

November 1, 2022

Dighton Special Town Meeting

# Proposed Warrant Articles

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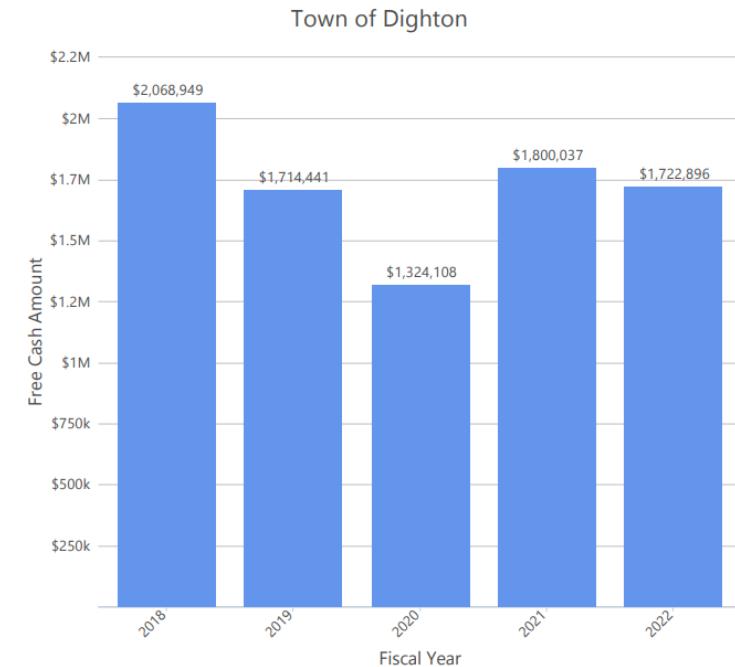
# Funding Ability – Free Cash History

FY22 Certified Free Cash by Department of Revenue (DOR) was \$1,772,896; with average trend history of roughly same amount.

- FY22 free cash figures the result of one-time COVID-19 spending freezes
- Strengthened reliance on highly-extended local receipt revenues to fund operating budget.
- DOR in June 2022 outlined possibility of more limited free cash levels in future years. (Source: Dighton Financial Management Review)



Data Analytics and Resources Bureau  
Category 1 - Certified Free Cash  
Data current as of 10/12/2022



# Funding Ability – Current Year Free Cash Certification

The Department of Revenue certified Dighton's FY23 free cash in the amount of \$2,996,269.00

- Includes, as expected, \$1,235,207 as Dighton's portion of Fiscal Year 2021 D-R Regional School Excess & Deficiency (E&D) one-time turnback funding in accordance with Regional Agreement
- Important to back-out \$1.2 million E & D to accurately illustrate Dighton's fiscal position in FY22 close-out
- \$2,996,269 less \$1,235,207 equals \$1,761,062
- FY21 and FY22 were two completely different budget years, but concluded with similar close-out positions
  - (i.e. downgraded FY22 revenue projections more closely mirrored current trends; COVID-19 spending freeze lifted in FY22)



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**Dr. Anthony C. Azar**  
Superintendent of Schools

**T.E.A.M.**  
(Together Everyone Achieves More)

**Dr. Adam Blaisdell**  
Assistant Superintendent

**Kristin Donahue**  
Director of Special Education

**Robert Baxter, Jr.**  
Business Administrator

June 14, 2022

Dear Dighton and Rehoboth Residents:

The Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District was notified yesterday that the Massachusetts Department of Revenue certified the amount of excess and deficiency or "E & D" as of July 1, 2021 (Fiscal Year 2020/2021) for \$5,738,000.00. Of that amount, \$3,440,363.00 will be applied to reduce the current fiscal year's (FY2022) assessment proportionately split to each member town in accordance with the provisions of G. L. Chapter 71, §16B½, as amended.

