

Putting batterers on notice

Gloucester aims to be free of domestic abuse

By Lisa Capone

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

GLOUCESTER — Long linked with a yellow-coated fisherman at the helm of his vessel, this city has a new icon: a clenched fist stopped short by a rigid hand. The stark black-and-white image, on signs throughout Gloucester, marks the city's new status as Massachusetts' second "Domestic Violence-Free Zone."

Even before the City Council vot-

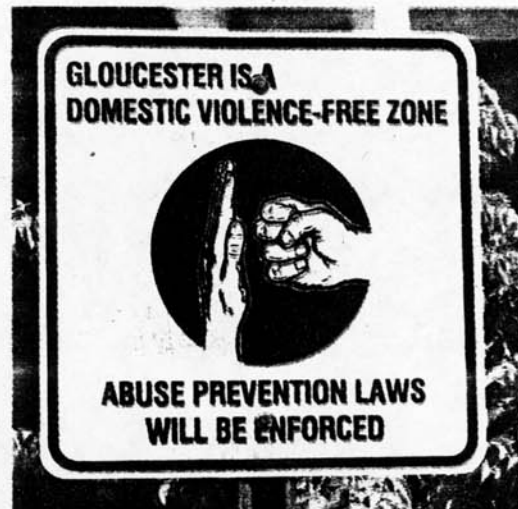
ed unanimously in favor of Mayor Bruce H. Tobey's proclamation Tuesday night, the signs were up at Grant Circle, the rotary that welcomes motorists to Gloucester, at the entrance to City Hall, and at two other locations. By the Fourth of July, the city plans to have 25 signs positioned throughout Gloucester as activists, law enforcement officials, religious leaders, and others begin a long process of educating city workers and citizens about what constitutes domestic violence and what they all can — and should — do about it.

While other cities in the state, such as Boston and Lowell, have initiated large-scale efforts to end wife

battering and other forms of domestic abuse, Gloucester is only the second city, after Cambridge, to declare itself a domestic violence-free zone, according to Judith Beals, executive director of Jane Doe Inc., a statewide organization that works on sexual assault and domestic violence issues.

"We're under no illusions. This is a 20- to 30-year project we're undertaking. That's what it takes to change a silent, deeply embedded problem," said Sunny Robinson, Gloucester's public health nurse and a key player on the Gloucester Coalition for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, an alliance of 16 groups, including the

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A sign outside Gloucester City Hall reflects the city's new resolve to become a haven against domestic abuse.