

# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner

November 29, 2019

Dr. Anthony Azar, Superintendent  
Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District  
2700 Regional Road  
North Dighton, MA 02764

Re: Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District - Fiscal Oversight pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71,  
§ 16B and 603 CMR 41.07

Dear Superintendent Azar:

In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 16B, if a regional budget is not adopted by December 1, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) shall establish a budget for the year and assume fiscal oversight of the regional district. We have reviewed the information provided by the school committee, school district and member town officials and town residents to support a budget level that they deem appropriate as well as within the member towns' fiscal capacities. We have also reviewed internal Department sources on past years' budgets, state aid, minimum local contributions and the district's use of excess and deficiency funds. We have considered the steps taken by the regional school committee to reduce its budget and mitigate the impact on the member towns by using other sources of revenue to offset the towns' assessments while maintaining a level of spending that will serve the needs of the Dighton-Rehoboth students.

In July, the Department established an interim 1/12 budget based on the district's prior year budget of \$43,848,919. In August, at the request of the school committee and the Town of Rehoboth, I increased the interim budget to \$45,096,223. At this point in the fiscal year, I will maintain the budget at this agreed upon level.

Accordingly, I am establishing the FY2020 Dighton-Rehoboth Regional District budget in the amount of \$45,096,223 based on the budget amount established on August 15 as the 1/12 budget. I am aware that this budget may result in a change in assessments to your member towns. Consequently, I expect the district to use any additional state reimbursements to offset such increases and reduce member towns' assessments in FY2020 proportional to the regional district agreement method for apportioning costs.

The treasurer of the regional district must calculate and certify to the member towns their respective assessments based on the statutory method. The member towns are obligated to appropriate their respective assessments based on this final budget amount and make payments to the regional district in accordance with the payment terms in the approved regional agreement.

In addition, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 16B and 603 CMR 41.07, the Commissioner will assume fiscal oversight of the district as of December 1. The following actions taken by the regional school committee, the superintendent of schools, or any other official of the school district shall be effective only with the written approval of the Commissioner:

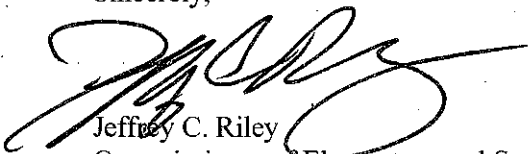
- (a) Adoption or reconsideration of the district budget.
- (b) Transfer of budgetary authority between line items.
- (c) Encumbrance or expenditure of funds not included in the general fund budget.
- (d) Borrowing.
- (e) Execution of new or amended collective bargaining agreements.
- (f) Execution of new contracts or amendments to existing contracts with a value of \$25,000 or more.
- (g) Establishment, increase, or decrease of user fees.

During the period of fiscal oversight, the Commissioner may impound any unencumbered funds for such period of time as he determines and undertake any initiatives that he deems necessary to secure the financial stability of the district. I am appointing Associate Commissioner Jay Sullivan to serve as my designee. This final budget and the Department's fiscal control will remain in place until the end of the fiscal year or until the member towns have approved a budget for the subsequent fiscal year, whichever is later.

I strongly encourage the district administration and officials of the member towns to initiate early discussions on the FY2021 budget so that local resolution can be achieved. In order to become fiscally sustainable, I also expect that the FY2021 budget will reduce the district's reliance on one-time sources of funding, such as excess and deficiency funds.

Please keep Mr. Sullivan informed of all fiscal activities and contact him at 781-338-6594, if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Jay Sullivan, Associate Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Katherine Cooper, Chair, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School Committee  
Kenneth Pacheco, Chair, Dighton Select Board  
Gerald V. Schwall, Chair, Rehoboth Select Board  
Mallory Aronstein, Town Administrator, Town of Dighton  
Helen Dennen, Town Administrator, Town of Rehoboth  
Christine Lynch, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Michelle Griffin, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education