



A Message from your Town Administrator

December 2018

GRANT UPDATES

The Town has been in receipt of quite a few grants lately and in pursuit of many more. We are working hard to ease the tax burden, but still accomplish much needed repairs and updates. Here are a few from the list:

- **Green Communities Designation: \$143,636** – read more below!
- **DER: \$92,346 Culvert Replacement on Briggs St**
- **Complete Streets: Requested Funding - \$393,867.66**
- **Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant: Requested Funding – up to \$45,000.**

TOWNWIDE PARKING BAN IN EFFECT

Per the Town's Bylaws, there is no overnight parking from November 1 to April 1. Thank you for your compliance with this directive.

Happy New Year! I hope you all enjoyed the whirlwind that is the holidays! It was certainly a busy month, as they all seem to be lately. After our Fall Town Meeting at which voters authorized us to spend funds on various projects, we got to work on procuring vendors for those projects. Of those was to repair and reconstruct the Highway Department roof as it has been leaking for some time. The bid process was highly competitive with five bidders, the lowest of which was Mike's Construction Company out of Dudley. It is exciting to see such competitive bids and from new companies as it shows Dighton is a desirable place for vendors to do business and, in the end, it saves us money as we see lower costs!

Dighton is a desirable place for vendors to do business.

PLANNING AHEAD

Last month, I told you about the five-year plans that the Board of Selectmen and I requested from Department Heads. I really enjoyed readings everyone's thoughts and plans for their departments. These ranged from small requests like a specialized copier to larger requests like new buildings or offices. We had encouraged everyone to dream big to see what they really thought could benefit their department. Of course, money is an important factor. The Board will now review these requests and plans to compile a sort of "Master" five-year plan which will guide the Town in future purchases that will ultimately come before the voters at Town Meeting.

From this town-wide review of wants and needs, it was clear that something needs to be done with the space in Town Hall. Selectmen heard a pitch at their meeting on December 12 about how to reallocate space. Since then, there have been more brainstorming ideas about how to quickly and inexpensively make changes to Town Hall that will address the special concerns for employees as well as the many documents we are required to store. Space is also an issue at the Fire Department Station 1 and the Public Library. We recognize that none of these improvements will occur overnight and they take a significant amount of planning and prioritization. However, knowing about the needs to each department, and recognizing the cost of each, allows us to plan better for the necessary growth in the coming years.

Similarly, the School Department has begun planning their growth and needs for the coming years. At one of their meetings in January, the School Committee will hear a presentation on the demographics involved in the district, which was completed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The School Department will utilize this information, along with a study of the current facilities to also be conducted by NESDEC, to develop a plan for their needs over the next five or so years.

Planning long-term in these ways enables the Town to really focus and prioritize our spending so we are better prepared for the necessary, yet expensive, items that come before the voters.

DECEMBER NEWS

Probably the most exciting thing to happen in December was the Town's designation as a Green Community and the availability of \$143,636 along with it. The Green Communities Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and the D-R School System worked in partnership with Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and SRPEDD to file an application for designation as a Green Community. This Designation allows us to apply for many competitive grants that will make necessary updates and improvements. The Town created an Energy Reduction Plan to guide the Town in reducing its energy use by 20%. Some items on the list have already been implemented, such as replacing the lights with LED bulbs and the solar panels on the parking canopies at the Elementary and Middle Schools. We are on our way to achieving our goal that not only is good for the environment, but saves money on regular operating expenses, too. The Town will now determine which items on the Energy Reduction Plan will be implemented with the \$143,636 reserved for us. Thank you to all involved in achieving this designation, including the voters who passed the Stretch Energy Code at Town Meeting in June 2018.

Along these lines of being more environmentally conscious, the Board of Selectmen discussed using iPads rather than paper packets at their meetings. Chairman Zografos has decided that he will utilize an iPad to access his packet electronically during the meeting. He cited the significant amount of paper utilized each meeting, as well as the effort in preparing the meeting packet, as chief reasons to explore this electronic route. Meeting packets are already available on the Town's website for public information.

Last year, the Conservation Commission voted to purchase land at Council Oak. The vote was made with the understanding that Dighton's history is steeped in agricultural roots and it should be celebrated and welcomed. That coupled with the town's vote to become a Right to Farm Community has led to the town offering the approximately six acres of land to be available for farming to one tenant. Through a Request for Proposals process, potential proposers will vie for a 5-year lease with an option to renew for an additional five years. The Proposal that is rated as "most advantageous" as described in the bid documents will be granted the lease, and exclusive use of the land. The RFP is now available at http://dighton-ma.gov/department/procurement_opportunities.php.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town is in need of Snow Plow Drivers either with or without their own plow. Please contact Highway Superintendent Thomas Ferry at 774-218-5339 to sign up!

I'd like to take this opportunity to formally congratulate the members of the D-R Football Team, their coaches, their parents and their families for an incredible season. The team made it to the Superbowl, getting the chance to play at Gillette Stadium. Certainly, it takes a lot of hard work and discipline to make it to the top in such a competitive District. Congratulations to the players. It certainly is an incredible feat!

IMPORTANT DATES

January 9 – Selectmen's Meeting

January 21 – Town Offices Closed
(Martin Luther King Day)

January 23 – Selectmen's Meeting

January 27 – Old Town Hall Ribbon
Cutting

Old Town Hall has been open and operational for some time now, however a formal Ribbon Cutting event is slated for January 27, 2019. Historical photos will be on display and light refreshments will be served. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting event.



THE BIG CHEESE

The Big Cheese for the month of December is Zoning Board of Appeals clerk Nicole Skyleson. Though she is not specifically a department head, I thought she was equally deserving of the award. Nicole regularly identifies needs of the town and offers to help fill any voids that may exist. Nicole did just this when she volunteered to serve as the clerical staff for the 40B Committee, absorbing those duties in her ZBA Clerk role as the two boards relate and compliment each other. Nicole also volunteered to assist the Conservation Commission in scanning files in preparation for moving to a more digital platform for all permitting documents. This recognition is in response to Nicole's recognition of how her role relates to the rest of the Town as an organization and in understanding the commonalities we all share,