

May 5, 2025
Annual Town Meeting, Part 1



**Please use the microphone
when recognized to speak.**

It greatly improves the audio quality of the recording, which is kept as an archival record of the meeting.

Volunteers Wanted

The Town is always looking for residents who might be able to volunteer for one of Gill's many boards, committees, councils and commissions. If you think you might be interested in joining any of these groups, please contact the Chair, or contact Ray Purington at 413-863-9347.

- Agricultural Commission (Tom Chalmers, 617-538-7886)
- Cable Advisory Committee
- Capital Improvement Planning Committee
- Conservation Commission (Brian Donahue, 781-697-8197)
- Council on Aging (Roberta Potter, 413-863-9357)
- Cultural Council (Patricia Crosby, 413-863-2297)
- Energy Commission (Vicky Jenkins, 413-325-5722)
- Finance Committee (Claire Chang, 413-626-3620)
- Historical Commission (Kit Carpenter, 413-863-2505)
- Memorial Committee (Merri Bourbeau, 413-863-8613)
- Recreation Committee (Isaac Bingham, 413-863-4431)
- Town Forest Committee (Ken Sprankle, 413-863-2975)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (Suzanne Smiley, 413-863-8174)

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

FRANKLIN, SS.

TOWN OF GILL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING: MAY 5, 2025

To any of the Constables of the Town of Gill in the County of Franklin,

Greetings:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are hereby directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of said town, qualified to vote in elections and in town affairs, to meet at the Gill Town Hall, 325 Main Road in said Town on Monday, the Fifth day of May, in the year Two Thousand and Twenty Five (05/05/2025) at 7:00 PM then and there to act on the following articles.

Article 1: To elect the following officers: Two or more Field Drivers; Fence Viewers; Measurers of Wood, Bark and Surveyors of Lumber - all for one year; AND

To see if the Town will vote to accept and expend any sum of money that might be made available from State or Federal funds for roadwork or other purposes for the Fiscal Year 2026 and for the Chapter 90 type funds, authorize the Selectboard to enter into contracts with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Transportation; AND

To see if the Town will vote to accept any sum of money that might be made available from the Quintus Allen Trust during Fiscal Year 2026, and authorize the Selectboard to expend such funds in support of the Gill Elementary School, or take any action relative thereto.

Motion: It is moved the Town vote to elect Edward J. Golembeski and Clifford C. Hatch as Field Drivers and the Regional Animal Control Officer as Assistant Field Driver and elect the Selectboard as Fence Viewers; Measurers of Wood, Bark and Surveyors of Lumber - all for one year; AND

It is moved the Town vote to accept and expend any sum of money that might be made available from State or Federal funds for roadwork or other purposes for the Fiscal Year 2026 and for the Chapter 90 type funds, authorize the Selectboard to enter into contracts with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Transportation; AND

It is moved the Town vote to accept any sum of money that might be made available from the Quintus Allen Trust during Fiscal Year 2026, and authorize the Selectboard to expend such funds in support of the Gill Elementary School.

The Finance Committee took no action on this article.

The names and positions (Field Drivers, Fence Viewers, and etc.) are the same as last year.

Chapter 90 funds are given annually by the state to the Town, and are used for our road maintenance program – activities such as repaving asphalt roads, applying new oil & stone (now called “chip sealing”), and drainage and guardrail projects. In Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 the state also provided Chapter 90-like funds for road maintenance through the Rural Roads and the Fair Share programs. The total state aid received in Fiscal Year 2024 was \$351,059, and \$289,742 was received in Fiscal Year 2025.

It is unclear if there will be Rural Roads or Fair Share funding in Fiscal Year 2026. Subject to approval by the Legislature, the Town expects to receive \$260,781 of traditional Chapter 90 funds for Fiscal Year 2026. The higher amount is based upon the Governor’s proposed 5-year bond bill for the Chapter 90 program that includes a 50% increase in the statewide funds for the program and a change in the allocation formula to add more emphasis on road mileage (and less emphasis on population and employment figures), which benefits rural towns. And while \$260K is a lot of money, keep in mind the estimated cost to mill and re-pave 1.5 miles of West Gill Road this spring is \$293,000.

