



A Message from your Town Administrator

September 2020

Volunteers are Vital!

All towns rely on their residents for volunteer service on various boards and commissions. The truth is, work simply can't get done without this dedication from residents. Board and committee members show up to regular meetings, offer insight, and do a lot of work "off hours" to keep projects moving. The Dighton Trails Committee, Agricultural Commission, ADA Commission, and Open Space Committee are perfect example of these. Other boards have permitting authority, such as the ZBA, Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Serving in these capacities are vital to the shaping the community and weighing in on how development proceeds throughout your town. We are currently looking to fill a variety of seats on our local boards. If you find yourself interested in serving the Town on a particular board/committee, please email boardofselectmen@dighton-ma.gov. A list of vacancies can be found at https://dighton-ma.gov/government/job_vacancies.php

Much of my work this month has been administrative. Many due dates occurred in September, including reporting purchases paid for with Cares Act and FEMA funds. This required a significant amount of work from the Town Accountant. I've also been focused on Green Communities reporting requirements as we gear up for our Annual Report. We have also been wrapping up some grant requirements and gearing up for some new opportunities, the deadlines for which are coming up in October. These include an ADA Project Grant through the Mass. Office of Disability and an IT Community Compact Grant which will assist the Dighton Middle School. Lastly, we were able to finalize Clerical Union negotiations and will ratify it after funding, which we are requesting at Town Meeting this fall.

September saw the conclusion of not only the summer, but some projects that we have been working on for a little while. All three intersection improvement projects have been completed. I thank the Highway Department for their prep work for all of this work, including the very quick turnaround time of the Somerset

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Avenue/Pleasant Street sidewalks. We received grant funding for all of these projects and have made a significant impact with no use of municipal funds other than payroll for us to manage them.

Community Happenings

The Agricultural Commission has voted to go forward with the Dighton Community Garden which will be located at 949 Somerset Avenue. The Board of Selectmen affirmed the plan which was presented at the September 23rd meeting. The Board of Selectmen officially designated the Scouts as custodians of the garden. Once the house structure is removed after the auction, which ends on September 29, they will begin prepping the land utilizing a Garden of Eden method. The Town will also be surveying the property and imposing bounds so volunteers know exactly where property lines exist and do not plant anything or disturb any land outside of these bounds. The crops grown at the garden are slated to benefit users of the Dighton Food Pantry, both town wide and at Lincoln Village. The volunteers are working on amassing materials necessary to begin and are working with the ADA Coordinator to ensure access for all of our residents.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 7, 21 – Selectmen’s Meetings

October 12 – Columbus Day, Town Hall Closed

October 17 – 29 – Early Voting

November 3 – Presidential Election

November 16 – Special Town Meeting

Also at a recent Selectmen’s meeting, I proposed establishing a position of Conservation and Stormwater Agent. The Town has had a Conservation Agent in the past. More recently, Mr. Charlie Mello of the Conservation Commission has assumed many of the duties befalling an Agent through the Conservation Commission’s work, as well as many in-depth administrative duties. Other members of the Commission have also conducted field inspections and site visits. However, Mr. Mello is looking to take some steps back and the Town is in need of an appointed and dedicated Conservation Agent. As conservation laws and stormwater laws

are intertwined, and as Dighton rolls out more formal stormwater management practices and inspections, there is a need for a dual role. I presented this idea of a combined function to the Board of Selectmen. They requested more information, which I am currently putting together, before making a decision. Some ideas that were generated from the discussion are partnering with another community to share a Conservation Agent/Stormwater Agent and looking back on the previous hours and cost of a separately appointed Conservation Agent. More discussion will come on this matter at future Selectmen’s Meetings.

The Town coordinated an online auction for equipment and vehicles this month as well. The auction, which is becoming an annual project, concluded and netted us over \$30,000. As the Town replaces vehicles and other equipment, much of it becomes surplus but can be useful in other enterprises. We enjoy cleaning out our unused inventory and returning some funds to Town coffers. Thanks to James Aguiar, Building Commissioner, for his assistance in moving the Town through this process and finalizing purchases and pick ups.

Many of our Town Meeting authorized purchases are in. The Town now has a new Street Sweeper and a Chevy Volt, which is used by the Fire Department for inspections. The Chevy Volt is an electric vehicle and was purchased in compliance with our energy efficiency policies. I commend Chief Chris Maguy for the purchase of this electric car. His department, as it is public safety, is exempt from the energy efficient vehicle purchase yet he welcomed the addition of an electric vehicle to his fleet.

