

June 9, 2025  
Annual Town Meeting, Part 2



**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

Council on Aging (Roberta Potter, 413-863-9357)

Cultural Council (Patricia Crosby, 413-863-2297)

Energy Commission (Vicky Jenkins, 413-325-5722)

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)

## Annual Town Meeting, Part 2

June 9, 2025

Thank you for attending the continuation of Gill's Annual Town Meeting. Tonight, we will vote on the FY26 Budget as well as other financial articles. The budget process this year was uniquely challenging as the Town had cost increases in the operating budget that were, for a variety of reasons, beyond our control.

Please understand this is not a typical budget cycle as we generally don't experience this many major increases in a single year. It is a "Perfect Storm," if you will.

The total increase from FY25 to FY26 in the Town's Omnibus Budget and Education assessments is as follows:

Omnibus Budget increase (Line 88)		\$223,402
<u>Education increase (Article 7)</u>	+	<u>\$225,427</u>
Total increase to Operating Budgets	=	\$448,829

Below is a list of five budget line items with significant increases from FY25 to FY26. These five budget lines account for 81% of the total increase in the Town's operating spending plan for the coming year. Explanatory notes for each item follow the list.

1. (Line 36) EMS/Ambulance \$30,745 increase
2. (Line 69) Fire Truck Loan \$53,771 increase
3. (Line 72) Group Health Insurance \$35,526 increase
4. (Line 85) Franklin County Technical School \$19,221 increase
5. (Article 7) Gill-Montague Regional School District \$224,165 increase

Total (above 5) \$363,428 (81%)

All other lines \$85,401 (19%)

1. (Line 36) EMS/Ambulance - \$30,745: We expect the cost of this service to rise over the next few years, as the EMS service expands its staffing and services to cover the needs of the region, and then level off. It is a critical service we cannot be without, and there are no other realistic options for coverage.

2. (Line 69) Fire Truck Loan - \$53,771: We funded 40% of the cost of this truck using ARPA Federal funds received during the COVID pandemic and another 25% using stabilization funds (savings accounts). The town voted to fund the remaining 35% through taxation and borrowing. This is the first of three years of payments. To help limit the increase to next year's tax rate the FY26 loan payment is being paid for using Free Cash.
3. (Line 72) Group Health Insurance - \$35,526: Health insurance across the region dramatically rose, with most municipalities seeing an increase of 18-25%. The rise in insurance rates was primarily caused by a sharp increase in use of the GLP-1 class of drugs (such as Ozempic, Wegovy, and Trulicity, among others, for diabetes and weight-loss). Most health insurers have recently announced these drugs will no longer be covered in 2026 for off-label uses (only prescriptions for type 2 diabetes will be covered). We expect/hope rates not to rise this dramatically again next year, and who knows, may even decrease. The budget for health insurance also includes a new benefitted position, as the Accountant will become a Town employee rather than a contracted position through the FRCOG.
4. (Line 85) Franklin County Technical School - \$19,221: The Town's assessment for the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) changes from year to year based on how many students attend from our town. Gill students attending Tech increased by 23%, from 13 to 16 students. Gill's assessment increased by only 9.4%
5. (Article 7) Gill-Montague Regional School District - \$224,165: Just like the FCTS assessment, the Town's assessment for the GMRSD budget changes based on the number of students who attend the District schools. The number of students from Gill increased from 79 to 93 (18%) at the same time Montague's enrollment decreased from 667 to 637 (4.5%). This was a double whammy – not only do we have more students to pay for, but our share of the overall District budget increased as well.

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.*

~~~~~  
*The town meeting on Monday, June 9, 2025 at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall is a continuation of the Annual Town Meeting originally opened on Monday, May 5, 2025. Articles 1, 2, and 3 were addressed on May 5<sup>th</sup>.*  
 ~~~~~

**Article 4 (Compensation for Town Officers):** 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	\$22.00
*Moderator – Annual Town Meeting	\$152.00
*Special Town Meeting, Each	\$28.00
*Selectboard Chair	\$2,778.00
*2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Member, Each	\$2,525.00
*Board of Assessors Chair	\$3,374.00
*2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Member, Each	\$3,067.00
*Board of Health Chair	\$1,522.00
*2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Member, Each	\$1,393.00
Town Clerk	\$29,742.00
Tax Collector	\$29,742.00
Additional As Sewer Fee Collector	\$839.00
Registrars – Three members, Each	\$71.00
Town Clerk, as Chair	\$115.00

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to fix the salaries or compensation of the several officers of the Town as listed in the Article, plus any cost of living adjustment (COLA) that may be provided by the Town.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 6 in favor and 1 opposed.*