This reimbursement represents the fiscal impact to the district of the federal, state and district's COVID-19 response during Fiscal Year 2020/2021 (FY2021). The district realized savings of \$1.3M as a result of curtailed operations, and lower energy and health insurance costs. As many in the community may remember, students during FY2021 were forced to stay home and access their education via Chromebook remotely, which resulted in significantly lower operating costs, including reduced transportation costs and lower energy costs. Additionally, school administrators made conscious decisions to postpone standard purchases while in a COVID-19 remote/hybrid shutdown. As a direct result, both the regional school district and the two member towns will benefit financially.

The district also realized increased revenues during Fiscal Year 2020/2021 of approximately \$4.4M through federal and state sources. While it was impossible to anticipate these economic events when the FY2021 budget preparation was underway in early 2020, Massachusetts General Law provides for the return of windfall savings to the member towns as mentioned above. The Town of Rehoboth will receive a reduction of their FY22 assessment of \$2,205,155.71. The Town of Dighton will receive a reduction of their FY22 assessment of \$1,235,207.29.

Additionally, the district will retain \$2,297,637.00 of the excess as provided for by Massachusetts General Law (the regional school district retains up to 5% of their overall budget in E & D funds). Of this, the district has proposed using \$750,000 to reduce the FY23 assessments to the member towns.

# Funding Articles - Financial Overview

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- ✓ Strong priority on maintaining fiscal discipline and operational sustainability to limit taxpayer burden
- ✓ Excess tax capacity for Fiscal Year 2023, based on proposed Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles, estimated at nearly \$800,000
- ✓ Proposed uses of free cash to fund Police Station debt service and additional funding to decrease the tax rate in the amount of \$597,925; proposed increases to Stabilization and Capital Stabilization account balances, and proposed funding for a number of capital investments
- ✓ Articles shaped by Department, Capital Outlay Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, and resident input

# Article 1

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**To hear reports from Town officials**



# Article 2

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## Payment of Fiscal Year 2022 Unpaid Bills

- Payment of Unpaid Bills from Police Department of \$28.71 to NAPA Auto Parts and \$2,352.77 to McKesson for the purchase of Narcan
- Payment of Unpaid Bills from the Town Reports budget of \$1,857.71 for 2021 Town Report

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 3

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## **Payment of Police Station Debt Service using Free Cash and Additional Funding to Offset Tax Rate - \$597,925**

- Proposes to fund \$367,925 to pay budgeted Police Station debt service, and proposes to appropriate an additional \$230,000 from Certified Free Cash to reduce the Fiscal Year 2023 tax rate

*Finance Committee Recommends  
Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 4

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## **Funding of Fiscal Years 2021, 2022 and 2023 Communications Department Personnel Expenses**

- Funds recently settled Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Town of Dighton and Dighton Dispatchers, Massachusetts Coalition of Police
- Agreement calls for base wage increases of 2%, 2% and 2.5% over three fiscal years; reforms vacation time and sick time buyback provisions, and clarifies progressive discipline language to be better in line with settled employment law