Quintus Allen was an original trustee of the Greenfield Savings Bank. Upon his death in 1884, his will established a trust fund to be used for education-related expenses in Colrain, Gill, Leyden, and Shelburne. The interest earned by the Trust is distributed to those towns each year. The Town

received \$2,291 from the Trust during Fiscal Year 2025, and there is a balance of \$13,200 in the Town's Quintus Allen account. The Selectboard recently approved funds for an all-school trip to Look Park at the end of this school year.

In recent years the School has used the Quintus Allen funds for:

2024	Gaga Ball Pit & Rubber Mat (\$4,900)
2022	Portable Netting behind Basketball Hoops (\$1,842.30)
2018-19	Outdoor Learning Center (\$4,537.96)
2017	Chromebook Computers (24) & Storage Cart (\$6,050.00)

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to adopt and enact the amendments to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Charter, said amendment(s) having been proposed by a two-thirds majority of the weighted vote of the full membership of the FRCOG Council and a majority vote of the FRCOG Executive Committee, with said amendment(s) taking full effect immediately upon adoption by two-thirds of the member towns unless a later effective date is otherwise specified; or take any action relative thereto.

A two-thirds majority vote by this town meeting is required for adoption and enactment of this article. Copies of the 2025 Proposed Amendment to the FRCOG Charter are available at Town Hall prior to the Annual Town Meeting and copies will be available at the Annual Town Meeting.

Motion: It is moved the Town vote to adopt and enact the amendments to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Charter, said amendment(s) having been proposed by a two-thirds majority of the weighted vote of the full membership of the FRCOG Council and a majority vote of the FRCOG Executive Committee, with said amendment(s) taking full effect immediately upon adoption by two-thirds of the member towns unless a later effective date is otherwise specified.

The Finance Committee took no action on this article.

A two-page Charter Change Fact Sheet provided by the FRCOG is attached as the last page in this handout. Copies of the 14-page document with all of the proposed amendments are available at the front table.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments was formed in 1998 with the abolition of county government. State legislation allowed creation of the FRCOG, and was followed by towns affirming the FRCOG's creation by adopting the FRCOG Charter.

After 28 years as a Council of Governments with no changes to the Charter, the FRCOG Executive Committee has decided to pursue amendments. There are two reasons the Charter has not been amended until now. First, the document is strong and relatively timeless and, for the most part, substantive changes were not needed. Second, the amendment process is onerous. A Charter amendment requires affirmative votes by the FRCOG Executive Committee and FRCOG Council and a 2/3 majority vote at 2/3 of Franklin County municipal Town Meetings.

A Charter amendment is proposed now because the FRCOG expects a leadership transition in the coming years and decided new leadership should be equipped with an updated organizing document that reflects the evolution of the FRCOG and allows more seamless organizational structure changes.

The process used to amend the FRCOG Charter and Enabling Legislation will be in the opposite order to that used in 1998. First, the FRCOG will seek approval of Charter changes at Annual Town Meetings of all Franklin County towns. Once there are affirmative votes of 2/3 of the member towns, the FRCOG will pursue legislative amendments to the FRCOG Enabling Legislation so the two documents match.

The proposed changes update the Charter to remove references to the original formation of the FRCOG, align grammar, provide greater clarity, and create greater flexibility when impacting state and federal law changes. The proposed changes do not alter the formula that dictates town voting powers and financial membership commitment. The substantive changes to the Charter are listed on the second page of the two-page Fact Sheet (last page of this handout).

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to fix the maximum amount that may be spent during Fiscal Year 2026 beginning on July 1, 2025 for the revolving funds established in town by-laws for certain departments, boards,

committees, agencies or officers in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, or take any other action relative thereto.

