



A Message from your Town Administrator

March 2020

New Date for Town Election

The Town Election was previously scheduled for April 11. However, due to the spread of the Coronavirus and our many efforts to employ social distancing practices, the Selectmen voted to postpone the Town Election, seeking a court order to do so, as state law allows. Just after that vote, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law that allows the Selectmen to postpone the election via a vote of their Board. The Board is expected to take that vote at their next meeting, of April 8. The anticipated new date is May 9, 2020. This decision was made so that people could feel more comfortable voting, or could use absentee ballot voting measures to protect themselves from contracting Covid-19. A date of April 11 is simply too close to the end of the Governor's Executive Order, which is April 7, for us to count on being able to assemble in one room. Stay tuned for more information.

Needless to say, the Covid-19 global pandemic has completely derailed many of our springtime plans. I am thankful for the warm winter we had that enabled us to get a jump on many projects, including the installation of the Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (now online and available for public use!), the completion of the Animal Shelter, and completion of many grant obligations. Though our review of the FY21 budget has been interrupted, we are still working to do all we can to stay on track for a June 1, 2020 Annual Town Meeting. We also were able to award the contract for the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan, a grant funded initiative. This contract went to KMA, LLC of Newton in the amount of \$26,800 after a competitive bid process. Work on this plan *can* occur remotely, so we are confident that we will be able to complete this project and move forward in eliminating accessibility barriers.

Updates for our response and new developments concerning the Coronavirus are available on our town websites: Dighton-ma.gov and dightonportal.com. The John Guilfoil Public Relations team has issued a few notices for us, they are posted at Dightonportal.com. We have also updated our website to include various notices from local departments and day-by-day updates to our response efforts.

The Board of Health and their staff have been instrumental in monitoring national and statewide developments and applying their minimal guidance to our local response.

The Board of Selectmen declared a local emergency on Monday, March 16, 2020. The Emergency Preparedness Committee and the Board of Selectmen have been meeting continually over the course of this pandemic, both jointly and separately. The Board of Health and their staff been instrumental in monitoring national and statewide developments, and applying the minimal guidance from the state and federal government to our local response. I thank them for all of their dedication and hard work, and their many conversations that keep us up to date on all the latest developments.

I have been in constant contact with local Town Administrators and Managers, via conference calls, emails, and one-on-one phone calls. This has allowed me to keep tabs on their local responses and issues, and to share their ideas with the Emergency Preparedness Committee, Board of Selectmen, and Board of Health. This network has been vital to our efforts to protect and prepare our community.

The Town has made the commitment to make decisions week to week so that we can keep up to date on the most recent guidance from state and federal officials and to use the most up to date data to make the best

decisions for our community. Some of our local response measures include: adopting social distancing practices for necessary meetings; closing playgrounds and fields/courts; closing municipal buildings to the public, and more recently staffing via essential personnel only and instituting remote work abilities for our employees; ceasing Prime Time programs, Council on Aging programs, and Library programs; ceasing the Pink Bag Recycling Program until further notice; and implementing a spending freeze on all non-critical purchases. We also made the painstaking decisions to cancel the Annual Easter Egg hunt, the Fire Department Open House, and the Medal of Honor Ceremony. We hope to reschedule both of these events once these drastic measures can be lifted.

IMPORTANT DATES

April 8 – Selectmen Meeting

June 1 - Annual Town Meeting

No other items are on the schedule at this time due to Coronavirus and our strict social distancing measures.

TOWN UPDATES

Astra Zeneca land donation

At a Town Meeting in 2018, we asked voters to support a spending article to authorize the Selectmen to conduct Phase I and Phase II ESA testing for the Muddy Cove Pond and Dam, and two other adjacent parcels constituting over 72 acres. Astra Zeneca, the current owners of the land, had approached the Town in 2017 asking to donate these parcels. The Town, before accepting the donation, wanted to be sure the land was clean. Our ESA research showed that the land was indeed clean. However, it also spotlighted the intense maintenance and financial liabilities involved with owning a large earthen dam. We reviewed the historical ESAs dating back to the original inspections conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers. We also consulted with a resident who maintains a dam outside of Town and had specific and critical knowledge of all that is required by the Office of Dam Safety. The Board of Selectmen voted not to accept the donation due to the seemingly endless costs required to upkeep the dam. The financial liability placed on the Town if the land was accepted would serve as a significant burden for decades to come. The Board did not believe that that was in the best interest of the Town and has voted *not* to accept the donation.

ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan

As indicated above, the Board of Selectmen was able to award this project to KMA, LLC after a competitive bid process. Most of the outdoor properties were audited by this vendor prior to the essential workforce order put in place by Governor Baker beginning noontime on March 24. Town officials and KMA will continue to conduct business via online conferencing and remote means. I am thankful for KMA’s resourcefulness in still being able to complete this work and to use various means to do so. Amidst the chaos that Coronavirus has handed us, being able to move forward with “normal” tasks provides a sense of peace.

