



A Message from your Town Administrator

May 2020

Code Red Emergency Notification system is live!

The Town has successfully rolled out a new emergency response system that will notify residents of emergencies, alerts and other important announcements for the Town. Residents can sign up on our website at dighton-ma.gov and will have the option to choose how they are notified: email, phone call, text message, etc. Residents can also select which type of alert they are interested in, which can include trash delay notifications, town hall closures, or emergency alerts. Sign up now!

PANDEMIC REOPENING TASK FORCE

Town employees returned to work on May 26 as the Governor's orders for essential workers only was lifted. We have instituted safety procedures and protocols. Prime Time remains closed, all other services are available to the public electronically.

We got back to regular business the best we could during the month of May. Finance Committee meetings convened virtually and the Town came to a final budget document. We developed Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting warrant articles and prepared for the return of our workforce. Town Hall looks a little different these days with split shifts, partitions between work spaces and a mask on every face. Service counters also have plastic partitions as we prepare for the public to come into our buildings once again.

We are continuing our work remotely and encourage you to call or email us if you have any questions or are in need of services. This includes the Library and Council on Aging. Prime Time remains closed, however. The Reopening Task Force will be working with the Library in the coming weeks to launch curbside services. Stay tuned for information about that.

Town Meeting

We have been able to finalize a Fiscal Year 2021 Budget! The budget will be brought before the

Town at the Annual Town Meeting of June 15, 2020. Currently we are planning for this Town Meeting to take place in the DR Regional High School Auditorium. Public officials will be implementing social distancing measures and ensuring safety of attendees. The warrants will be posted on June 1. As is customary in Dighton, the Annual Town Meeting Warrant will be mailed to each residence.

Some of the articles on this year's Annual Town Meeting Warrant include by law changes for the Capital Outlay Committee, Kennel license definitions, and expanding a Route 44 Business Corridor, a Home Rule Petition to rename the Board of Selectmen to "Select Board", and a small group of spending articles. The Fire Department is requesting \$60,000 to purchase a used Ladder Truck as well as \$37,000 to purchase an electric vehicle. Chief Maguy received a grant of \$7,500 to be put towards this purchase. The Police Department is seeking the purchase of two new cruisers, the Highway Department is requesting \$55,000 for a lease-to-purchase agreement for a Street Sweeper, and I am requesting along with the Highway Department \$150,000 to be spent on the construction of the Briggs Street Culvert, which will serve as the Town's match to a federal grant in the event we do not receive a grant from the state through the Division of Ecological Resources.

*Thank you for your patience
as we closed Center Street to
accommodate the Bristol
Aggie construction project.*

Town Election

We are also forging ahead with a local municipal election, which will be held on June 6, 2020 at the Dighton Elementary School. We ask that you please wear a mask. If you feel uncomfortable voting in person, mail in ballots will be accepted. The process is very easy: If you are a registered voter in the Town of Dighton, complete a 2020 municipal election early ballot application (available on our website, or through the Secretary of State's office), fax or mail it to the Town Clerk or drop it in the lock box at the bottom of the ramp at Town Hall. An absentee ballot will then be mailed to you. Absentee ballots must be received no later than June 6, 2020.

IMPORTANT DATES

June 6 – Annual Town Election

June 10, 24 – Scheduled Selectmen Meetings

June 13 – Household Hazardous Waste Day,

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

June 15 - Annual Town Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

June 27 – Rabies Vaccination Day, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Local Services

Our local building permitting services have been transferred online for convenience in a post-Covid world. The link to do so is featured prominently on our webpage at dighton-ma.gov with a button designated “Online Permitting”. All homeowners who have not hired a contractor for a building project may choose to utilize this service by creating a personal account, using an email address and a unique password. Supporting documents can be uploaded and attached as needed. A resident's account can be used to obtain any building permit for their property. Residents who wish to continue to submit paper permit applications are still able to do so. There is also a newly-installed drop box outside the offices at 1111 Somerset Avenue. Please utilize that when providing documents to the Building, Health, Veterans, or Conservation Departments.

The Animal Shelter has dog and cat food available for those who may be in need. Please contact Animal Control Officer Stacy Ferry for information. And for our four-legged residents, Rabies Vaccination Day will take place from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Animal Shelter on Tremont Street on June 27, 2020. The Animal Control officer has also had various residents stay at the shelter for a time before being placed in foster care. If you're interested in adoption or fostering, please reach out to her. Bentley, a chihuahua featured last month has already been placed in a permanent home.

