



Town Of Chatham
Economic Development Committee



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Selectmen
Jill R. Goldsmith, Town Manager

FROM: Luther Bates, Chairman
Economic Development Committee

DATE: March 16, 2016

SUBJECT: Potential Economic Benefits of Off-Season Events

One of the challenges to the future economic vitality of the Town of Chatham is to surmount difficulties presented by our seasonal economy. It is clear between short-term visitors and 2nd home owners, the role of tourism is crucial to the current economic health of the town. Many sectors of the local economy benefit from tourism related revenue, including lodging and hospitality; retail shopping, dining, real estate/home rentals; and service industries ranging from boat rentals to home maintenance/improvement.

By establishing, supporting, growing, and promoting off-season events, the town can draw new visitors and simultaneously provide additional reasons for 2nd home owners to return to town. Shifting focus to increase tourism specifically during the typical periods of lower off-peak demand will capitalize on existing infrastructure and generate a significant economic benefit to a wide spectrum of the local population. The EDC believes this is a strategy that will result in high economic return on investment.

In researching this matter the EDC learned about a few events, some existing, some planned which will have or have had economic impact on the town.

- **Oktoberfest:** Chatham's Oktoberfest, sponsored by the Chatham Retail Merchants Association, has seen 150% growth in attendance between 2014 and 2015. This event has the potential to anchor a larger fall event or festival.
- **Shellfish:** There is an ongoing initiative by the Chatham Shellfish Advisory Committee to develop a special event focused on shellfish. It is our understanding progress is being made on the scheduling of an initial event which will be run privately. Chatham's shellfish are a unique asset to the town which can and should be highlighted during the shoulder season. This event has the potential to become a town wide public festival.
- **Sharks:** Ongoing efforts by the Shark Center have increased educational awareness about sharks and their work has the potential to bring global visitors to the town. The center, in its infancy, is an asset to the town and should be encouraged and supported.

The EDC's vision is that through the efforts of a public/private partnership and with the full support of the town, Chatham has the resources and capability to present an event attaining

nationwide recognition. The committee envisions an event of the same caliber as The Wellfleet Oysterfest, Nantucket Wine Festival or Figawi race. While the EDC acknowledges and appreciates the support the Town regularly provides to events such as the Oktoberfest, the EDC recommends the Board of Selectmen proactively consider additional actions, such as closing parts of Main Street, encouraging the cooperation and support of our local police, fire and other relevant departments while continuing the expeditious processing of permits when reviewing proposed events. These actions will assist organizers and community volunteers and will have a wide reaching impact on the town's economy.

The EDC felt it was important to bring the potential economic benefits associated with developing one or more significant shoulder season events to the Board of Selectmen's attention and encourage the Board to do everything it can to help support and grow such events. The EDC will also continue to monitor the events identified above, as well as serving as a resource or conduit for other event concepts. We would also welcome feedback for the Board, particularly if there are any additional actions the Board would like to see the EDC take to support this initiative.