



## SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

November 16, 2020

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

The Special Town Meeting held on November 16, 2020, at the Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School was called to order at 7:00PM by Gary Scott Dingus, Moderator. Salute to the flag was given. The checkers were Susan Carpenter, Meghan Mello, Rebecca Mello, Margaret Mullen, and Elizabeth Silvia. Total attendance was 49.

### **Statement from Moderator Gary Scott Dingus:**

Good Evening,

Prior to opening on our Fall Special Town Meeting I would like to review the essential COVID 19 guidance and why under the current guidance we are able to conduct the meeting in this format.

First off this assembly is considered a Municipal Legislative body. Under the Revised Order Further Regulating Gatherings in the Commonwealth, COVID-19 Order No. 54, Municipal Legislative Body's are considered and exception and the Order shall no apply.

However, this exception does no exclude our assembly being subject to the recommendation from the Dept. of Public Health. At minimum this includes:

- Proper signing in INCLUDING collection of correct contact information for all attendees for contact tracing requirements.
- Minimum of 6 feet social distancing between any attendees not from the same household at all times. Including check-In, exiting, while in queue to speak, or while seated.
- We shall maintain proper ventilation including opening off all doors as reasonably able.
- All attendees over the age of 5 must wear face covering or masks in accordance with COVID-19 order No.31 except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition.
- Cleaning and Disinfecting materials are available for your use

as need and upon request.

-In the event that anyone is exposed to COVID-19 at this meeting, attendees may need to be identified and will be contacted by the board of health.

If anyone is feeling sick or have exhibited any of the following symptoms (Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell), or have been exposed to someone with a confirmed or SUSPECTED case of COVID-19, then please exit the assembly immediately and contact the BOH for further direction and contact tracing.

If at anytime during this evenings meeting the BOH, Town Council or I feel continuation of the proceeding is compromising the health and safety of our attendees or limiting the access of our Town Residents to vote and be heard on the items under discussion we will exercise the right to suspend the meeting to a future date when safety and due process can be achieved.

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion Brett Zografos and seconded to dispense with the reading of the warrant.

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Brett Zografos and seconded to dispense with the reading of the Articles and references to them be made by number and content.

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Bett Zografos and seconded to consider adjournment this evening at 9:30PM.

**ARTICLE 1. VOTED:** On motion of Brett Zografos and seconded to hear reports of the Town Officials and act thereon:

Brett Zografos, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen read the following report:

### **November 16, 2020 BOS Report**

To the Citizens of Dighton:

Since the last time we convened this legislative body for the Annual Town Meeting in June, our town was enjoying a summer season marked by low COVID-19 incidence. Dighton remained with "grey" status (low risk) for most of the warm summer months. Although we were able to reopen safely before many of other neighboring towns, we have unfortunately regressed from "grey" to "red" status (high risk) within a matter of weeks, prompting the Board of Health, in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen and the

Pandemic Reopening Task Force, to close Town Hall and Old Town Hall to the public and to require that all committee meetings be held remotely out of an abundance of caution. We will remain proactive, prepared, and vigilant as we work to continue keeping our residents and our employees safe. We must wear our masks in public, practice social distancing consistently, and abide by the wise counsel of scientists, medical experts, and public health officials. It is vital that we continue these safe habits as the weather gets colder and we remain in doors for longer periods of time. Now more than ever, we must continue to protect one another, as we are one Dighton family. We shall persevere together because we are Dighton Strong.

Mallory Aronstein resigned after three successful years as on the job as our first Town Administrator. She was a trailblazer and a leader, respected by those who were fortunate to work with her, admired by residents who sought assistance from her, and appreciated by all. She helped set the Town of Dighton on a successful trajectory. We thank her for her service, commitment, and dedication. The Board of Selectmen hired a search firm, Community Paradigm Associates, LLC, who are currently soliciting and collecting applications for potential candidates to be interviewed. We will fill this important position as quickly and efficiently as possible with the most qualified candidate on the market. Until we do so, the Board of Selectmen and our fantastic Administrative Team – Executive Assistant Karin Brady and Administrative Assistant Leeanne Kerwin – will continue working tirelessly to make progress on the all the progress, grants, and initiatives that Mrs. Aronstein was pursuing and that Dightonians have come to expect from us.

Both myself and former Town Administrator Mallory Aronstein completed work on a Town of Dighton business guide over the summer, which was approved by the Board of Selectmen in July 2020. The business guide outlines the processes by which businesses can both open and maintain operations. It is our hope that this will make it easier for potential commercial entities to understand and navigate the various processes required to operate in Dighton.

