

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

MINDY DOMB
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
3rd HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT
AMHERST | PELHAM | GRANBY
Mindy.Domb@mahouse.gov

COMMITTEES:
Environment, Natural Resources &
Agriculture, *Vice Chair*
COVID-19 and Emergency
Preparedness & Management
Higher Education
Revenue

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REP. MINDY DOMB (D-Amherst) RECOGNIZES COMBINED EFFORTS OF GABRIELLE GOULD OF THE AMHERST BID AND CLAUDIA PAZMANY OF AMHERST AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DURING COVID PANDEMIC.

State Representative Mindy Domb (D-Amherst) recognized the collaborative efforts of two Amherst residents at the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast on Friday, October 29. Domb cited Claudia Pazmany, of the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, and Gabrielle Gould, of the Amherst Business Improvement District, for their innovative and outstanding efforts to support Amherst small businesses and sustain the local Amherst economy and community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her remarks, Rep. Domb acknowledged “the positive impact Pazmany and Gould and their teams have had on the lives of so many Amherst residents, on the survival of local small businesses, and on the sustainability of Amherst’s downtown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Domb also acknowledged the immense and extraordinary efforts of the Amherst Survival Center, Not Bread Alone, Family Outreach of Amherst, the First Baptists Church Food Pantry and the Amherst Senior Center in making sure that food and meal distribution were uninterrupted in Amherst, and in some cases expanded, during the pandemic.

Domb noted from the very beginning, “The Chamber and the BID executive directors and their teams sprang into action to craft a safety net for small business owners and their employees, transforming the Downtown Amherst Foundation into a grant-making organization for small businesses, raising money, and helping small business owners access the federal PPP program to protect the paychecks for hundreds of community residents who were employed by them. They also negotiated pauses in rent from small businesses during the worst times. They scheduled vaccine appointments and vaccine clinics for restaurant workers, offering access to this vital



public health service. They and their teams created public health related messaging for the downtown, demonstrating our town's commitment to keeping everyone healthy and safe.”

“They didn’t stop there,” Domb continued. “The Chamber created a virtual tip jar to support service staff in restaurants that were forced to close, they distributed educational materials and face masks. They launched an innovative meals exchange program in collaboration with Family Outreach of Amherst and the Amherst Survival Center, where they purchased hundreds of meals from local restaurants and distributed them to food insecure families – helping to keep these restaurants in business and their workers employed, while feeding our community members.” Domb noted her success in securing state funding last year to support this program.

In addition to helping small business owners access federal funding, both directors helped small business owners tap into state resources. Domb stated, “Gabrielle, in particular, sat with small business owners and helped them to complete their applications with the state.” This outreach and assistance was hugely successful, bringing approximately \$2.1 million in state small business grants to support 60 small Amherst businesses.

“These funds helped to prevent layoffs and closures.” said Domb.

“Their energy, creativity and focus on supporting our small business owners, our local economy, and the workers that help these businesses operate has been relentless and optimistic. They deeply felt the pain of our community, but they also never stopped thinking about the future. All of which is clearly beyond the specific scope of the BID or Chamber, but clearly supported our local resilience, our local economy and our local response to the pandemic,” said Domb.

Domb also noted their success in getting a tourism grant, which she described as giving small businesses a lift, the production of a popular well-attended free outdoor music series, and their role in facilitating outdoor dining and compliance with local bylaws on mask wearing as other accomplishments.

Domb provided Pazmany and Gould with citations from the Massachusetts House of Representatives in recognition of their community service.