



# A Message from your Town Administrator

December 2019

## Grants awarded in 2019:

\$12,500 DLTA  
Assistance for Culvert  
Management Plan

\$22,000 Hazard  
Mitigation Plan/MVP

\$30,000 ADA  
Planning Grant

\$3,850 ADA Project  
Grant

## Grants applied for: Complete Streets (2)

(One denied, second  
under review)

DER Hydrology  
Study, Wheeler Street  
(not awarded)

Another year has come and gone. It seems 2019 has been the fastest year yet. I observed my two-year work anniversary in Dighton on December 4. I'm still so thrilled and excited to have been selected as the Town's first Town Administrator. It is a duty and honor to serve you, to get to know this marvelous town and to advance its goals and objectives. I have requested that the Board of Selectmen enter into another contract with me, as my current term expires on June 30, 2020, and we are currently discussing that request at meetings.

We have focused considerably on open space preservation, mitigating risk of storm-related crises, and improving infrastructure. The Town has invested in upgrading telecommunications, networking systems, and computers. We have cut costs in this area by switching vendors, and though it was an arduous process to overall these two necessary areas it has worked out considerably. Thanks goes to Ms. Karin Brady for her incredible patience as well as to Mr. Chris Rauner of Netrospect for finding solutions to all of our problems. I would also like to thank the employees of the Town for their patience as we interrupted their normal work days to coordinate this change.

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## **TOWN UPDATES**

The month kicked off with a hugely successful Community Resilience Building Workshop which is part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant the Town received this fall. Local officials, officials from neighboring towns, members of the business community, representatives from SRPEDD and Save the Bay, and even a member of MassDOT gathered together to identify those areas in our Town that are susceptible to problems arising from increased temperatures, rising sea levels, more extreme storms, and flooding. It was an amazingly productive day as we thoughtfully identified the problems we currently face and could face in the future. We selected a handful of priority items to focus on as a result of that workshop and details will be forthcoming in a written plan. We will be holding a public forum in either January or February at which you will be invited to attend, be heard, and contribute. I am so pleased with the progress we made at this workshop and the insightful contributions from all who attended. As Dighton is a coastal community with incredibly unique habitats, we are quite interested to examine from this perspective and to highlight all of our special characteristics not seen in other parts of the Commonwealth.

On December 9, the Town held a Special Town Meeting, our first without Mr. William McKeon, Esq, who has resigned as Town Moderator. Thank you to Mr. McKeon for his expertise and professionalism at every meeting he attended. I will miss working with him and I wish him well. The Town Meeting unanimously

passed the articles presented, which were focused on the results of a successfully negotiated Firefighter's Union contract.

Special thanks are due for the Town's Assessor, Ms. Carol Beauregard who agreed to delay the Tax Classification Hearing so that we could hold that Special Town Meeting. She also prepared a great packet that showed average values and various scenarios to help us have an overall picture of what changes to the split would mean to an average tax payer. This was posted in the Selectmen's Meeting packet for the December 11, 2019 meeting. The Selectmen voted to keep the split the same at 1.65 between residential and commercial/industrial properties. The Residential tax rate is \$14.98 per thousand. The Commercial/Industrial tax rate is \$27.57 per thousand.

The Town received another grant! This grant is from the Massachusetts Office on Disability and is for \$30,000 to be used for a self-evaluation and transition plan. The town will issue an RFP to hire a qualified vendor to conduct this evaluation of all municipal properties. Completing this project will move the Town one step closer to achieving our overarching goal of ADA compliance town wide. Additionally, the Town and the Elementary School partnered up to receive a \$3,850 grant, also from MOD, to install an ADA compliant walkway to the outdoor classroom. Late in the month, the Selectmen appointed Jonathan Gale as the ADA Coordinator. Since this position was funded in October 2019, the Town posted for applicants. Mr. Gale was officially hired for this stipend position. In January, the Board expects to establish an ADA Commission, the authorization to do so being adopted at Special Town Meeting in October, and will be in need of volunteers. If you are interested, please let us know by emailing [boardofselectmen@dighton-ma.gov](mailto:boardofselectmen@dighton-ma.gov) or submitting a Volunteer Information Form through the Town's website.

Responding to a handful of parent complaints of congestion and unsafe conditions at school pick up, the Town offered assistance in designing a new driveway at the Dighton Elementary and Dighton Middle Schools. Building Commissioner Jim Aguiar and Highway Superintendent Tom Ferry worked with school officials as well as a local engineer to devise a solution. Preliminary plans are drawn up and a meeting will take place in early January for approvals, changes, or any other comments.