The Board of Selectmen, former Town Administrator Mallory Aronstein, and our Administrative Team have made strides to professionalize our municipal operations. The Town of Dighton Policy Manual, the first in the history of our town, was created and distributed to all our employees. As this manual is a “living document” that we expect to change and evolve over time, electronic copies will be distributed to newly hired employees in the future.

The ADA Commission has a quorum and has begun meeting bi-weekly in order to make recommendations on various town plans, ranging from the community garden to the open space & recreation plan to the North Dighton playground plans. We appreciate their hard work and we look forward to working with them hand-in-glove to remove all barriers in order to make all town facilities and grounds accessible to every single Dightonian.

The Board of Selectmen, in conjunction with the Agricultural Commission, designated Dighton BSA Troop 45 as custodians of the Dighton Community Garden at 949 Somerset Avenue. The fresh, healthy produce grown with love from our garden will be provided to

Dighton's neediest residents through the Dighton Lions Food Bank for years to come, once established. We give our sincerest thanks to Tonia Patricio, Jenna Barr, and all our Dighton Boys and Girls Scouts for their leadership, for making this vision a reality, and for protecting our most vulnerable.

The Board of Selectmen recently established a Human Rights Committee comprised of 9 diverse Dightonians from unique backgrounds dedicated to building a stronger, more unified town – free from bigotry, hatred, intolerance, and disrespect. They recently held their first organizational meeting and are currently working on their Mission Statement in consultation with the Board of Selectmen. We believe this work is important, vital, and groundbreaking for our town; we believe this committee is an embodiment of Dighton's core values of love, community, and respect for all.

The Town of Dighton partnered with SRPEDD to perform a town-wide speed study in order to identify areas in town with pervasive traffic and/or speed issues. Residents at the Annual Town Meeting in June granted the Board of Selectmen the authority to establish designated safety zones with 20mph speed limits. The Board of Selectmen, in consultation with Police Chief Robert MacDonald, Fire Chief Christopher Maguy, and Highway Superintendent Thomas Ferry, chose Pleasant Street as the first potential safety zone due to its high pedestrian traffic, parks, and recreational areas in the neighborhood. The Board of Selectmen held a public hearing to establish a safety zone. Based on overwhelming support in the community, the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to establish a safety zone from 1848 Somerset Avenue and down the entirety of Pleasant Street (including all streets to its east) to the Dighton-Somerset line.

Dighton received Green Communities designation in 2018, which was complemented with a grant for \$143,646. The four projects chosen to assist us in reducing the Town's energy consumption by 20% by 2021 were: building weatherization, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, WiFi programmable thermostats, and LED lighting and fixtures. All energy efficiency projects should be completed by the end of this month, making the Town of Dighton eligible for further Green Communities grants on a competitive basis. We thank everyone for their hard work.

Serving as a liaison for the Open Space Committee, I am happy to report that the committee is almost ready to approve a completed Open Space & Recreation Plan that will be sent to the Planning Board for approval and inclusion in the Town of Dighton Master Plan. Once the approved plan is submitted to the Commonwealth's Division of Local Services and accepted, the Town of Dighton will be eligible for an additional round of Community Compact Cabinet Best Practices.

The Stormwater Committee will be working with SRPEDD on an expanded Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program that will include Dighton, Swansea, and Somerset. This will lead to the submission of grant applications for regional municipal vulnerability planning. In addition, Dighton, Taunton, and Raynham have filed a grant application for expansion of stormwater education in these communities.

The Board of Selectmen developed a 5-year plan to address various infrastructure and equipment needs in town. To that end, we have established a Municipal Buildings Study Committee to begin researching different plans and options for the following municipal facilities: fire station, highway garage, and library. We are also working on researching grants to expand sewer infrastructure down Route 138 in an effort to spur business and renovating Town Hall in order to create additional needed space.

We thank you for the confidence and trust that you have placed in us. It is an honor to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,

**Board of Selectmen**

Edward Swartz, Chairman of the Finance Committee stated that the Finance Committee would make their recommendations as each article is read as they do at all town meetings.

