

# June 5, 2023

# Annual Town Meeting

# Informational Overview

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MICHAEL P. MULLEN, JR, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR



# Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Overview

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- ✓ 27-article Annual Town Meeting Warrant includes the Town's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) proposed **\$25.3 million operating budget**, with a 5% overall increase over Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations
- ✓ FY24 town operating budget is a **fiscally-responsible, structurally balanced budget** with a projected Excess Levy Capacity of ~\$100K
- ✓ Efforts to plan for FY24 have centered upon **conservative, zero-base justified budgeting** as we adapt to fiscal challenges shaped by outside factors
- ✓ Various warrant articles reflect ranked priorities of Capital Outlay Committee accompanied by respective funding recommendations from the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
- ✓ Article 14, one of the two proposed Articles to fund necessary **building improvements for the Dighton Public Library** at Smith Memorial Hall, has been recommended by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
- ✓ The remaining proposed ATM Articles include proposals to fund **elementary and middle school security improvements, Main Street roadway reconstruction efforts, public safety equipment**, and funding for **Forest Hills litigation** and related claims

# Commonly Used Terms Included in Annual Town Meeting Warrant

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**Available Funds:** Balances in the various fund types that represent nonrecurring revenue sources. As a matter of sound practice, they are frequently appropriated for unforeseen expenses, capital expenditures, or other one-time costs. Examples of available funds include free cash, stabilization funds, overlay surplus, water surplus, and retained earnings.

**Excess Levy Capacity:** The difference between the levy limit and the amount of real and personal property taxes actually levied in a given year. Annually, the Board of Selectmen must be informed of excess levy capacity and their acknowledgment must be submitted to DLS when setting the tax rate.

**Fiscal Year:** A 12-month period, commencing July 1 and ending June 30th, to which the annual budget applies. Fiscal years are often denoted FYXX with the last two numbers representing the calendar year in which it ends, for example, FY24 is the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

**Free Cash:** Free cash is the portion of unreserved fund balance from a prior fiscal year available for appropriation. It is not cash but rather is approximately the total of cash and receivables less current liabilities and earmarked reserves also reduced by reserves for uncollected taxes. This is also referred to as “available cash”. The amount is certified annually by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

***The current Town's Free Cash balance as of 5/1/23 is \$ 514,508.51***

**Raise and Appropriate:** A phrase used to identify an expenditure's funding source as money generated by the tax levy or other local receipts.

# Article 1

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**To hear reports from Town officials**



Photo Text: Town Meeting Clip Art Graphic

# Article 2

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**To allow Board of Selectmen to appoint all necessary town officials and Board/Committee members**



Photo Text: Clip Art depiction of individuals meeting at conference table

# Article 3

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## Payment of Fiscal Year 2022 Unpaid Bills

- Funds payment of \$14,493.95 in unpaid bills from prior year due to invoices being received after close of the fiscal year

*Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*

*Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*

# Article 4

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## **Set Salaries for Elected Town Officials for Fiscal Year 2024**

- Includes 2% increases in stipends or salaries from Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations

***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Article 5

## Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Proposed Operating Budget

- ✓ FY24 town operating budget is a **fiscally-responsible, structurally balanced budget** with a projected Excess Levy Capacity of ~\$100K
- ✓ Efforts to plan for FY24 have centered upon **conservative, zero-base justified budgeting** as we adapt to fiscal challenges shaped by outside factors
- ✓ **FY24 expenditures initially proposed to increase by \$1.1 million over FY23 levels, driven by cost increases most outside of town's control:**
  - ✓ **Proposed Education Budget includes increases of \$907K with capital assessments (factoring in \$254K for B-P project).** Of net \$1.07 million increase in year-to-year available revenues, 85% of new revenues would be dedicated to meeting education cost and educational capital debt assessment increases
  - ✓ Increase in Bristol County Retirement System assessment by \$150K per state approved funding requirement to fund unfunded liability by 2034
  - ✓ \$13,000 increase in trash/recycling pick-up and disposal costs on top of last year's \$113K increase
  - ✓ \$13,000 increase as part of liability insurance budget to fund cyber insurance (previously funded by Special Town Meeting Article)
  - ✓ \$20,000 in health insurance costs
  - ✓ Fuel and energy cost increases in building utilities and in Highway and Public Safety Departments
- ✓ **Offsets realized also include decreased retirement separation costs, current year snow and ice costs, and breakage from FY23 retirements**