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Organizational Chart

As you may know, I am bound to complete at least four goals a year, all voted on by the Board of Selectmen. One of those goals this year was to create an organizational

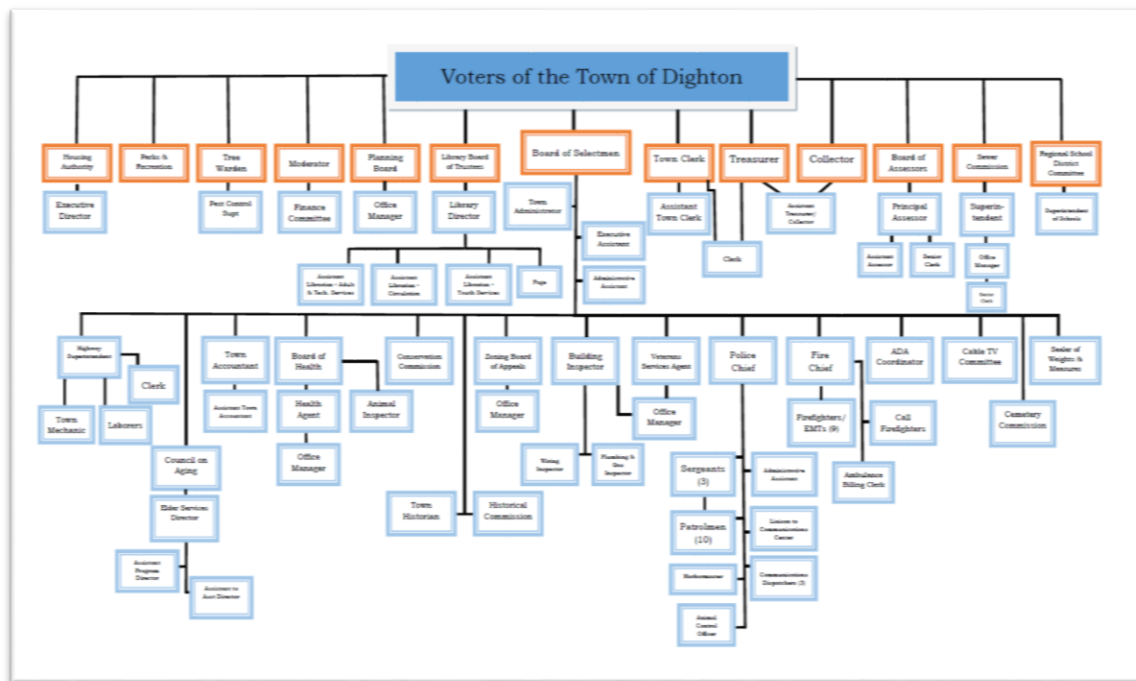


chart as a complement to a business guide. While I’m not at all close to completing our business guide, I was

able to finish up the organizational chart. This chart is also available for inspection (and much easier to read) on our website. Dighton-ma.gov, hover over “Government” and it is listed first.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Please know that despite our working with essential staffing only, we are still able to get quite a bit accomplished. Our staff are continually checking email and voicemail, even remotely. Residents and businesses should feel free to reach out to us to get the answers to their questions despite the advisory to stay indoors. Our websites and social media pages will remain updated with critical information, including the rescheduling of events and meetings. The Board of Selectmen will continue its work on the FY21 budget and the articles that the Town plans to present to the voters at Town Meeting, if we are able to hold it. I will be applying for an action grant as it relates to our Municipal Vulnerability Plan and our Hazard Mitigation Plan. I am also planning on requesting more funding from the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Resources for construction of the Briggs Street Culvert. Work for the Cable Committee’s studio is on schedule with minimal work left to do. Only one phase of that project is on hold due to the spending freeze now in place.

We have scheduled the work for our Complete Streets intersections. Selectman Goulart and Highway Superintendent Tom Ferry have done as many meetings as they could before the essential workforce order went into effect and are in a good position to continue once the order is lifted. I thank them for their hard work and diligence.

We urge you to heed the warnings of staying inside and leaving only if you absolutely have to. Support local business as much as you can, maintain your social distance, practice good hygiene, and check on neighbors and loved ones as best you can.

THE BIG CHEESE



This month’s Big Cheese award recipient is Animal Control Officer Stacy Ferry! Stacy has embodied what it means to roll with the punches! The Animal Control Officer van was supposed to be replaced once the detective’s vehicle was purchased. The Town ran into a snag with that plan as a cruiser sustained significant damage, and the vehicle that was intended for the Animal Control Officer had to stay within the Police Department fleet. There was nary a complaint from Ms. Ferry. She instead exhibited tremendous patience in the whole ordeal and instead painstakingly researched colors that had calming effects on animals, choosing a beautiful blue for the interior of our new shelter. Ahead of the opening, Stacy also found pictures of previously adopted out animals, including the escape-artist pig from last fall, and adorned the shelter’s walls with their furry faces in their forever homes. These two special touches are seemingly small and minute, but they go a long way in creating the best space we can. Martin Luther King, Jr., referred to these as “small great things”, which are everyday, simple things which make significant impacts.

Honorable mention does go out to Detective Ryan Richards, an incredible problem solver, who continually watched for vehicles up for auction that would serve our Animal Control needs. He found a better fit and worked with the auction to secure a 2018 Cargo Van for only \$5,500 that better suits our needs than the previous car that was going to be assigned to the ACO. Thanks also goes out to Manheim Auto Auction, our partner in this, for their contributions in helping us receive this van.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Despite being closed, the Dighton Public Library’s digital content is still available. Download the Sails Mobile app for even easier access. If you’re looking for an audio book or two to listen to during a quarantine or stay at home directive, check out *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy* by Karen Abbott, which I’m currently reading. It’s a story of four women who served as spies during the Civil War. Reads like a novel, but it is ALL true. If historical fiction isn’t your thing, try *The Time Keeper* by Mitch Albom, a novel that will surely resonate to those confined to their homes. Other favorites that have stuck with me over the years are *Where’d You Go Bernadette?* by Maria Semple, *The Zookeeper’s Wife* by Diane Ackerman, *Unbecoming* by Rebecca Scherm, *The Woman in the Window* by A.J. Finn, and *The Girl You Left Behind* by Jojo Moyes. I hope you enjoy them!