



**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF DIGHTON, MA
October 30, 2023**

The Special Town Meeting held on October 30, 2023, at the Dighton-Rehoboth High School and was called to order at 7:01 PM by William Moore, Moderator. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited. The checkers were Sue Carpenter, Lisa Cowan, Peg Mullen, Sheila Neu, Jeanne Noons, Joan Ready, Janet White and Ashley Daigneault.

From the Finance Committee was Chairman Peter J. Roache, Andrew Horton, Susan Lorenz, Ronald McKay, William Mello, William Pruitt, and Doug White. Present and seated on stage from the Board of Selectmen was Chairman Peter Caron, Leonard Hull, and Nicole Mello. Also present and seated on stage was Michael Mullen Town Administrator, Matthew Costa Town Council, Shara Costa Town Clerk, and Sirena Amaral Town Accountant. The Special Town Meeting Dissolved at 8:56 PM. Total attendance was 96.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Leonard Hull and Seconded, I move that we dispense with the reading of the warrant.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Peter Caron and Seconded I move that we dispense with the reading of the articles, and that reference to them be made by number and content.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Nicole Mello and seconded, I move that the Town consider adjournment this evening at 10:00 P.M.

ARTICLE 1. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Leonard Hull that we hear reports of Town Officials.

Chairman Peter Caron of the Board of Selectmen read the following statement:

"I stand before you as one of your selectmen representing the interest and the well-being of our Town we gather here at this meeting The Special Town Meeting to discuss and make decisions that will shape the future of our community. Tonight, we will have the opportunities to discuss matters that directly affect our community. Each article of the warrant has been carefully considered and prepared with the best interest of our Town in mind. We encourage thoughtful discussion hearing different perspectives and ultimately making informed decisions that will shape our Town's future. First, I would like to acknowledge our other two Selectmen, Leonard Hull and Nicole Mello and our Town Administrator, Mike Mullen. Without their hard

work and talent this evening would almost be impossible. I would also like to acknowledge the strength and resilience of our community. Since the last meeting we have faced some challengers from the economic uncertainties to replacement of our Police Chief with Acting Police Chief George Nichols into addressing our need to address the need for our own part at our schools. First thing I would like to talk about is taxes. I assure you we understand the challenges faced by our taxpayers. We recognize the need for relief especially during these uncertain times. With that said, the Selectmen in Article 10 is requesting for \$250,000 tax cut for our tax payers. The decision was made with the thoughtfulness and what works best for the taxpayers. Our goal is to create a sustainable and equitable tax system that benefits all members of our community. To that end we have been working diligently on various measures to lower taxes where we can reduce spending without compromising essential services and so innovative solutions to maximizing our resources. One of our primary focuses has been attracting new businesses and industries to our Town by expanding our commercial base we can increase revenue without relying solely on residential taxes. We also committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our local government. We are implementing technology driven solutions and streamlining administrative processes to eliminate unnecessary expenses and minimizing waste. However, it is important to note that lowering taxes cannot be achieved overnight. It requires careful planning, collaboration with various stakeholders and a long-term vision. We remain steadfast in our dedication to providing essential services to our Town's residents. Our Town's infrastructure is being improved with investments in road repairs led by Tom Ferry, expansions of facilities with the hard work of Kevin Smith. We understand that a thriving community requires a solid foundation and we are committed to maintaining that foundation. Education is another area we have made significant strides. We have worked closely with our school district to provide our students with a quality education that prepares them for success. We have invested in our schools ensuring that they have the resources they need to offer innovative programs and support our students' growth and development. As we look to the future, we have ambitious visions for our Town. We are actively planning for sustainable growth, preserving our natural resources and enhancing the quality of life for all our residents. However, we cannot achieve these goals alone. Our success as a community relies on the active participation and engagement of each of you. I encourage you to join us in our efforts to share your ideas contribute to the collective vision we have for our Town. In closing I want to express my gratitude toward the dedicated Town employees, volunteers and community leaders who work tirelessly behind the scenes. Your commitment and passion for our Town are truly commendable. Thank you"

Nancy Goulart of the of the Board of Assessors read the following statement:

Good evening, Mr. Moderator, town officials, ladies and gentlemen, Thank you for attending this special town meeting to finalize the FY2024 Budget and act on various bylaws and revisions. The Board of Assessors is finishing up a random review of properties classified under Ch. 61, 61A, and 61B. As a reminder, a minimum of five acres is required in order to apply for a classification under Ch. 61.