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 5

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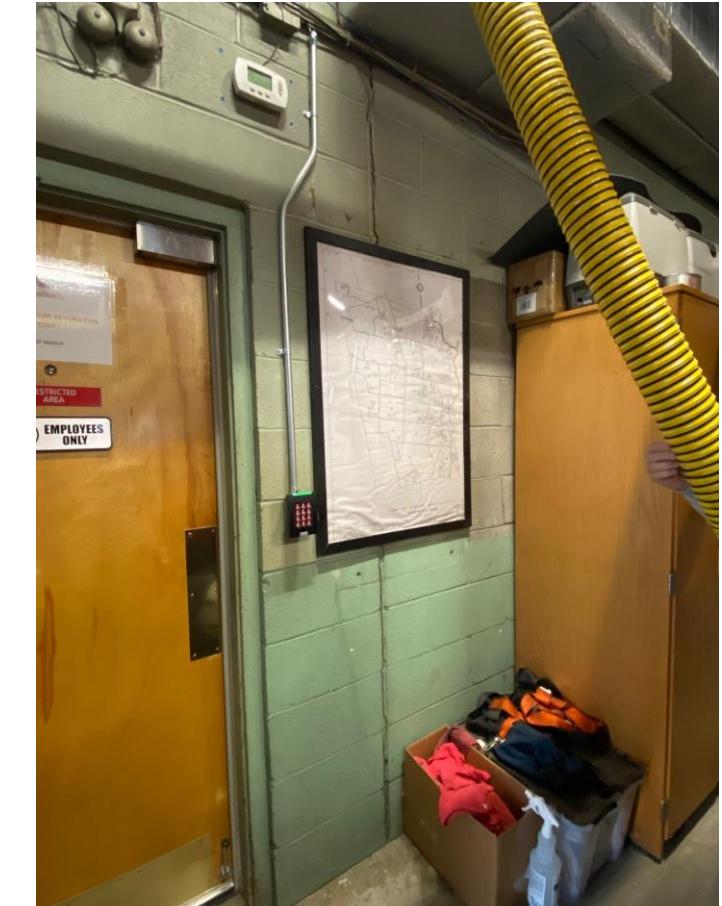
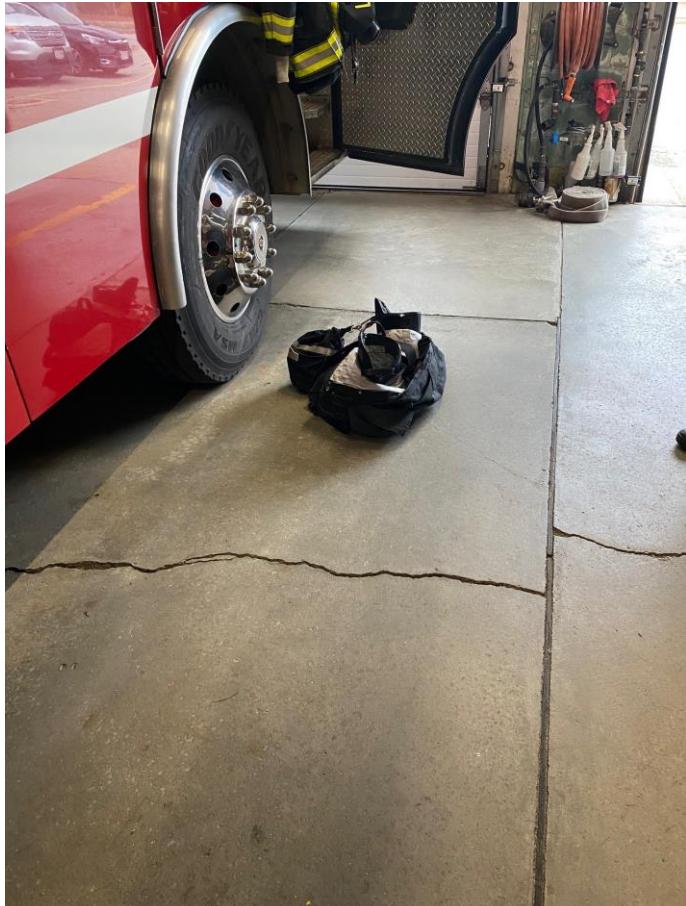
## Dighton Fire Department – Feasibility Study for Station 1

- Proposes \$150,000 Feasibility Study to provide recommendations on modernizing Station 1 on Main Street, which includes funding for Architect Design and Owners Project Manager



