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DIGHTON DIGEST

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Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District Invited Into Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Eligibility Period for Possible Building Project at Dighton Elementary School

The Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District has been invited into the Eligibility Period by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for a possible building project at Dighton Elementary School (DES). The MSBA voted on Dec. 13 to invite DES into the Eligibility Period, along with 18 other districts, to assess opportunities to address the DES school building and programmatic needs.

The invitation is the result of a Statement of Interest (SOI) submitted to the MSBA in April 2023 by Dighton officials. The SOI outlined overcrowding issues, continual increases in enrollment, and obsolete building space for required education programming at DES. The Eligibility Period is the first step in applying for building project funding assistance from the MSBA. During a 270-day Eligibility Period, expected to start on May 1, 2024, the MSBA will work with the district and town to determine the financial and community readiness to enter the MSBA Capital Pipeline.

Dighton Police Department Awarded \$20,000 in Support of Municipal Road Safety Program

The Dighton Police Department has been awarded \$20,000 in grant funding to improve road safety. The \$20,000 in grant funds were made available by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and allocated by the Office of Grants and Research (OGR).

This funding will be used to support the Municipal Road Safety Program, which assists in developing enforcement strategies to reduce roadway crashes, injuries, fatalities, and associated economic losses in Massachusetts.

The Dighton Police Department will use the funds to increase enforcement, purchase equipment, purchase community education resources and fund youth outreach initiatives.

From Board of Selectmen Chairman Peter Caron

Welcome to the second edition of the Dighton Digest! As I sit down to write this segment, I think about efforts displayed this week by our Highway Department, Fire, Police and Communications personnel. From removing downed trees, to helping school busses safely navigate student drop-offs, and assisting residents with mitigating this week's flooding and weather impacts, our highway and public safety employees once again demonstrated their preparedness and resolve to help us weather any kind of storm. This is what makes Dighton so special.

This holiday season, as we take a moment to reflect on this past year, it is clear that we are blessed to have a community filled with so many dedicated employees, volunteers and truly engaged residents. This year seemed to go by in a blink of an eye, which included both highlights and challenges. Our priority to ensure transparent fiscal planning through zero-base budgeting helped to streamline our budget process. Personnel transitions have resulted in the hiring of new employees who bring new energy, skills and passion to their positions. We have also dedicated time and energy to modernize many of our town permitting functions, while continuing our focus on securing targeted grant funding to help accomplish a variety of capital and operational goals. There is no doubt that 2024 will bring on new opportunities and challenges, but I am confident that we will continue to move forward. I join with my colleagues, Selectmen Nicole Mello and Leonard Hull, in wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE



I would like to think that the end of every calendar year is the calm before another storm, figuratively speaking, of course. The to-do list seems never-ending, but I know that with a new year comes a new budget process, updated goals, and a schedule that will quickly take us from January right through Annual Town Meeting. Despite the never-ending list, it's important to take a moment to think about where we have been and where we're headed.

As I think about where we've been, I go back to my first introduction to the community: attending Dighton's November 2021 Special Town Meeting just prior to applying for the role I am honored to have now. I think about how Dighton has invited me in to become part of your community; how my family's holiday traditions have been shaped by the traditions here in town. I also go back to June, when our third child, Casey, was born. My wife, Jenna, and I are still overwhelmed by the well-wishes we continue to receive.

We have accomplished so much, with much more still on the horizon. I remain grateful for the opportunity to have become part of the Dighton family, and wish you all a very Merry Christmas, a wonderful holiday season, and an exciting New Year!



Upcoming Dates

For a full calendar listing of meetings and events, please visit Dighton's official website at www.dighton-ma.gov

- January 1, 2024 – New Years Day – Town Offices Closed
- January 2, 2024 – Nomination Papers Available to seek positions for elected town office at the April 6, 2024 Annual Town Election
- January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Town Offices Closed
- February 1, 2024 – Applications for Abatement due to Assessors Office for Fiscal Year 2024. For more information, visit the Assessing Department website [here](#).
- February 14, 2024 – Last Day to Obtain Nomination Papers for Annual Town Election
- February 16, 2024 – Last Day to Submit to Registrars for Annual Town Election

Photos Around Town



On Dec. 12, Impact Family Church treated Dighton town employees to a Taco Tuesday lunch. The Town of Dighton truly appreciates the thoughtfulness of Pastor Maria and Eric Murphy and the IFC community and thank them for all they do for the Dighton community!



Colonel Robert Perry was joined by local veterans and various town officials and Dighton residents as he led this year's Veterans Day ceremony on behalf of the Dighton Veterans Department.



Town Administrator Mike Mullen and Members of the Board of Selectmen (from left), Nicole Mello, Leonard Hull, and Peter Caron connect with residents and support the Dighton Lions Club Arts Festival.

Board of Selectmen Approves Final Dighton Economic Development Plan



On Wednesday, Dec. 13., the Board of Selectmen approved a final Dighton Economic Development Plan, which was drafted and completed over the last year and a half through a state grant-funded partnership between the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District and the Dighton Development & Industrial Commission.