Lastly, one of my ongoing projects from literally the first day I arrived in Dighton has been to negotiate an updated Cable License Agreement with Comcast. This Agreement allows the Town to provide public programming to residents. It does not negotiate subscription charges nor does it keep out other competition. We have successfully come to agreement on terms and are awaiting Comcast's final approval, which is expected in the Spring of 2020. Our agreement expires in June 2020 and we are eager for these new terms to apply. Working with Atty. William Solomon, who specializes in cable agreements, we were able to increase the revenues due back to the Town from 1% to 5%. We were also able to secure \$120,000 in capital funds to be provided over 10 years. These capital funds allow the Cable Committee to implement their plans for the future – mobile cameras, going live from locations outside of Town Hall, building a studio in the lower level of Town Hall, instituting podcasts, and more. It was a pleasure working with the folks on the Cable Committee to learn of their ideas in how we would expand cable services to the Town. I'm very excited for what this new decade will provide to us, including more resident-based programs. Stay tuned!

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

Budget preparations for the Fiscal Year 2021 are about to begin! Department Heads and Committees have been asked to submit budget requests by the end of January. I am looking forward to working alongside the Selectmen and the Finance Committee to provide a budget for Town Meeting in June.

At the end of this newsletter is a Fiscal Milestones calendar developed by Mr. Jeff Carvalho. I hope you find it helpful! It breaks down a schedule of sorts about how we arrive to the final budget we present at Town Meeting,

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

*January 1 – New Year's Day, Town Offices  
Closed*

*January 8, 22 – Selectmen's Meetings*

*January 9 – Memorial Day Parade Planning  
Meeting, 7:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall*

*January 18 – Dighton Food Bank distribution,  
Lower Level of Town Hall*

*January 20 – Martin Luther King Jr Day,  
Town Offices Closed*

and how we utilize the authorizations granted at that meeting for both operating and capital expenses to set the tax rate in November. Thank you Jeff for putting this together.

Also coming up in January is another quarterly report from the Board of Selectmen on their Five Year Plan and their progress in advancing each of their goals.

In February, we are expecting to hold an open house at the Animal Shelter as it is near completion. More information on that event to come.

## **COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There is still time to respond to our Hazard Mitigation survey. Please use the below link to take the survey, which we will use to help identify areas in need of improvements, repairs, or changes in order to prevent or lessen problems that arise with extreme storms, higher temperatures, and other climate-related problems. Thanks for your help! Access the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/dightonmitigation>.

Veterans Agent Donald Hirschy will be hosting the first Memorial Day Parade Planning Meeting on Thursday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will take place in the Old Town Hall meeting room. We are looking forward to hosting this parade in Dighton. The Town will no longer be joining with Rehoboth to alternate the hosting of the parade each year. We welcome any and all to attend and contribute. Hope to see you there!

PrimeTime is seeking clients. If you or someone you know would benefit from meeting new friends, trying new experiences, and staying active, call Sheila at 508-669-6272.

Do you have Dighton news to share? Tell us about it! Visit <https://dightonportal.com/submit-a-story/> to provide details on our story!

## **PRESIDENTIAL TRIVIA**



Franklin Pierce, 14<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, was the first to have a Christmas Tree in the White House, purportedly setting up in his private quarters to cheer up his wife after the death of their son. Other historians credit Benjamin Harrison, president number 23. Calvin Coolidge lit the first National Christmas Tree on the White House lawn in 1823.

# Town Of Dighton Fiscal Milestones

Updated: 13 December 2019

## **July**

Happy New Year!

## **August**

## **September**

## **October**

- Fall Special Town Meeting (historically latter part of the month on a Monday)
- Dighton Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meets to begin review of Community Preservation Act (CPA) proposals

## **November**

- Set next Calendar Year (CY) tax rate based upon budget voted on at the previous Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and any changes made at the Fall Special Town Meeting
- Dighton Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meets to finalize review of Community Preservation Act (CPA) proposals for submission to ATM warrant

## **December**

- **Mid:** Budget requests sent out by Town Administrator
- **31st:** Annual reports Due

## **January**

- **31st:** Budgets due to Town Administrator and Town Accountant (Committee budgets should be VOTED ON prior to submission)

## **February**

- Board of Selectmen (BoS) reviews and votes on each budget submission

## **March**

- BoS reviews and votes on each budget submission

## **April**

- BoS reviews and votes on each budget submission
- Finance Committee (FinCom) meets and puts together budget that will be voted on at the ATM
- BoS and FinCom meet to go over Warrant Articles for ATM

## **May**

- BoS and FinCom meet to go over Warrant Articles for ATM

## **June**

- **First Monday in June:** ATM, new budget is voted on
- Schedule from Town Accountant regarding encumbrances, last day to pay bills, etc, is released.