



# A Message from your Town Administrator

August 2020

## Library Services

The Dighton Public Library is offering curbside services in light of Covid 19 regulations and constraints. You can contact them for pick up at 508-669-6421. Computer services can also be requested. Those services are available by appointment only and are located at the Old Town Hall Meeting Room. The Library also has a significant amount of digital resources available for access. Contact them for more information or visit their website at [www.dightonlibrary.org](http://www.dightonlibrary.org).

## TOWN HALL SERVICES

We are OPEN for business at Town Hall. We continue to promote our services online and through remote means. However, if you need to visit town offices, you are welcome to. Please wear a mask and use some sanitizer on your way in and out.

We are winding down the summer and we are sad to see it go! The Covid health crisis will now present new challenges, forcing us to rethink how many establishments are offering services as colder weather moves us inside. We must also remain vigilant and cautious as schools in our area resume services and societal life continues. As of August 31, 2020, Dighton has seen a total of 70 coronavirus cases throughout the pandemic. Currently, we have one active case from the last fourteen days. Our average daily incidence rate is 0.91. A threshold has been set for this key data point at 1%, so it is important for us to continue to be below that threshold. To continue tracking our community for weekly updates, you can visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting>.

Travel ban orders are changing as Governor Baker has added new states to the Lower Risk list: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#lower-risk-states> to keep up to date on this quickly changing landscape, especially if you are interested in travelling.

As we learn to live with these new restrictions, we are beginning to resurrect our routine work once again. The Board of Selectmen voted to lift the spending freeze that we instituted in March.

Departments seeking to spend any funds below \$1500 must fill out a requisition form to be signed by myself and the

Town Accountant so we can track necessary and appropriate purchases, but not delay spending on needed items by waiting for Board of Selectmen meetings. Any orders exceeding the \$1500 limit must go to the Board of Selectmen meeting for approval by a vote of the Board. The Town Clerk also successfully navigated early voting for the State Primary race at the end of the month which brought many voters to Town Hall from August 22 to 27. It was so nice seeing an active building once again. We thank everyone for complying with wearing masks, using sanitizer, and standing behind the plastic partitions we have set up.

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## Community Happenings

Volunteers gathered at the property at 949 Somerset Avenue to discuss the layout for a community garden and what supplies, materials, and manpower would be needed to get this project off the ground. The preliminary meeting was a kick off of sorts to share ideas and discuss approvals that

would be necessary to continue. There were many volunteers in attendance, a welcome sight to see so many engaged residents. The boy scouts and girl scouts in Dighton are stepping up to the plate to offer their assistance as well. As the planning continues, the Agricultural Commission will meet and vote on hard and fast plans for the garden. All produce grown at the community garden will be donated to the Dighton Food Pantry. Keep posted for future updates.

Three of our Police Officers were honored and recognized by the VFW Post 611 in Taunton this month. As the Veterans recognized First Responders month, they awarded Sgt. Shawn Cronin, Patrolman Greg Steele, and Patrolman Jason McGovern for their efforts in saving a man drowning in the Taunton River in June 2019. The Post also “adopted” Dighton’s veterans, which was a wonderful gesture considering we no longer have a VFW post to call our own. I enjoyed the ceremony and remarks by all and congratulate our officers for the good work in what could have turned into a terrible tragedy for the Town.



The Town is also holding an auction in September, going live on August 31 and ending on September 15. Old surplus vehicles and equipment are up for auction as is the building at 949 Somerset Avenue. It is important to note that we are only auctioning off the structure at that property and the land is to stay with the Town of Dighton. The auction is digital and available for viewing with these two links:

<https://www.auctionsinternational.com/auction/town-of-dighton-ma-22258-22258>

<https://www.auctionsinternational.com/auction/22234/item/1700s-vintage-two-story-wooden-farm-house-136284>

The auction is our second annual auction and something we will continue to undertake each year. Auctioning off old equipment is a decent source of revenue for the Town, especially as we replace aging or broken equipment with new, more efficient vehicles. Auctions International has been a great partner to work with and makes for a seamless process.