The planning efforts were informed by and included feedback from public outreach, public meetings and a survey, which included engagement from 140 participants.

The Dighton Economic Development Plan highlights a variety of initiatives already underway to streamline town permitting processes and provides a pathway to create targeted, measured and sustainable development to help guide the Dighton community into the future. Efforts to implement the plan's recommendations will rely on the engagement and support of the entire community.

Dighton Public Library Appoints Mark Procknik as Library Director



The Dighton Public Library Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Mark Procknik has been appointed as the new library director.

Procknik began his new role on Monday, Dec. 18.

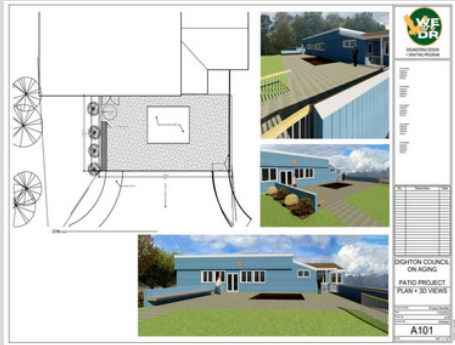
Procknik comes from the New Bedford Whaling Museum where he served as a librarian for several years.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Stonehill College and a master's degree in library science from Simmons College.

Opportunities for residents to meet with Procknik will become available in the near future. In the meantime, residents are encouraged to stop by Procknik's office, located in the modular unit at Town Hall.



Dighton Council on Aging Receives Over \$75K in Grant Awards



Council on Aging (COA) Director Anabela Powell and her team are excited to share that the COA recently received three grant awards to help the COA further strengthen and expand the vibrancy of its programming.

The COA was awarded \$1,000 for being the top statewide participant in the Walk Massachusetts Challenge through the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA). The award was a result of community participation in Dighton's local walking challenge initiated by the Council on Aging. The Award will be used to help fund COA fitness programming.

Additionally, the COA was awarded a \$50,000 grant to expand hybrid/in-person programming. This grant, awarded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, will be used to fund hybrid programming equipment and technology and to expand the COA's hybrid programming.

The COA has also been awarded a \$25,000 Senior Center Modernization Grant from the Massachusetts Council on Aging which will be used to update and renovate the rear entrances to the Council on Aging / Prime Time building, which will include the construction of a new concrete patio. This grant award was made possible by the shared efforts of the COA, Highway Superintendent Tom Ferry, Building Commissioner Jim Aguiar, and Town Administrator Mike Mullen.

The Town of Dighton would like to thank Jessica Nardozzi's Drafting and Engineering, Design & Drafting class at Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School, which worked with town officials to draft conceptual plans, submitted as part of the grant application.

Dighton welcomes new Health Agent Heather Guenard

The Board of Health welcomes Heather Guenard as Dighton's new Health Agent. Ms. Guenard has served as Health Agent since early September and brings with her a background in food services. We are grateful that she has dedicated herself to promoting the health and welfare of Dighton residents. We look forward to further developing a vibrant Health Department with her assistance in the years ahead.

Town of Dighton Awarded Grant to Update Housing Production Plan

The Town of Dighton has been awarded a \$40,000 state Community Compact Cabinet Grant to update the town's Housing Production Plan (HPP).

An HPP represents a community plan for affordable housing by creating a strategy that will enable the town to meet its affordable housing requirements in a manner consistent with state law and regulations.

Dighton will partner with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) to develop the town's HPP. Over the course of a year and a half, SRPEDD will review demographic and existing housing conditions and trends, while analyzing the town's available land to identify future sites for affordable housing development.

Dighton's efforts to maintain an updated Housing Production Plan dates back to the town's original plan adopted in February 2009. The town's last state-certified plan was adopted in 2014. State regulations require Housing Production Plans to be updated and certified every five years.

"Receiving a state grant to update Dighton's Housing Production Plan reflects the town's ongoing priority to plan for its future," said Town Administrator Mullen. "Having an updated Housing Production Plan allows Dighton to have more control in considering—and even denying—affordable housing projects not in the town's best interests, but it's important to first have a plan in place that reflects consensus and feedback from residents and stakeholders. This is especially critical with regard to the constraints, challenges, opportunities and strengths that need to be reflected in such a plan."

Library Building Project Update

Library Building Committee Co-Chairs Ron O'Connor and Ken Pacheco are excited to share that progress continues with plans to move the Dighton Public Library to its future home at 207 Main St., the former Smith Memorial Hall.

Thanks to a partnership with Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School (B-P), town officials have engaged B-P electrical students under the leadership of instructor Tom Ross to upgrade the building's electrical system.

The building's basement level was recently gutted in preparation for upcoming HVAC engineering, upgrades and installation efforts. The Library Building Committee, at their meeting on Dec. 18, also approved a fee proposal from MMT, the town's new architect, to create and provide construction drawings and specifications. A current anticipated completion date for the project is envisioned for early 2025.

Keep an eye out for the Dighton Digest!

The Dighton Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter. Every two months a new edition will be shared to help keep residents up-to-date. Check out the newsletter on the Dighton News and Events Portal and subscribe to receive the newsletter directly to your inbox.