Two important deadlines are approaching. Exemptions must be filed by April 1, 2024 but if they are received by the assessors' office as soon as possible, your February and April tax bills will be reduced to reflect the exemptions. After the January 2024 tax bills are issued, applications for abatements for real and personal property must be received by February 1, 2024. Forms to apply for exemptions or abatements are available on line or in the assessors' office. Anyone needing assistance or having questions should contact the assessors' office. In a few weeks, the Board of Assessors will meet with the Board of Selectmen at which time the tax rates for FY2024 will be set. This is an open public meeting if anyone wishes to attend. It will be held at the Old Town Hall.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric J. Easterday, Chairman
Nancy J. Goulart, Clerk
William F. Moore, Member

Peter Roach of the Finance Committee read the following statement:

There was a request prior to the meeting to just give out a couple of numbers beforehand. If all the articles passed as they are written the free cash at the end of the meeting will be \$739,392.00. Stabilization is \$1.933M and capitalization stabilization 1.519M, neither of those have any articles contributing into them.

ARTICLE 2. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Peter Roache and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$4,587.75 to pay prior year bills.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 3. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On motion of Ronald McKay and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$106,146.76 to be expended by the Fire Chief as the third payment of a seven-year lease purchase of a new fire engine and any necessary accessories.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 4. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of William Mello and seconded,

Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$46,347.74 to fund the FY2023 Snow & Ice deficit.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 5. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Andrew Horton and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$50,561.92 to be expended by the Highway Superintendent as the fifth and final-year lease payment on the 2020 Street Sweeper voted in Article 22 of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant of June 15, 2020.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 6. MOTION CARRIES: On Motion of Susan Lorenz and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$90,000 to fund unforeseen educational and non-resident student vocational tuition and transportation costs as required by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 7. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Doug White and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash a sum of \$300,000.00 to be expended by the Highway Superintendent for Main Street infrastructure and roadway improvements.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 8. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Doug White and seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to raise and appropriate the amount of \$40,000.00 to department #192- Public Buildings & Properties Maintenance to provide additional funding in the fiscal year 2024 budget for energy and utility costs.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 9. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Susan Lorenz and Seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash, the sum of

\$90,000.00 to the "Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund" established to cover the unfunded actuarial liability for retirees' health care and life insurance benefits.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 10. FAILED: On Motion of Peter Roach and seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash, a sum of \$250,000.00 to reduce the tax rate.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 10. MOTION TO AMMEND FAILED on motion of Leanord Hull and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move we move to amend to transfer from Free Cash, a sum of \$350,000.00 to reduce the tax rate.

Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 11. MOTION CARRIES: On Motion of Ronald McKay and seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$28,000.00 to have Aquaria, LLC (\$13,000.00) and Dighton Power, LLC (\$15,000.00) appraised for the Fiscal Year 2025 five (5)-year certification revaluations as required by the Department of Revenue.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 12. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of William Mello and seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$15,000 to fund necessary repairs to the Highway Department 2011 Ford bucket truck.

*Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends*

ARTICLE 13. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Andrew Horton Mr. Moderator, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to establish a new Cannabis Stabilization Fund in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 5B, the purpose of which will be to establish clear accounting and tracking of revenues generated from Host Community Agreements between the Town and marijuana establishments and of expenditures of said funds approved by Town Meeting.

Finance Committee Recommends

Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 14. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Susan Lorenz and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to accept the fourth paragraph of Massachusetts 4 General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B, which allows the dedication, without further appropriation, of all, or a percentage not less than 25 percent, of particular fees, charges or receipts to a stabilization fund established under said section of the General Laws, to be effective for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2023.

Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 15. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Doug White and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the town vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$36,042.40 and dedicate community impact fees paid by marijuana establishments operating within the Town, collected in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 94G, Section 3, to the Cannabis Stabilization Fund established under Article 13, effective for fiscal year 2024 beginning on July 1, 2023

Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 16. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of William Pruitt and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to create a special purpose Opioid Stabilization Fund in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 5B, to which receipts from the Massachusetts State-Subdivision for Statewide opioid settlement funds shall be appropriated annually to be used to supplement and strengthen resources available to communities and families for substance use disorder prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.

Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 17. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion of Susan Lorenz and Seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to transfer from Free Cash the amount of \$10,114.89, to the Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund established at the October 30, 2023 Special Town Meeting.

Finance Committee Recommends
Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 18. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion from Jeff Carvalho and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws by deleting sections 5420, 5441, 5442, 5445, 5450, and 5460, and replacing the same with new sections 5420, 5441, 5442, 5445, 5450, and 5460, and by italicizing all words within section 5400 of said Bylaws that are defined in Section VI, Definitions, all as incorporated and set forth in Article 18.

Planning Board Recommends

ARTICLE 19. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion from Jeff Carvalho and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws by deleting sections 4659. a. II, 4659. a. III, and 4659. a. IV of said Bylaws, and replacing the same with new sections 4659. a. II, 4659. a. III, and 4659. a. IV, and by removing "Large-Scale Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation" from Section VI, Definitions, as it no longer applies, and by italicizing all words within section 4600 of said Bylaws that are defined in Section VI, Definitions, all as incorporated and set forth in Article 19.

Planning Board Recommends

ARTICLE 20. MOTION PASSES: On Motion of Nicole Mello and seconded Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to amend the Town of Dighton General Bylaws by adding a new Article to be inserted after Article XLI as presented in Article 20

Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 20. MOTION TO AMMEND PASSES UNANIMOUSLY: On Motion from the floor, Mark Pacheco and seconded, made motion to amend Section 1.3 to add the Town Clerk to the Financial Team.

ARTICLE 21. TABLED: On motion of Leonard Hull and seconded, Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to amend the Town of Dighton General Bylaws by amending Section 7 of Article I which states "The conduct of all Town meetings not prescribed bylaw or by these by-laws shall be determined by the rules of practice contained in Cushing's Manual, so far as they are adapted to Town meetings." by adding the following sentence:

"Amendments to the Town of Dighton General Bylaws shall only be decided by no less than a two-thirds vote."

Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 21. MOTION TO TABLE PASSES: On Motion from the floor to table article 21

ARTICLE 22: On Motion of Peter Caron and seconded. Mr. Moderator, I move that the Town vote to amend the Town of Dighton General Bylaws by amending Section 1 of Article II by striking out the last sentence of said section 1 and replacing it with the following:

“At the annual meeting and before the final adjournment thereof, there shall be appointed by the moderator a finance committee consisting of seven members to serve until the final adjournment of the next annual meeting and until their successors have been appointed, none of whom shall be an officer of or member of any board of the Town. ~~Vacancies shall be filled by the remaining members of the committee.~~ Vacancies shall be filled by the moderator.”

Board of Selectmen Recommends

ARTICLE 22. AMENDMENT TO ADD TOWN RESIDENCY SHALL BE A REQUIREMENT TO SERVE ON THE FINANCE COMMITTEE: MOTION PASSES

On motion from the floor to include a residency requirement as “Town residency shall be a requirement to serve on the Finance Committee”

ARTICLE 22. AMENDMENT TO TABLE DOES NOT PASS:

On motion from the floor to Table - Hand count was requested by Leonard Hull

ARTICLE 22. AMENDMENT STRIKE OUT VACANCIES SHALL BE FILLED BY MODERATOR add back in VANCANCIES SHALL BE FILLED BY REMAINING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE: MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

“At the annual meeting and before the final adjournment thereof, there shall be appointed by the moderator a finance committee consisting of seven members to serve until the final adjournment of the next annual meeting and until their successors have been appointed, none of whom shall be an officer of or member of any board of the Town. Vacancies shall be filled by the remaining members of the committee. Town Residency shall be a requirement to serve on the finance Committee ~~Vacancies shall be filled by the moderator.~~”

ARTICLE 23. NO MOTION

PASSES: On Motion of Nicole Mello and Seconded *Mr. Moderator*, *I move that the Town vote to dissolve the Special Town Meeting*

ATTEST:



Respectfully Submitted,

Shara Costa.

Town Clerk