## IMPORTANT DATES

*September 1 – State Primary Election*

*September 7 – Labor Day, Town Hall Closed*

*September 9, 12 – Selectmen’s Meeting*

*September 1- 15 – Annual Auction of Surplus Equipment*

*September 19 – Dighton Food Bank Distribution, Town Hall.*

*November 16 – Special Town Meeting*

## Grant Projects Status Update

We wrapped up August by officially adopting by vote of the Board of Selectmen our Hazard Mitigation Plan. It’s official! We have five years to work on our plan, accomplish the goals and tasks laid out and keep track of our progress. This plan was created in conjunction with our Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness Plan. Together with our Stormwater Management efforts, we will certainly be able to mitigate various climate-related risks to our community, our municipal buildings, and our residents and businesses.

Last month I shared that we applied for funding through MassDOT’s newly released Shared Streets and Spaces Program. We were successful in one of our applications and received \$168,242.30! This funding is for the installation of sidewalks along Pleasant Street and Somerset Avenue, which will connect existing sidewalks from playgrounds and a nearby neighborhood to County Street. This provides pedestrian access to a bus stop, another playground, the Library and Fire Station, commercial entities along Route 138 and to other neighborhoods. Some of you may have seen me walking in this area, camera in hand, with Superintendent Tom

Ferry We are thrilled to be able to work with MassDOT and take care of the improvements to this intersection, which was project number 2 on our Prioritization Plan. We are still awaiting word on our second application which was to redesign the sidewalk and entrance into the Dighton Middle School. We updated this application after feedback from MassDOT officials, focusing on installing new ramps at the loading zone, designating handicapped accessible parking that is visible from the doorway, and providing a safe crosswalk and walkway all the way to the rearmost parking lot. Fingers crossed that we hear more positive news! Both projects must be completed by October 9, 2020.

Complete Streets work has been underway this summer. You may notice new sidewalks installed along Center Street close to the Dighton Elementary School and Dighton Middle School entrance. We have also completed sidewalks at Pearl Street and Spring Street. We are slowly ticking down our list of projects on our Prioritization Plan!

Green Communities Projects are also underway! These are primarily driven by energy efficiency changes, like replacing light bulbs with LED lighting, installing WiFi Thermostats in various buildings and completing weatherization projects in various municipal buildings. We will be spending the month of September finalizing these projects. Upon completion, we will then have access to the Green Communities' competitive grant process.

We have three other pending grant applications: Division of Ecological Resources is still reviewing our project to construct a 17' span culvert at Briggs Street. This grant will supplement funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for which we applied jointly with the Town of Bridgewater and also funds allotted at Town Meeting, if the grant funding does not come through. I am hopeful as this is such a worthy project and will fix a long-outstanding erosion issue, stormwater management problem, and ecological threat to the local habitat. The third application is through the MVP Action Grant and, if awarded, we will study the hydrology of the Segreganset River. Since this river hasn't really been studied all that much, this will be important work to lay a foundational basis for future study and projects involving the Segreganset, such as culverts and bridges along Wheeler Street.

Selectman Pacheco, ADA Coordinator Jonathan Gale and I are also working to put a grant application together for engineering and design work for an elevator and redesigned ramp to the front entrance of Town Hall. This will also impact some parking if we receive the planning grant through the Massachusetts Office of Disability. Applications are due on October 9 with an expected award announcement in the Spring of 2021.

As you can see, all of the plans, evaluations, and lists of projects assist in forming building blocks and steps to other grants that often come with higher award amounts. Completing these steps, and being part of the Community Compact with the Commonwealth, assist us in maintaining our competitive edge for these worthy projects that would otherwise cost taxpayers too much to make any quick progress. It is a pleasure to work with the many facets of this Town and succeed in formulating a game plan to make these infrastructure repairs and upgrades, while not burdening the local taxpayer.