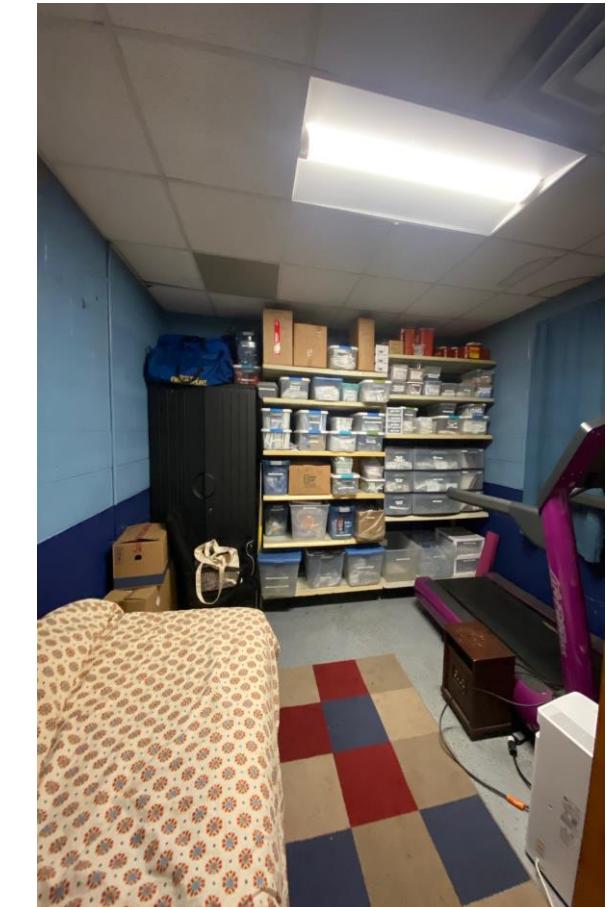
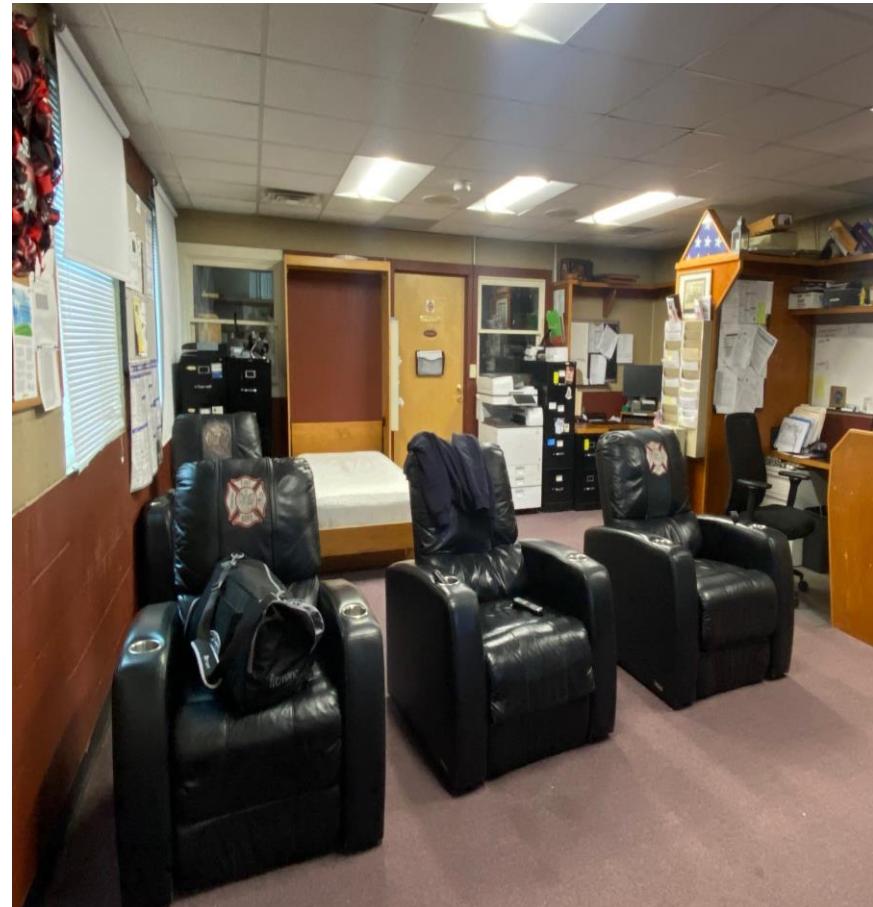
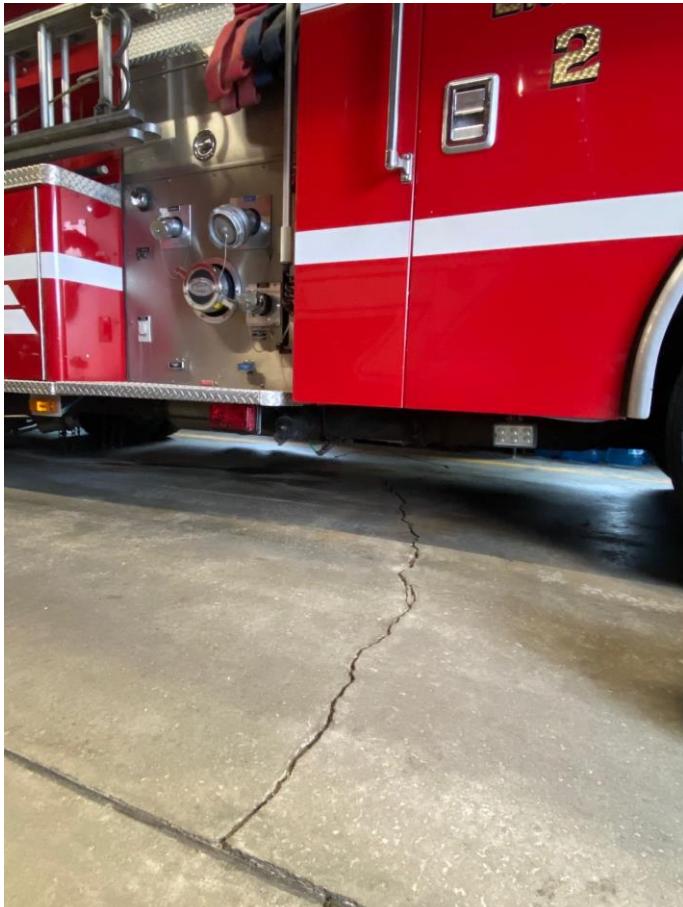
# Article 5 – Station 1 Existing Conditions Photos