Our outdoor spaces remain open to the public, but with social distancing measures in place! Trails are beautiful and spending time outside seems to be just what the doctor ordered these days. Now that the nice weather is upon us, we expect to see more of you walking the track behind Town Hall. And our Dighton Trails Committee has been showcasing various trails on their Facebook page as well.

Plans

This spring has brought many plans to the forefront. The Town has compiled a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), available here: <https://dighton-ma.gov/departments/grants.php>. We are currently soliciting public comment for this plan, specifically on the 34 identified projects to work on over the next five years. Please email comments to maronstein@dighton-ma.gov. Also available at that link is the Municipal Vulnerability Plan, which was completed last month and has been submitted for state review. The Town of Dighton intends to utilize the MVP for an Action Grant offered through the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Our grant project is to study the Segregansett River, its hydrology, and various areas of flooding around that part of Town.

Another major plan that was submitted this month is the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. All departments were instrumental in filling out surveys, as were members of the public. Our vendor said it was the greatest amount of public comment they had ever seen. So thank you! The draft plan is now being reviewed by town officials. A final plan is expected in June. We will be able to utilize the recommendations in this audit to implement changes to eliminate barriers and to seek grant funds for major projects.

The Open Space Committee has been hard at work finalizing their Open Space Plan, a document I'm excited to see and implement along with these other plans. Open Space preservation is an on-going theme for Dighton, as it is included as one of our Community Compact best practices. Open Space and nature-based solutions are

also preferred solutions to flooding problems that were identified in our MVP and HMP. Together these various plans work toward achieving the overarching goals identified in the 2014 Master Plan.

Sewer Study Update

Last town meeting, voters allowed the appropriation of funds to explore expanding sewer services along Route 138 from Center Street to Hart Street. The team assigned to this project includes myself, Selectman Brett Zografos, Sewer Commissioner Tom Ferry, and our outside vendor, Woodard and Curran. The final draft of the study will be submitted soon. We are also awaiting a report on financing options, both for paying for the construction costs and also how the cost of connecting to the system, through betterment figures, may look like. We are hard at work to adequately weigh the cost benefit of implementing this project. I am also working directly with Woodard and Curran on funding opportunities for this project through stimulus funds. The Economic Development Administration released over \$1 billion in federal funds as economic relief for awardees to spend to promote economic development. Though we are not in a designated "Opportunity Zone" we still intend to apply for our chance of at least a 50% contribution for this project.

Speed Issue Update

While there has been limited traffic with the shutdowns and remote work orders, the Town has still stayed the course of its management of speed control throughout the Town. The upcoming Town Meeting will see a request for \$8,500 from the Police Chief to purchase an additional speed trailer. Town Meeting will also vote to authorize the Town to begin designating certain areas that fit established criteria as Reduced Speed Zones. By state law, established speed zones have a speed limit of 20 miles per hour.

The Big Cheese



This month's Big Cheese trophy is awarded to Town Clerk Sue Medeiros. Mrs. Medeiros has worked tirelessly to develop ways in which to hold a municipal election under the regulations set forth in the Governor's various Executive Orders. Her and her staff have creatively maneuvered election set ups, processes, and protective equipment measures to ensure a safe, healthy election! Mrs. Medeiros also rolled out a mail-in early voting program to assist residents to still exercise their right to vote during a pandemic and major health crisis. Way to go Sue!

News from You

This month, just after I sent out my April newsletter, I received a letter from a resident with a suggestion on content. I thought it was a fabulous idea! If you have news to share or an item you'd think would be good for other residents to know, send it my way to maronstein@dighton-ma.gov, through the mail to Town Hall, or you can drop it off in the drop box.

The news this resident shared was regarding the importance of CLEAN recyclables. This has been an ongoing issue that the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Health have discussed at their meetings. If you recycle an item but fail to clean it out, it is effectively rendered unusable and defeats the purpose of recycling because of the contaminants in the materials. It also disrupts operations at the recycling plants, as do plastic grocery bags which are NOT recyclable and get stuck in the machines. The story, entitled "We are the Reason Recycling Doesn't Work", was featured in *The Boston Globe Magazine* in March. The EPA has also recently, as in this month, issued guidance about how important clean recyclables are and that the increased shipping occurring during the COVID19 pandemic threatens a shortage of cardboard.

To do our part, Dighton's Board of Health received a grant from MassDEP to be expended over the next two years to jump start a program called Recycling IQ. The program's mission is much like this article: to educate residents on the need for recyclables to be cleaned out, or cardboard boxes to be broken down so that recycling initiatives are successful. Read more about the program here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/presentation-massdeps-recycling-iq-kit/download>.