



# *A Message from your Town Administrator*

*February 2019*

## **COUNCIL OAK LAND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY AWARDED!**

The Conservation Commission met at a special meeting on February 27, 2019 and voted unanimously to award the land management/farming opportunity at O Council Oak Way to Mr. Ken Araujo after a panel of reviewers deemed his proposal Highly Advantageous. We are excited to begin this new partnership! Next steps include heading to Town Meeting for authorization to enter into a five-year lease.

## **TOWNWIDE PARKING BAN IN EFFECT**

It's still snowing and the parking ban is still in effect until April 1. Thank you to our snow plow drivers for keeping our roads safe and clear!

February is the shortest month but it comes with tall orders! Budgets are dominating this month's meeting agendas, and we are holding special meetings dedicated, mostly, to budget review and commentary. I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Town Accountant in this endeavor. Ms. Luiz and I got together with Finance Committee Chairman Ed Swartz and devised a new process for this year's budget which so far is going very smoothly. It is a big improvement from last year and encourages collaboration between the two of us while ensuring no duplication of work. Additionally, I've also introduced budget books to help manage the many documents coming along with the budget, including explanations from departments and notes on their presentation. We are loving them!

Thanks are also due to Mr. Nelson DeMelo, the Town's newest volunteer. Mr. DeMelo is the most recent appointee to the reinvigorated 40B Committee. Thank you for your service to the Town of Dighton! A town like ours is nothing without volunteers to handle the extensive issues that surround modern municipal governing. Thank you for your work!

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*We're gearing up for a busy Spring! Save these  
dates: March 23, 2019 – March 28, 2019 –  
April 6, 2019.*

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## **NEW BUILDINGS, NEW SYSTEMS, NEW INITIATIVES**

February was an exciting month for the Town. The modular buildings at Dighton Elementary School wrapped up and the School Department held an open house the last week of the month for members of the public to tour the buildings. They are beautiful and the School Department is excited for their debut. I'd like to take a quick minute to recognize the efforts of Principal Dessert and Assistant Principal Ashley Fullen. Both put in a lot of hard work and effort to design temporary room assignments, then full-time room assignments for the remainder of the year. The transition, once the modulars were ready for occupancy, went smoothly. I'd also like to recognize the Building Commissioner and Fire Chief for their instrumental work in assisting the School Department in getting these buildings up and running.

The Police Department and Communications Center officially moved into their new home mid-February. The staff in both departments, who together earned my Big Cheese Award this month, banded together to make a smooth, seamless

transition with minimal interruption in service. The department also handled the installation of a new phone system simultaneously with as little negative impact as possible. I am very impressed with the comradery amongst our team to get this job done and the willingness for everyone to do what they could to help. Thank you for your efforts and for your dedication to our Town! The public can check out the new building at the Department's open house on Saturday, March 23 from 10:00a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!

As previously mentioned, the Town has moved to a new phone system. All departments in all buildings are now on the same system which not only helps us monitor and track billing, but allows us some new, efficient means to communicate with each other internally. Additionally, the Fire Department finally has their own voicemail and we've eradicated those pesky long-distance phone numbers that served as direct dial phone numbers. Our system has a better quality sound, an 8-hour backup if it fails, and more sophisticated services and abilities. We appreciate the public's patience, and the patience of our employees who no doubt had a tough time on install day, as we roll out this new product. Specifically though, I'd like to mention the efforts of Administrative Assistant Karin Brady who was incredibly instrumental in the transition of our phones. The change did not come without many issues and errors. Ms. Brady served as point person for this project, she handled complaints and problems well after the date of installation and did not stop until the complaints were resolved. Thank you, Karin, for your unmatched customer service skills and dedication to projects from start to finish.

The Town is also gearing up to install a new Emergency Vehicle Exhaust Fume Removal System at Station 2. This is the first step in allowing us to utilize Station 2 more permanently and begin staffing it to desired levels. The Town awarded this job to Air Cleaning Specialists of New England for a little more than \$29,000. The Town, at the Fall Town Meeting, authorized us to spend \$40,000 for this project. We're pleased to report that after some competitive bidding, we will once again be under budget on a municipal public works project.

If you watched our latest February Selectmen's meeting, you'll hear about Selectman Goulart's proposed initiative to install American Flags on the utility poles along Route 138 up until Center Street. Selectman Goulart has worked with the Veterans Agent Don Hirschy and Highway Superintendent Thomas Ferry to research the possibility of installing the flags with National Grid. Thank you, Mrs. Goulart for always thinking of ways to enhance the Town's quaint character.

Similarly, the Selectmen have each been dispensed to work on their specific parts of their voted-on Five Year Wish List. Mr. Zografos has been charged with exploring the expansion of sewer services and examining the allocation of new space at Town Hall. Mr. Pacheco is working with ADA Coordinator Jonathan Gale on the need for ADA compliance in town-owned buildings as well as plans for a new library. Mrs. Goulart is exploring the viability of a new highway garage to be located at Tremont Street complete with a fuel depot for town-owned vehicles as well as a renovation of Fire Station 1. The Selectmen are due to report on their progress at the end of March. Stay tuned!

## **FEBRUARY NEWS**

The Board of Selectmen made a very difficult decision this month which was to part ways with our broker, Torres Insurance, at the end of the fiscal year. This family-led business has assisted the Town in insurance needs for many, many years. We thank them for their hard work, dedication, and continued efforts to provide great service to the Town. Insurance costs are some of the highest that municipalities pay and these costs demand a detailed examination from time to time. Dighton's insurance hasn't been shopped around for a while. By leaving Torres for another insurance broker (FB

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

*March 13, 20, and 27 – Selectmen's Meetings*

*March 23 – Police Station Open House  
(10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)*

*March 28 – Special Town Meeting*

*April 6, 2019 – Annual Town Election*

*April 6, 2019 – Parks & Rec Easter Egg Hunt,  
12:00 p.m. (Rain date, April 13)*

Insure), the Town aims to shop around its policies, reexamine the town's needs and valuations of new buildings, and receive an improved product that better fits the needs of the Town. The increased competition of shopping between multiple insurance carriers should provide lower costs to the Town, similar to a formal procurement process, and forces us to truly examine our needs, identify our risks, and insure them. It was not a light decision to leave Torres, and it was one that myself and the Board weighed substantially. We came to FB Insure after I visited with four insurance brokers, detailed the needs of the Town, and weighed our options.

This month, the Town was awarded another grant, this time from DLTA for assistance in the amount of \$12,500 to develop a Culvert Management Plan. Aligned with our designated best practice of Stormwater Management, this plan will enable us to identify the culverts that are particularly vulnerable, prioritize which need to be replaced and when, and to develop a plan on how we will go about replacing them including costs and available funding sources. I am thrilled to be able to work with SRPEDD once again on this important initiative. We hope that this plan will keep our grant applications competitive in other programs, such as the Division of Ecological Resources design grants, Climate Change Action grants, and MEMA and FEMA funding opportunities. We also will utilize this plan to map out a timeline for replacement so as to limit the tax burden.

I ended the month visiting with the Dighton Lions Club and the Friends of the Dighton Public Library. Both groups invited me to their meetings this month and I eagerly agreed! I love meeting the residents and volunteers in this community and am so happy to have been included in their monthly business. The Lions Club was a gracious host and its members engaged with me in a lovely conversation about what it was like this first year to be your Town's first Town Administrator.

The Friends and I had a great discussion regarding fundraising efforts and ideas to assist the Dighton Public Library continue to provide top notch services at a low cost to the community. We also discussed the needs of the library, our hope for the support of a new building, and strategies on how to limit costs to the taxpayers. Jocelyn Tavares, Library Director, and myself along with Selectmen Brett Zografos and Ken Pacheco, will be heading to the State House for Library Legislative Day on March 5. We seek to work with our State Legislators, Senator Marc Pacheco and Representative Patricia Haddad to enlist their help with our needs for a new, fully functional and safe library that can serve the needs of our community.

## **COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Board of Health will soon be instituting a new Curbside Textile Recycling Program. Residents will receive a pink bag to fill with textiles: clothes, blankets, stuffed animals, drapers, curtains, shoes, coats, and more. Items do not need to be in good condition. Leave your bag(s) out on trash day and receive a new pink bag to fill up later! This initiative aims to keep textiles out of household trash as items can be resold or recycled. Textiles, which can be heavy, contribute to the Town's weight for trash hauling, thus driving up the Town's costs for rubbish disposal. The benefits to the Town, outside of this being an environmentally sound initiative, are two-fold: The Town saves money by removing these items from the weight and the town receives \$20 for each ton of textiles collected.

The Annual Town Election will be on Saturday, April 6, 2019. There is only one contested race this year and that is for the two-year term on the Dighton-Rehoboth School Committee. No one has taken out papers for Planning Board, a five-year seat that is up for reelection this year.

## THE BIG CHEESE



This month's Big Cheese award goes to the employees of the Police and Communications Department. Their ability to adapt to moving to a new building, upgrading network and phone systems, and move into a new space so swiftly and with virtually zero interruptions to public service was astounding. The fact that they did this simultaneously is even more impressive. They managed their own snafus and hiccups, which are all inevitably part of any major change, and held public service as paramount. The Sergeants, specifically, worked together to develop solutions to proposed problems or issues when cutting phone lines and setting up new services. All members of the departments banded together to do what it took to get the job done and to get back up and running quickly and smoothly. They did this all while manning the desk at Dispatch, continuing patrols within the Town, and even responding to a call and making an arrest. Police Chief Robert MacDonald and

his team are truly part of Dighton's finest and it is a pleasure to bestow upon them this award.