Grant Projects Status Update

We received two grant denials this month. The MVP Action Grant request, which would have provided funding to study the Segregansett River, was not successful. However, this highly competitive grant program is still on our radar and we will be pursuing funds again. The other denied project was the replacement and reconfiguration of the Dighton Middle School entrance and drop off zone. This request was through MassDOT’s Shared Streets program, which had previously awarded us funds to construct the Pleasant Street and Somerset Avenue sidewalks that we finalized in August. Since we were already a large-award recipient through this program, it was not a surprise that this was not funded.

However, we did enter the fall with some good news. The Town was awarded \$150,000 from the Division of Ecological Resources to construct the Briggs Street culvert, which is the first step in reopening the roadway and fixing the various infrastructure issues in that area. We now await news from the federal program that will assist in financing this project, which was a \$200,000 request from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The DER funds are expected to serve as the Town’s match for the grant. Together, all costs will be covered minus any unforeseen circumstances. I am hopeful to get this project finalized and am so excited, as any fellow government nerd would be, that this project is a successful collaboration of local, state, and federal governments.

We have also partnered with the City of Taunton and Town of Raynham to advance our stormwater management practices in requesting funds through DEP’s MS4 Municipal Assistance Program. The award will allow each community to purchase message boards and storm drain medallions for their respective communities. The grant will also allow the communities to purchase monitoring equipment to be used by Bristol Aggie students as part of their curriculum to monitor stormwater discharge into the Taunton River. This is an exciting initiative that is not only collaborative with our neighbors, but we are able to provide an educational opportunity for local students while saving money! Use of the students in this endeavor saves us

from not hiring an outside vendor to accomplish these tasks. It is a win-win-win. I thank Selectman Goulart for her efforts in spearheading our collaborative efforts with Taunton and Raynham.

Announcements

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 Dighton Lions Club is holding a Chicken Barbecue Fundraiser on Saturday, October 24 at 1:00 p.m. It is a drive-thru set up with pick ups at the Lions Club Pavilion. Purchase tickets at Araujo Farms or with any Lions Club Member.

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. Find a list of vacancies on our [website](#).

Early Voting will take place at the Lower Level of Town Hall starting October 17, 2020. Below includes specifics on times as well as other options for voting in this year's Election taking place on November 3, 2020.

Early Voting – DIGHTON

State Election – November 3, 2020

Early voting in Massachusetts for the State Election will begin on Saturday, October 17th and continue through Thursday, October 29th, 2020. Although absentee voting will still be available for registered voters who qualify, only those who will be absent from their city or town on Election Day, or have a disability that prevents them from going to the polls, or have a religious belief preventing the same, are legally allowed to vote by absentee ballot.

Unlike absentee voting, early voting is for every registered voter. Registered voters do not need an excuse or reason to vote early. Regardless of whether a voter wants to take advantage of early voting, vote absentee or vote on Election Day, the first step is making sure you are registered. To check to see if you are registered to vote, and to find information on how to register to vote, you may visit the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele. If you need to register to vote, you may do it online by visiting: www.RegisterToVoteMA.com. All you need is a license or an I.D. issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles to apply online. You may also register to vote at the Town of Dighton Clerk's office. To be eligible to vote in the November 3rd State Election, you must register to vote or make any necessary changes to your voter registration by 8PM on October 24th, 2020.

Early voting can be done in person or by mail. In DIGHTON, early voting can be done in person at **Dighton Town Hall, Lower Level, 979 Somerset Avenue, Dighton, MA** during the following dates and times:

October 17, 2020 - 7:00am to 11:00am
October 18, 2020 - 7:00am to 11:00am
October 19, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 20, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 21, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 22, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 24, 2020 - 7:00am to 11:00am
October 25, 2020 - 7:00am to 11:00am
October 26, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 27, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 28, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm
October 29, 2020 - 7:30am to 4:30pm

Also, registered voters have the option to request an early voting ballot through the mail. Simply fill out an application and mail it to the **Town of Dighton, Clerk's Office, 979 Somerset Avenue, Dighton, MA**, or by email to smedeiros@dighton-ma.gov. You can find the application on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele>, and on the Town of Dighton's website. We encourage all of our citizens to exercise their right to vote and take advantage of the opportunity to vote on their schedules.

Please note, however, once a voter has cast an early voting ballot, the voter may no longer vote at the polls on Election Day.