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# Article 5 – Station 1 Existing Conditions Photos

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# Article 5

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## Proposed Station 1 Feasibility Study – Background

- Station 1 was built in the 1960s as a Call Fire Station; currently operates 24/7 with a 3 Firefighter/Paramedics per shift, while also continuing as a call station
- Built in close proximity to wetlands causing moisture issues throughout many areas of building; Station is in known flood plain and inundation zone should Muddy Cove Pond Dam fail
- Shared spaces include administrative assistant's office doubling as a bunk room, a supply closet serving as a bunk room, and the day room serving as a bunk room with no privacy
- Station is utilizing a cesspool installed when the building was originally constructed
- No insulation in any of the exterior walls
- Cracks in flooring and walls indicate potential structural building issues

# Article 5

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## Dighton Fire Department – Feasibility Study for Station 1

- Feasibility study would secure an architect for the Town to review the existing conditions of Station 1, perform a programming analysis, and provide a recommended schematic design along with applicable costs estimates
- Proposed funding includes anticipated costs for site explorations and surveys to compare any identified options
- The Fire Department has no preference on whether an expansion/renovation or a new building should be constructed. Town owns adjacent property; all options would be evaluated in Feasibility Study.
- Goal of the study would be to provide taxpayers with the most information possible with all options on the table

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 6

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## \$75,500 for a Fully-Equipped Police Vehicle