# Article 6

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## **Administration of Sewer Enterprise Fund by Sewer Commissioners for FY24**

- Warrant article required to be annually adopted at Annual Town Meeting
- Establishes the budget for the Sewer Department Enterprise Fund for FY24

***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Article 7

**Proposes to Amend General  
Bylaws to Establish the  
Following new Revolving  
Funds:**

Department Fund	Department, Board or Committee Authorized to Spend	Program or Activity Expenses Payable from Fund	Fees, Charges or Other Receipts Credited to Fund	Restrictions or Conditions on Expenses Payable to Fund	Other Requirements	Fiscal Years
Police Department Detail Cruiser Usage Fund	Chief of Police	Fuel and Maintenance of Police Fleet	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Detail Fees	None	N/A	Fiscal Year 2024 and future years
Police Department Firearms Training Range Outside Usage	Chief of Police	Purchase of Ammunition, Range Supplies and Firearms-Related Materials	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Use of Range Fees	None	N/A	Fiscal Year 2024 and future years
Police Department Youth and Community Policing Engagement Fund	Chief of Police	Programs and Engagements (Youth Police Academy, Coffee with a Cop, Riverfront 5K)	Tuition, Donations and Other Revenue	None	N/A	Fiscal Year 2024 and future years
Parks and Recreation Field Usage	Parks and Recreation Commission	Field and Equipment Maintenance/Repairs and Replacement; Support Recreational Programs	Fees Charged and Monies Received for Field Use, Recreational Programs	None	N/A	Fiscal Year 2024 and future years

***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Articles 9 and 10

**Authorize Town, through Board of Selectmen, to:**

- Make changes in grade, take land by eminent domain, and settle damages related to roadway capital improvements
- Make changes in grade, obtain easements, purchase land, etc. for highway maintenance and bridge reconstruction projects



Photo Text: Roadway in the Town of Dighton

***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Article 11

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**Applies Cost of Living Allowance to Tax Exemptions, including for Veterans, Widows, and Residents who are Elderly and Blind**

- FY24 increase, as set by Division of Local Services (DLS), is 6.5%



Photo Text: Bridge Dedication for Clinton E. Rose

***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Article 12

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## Close Out of Prior Year Balance Sheet Deficits

- Recommended by Department of Revenue officials and the Town Accountant to close out deficit accounts that have been carried on the Town's balance sheet since Fiscal Year 2021
- These balances have been negatively impacting the Town's Free Cash Certification and available Tax Levy for the last two fiscal years
- Reconciling these accounts would remove these liabilities from the Town's balance sheet before the FY23 close-out and in advance of the FY24 tax-rate setting process

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash***

# Article 13

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**Establishes \$130K in projected Community Preservation Committee (CPC) revenues for FY24**

- Routine warrant article annually adopted at ATM; required by Section 6 of Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Town's General Bylaw

*"In each fiscal year and upon the recommendation of the community preservation committee, the legislative body shall spend, or set aside for later spending, not less than 10 per cent of the annual revenues in the Community Preservation Fund for open space, not less than 10 per cent of the annual revenues for historic resources and not less than 10 per cent of the annual revenues for community housing. In each fiscal year, the legislative body shall make appropriations from the Community Preservation Fund as it deems necessary for the administrative and operating expenses of the community preservation committee and such appropriations shall not exceed 5 per cent of the annual revenues in the Community Preservation Fund."*

***Community Preservation Committee Recommends***

# Articles 14 and 15 Overview

## Library Building Rehabilitation at Smith Memorial Hall

### Initial Budget Projections

**"Total initial costs, including acquisition and building improvements, are expected to cost approximately \$2 million. The cost associated with the purchase of 207 Main St. would be significantly less than the previously proposed \$8 million addition."**