Detailed information on the various grants awarded to the Town and their development and end results can be found on our [website](#).

### **Town Updates**

The Board of Selectmen discussed establishing a Human Rights Committee for Dighton to handle diversity issues, including educating various groups on cultural differences. In September, the Board will be hosting a presentation of Easton's Human Rights Committee to learn more about the group's efforts and see if Dighton could benefit from having a group, what their mission would be in Town, and other helpful tips.

A Special Town Meeting has been scheduled for Monday, November 16, 2020. This meeting will discuss spending articles, by-laws, and other items to come before the Town, including a potential PILOT Agreement. We are hopeful to have this meeting in person as we held the Annual Town Meeting. However, we remain vigilant and cautious about Covid 19 changes and regulations, recognizing the highly fluid nature of governing during this pandemic.

The basketball court and tennis courts along Somerset Avenue were closed and locked for much of the summer, unfortunately. This was first due to Covid 19 safety precautions. However, once we opened up the tennis courts when guidance from the state allowed us to do so, vandalism by a select few forced the gates locked once again.

Fencing was damaged and cut. Repairs were recently made to the fence and the courts were re-open on August 31. However, one basketball hoop is blocked off as the courts are not open for games. The Board of Health is allowing singles tennis and casual basketball practice and playing. We know this is not ideal and frustrating to many residents. But we are also interested in maintaining our low rate of infection in Dighton. Allowing cautious recreational play is a healthy way to weather this storm, but we are doing our part to prevent the spread of the infection by discouraging contact games.

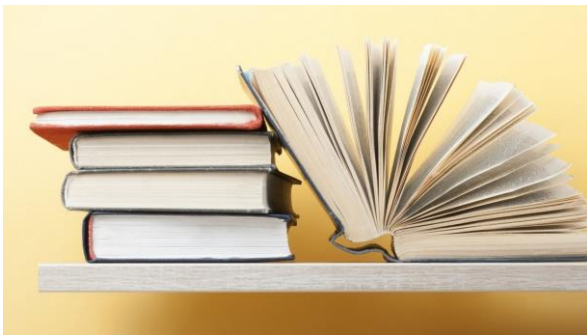
### **Community Announcements**

Our sibling entity, the Dighton Water District, announced a townwide water ban and a moratorium on new construction. Current house lots can have homes built on them. But any subdivisions that are not already approved will not be able to continue until such time as there is more water available for the District. They are also working hard on replacing the infrastructure along Main Street. It is from the 1950s and in need of replacing but it is an expensive endeavor. Once that is replaced, the Town expects to repave Main Street. The drought announcements made by the Commonwealth further restrict the use of water, and that includes residences outside of the Dighton Water District.

There are various vacancies on town boards and committees, including some newly created committees. If you are interested in serving the Town in a particular capacity, please fill out a volunteer information form and submit it to [boardofselectmen@dighton-ma.gov](mailto:boardofselectmen@dighton-ma.gov). Find a list of vacancies on our [website](#).

### **Book Recommendations**

At the start of this pandemic, I offered a handful of book recommendations in my March newsletter. I participated in a book challenge with my family and read the following over the pandemic. The challenge was to read at least five books in two and half months. That doesn't sound like much, but I don't get too much time to read for myself, so not counting the kids books I read to my two boys, I devoured six books in that time, meeting the challenge. My mother contends that I "cheated" by listening to audiobooks, but I disagree. Reading is reading and I was multitasking! And audiobooks, with the right narrator, are incredibly entertaining. Below are my six books – I'd recommend them all except *We Were Liars*. What are you reading?



- *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury (Narrated by Tim Robbins, incredible!).
- *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris (and based on a true story).
- *The Wife Between Us* by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen
- *We Were Liars* by E. Lockheart
- *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah (Highly recommend!)
- *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle