The following Meeting was video recorded for cable broadcast.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Wednesday, 25March, 2015, 7:30 o'clock p.m.

Regular Meeting

Town Hall –Selectmen's Meeting Room

1. **Meeting was called to order at 7:31pm**

2. **The Pledge of Allegiance** was then recited.

3. **Approval of minutes:**

    a. **Regular Meeting of Wednesday, March 18, 2015.** Motion to approve by Selectman Menges, seconded by Selectmen Pires. Unanimously carried.
    b. **Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and SRPEDD, Monday, March 9, 2015.** Motioned to approve by Selectman Menges and seconded by Selectman Pires Unanimously carried.

4. **Approval of Warrants: #39A-15, $71,358.83; #39B-15, $15,718.63; and #39C-15, $111,840.60.** Motioned for approval by Selectman Pires and seconded by Selectman Menges. Unanimously carried.

5. **Correspondence:**
    a. Chairman Cronin explains the bridge closings, for night work scheduled to begin, letting everyone know, that they will be working, but that does not necessarily mean that the bridge will be closed every night.

6. **Announcements**: Are read by Selectman Pires and finished by Chairman Cronin.

    a. Selectman Pires adds that there will be a rabies clinic held on Saturday, April 25, 2015, from 2:00-3:00 PM. In addition to rabies shots, there will also be micro-chipping available. The cost for rabies shot is $12.00 and the cost for micro-chipping will be $20.00.
    b. Selectman Menges adds that the warrant article deadline was today at 4:30 pm. He says stand by for the text of the warrant on or about April 7th.
    c. Selectman Pires reads that list of candidates
    d. Chairman Cronin asks Selectman Menges to inform the public of the upcoming 911 Regionalization public forum to be held on April 1, 2015. Chairman Cronin adds that this will be a public forum. Selectman still have questions. We invite you and your friends to come out. It may help to clear up some information or any questions that you may have.

7. **Old Business:**
    a. Good Energy Aggregation Documents. Chairman Cronin states that the board is at the last step in the process to enter into energy aggregation agreement with approximately 14 other communities. This allows supplies suppliers to bid for our service. The contract should be finalized in July, and should represent a substantial savings. He then asks for questions.
    Someone in the audience asks if there is an option to opt out if they have already contracted with another supplier? Chairman Cronin says it depends on your contract with that supplier, sometimes they do charge fees to opt out. Be very careful who you are dealing with. When this upcoming contract is finalized, you will be able to opt out at any time.

8. **New Business:**
    a. Appointment of Melissa St. Laurent to the Regional School District Collective Bargaining Representative. Selectman Menges moves to postpone action until quarterly meeting w/Rehoboth on May 4th. May 6th is our deadline to act. Selectman Menges reads letter from Rehoboth Board of Selectmen to Dighton regarding the appointment of Melissa St. Laurent. They will act on March 30th at their regular meeting.
    Selectman Menges motions to approve main motion, and Selectman Pires seconds the main motion. Aye, aye. Unanimously carries
    Selectman Menges motions to send memo to Rehoboth thanking them for draft, and Selectman Pires seconds the motion. Aye, aye. Unanimously carries.
    b. Appoint Joe Pacheco to parking clerk for Town of Dighton. Chairman Cronin explains the duties of the parking clerk, and tells everyone a little about Joe Pacheco. He's been involved in so many ways in Dighton for years. Motion to appoint by Selectman Pires to appoint Joe parking clerk. Seconded by Selectman Menges. Unanimously carries.

9. **Reports:**
    a. Selectman Menges reports on the town administrator selection process. He states that on Monday interviews were conducted with 6 of the seven finalists. The board was polled and chose two of these. On Tuesday, they will interview the last candidate, and at that point we should have 3 finalists. It is anticipated that on Wednesday, we will choose one, and then we will enter into Executive Session to negotiate salary. The Finance Committee will need this information by April 7th. The final review of the three is open session says selectman Pires. Selectman Menges agrees.
    b. Selectman Menges would like to say a kind work about John Jones, Mr. Robert Fredericks. Another little League season is underway at the Lopes Complex. Everyone is looking forward to it, and when it is convenient, we will have them in for more information.

c. Selectman Menges would also like to say a word of praise for Elizabeth Hatten, seamen United States Navy, for being named Blue Jacket of the year. God Bless her for her service.

10. Public Input:

Chairman Cronin opens the public forum

a. Melissa St. Laurent, 366 School Lane, Dighton, comes forward to clarify some facts on statements that were made and upset some people. See if you stand by your comments and would like to publicly apologize for any of them.

Selectman Pires says be specific

Melissa says there a few, such as comments made referring to the Fire Chief and AMR ambulance, etc.

Chairman Cronin states that most of the content in the two prior (candidates night and finance committee) meetings were open to the public. Whatever was said on tape was in reference to those meetings. Please be aware that I would never intentionally degrade or mock anyone. I think it was misinterpreted.

Selectman Pires says he regrets nothing. I don't think we were out of line. It was a private conversation that you happened to hear.

Melissa says she will just move on to some facts then:

She states that the Deputy Director of the Mass State 911 Board states that there are no state minimum staffing requirements for dispatchers.

Melissa goes on to say that she spoke with Jeff Beagan from AMR and it would cost between 700,000.00 to 1,000,000.0 to dedicate one ambulance to the Town. They currently have 30-40 ambulances in the area and only 200 in the entire State. The approximately $200,000.00 that the Fire Chief is requesting is the most feasible for the town.

She also asks the board if there are any personal conflicts with the Fire Deparment and If there are any other departments are required to produce the amount of documentation that was required of Chief Roderick, or is the Fire Department being singled out. Chairman Cronin says yes the ones with the biggest budgets are required to. She goes on to say that there have not been any studies to prove that regionalization of the dispatchers will improve public safety. That was from Ross Perry. In fact Hingham has stated that it has compromised the safety of its' residents. The feasibility study says it will save Dighton $100,000.00, by adding four additional Dispatchers in Fall River, but how much will it cost in unemployment for our current dispatchers. How much will it cost to man the police station on nights and weekends? Melissa says that those are questions according to Ross Perry, that the board will have to answer according to Ross Perry. Selectman Menges says you will need to hear the presentation on April 1st.

Chairman Cronin says the $60,000.00 cost to prepare the Study was paid for with a grant, part of that cost was to put on a public forum. Once the final draft is presented and done, part of that cost is to present a public forum, and that has not happened yet. He goes on to say, that he cannot give a fair statement until he has all the facts. He says he owes it to the town, and is looking forward to the presentation. Melissa asks if the

board chooses to move forward, would the communication center still be built, and if so will the taxpayers pay for it, to which Chairman Cronin says that if we do go that route, no, we would not invest a lot of money into equipment that is not needed. We will make that decision when we come to it. That comes later. Our priority is to get all the facts right now.

Selectman Pires says he would like to discuss the ambulance issue. There are some misconceptions with what was brought up last week. We have a group of outstanding paramedics and first responders. He tells Melissa she is right, we did go through this years ago with ambulance #1. There is no benefit to us privatizing ambulance #1. However, there is a problem with ambulance #2 and we are not happy about that. We have had 83 calls for ambulance #2 from 1/1/14-3/21/15. 57 runs by Dighton, 26 made by mutual aid. That is a 68% response, to me, is not acceptable. This is no fault of our 1st responders, it's either staffing or scheduling. Will three people help? Possibly, but it is our responsibility and our duty, to explore ways to do better than 68%, as well as to save the town some money. Not caring about peoples' lives is not what It's about.

Firefighter Medeiros says percentages are 100%. He asks if any one of those 26 people did not get treated. Selectman Pires says he does not have that information, it could be all were treated. Mr. Medeiros then asks if we go to Taunton, Berkley, Somerset and provide mutual aid. Why, because their ambulances are not available. This is why we have mutual aid. He says "What you did last week was disgraceful – You should step out right now."

Selectman Pires asks Mr. Medeiros "Are you saying that we can use mutual aid?' to which firefighter Medeiros says "We use it all the time." Selectman Pires says, "then we don't need three people." Selectman Pires says, I think you are off track. Firefighter Medeiros says "Both of you said you would get the ambulance for free." Another woman in the audience says "Our men exemplary, I have worked in the field. Mutual aid is backup." It is not used instead of our men.

Selectman Pires says that he would rather that our guys respond, the woman then says that the bottom line needs to be looked at.

Melissa says that if A1 gets a call to go to Taunton, our town becomes vulnerable. 10 minutes is unacceptable. Selectman Pires agrees with Melissa. Melissa says the cost would be $25.00/day average for taxpayers. Selectman Menges lets Melissa know that everything that the Fire Chief has asked for has been placed on the warrant. Our concern, is that whatever we do, be effective. The manning and training of the Fire Department are the responsibility of the Fire Chief. He voluntarily withdrew his article for a new vehicle, and instead submitted an article for increased manning. The town accountant expressed preference that those figures be included in the budget. She has given two new budgets to Ed Swartz of the finance committee. We have not impeded the process.

He goes on to say that we had placed on the warrant to hear a statement by the Board of Selectmen on the readiness of the Fire Department. That was to have preceeded his two special articles. He was concerned about that article. The chief was asked to research and he did call and give me his conclusions, and I in turn removed the

statement from the warrant. Public safety depends on his success. The people can be absolutely confident that this board is not trying to undermine the Fire Department. Melissa says there is the same problem in the Police Department. You only have two men. It's about the readiness of both departments, not just one.
Selectmen Menges says that what the Chief has put on the warrant. We could force the chief to go out and get 10 signatures if we strongly opposed something. At that point the selectmen are just like taxpayers at the meeting. We listen to finance committee's recommendations.
Tom Medeiros apologizes for his outburst, he says he is very passionate about his job.
Karin Potter comes forward regarding 911 regionalization and asks if the public has any bearing on the decision to regionalize.
Selectman Menges says that there is a lot more to it. The board makes the final decision, but we pay close attention to the public when it is our sole responsibility to make the final decision.
Karin asks how the public can provide their input.
Selectman Menges says – we will take public input via the web, (he asks administrative assistant to make not of that).
He goes on to say, that the board has a thorough awareness of the public's concern. We live in Dighton too.
Karin asks if the Town Administrator is a done deal. If we turn down the budget, does that end it?
Selectman Menges explains the process. At the annual town meeting, he says, it had a good head of steam, it was sent to a study committee, which studied its advantages and disadvantages. It was voted 4 – 2 to recommend. A by law was added to launch the process before the annual town meeting this year, so that the budget will be complete. Shortly before the deadline for submission, we received a petition to repeal the by law. It will go to the registrar's office to validate the signatures. If it is not repealed, we have given finance committee a budget of $124,000.00.
Karin asks "If the by law is repealed, is it off the table?" Selectman Menges says "Yes." He adds that I hope there is a robust debate. We need commerce. When people look to relocate here, they look for a smart town. It is a debate that the town needs to have.
Karin thanks Melissa, police and fire department.

John King comes forward and says that he would like to start a community garden in town, and is looking for a piece of land 1 – 1 ½ acres.
Selectman Menges says the town has a book of land that the town has taken. Let us check on a piece of property on Smith Street that I know of.
John King says he is serious about this. I have volunteers to clear land and I am heavily involved in the food bank.
Selectman Menges says that if a property owner allows his land to be used at no charge, the owner is absolved of liability as long as the owner did nothing to cause Harm.
Mr. King thanks the board for their time.

Glen Jefferson comes forward and states that he supports increases in both Fire and Police. It has come to his attention that there are quite a bit of back taxes owed to the Town. He asks how those are being recouped and if it will help the bottom line. Selectman Menges says the short answer is to find out from the collector. This falls heavily on the collector to move forward with a lien or a payment plan. It's a very fact laden determination. The Town is owed a substantial amount. Mr. Jefferson asks for an amount, and Chairman Cronin says it is seven figures. Mr. Jefferson asks if he decides not to pay taxes, nothing will happen to me, to which Selectman Menges replies that the collector encourages homeowners to make a payment plan. The Board has been approached by developers to wipe out their back taxes, because only if lots are sold will the development begin to produce for the Town. The direct answer from the Board to developers is to pay your taxes.

Mr. Jefferson says the school has proposed a band aid to add on to our schools. Meanwhile I was shocked to see another development going in.

Selectman Menges says a lien can be placed, and Mr. Jefferson asks if that is being done now. Chairman Cronin says yes it is. Mr. Jefferson asks if the town needs To develop a more aggressive policy.

Selectman Menges says if you discourage someone completely and they walk, that Is a big expense. The collector is not in the real estate business. Mr. Jefferson says The developers in town should be held to a higher standard.

Selectman Menges says that regarding the 40B's (affordables). Dighton is on the cutting edge of obtaining an appellate tax decision, and we can thank the board of assessors for that.

Everything that you said is reasonable, except for us letting people get away with not paying taxes.

Mr. Jefferson says that to hear that developers are coming in and not paying is discouraging.

Selectman Menges says that in the past 2 – 2 ½ years this problem has become more aggressive. It is not true that we allow them to keep building. The developers are being held to a higher standard. We will not allow a permit to be issued.

Chairman Cronin says we will fight through it.

Mr. Jefferson thanks the board

Selectman Pires says the collection process has improved considerably.

Chairman Cronin thanks everyone for coming and the board appreciates everyone's Input. He urges everyone to come out on the 1st.

Selectman Pires says he would rather see you here, than on social media.

Selectman Menges adds "We are your board."

Selectman Pires motions to adjourn. Selectman Menges seconds, Unanimously carries.

11. Adjournment:

Adjourned at 9:14 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Karin L. Brady
Administrative Assistant
Board of Selectmen

Dean V. Cronin-Chairman **Tom Pires – Selectman** **Patrick Menges - Clerk**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Board of Health has sharps disposal containers for sale for Dighton residents only at the office ($3.00qt/$6.00gal/$7.50/2 gal). Once full, they can be brought back to the Board of Health for proper disposal at no additional cost.

- National Grid will be performing selective side pruning and/or danger tree removal along the "Power Lines," in Dighton, now thru March 31, 2015. Call Mariclaire Rigby at 508 860 6282 for any questions.

- URGENT - Please return your census forms. You may use drop box outside of Town Hall for your convenience.

- Dog licenses for 2015 are still available at the Town Clerks Office..

- Recycling Stickers are on sale for $1.00 at Town Hall, for your own containers.

- Burning season started January 15th. Get permits at Station #1, 300 Main Street, for $10.00. Check or money order only.

- A copy of the final draft of the Master Plan is available at Town Hall and at www.dighton-ma.gov for review. Any questions or comments can be addressed to Heidi Swist at Hswist@townofidighton.com or call 508 669 6636.

- The Library has Massachusetts State Tax Form 1. They do not currently have Federal Income Tax Forms, or instruction booklets but can print them for you if needed. Fee charged for the instruction booklet.

- For seniors that need help with tax preparation please visit: www.aarp.org/findtaxhelp or call 1-888-227-7669. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is offered in conjunction with the IRS.

- 2015-2016 Kindergarten Registration and Screening is being held Monday, April 6 – Friday, April 10, 2015. Mailings to parents have been sent. New residents should call the school to be added to the mailing list. Call 508 669 4245 X1100, for more information. On March 10th and March 19th registration paperwork can be returned in Dighton Elementary School foyer. No appointments needed for that portion of the registration.