Revolving Fund	Department, Board, Committee, Agency or Officer Authorized to Spend from Fund	Fiscal Year 2026 Spending Limit
Oil Burner Inspections	Fire Chief	\$2,000.00
Energy Commission Programs	Energy Commission	1,000.00
Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)	ZBA, Administrative Clerk	3,000.00
Dog	Town Clerk, Selectboard	8,000.00
Conservation Commission Project Review	Conservation Commission	10,000.00
Cemetery Opening Fees	Cemetery Commission	2,000.00
Agricultural Commission Programs	Agricultural Commission	500.00
Solid Waste & Recycling	Board of Health, Town Administrator	5,000.00
Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station	Selectboard, Town Administrator	4,000.00

Motion: It is moved the Town vote to fix the maximum amount that may be spent during Fiscal Year 2026 beginning on July 1, 2025 for the revolving funds established in town by-laws for certain departments, boards, committees, agencies or officers in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53E½, in accordance with the amounts listed in the table above.

The Finance Committee took no action on this article.

A revolving fund allows a “department” to use its program revenues within the fiscal year for the purposes listed in the Town’s Departmental Revolving Funds bylaw adopted at the June 12, 2023 town meeting. At the end of the fiscal year the remaining fund balance carries forward to the next year.

The listed revolving funds and spending limits for Fiscal Year 2026 are identical to those approved at last year’s Town Meeting and are felt to be adequate for the foreseen needs of the Town.

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*A motion to continue the meeting until Monday, June 9, 2025 at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall is anticipated at this point. The additional time will allow the Town to complete the budget process for Fiscal Year 2026.*

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Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to fix the salaries or compensation of the several officers of the Town as follows, or take any action relative thereto.

- Constable(s) – Each Posting
- Moderator – Annual Town Meeting
- Special Town Meeting, Each
- Selectboard Chair
- 2nd & 3rd Member, Each
- Board of Assessors Chair
- 2nd & 3rd Member, Each
- Board of Health Chair
- 2nd & 3rd Member, Each
- Town Clerk
- Tax Collector
- Additional As Sewer Fee Collector
- Registrars – Three members, Each
- Town Clerk, as Chair

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation a sum or sums of money to provide a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all appointed Town employees and certain elected officials, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide a sum or sums of money for the maintenance of the several departments of the Town (the “Omnibus budget”) for Fiscal Year 2026, and for other necessary charges, in accordance with the amounts recommended by the Selectboard, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide \$1,994,553.00 to provide \$1,985,811.00 for its Fiscal Year 2026 operating assessment and \$8,742.00 for its Fiscal Year 2026 debt service costs for the Gill-Montague Regional School District, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide a sum or sums of money to add to the account to be used toward the costs associated with an appraisal of the real and personal property in the Town of Gill owned by FirstLight Power and an appraisal of the personal property in the Town of Gill owned by National Grid, New England Power Company, and NSTAR Electric Company d/b/a Eversource Energy, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide a sum or sums of money to add to the Board of Assessors Revaluation Account (001-142-5801), or take any action relative thereto.

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund (account 256) a sum or sums of money to add to the account (001-159-5846) previously established to provide for Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access operations and other municipal cable-related expenses, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide a sum or sums or money for the Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) or other available funds and place said amounts into one or more of the following stabilization funds: Capital Stabilization Fund, Education Stabilization Fund, Energy Stabilization Fund, Fire Department SCBA/Air Packs Stabilization Fund, and General Stabilization Fund, or take any action relative thereto.

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum or sums of money from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) or other available funds to be used to reduce the tax rate and stabilize the tax levy for Fiscal Year 2026, or take any action relative thereto.

And, you are directed to serve this Warrant by posting up attested copies thereof at the Town Hall, Main Road; Post Office, Mt. Hermon; The Gill Tavern, Main Road; and Riverside Municipal Building, Route 2, in said Town seven days at least before the time of holding said meeting.

Hereof fail not and make due return of this Warrant with your doings thereon to the Town Clerk at the time and place of meeting, as foresaid.

Given under our hand this 24th day of April in the year Two Thousand Twenty Five (04/24/2025).