**– June 1, 2022**

\$790K to purchase building with ARPA grant funds

\$150K for exterior building improvements funded by town meeting-approved Capital Stabilization appropriation

\$200K state earmark for exterior building improvements initiated by Town Administrator and Library Director secured by Sen. Marc Pacheco and Rep. Patricia Haddad

**Total Initial Project Funding for Acquisition and Exterior Building Improvements of \$1,140,000 as of 8/1/2022**



Photo Text: Residents and town officials gathered at Smith Memorial Hall for the Library Building Committee's Open House and Informational Meeting on May 13, 2023

# Articles 14 and 15 Overview

## Library Building Rehabilitation at Smith Memorial Hall

Smith Memorial Hall is in need of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) improvements, as well as modifications to increase accessibility as the building does not currently have an accessible first floor.

The following building modifications are needed in order to provide accessible, barrier-free library access and to protect and rehabilitate the building:

- Provide appropriate access throughout the first floor, including a ramp from the main assembly room to the new children's area. Expanded accessibility will be provided by the installation of a new framed floor in the former Kitchen/Dining space. The new floor will be at the same height as the stage
- Reconfigure the existing toilet room space next to the new Children's Area for efficiency of space and to provide a family accessible bathroom
- Install high efficiency heating and air conditioning system utilizing electrical Variable Refrigerant Flow systems (VRF)

-continued-



**Photo Text: Architectural Rendering of the Dedicated Library Children's Area Planned for Smith Memorial Hall**

# Articles 14 and 15 Overview

## Library Building Rehabilitation at Smith Memorial Hall

- Demolition includes the reconfiguration of the rear of the southerly basement access stairs. A single code-compliant stairway for Town access to mechanical and electrical equipment in the basement must be maintained; however, the current stair is non-conforming and headroom for that stair requires a bulkhead protruding into the Storage Room between the Stage and the Kitchen area. Its removal, with the reconfiguration of the existing stair, not only provides a legal, functioning stairway from the Basement, but also allows the Storage Room to be transformed with appropriate access to the two existing Toilet Rooms
- Also to be removed is the basement stairway access at the front of the building in the curvilinear front entrance
- Provide electrical power to the various Library rooms as electrical codes mandate



Photo Text: Architectural Rendering of Interior Building Improvements at Smith Memorial Hall



# Article 14

## Community Preservation Committee - Library Building Rehabilitation at Smith Memorial Hall

In 1843 Newport, Rhode Island real-estate broker Alfred Smith (1809-1886) married Ann Maria Talbot (1820-1884), a native of Dighton. Born in Middletown, Rhode Island, Alfred Smith was known as "Newport's millionaire real estate agent." Smith held mortgages, rented properties, and bought and sold properties on speculation in Newport, Rhode Island. After Ann Maria's death in 1884, Alfred Smith memorialized his wife with two buildings in Newport, a memorial hall and a cottage on Kay Street for use as a parsonage for the Channing Memorial Church, and one building in Dighton, the Smith Memorial Hall.

Prior to his death, Smith hired Newport builder-architect John Dixon Johnston (1849-1928) for the Dighton project. Johnston was considered one of the most prolific architectural professionals working in Newport from 1880-1920. Johnston helped to craft Newport's first building codes and is responsible for designing and building Newport City Hall. Alfred Smith died before the memorial was complete; his heirs oversaw completion of the building, which was dedicated in 1889.

In 2022, the Town of Dighton acquired Smith Memorial Hall as the home of the Dighton Town Library. This Community Preservation Act Application is seeking funds to help restore and protect the building at 207 Main Street, with modest interior reconfigurations for building efficiency and increased accessibility, new HVAC upgrades for heating and cooling, and minor upgrades to electrical and plumbing systems as needed throughout the restoration process. The proposed activities within this application are intended to protect and rehabilitate the building for use as the Dighton Town Library with barrier free access for all.

Kevin Smith, Jr.  
CPC, Chairman  
979 Somerset Ave.  
Dighton, MA 02715

January 13, 2023

Dear Kevin and Committee,

On January 10, 2023, the Dighton Historical Commission identified the Smith Memorial Hall at 207 Main Street as being of local historic significance. The vote was unanimous to identify the Smith Memorial Hall as locally significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture in the town of Dighton.

At this meeting, the Library Building Committee and Granite City Partners presented the concept drawings for the proposed rehabilitation of Smith Memorial to be the new home of Dighton's Public Library. The rehabilitation plans presented are mindful of the historic elements of the building and the importance of maintaining the historical integrity. The rehabilitation plans provide Dighton's citizens with a library while preserving one of Dighton's historic buildings.

The Dighton Historical Commission supports the plans of the Library Building Committee to repurpose the Smith Memorial Hall for use as the Dighton Public Library.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Gailes*  
Patricia Gailes  
Chair  
Dighton Historical Commission

cc: Library Building Committee  
Joseph Shea, Granite City Partners  
Holli Roche Robinson, Granite City Partners  
Dighton Historical Commission

**Community Preservation Committee  
Recommends**

# Article 14

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## CPC FUNDING REQUEST

PHASE	ESTIMATED BUDGET
Carpentry	\$39,000
HVAC	\$205,000
Electrical	\$39,000
Plumbing & Bathroom Fixtures	\$40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$323,000</b>

*Community Preservation Committee Recommends*

# Article 15

## Library Building Rehabilitation at Smith Memorial Hall

- Remaining \$404,000 in building project costs are estimated and reviewed by the town officials and the Town's Owners Project Manager and Architects for this project
- Available funds made possible by D-R Excess/Deficiency turnback in the current FY23 budget; not part of a request to Capital Stabilization
- If approved, funding would allow town to continue advancing plans to move Library into Smith Memorial Hall in late 2024

Library Building Committee Interior Restoration and Rehabilitation Proposed Budget & Warrant Article Request	
Budget for Project	812,350.00
Less Building Permit Fees	-16,247.00
Total Budget for Project	796,103.00
CPC Funding Request	323,000.00
Remaining Capital Request	473,103.00
Mass Cultural Sector Recovery Grant	- 26,660.00
In-House Electric/Lighting Savings	- 15,000.00
Fire Alarm Reconfiguration Savings	- 25,000.00
In-House Painting Savings	- 2,500.00
Revised Capital Request with Savings	403,943.00
Total Proposed Project Budget, including Building Acquisition: \$1,936,103	

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Available Funds***  
***Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Available Funds***

# Article 16

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## \$106,146.76 for Second Payment of Seven-Year New Fire Engine lease-purchase

- Production timeline of new engine delayed making of anticipated first payment to December 2022; no payment required in FY23.



*Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*

# Article 17

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## Increases funding for new Ambulance through first of a three-year lease-purchase

- \$122,000 approved at the June 2022 Annual Town Meeting
- Cost increased by **\$23,533.06** between time of cost estimate to contracting/production
- Continues the Town's five-year ambulance replacement schedule
- Completely funded through Ambulance Fund dedicated revenue with no tax rate impact



*Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Ambulance Fund  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Ambulance Fund*

Photo Text: Dighton Fire Dept. Ambulance

# Article 18

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## **\$50,561.92 for fourth year Highway Department Street Sweeper lease-purchase payment**

- Fourth of five year lease-payment schedule for Highway Department Street Sweeper approved at the June 2020 Annual Town Meeting

*Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash*

# Article 19

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## **\$50,000 to fund Planning Board legal costs and related litigation**

- Planning Board faces need to protect and defend the Town's interests in a number of legal matters, including an legal appeal relative to the proposed Forest Hills development, that could possibly extend beyond the next fiscal year
- Proposed Article provides a dedicated funding source to fund litigation, legal issues, and related complaints

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Raise and Appropriate  
Finance Committee Recommends Raise and Appropriate***

# Article 20

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## \$300,000 in Initial Funding for Main Street Roadway Reconstruction Project