- Funds a fully-equipped police vehicle includes computer, firearm (Patrol Rifle), radio, antenna, and related accessories
- Cruisers run daily with idle time and engine hours accumulating
- DPD, together with Town Mechanic Mark Carr, places top priority on vehicle care and preventative maintenance. A majority of cruisers have over 100k miles, with a few nearing their end
- Vehicle cost is up 15%; we compete with bigger agencies who receive preference from wholesalers based on volume
- Costs of lighting packages are up 20% and there is a supply chain challenge
- Lead time to take delivery is over 1 year from ordering; we are still waiting for the cruiser that was ordered after last year's STM
- Recent water pump issues with Explorers and intermittent problems require dealership attention, which have recently posed a challenge to ensure active Department fleet

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 7

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## **\$30,000 to Install Asphalt Parking Lot at Tennis/Basketball Court Facility at 1551 Somerset Avenue**

- Funds the grinding and removal of existing failed asphalt surface
- Would allow for installation of new 175' long by 40' wide asphalt parking surface
- Eliminates existing safety hazards and lack of ADA compliance due to existing surface conditions and grade
- Creates accessible parking to tie into ADA accessible walkway created through the MOD grant
- Allows for established handicap parking spaces to access both the courts and picnic area
- Establishes single entry and exit to Route 138 reducing current dangerous traffic entry and exit condition
- Facility is used regularly by tennis, pickleball, hockey, and basketball players. Including wheelchair users

*Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*



# Article 7 – Additional Photos

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# Article 8

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## **Dighton Highway Department – \$15,000 for Hart Street Drainage Improvements**

- Includes proposed drainage improvements in the area of 554 and 640 Hart Street
- Area currently has no erosion controls or water treatments in place
- Also involves a vernal pool and additional downstream wetlands
- Drainage would be installed to follow best management practices (BMPs) for adequate drainage processes

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 9

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## **Dighton Highway Department – \$105,000 for Purchase of One (1) Light Duty Dump Truck with Snow Plow**

- Proposed 2022 Chevrolet Silverado 5500HD, 4WD would replace a 2005 Ford Pickup taken out of service for rot and sold at a recent auction
- Vehicle would be equipped with snow plow and warning lights
- Purchase includes a 5-year, 100,000 mile powertrain warranty

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 10

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## **\$75,000 for Town Hall Walkway Railing and Stairway System**

- Proposed Town Hall Walkway and Stairway System would supplement already completed grant-funded ramp demolition and walkway accessibility improvements, which removed longtime accessibility barrier to Town Hall's main level
- Includes 175' primed and painted steel railing system
- Concrete stairway would provide additional connection point to walkway from Upper Level Town Hall Parking Lot

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 11

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## **\$13,000 for Transfer Station Point-of-Sale System**

- Funds a complete overhaul to outdated paper- and labor-driven Transfer Station payment processing system
- Would complement efforts to allow credit and debit card payment options
- Allows the Town to assess real-time reporting relative to Transfer Station volume and reporting efforts

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 12

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## \$267,000 for Pleasant Street Bridge at Muddy Cove Final Engineering, Design and Permitting

- The 107-year old Pleasant Street Bridge at Muddy Cove is listed as a vulnerable area/area of concern in terms of coastal flooding in the town's combined Municipal Vulnerability Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan Regional Addendum for Somerset-Dighton-Swansea
- Bridge has a weight posting for less than half the legal statutory vehicle load, which presents a hurdle in public safety access across Pleasant Street; average traffic volume along Pleasant Street recorded at 1,345 vehicles/day
- Town Meeting funded initial (to 25%) engineering and design costs at November 2021 Town Meeting. Initial design completed October 2022
- Proposed Article would fund final engineering and design as well as required permitting, which includes:
  - Dighton Conservation Commission
  - Mass DEP – Chapter 91 License and Water Quality Certification
  - MEPA – Environmental Notification Form
  - Army Corps of Engineers – General Permit
  - MassDOT Review (MGL Chapter 85 Section 35)
- Town would rely on state / federal grants to make construction funding a reality; funding final engineering, design and permitting would truly make the project 'shovel-ready' and improve the Town's chances of securing such grant award