Selectboard of Gill

Gregory M. Snedeker, Chair

Charles J. Garbiel II, Board member

Randy P. Crochier Sr., Board member

A true copy Attest:

Doreen J. Stevens, Town Clerk

Date: April 24, 2025

Individuals who may need auxiliary aids for effective communication for this meeting should call the Gill Town Hall at (413) 863-9347.

Pursuant to the within Warrant, I have notified and warned the inhabitants of the Town of Gill by posting up attested copies of the same at Town Hall, Main Rd.; Post Office, Mt. Hermon; The Gill Tavern, Main Rd.; and Riverside Municipal Building, Route 2, seven days before the date hereof, as within directed.

Constable of Gill

Date:



What is the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)?

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments is a regional service organization serving the twenty-six towns of Franklin County. It was formed in 1997 in response to the abolition of County Government and the Franklin County Commission.

The FRCOG is a voluntary membership organization. All 26 municipalities of Franklin County are members. Membership assessment is as low as possible and pays for administration, advocacy and special projects.

Participation in fee-for-service municipal service programs is voluntary and paid through separate assessments (with assessment formulas unique to each program); federal and state grants fund other programs.

The FRCOG is both a **Council of Governments (COG)** and the designated **Regional Planning Agency (RPA)** for Franklin County. COGs provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines; RPAs, created by Massachusetts General Law in 1974, study, plan, and recommend how a region can protect and enhance its environment, economy and quality of life through the land use, natural resources, climate resiliency, economic development, and transportation.

The FRCOG's mission: to foster a vibrant, sustainable region for all, and to leverage resources that promote collaboration and efficiency within our member communities.

We do this by providing advocacy, planning, and cooperative services – both proactively and in direct response to our member communities' needs.

What is the FRCOG Charter?

Franklin County Commission (the name of our former county government) provided valuable services to the towns of Franklin County and was the legislatively established Regional Planning Agency for Franklin County. In the mid-1990s, Governor Weld was intent on eliminating County Government, as he considered it a redundant layer of government.

A **charter** is a legal document granted to an organization that outlines the purpose and structure for the creation of an organization, as well as the rights and duties the organization will have.

A Charter Commission was formed to create a Council of Governments before county government was abolished. The Charter was adopted by all 26 towns in 1996, and the FRCOG

was created in 1997. State legislation allowed the formation and creation of the FRCOG and abolished the county government – 151 Acts 96, Section 567.

Why Update the Charter Now?

The FRCOG Charter is a strong document. In our 25+ year history, no amendments have ever been made. Now, some items are out of date, and no longer reflect the evolution of the FRCOG and Franklin County.

To make any changes is a significant process. We do so now prior to the anticipated retirements of several long-term management staff, and to poise the FRCOG and the region for the future.

FRCOG Charter Amendment Process

Step 1

Majority vote of FRCOG Executive Committee.

Step 2

2/3 of weighted vote of FRCOG Council.

Step 3

2/3 majority vote by 2/3 of member towns.

Proposed Charter Changes

The proposed changes update the Charter to remove references to the original formation of the FRCOG, align grammar, provide greater clarity, and create greater flexibility when impacting state and federal law changes. Changes also:

- Expand FRCOG Council and Executive Committee municipal membership eligibility
- Revamp Franklin Regional Planning Board by reducing membership composition (from 74 members to 20); expanding membership potential to include subject matter experts and/or professional planners; enable easier amendment to the Board’s operating procedures by removing specificity in the Charter; renaming the Board the Franklin Regional Planning Advisory Board (FRPAB) to clarify its purpose
- Add language to address vacancies on Council or FRPAB
- Clarify the procedures for out-of-County municipalities that wish to join the FRCOG, and for in-County municipalities that may wish to leave the FRCOG
- Modify future charter change process requirements by requiring a simple majority vote of 2/3 of Town Meetings

View a copy of the original charter with all proposed changes highlighted red (additions/edits) and red strikethrough (deletions) at: <https://bit.ly/frcogcharter> or scan the QR code below.