- Along with the Dighton Water District's water main replacement efforts, planned Main Street infrastructure improvement projects include replacement of utility poles and drainage improvements, sidewalk upgrades and roadway reconstruction
- The drainage improvements, sidewalk upgrades and roadway reconstruction components are currently estimated to cost approximately \$2.1 million and are being planned as a multi-year, phased project during the next two (2) to three (3) years
- Dighton will be leveraging various funding streams, including state Chapter 90 and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to bring project goals to fruition. In the coming weeks, for example, town officials plan to make a \$250,000 ARPA funding request to the Bristol County Commissioners to fund necessary Main Street drainage and stormwater improvements related to the project.
- \$300,000 is an initial town investment in the project that would provide the opportunity to establish a workplan leveraging all available funding sources. The investment would also represent the town's first step in implementing recommendations from our recently-completed Pavement Management Plan



Photo Text: Main Street via Google Street View

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash***

# Article 21

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## Alternatives Analysis Report for the Closed Briggs Street Bridge

- Briggs Street Bridge has been closed to vehicular traffic by MassDOT since 1995
- \$28,000 proposed Alternatives Analysis includes a review of various alternatives for the disposition of the bridge; to consider impact to surrounding river infrastructure, including dam and associated hydraulic channel system
- The following alternatives will be reviewed:
  - Removal of the bridge (roadway and clapper stones) with appropriate public safety measures
  - Rehabilitation of the bridge
  - Replacement of the bridge with a new pedestrian bridge
  - Replacement of the bridge with a new vehicular bridge



Photo Text: Closed Briggs Street Bridge via Google Street View

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Free Cash  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Free Cash***

# Article 22

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## **\$34,000 Purchase of Two (2) CPR Chest Compression Systems for Dighton Fire-Rescue**

- Funds the replacement of two (2) outdated CPR Chest Compression Systems
- Price includes trade-in costs for current outdated equipment

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Ambulance Fund  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Ambulance Fund***

# Article 23



## \$100,000 for Security Technology and Access Controls at Dighton Elementary and Middle Schools

The overarching goal of the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District is to provide a secure and welcoming environment for all individuals

The relatively small student population in the District does not insulate the District from potentially violent incidents. Rather, that very size of the District may create more vulnerability for violent incidents, as has been historically demonstrated by active threat/shooter incidents in schools in similar environments. Because of that reality, the District has embraced an aggressive and proactive attitude toward security and safety

The District campuses have glaring and obvious deficiencies in basic safety and security issues. The District's video camera surveillance and door access control systems are inadequate when compared to contemporary standards

Specifically, the Dighton Campus buildings have no security cameras inside the schools. The District has a critical need to immediately improve those systems. Residents may recall the flood at DMS this past winter. While all signs pointed towards vandalism, there was no camera footage to determine the cause

The funds of this warrant article will be used for:

1. The purchase of a video camera surveillance system to eliminate the blind spots and lack of cameras with particular emphasis on all occupied and critical interior areas
2. Keyless door access control system to ensure the continued safety and security of the students and staff by effectively controlling all unauthorized access to the campus perimeters

Available funds made possible by D-R Excess/Deficiency turnback in the current FY23 budget

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from Available Funds***  
***Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from Available Funds***

# Article 24

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## **\$60,000 from PEG Access Account to Fund Cable Studio and Old Town Hall Technology Upgrades**

- Upgrades to server, cable workstations and Channel 9 Studio audio/visual equipment
- Modernization of Old Town Hall Zoom video technology and related audio/visual equipment, while relocating current system to the Dighton Police Department Community Room

***Board of Selectmen Recommends Transfer from PEG Access Fund  
Finance Committee Recommends Transfer from PEG Access Fund***

# Article 25

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## Technical Amendments to D-R Regional Agreement

- Updates list of Rehoboth school properties
- Updates the annual budget process timeline for tentative capital and operating budget and assessments for the following fiscal year to be presented by March 1<sup>st</sup> rather than January 15<sup>th</sup> of every year



***Board of Selectmen Recommends***

# Article 26

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## **Resident Petition – Proposed Amendment to General Bylaws relative to the term of the Moderator**

# Article 27

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Any other business?

THANK YOU!

Michael Mullen, Jr.

Town Administrator

[mmullen@dighton-ma.gov](mailto:mmullen@dighton-ma.gov)