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 13

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## **Transfer from Municipal Waterways Revenue Account into Harbormaster Budget**

- Simply proposes a \$5,000 transfer in available funds from the Municipal Waterways Revenue Account to the Harbormaster budget
- Would fund required hull maintenance to town patrol boat

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 14

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## **\$90,000 Transfer to Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) Trust Fund**

- The Town's Independent Auditors, Roselli, Clark & Associates, recommend that the Town of Dighton fund its OPEB Trust at an amount of at least \$125,000 each year to fund our unfunded liability for retiree health care and life insurance benefits
- The proposed funding in Article 14 seeks to continue the Town's commitment of fulfilling this obligation, which continues to strengthen the Town's financial position
- Of the \$125,000 in recommended funding, \$90,000 would be funded with a transfer from Free Cash, with the remaining \$35,000 already funded in the Town's operational budget

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 15

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## **Rescinding of 2021 STM Article for Trails Committee Feasibility Study**

- This proposed article proposes that Town Meeting rescind the vote taken relative to Article 11 of the November 2021 Special Town Meeting
- \$40,000 approved for a Trails Committee Feasibility Study has been funded by a grant from the Taunton River Stewardship Council, thereby removing the need for local funding
- Funding would revert back to unappropriated fund balance (next year's free cash certification) unless otherwise reappropriated

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*

# Article 16

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## \$650,000 Deposit to Capital Stabilization Account

- Fund Balance currently stands at \$837,457.13
- Balance would increase to \$1,487,457.13
- Capital Stabilization Account is an important dedicated funding source to fund planned capital needs
- Any funds proposed to be transferred from Capital Stabilization Account always require a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 17

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## \$425,000 Deposit to Stabilization Account

- Fund Balance currently stands at \$1,499,195.02
- Balance would increase to \$1,924,195.02
- Recommended best practice is to build Stabilization Account balance to 10% of operating budget
- Any funds proposed to be transferred from Stabilization Account always require a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting

*Finance Committee Recommends*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 18

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## **Proposed Elected/Appointed Board and Committee Stipend Bylaw Amendment**

- Follows through with commitment from Board of Selectmen to propose stipend structure for applicable Elected/Appointed Board and Committee Members
- Proposes to memorialize stipend-setting structure while responsibly ensuring fiscal responsibility and budget sustainability
- Encourages continuity and resident engagement on Dighton's elected and appointed Boards and Committees

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 19

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## **Restatement of the Bristol-Plymouth Regional Vocational Technical School District Agreement**

- **Updated language to make consistent throughout the document**

Change "District School" to "School District"  
Change "Vocational Regional" to "Regional Vocational"  
Replaced references to "community, town and municipality" with  
"member" throughout document

- **Adding Statutes and updating Law w/New Statutes**

Updating language to go along with statutes that have changed  
New statutes added on Pages 1, 2, 5, 6

- **Adding Freetown as a member and removing Lakeville and Seekonk as members (Lakeville and Seekonk were permitted to join the District under the Establishment of the Regional School District; however, to the date of this Re-Statement, they have chosen not to join).**

- **Changes to Section IV "Apportionment and Payment of Costs incurred by the District"**

- Section A. Changes to Classification of Costs (from 2 to 3 categories)**

- operating costs
  - transportation costs (added)
  - capital/debt costs (name changed from capital costs to capital/debt costs)

- Addition of Section B. Assessment Calculation**

- Establishment of operating, transportation, and capital/debt costs

- Section C. Changes to Times of Payments for Apportioned Costs**

- Removal of Section D. E. and F. Apportionment of Capital Costs, Apportionment of Operating Costs, and Special Operating Costs**

- **Changes to Section VIII "Admission of Additional Members to the District"**

- **Changes to Section IX "Withdrawal"**

**NOTES:**

A lot of the original language pertained to the establishment of the District  
DESE has reviewed and commented throughout the process and approved the  
document being presented.