Board of Assessors: No report

Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District: No report

**VOTED:** On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded to accept the reports of Town Officials as read.

**ARTICLE 2.** No motion

**ARTICLE 3. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from certified free cash in the treasury, an amount not to exceed \$391,425.00, to be expended by the Board of Selectmen to make the third payment on the Police Station Bond.  
Finance Committee Recommends

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash a sum of \$391,425.00, an amount equal to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year principal and interest payment on the Police Station Bond, to reduce the tax rate.  
Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 4. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to authorize a total expenditure of \$51,088.44 to be raised and appropriated for FY21 expenses as outlined in Article 4 of the Special Town Meeting Warrant.  
Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 5. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum of money not to exceed \$30,025.47, and of that amount \$2,680.43 be transferred from Sewer Enterprise Retained Earnings and \$27,345.04 be raised and appropriated to fund FY21 personnel expenses for employees covered under the recently settled Clerical Union Bargaining Agreement.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 6. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$23,000.00 to fund FY21 personnel expenses for the hiring of a Conservation Agent.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 7. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash a sum of money not to exceed \$85,000.00 to be expended by the Board of Selectmen for engineering services to redesign the driveway and traffic pattern at Dighton Elementary and Dighton Middle Schools.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 8. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that Mr. Moderator I move that the Town vote to transfer from free cash, a sum of money not to exceed \$105,000.00 to be expended by the Board of Selectmen to engineer and construct a secondary means of egress and renovate a portion of the Dighton Public Library.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 9. VOTED:** On motion of Edward Swartz and seconded that the Town vote transfer from free cash a sum of money not to exceed \$30,000.00 for engineering services to make ADA improvements to Town Hall.

**ARTICLE 10. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded that the Town vote to reappropriate an amount of \$40,000.00 from Special Article account #010-2-122-0000-20-5810 Miller's Lane Land Takings & Upgrades, approved at the June 3, 2019 Annual Town Meeting, to be expended by the Highway Superintendent for sidewalk design and drainage upgrades on Main Street.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 11. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Brett Zografas and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash, a sum of money not to exceed \$30,000.00 to purchase and letter a 2020 Ford Escape hybrid vehicle to be used for inspectional services.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 12. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Robert Rendon and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from PEG Access a sum of money not to exceed \$14,000.00 to be expended by the Cable Commission to purchase and install recording equipment and related expenses for the Old Town Hall Meeting Room.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 13. TABLED:** Mr. Moderator I move that the Town vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds an amount not to exceed \$92,041.43 for the purchase and installation of equipment for the North Dighton Playground Project.

**Motion of Jonathan Gale and seconded that Article 13 be tabled until the Annual Town Meeting.**

**ARTICLE 14. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Robert Rendon and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash the amount of \$8,000.00 to be expended by the Board of Assessors to be used as assistance for the Fiscal Year 2022 Revaluation of Real Estate and Commercial Property for the Town of Dighton.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 15. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Robert Rendon and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash a sum not to exceed \$100,000.00 to the “Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund” established to cover the unfunded actuarial liability for retirees’ health care and life insurance benefits.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 16. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Robert Rendon and seconded that the Town vote to transfer from free cash a sum not to exceed \$150,000.00 to the Capital Stabilization Account.

Finance Committee Recommends

**ARTICLE 17. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded that the Town vote to authorize its elected Town Treasurer to act as Town Collector pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Section 1.

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded that the Town vote to have its elected Treasurer/Collector become an appointed Treasurer/Collector; and if such vote passes by a simple majority, for the Board of Selectmen to place on the Annual Town Election ballot a question to see if the residents of the Town of Dighton will vote to have its elected Treasurer/Collector become an appointed Treasurer/Collector in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Section 1B.

**ARTICLE 18. DEFEATED:** On motion of Brett Zografos and seconded that the Town vote to amend Article XXXVI of the Town General Bylaws, to establish a Police Cruiser Administration Revolving Account pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, sec. 53E ½ to be used for all costs and expenses associated with the maintenance and repair, and acquisition of police department vehicles and vehicle equipment as outlined in Article 18 of the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

**ARTICLE 19.** VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded that the Town vote in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 38H, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a **Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement** with BWC Greene Brook, LLC as outlined in Article 19 of the Town Meeting Warrant.

**ARTICLE 20.** VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On motion of Nancy Goulart and seconded that the Town vote in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 38H, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a **Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement** with BWC Greene Brook, LLC as outlined in Article 20 of the Town Meeting Warrant

**ARTICLE 21.** VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: On motion of Timothy Rhines and seconded that the Town vote to accept the roadway known as Jennifer Lane described below as a town road as described in Article 21. of the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

**VOTED UNANIMOUSLY:** On motion of Kevin Perry and seconded to dissolve the Special Town Meeting of November 16, 2020 at 8:40 PM.

ATTEST:   
Susan Medeiros

Town Clerk