# Article 20

## Amend the Town of Dighton General Bylaws

- New Bylaws are often proposed on the Town meeting floor as an “un-numbered General Bylaw”
- This new bylaw will allow the Town Clerk to assign these new bylaws (if approved) a number
- Also, from time to time it makes sense to review the arrangement of bylaws to make sure the order in which they appear makes sense. This new bylaw will allow the Town Clerk to do so
- We currently have some unnumbered bylaws in our listing of approved bylaws as no one has the authority to assign them a number

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



## TOWN OF DIGHTON

### GENERAL BY-LAWS



REVISED: June 28, 2022

# Article 21

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## **Adopt Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) under M.G.L. Chapter 59, Section 5**

Chapter 126 of the Acts of 1988 (Amending Section 4 of Chapter 73 of the Acts of 1986) authorizes a city or town certified by the Commissioner of Revenue to grant additional real estate tax exemption

The cost of living adjustment (COLA) is measured by the increase in the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics annual inflation rate for the previous calendar year

If the Town of Dighton votes to adopt the COLA for Local Property Tax Exemptions for Surviving Spouse and Blind Persons under Clauses 17, 17C, 17C ½, 17D, 37 and 37A then each year's exemption will become the base to which the next year's increase applies

- Example: Blind Person 2022  
Exemption 2021 \* COLA 2022 = New Exemption amount for FY2022  
\$532 \* 1.4% = \$539.44 New Exemption amount for FY2022

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 22

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## **Amend Zoning Bylaws to by Deleting Section 4600. Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations and Replace with a new Section 4600. Solar Generating Facilities**

Changes from previous Section 4600 include important and necessary Battery Energy Storage facilities in section 4659 that without this bylaw replacement, will continue to be installed without the protections outlined in this update

Protections to residents for Battery Energy Storage facilities in the proposed updated bylaw include:

- More stringent safety and environmental standards to include developing an emergency response plan with local emergency services
- New monitoring, maintenance, and reporting requirements
- Minimum Fire Department access to a municipal public water supply
- Buffer of Battery assemblies no less than 200 feet from any property line and minimum of 100 feet from the tree line/vegetative buffer

# Article 22

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## **Amend Zoning Bylaws to by Deleting Section 4600. Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations and Replace with a new Section 4600. Solar Generating Facilities**

Important updates since last June 2022 ATM where this bylaw change was defeated. Updates focus on compatibility with these facilities and the residential areas in town

Planning Board took resident inputs and reached out to MA Towns of Dartmouth and Rochester to leverage their existing successful “solar farm” bylaws aligning the Town of Dighton with surrounding towns that have successfully adopted a “solar farm” bylaw compatible to their rural characters

- Updated changes from June 2022 include:
  - 4651 Lighting: Emphasizing *Dark Sky* compliant lighting on facilities
  - Section VI Definitions: Lowering Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Electric Installation to 250 kW from previous 1 MW. This imposes the bylaw protections on smaller commercial arrays
  - 4659 Dimensional and Density Requirements; Setbacks
    - Increase of side and rear yard set backs to at least 75 feet and 100 feet from any abutting dwelling
    - Substantial Buffer requirements
      - § Minimum 30' natural buffer around entire facility for screening
      - § Buffer vegetation needs to grow to at least 10 feet within five years of the completion of construction
      - § Minimum 75% of planted buffer vegetation must be evergreen species

# Article 23

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## **Stoney Ridge Estates: Galway Drive, Waterford Circle, and Kerry Lane Roadway Acceptance**

- Roadway acceptance for Stoney Ridge Estates development located off Pine Street
- Voted to approve by Town of Dighton Planning Board on 5 October 2022

*Board of Selectmen Recommends*



# Article 24

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Any other business?

THANK YOU!

Michael Mullen, Jr.  
Town Administrator

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