*Otherwise, all amounts are level funded (with rounding) from Fiscal Year 2025. A COLA, if approved in Article 5, would be in addition to the amounts listed above. The elected positions preceded by an asterisk (\*) are not included in the COLA proposed in Article 5 on the basis the provided stipends are more akin to honorariums, and are not intended to be working wages compensation for the time spent on the duties of the positions.*

**Article 5 (COLA for Town Employees):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$17,650.00 to provide a 2.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all appointed Town employees and the elected Tax Collector and Town Clerk.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*The proposed 2.5% COLA for Fiscal Year 2026 is the same increase provided to Social Security recipients effective in January 2025.*

*Certain elected positions (Constables, Moderator, Selectboard members, Assessors, and Board of Health members) are excluded from this COLA on the basis the provided stipends are more akin to honorariums, and are not intended to be working wages compensation for the time spent on the duties of the positions.*

**Article 6 (Omnibus Budget):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$2,338,639.00 and transfer \$150,000.00 from Sewer Use Fees and appropriate \$35,000.00 from Fiscal Year 2026 Estimated Sewer Receipts and transfer \$109,816.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) for a total appropriation of \$2,633,455.00 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 amount recommended by the Selectboard.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 6 in favor and 1 opposed.*

*Please see the separate handout (legal-sized paper) for the Omnibus amounts and accompanying notes. The amounts in the motion come from page 3, Column D, lines 88 – 92 of the handout. The second sheet of the stapled handout contains general remarks about financial challenges faced in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.*

**Article 7 (GMRSD Assessment):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$1,908,553.00 and further transfer \$86,000.00 from the Education Stabilization Fund 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 (GMRSD).

*A 2/3 majority is needed to transfer funds from the Education Stabilization Fund.*

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*The GMRSD’s total Fiscal Year 2026 “All Funds” budget increased by 4.2% over Fiscal Year 2025. Gill’s assessment for the GMRSD’s operating budget increased by \$224,165 (12.7%) and the debt service for the high school/middle school renovation project increased by \$1,262.*

*Gill’s enrollment in the District increased 17.7% from 79 to 93 students at the same time Montague’s enrollment decreased 4.5% from 667 to 637. Gill’s share of the District’s operating costs increased from 10.59% to 12.74% and Montague’s share decreased from 89.41% to 87.26%.*

*“Putting money into the Education Stabilization Fund provides a reserve that can be used in future years in the event of a significant increase in assessments or other educational needs.” This statement has appeared in many of the recent Town Meeting handouts as part of the explanation for the Article related to adding funds to the Town’s various Stabilization Funds. Gill’s Fiscal Year 2026 assessments for the GMRSD and the Franklin County Technical School have a combined increase of \$244,648 (12.4%) over the Fiscal Year 2025 assessments. The Selectboard and Finance Committee agreed this is a “significant*

increase” and are recommending using \$86,000 from the Education Stabilization Fund to mitigate the need for a Proposition 2-1/2 Override vote.

A handout from the GMRSD is attached (last page in Town Meeting handout, printed on color paper), and District officials are in attendance to answer questions.

**Article 8 (Assessors Utility Appraisals):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$9,000.00 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 appraisals 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.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*Every five years the Department of Revenue requires the Assessors to obtain a new appraisal of the value of the Gill portion of the Turners Falls Dam, as well as other property in Gill owned by FirstLight. Yearly appraisals are also needed to substantiate the valuation of the several electricity distribution companies with property in Gill. This article adds to the existing account, saving toward the next major appraisal being done for Fiscal Year 2027 and providing funds for interim year appraisals and updates.*

**Article 9 (Assessors’ Revaluation):** 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.

It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$10,000.00 to add to the Board of Assessors’ Revaluation Account (001-142-5801).

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*Fiscal Year 2027 is the next recertification year for Gill, in which the Department of Revenue will review and certify property values town wide. Because of the added level of research and analysis, the Assessors incur extra costs during revaluation years. This article continues saving toward the revaluation.*

**Article 10 (PEG Access):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$11,500.00 from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund (account 256) to add to the account (001-159-5846) previously established to provide for PEG Access operations and other municipal cable-related expenses.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*The Town annually receives approximately \$15,000 in PEG (Public, Educational, and Governmental) Access funds from Comcast as part of its cable license. There is currently a balance of \$143,968 in the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund. The money can only be used for public access broadcasting, educational media and broadcasting, government access television, and/or the capital costs of PEG facilities, and must be appropriated by Town Meeting before it can be spent.*

*The PEG Access operating account began Fiscal Year 2025 with a balance of \$16,075 and is projected to spend approximately \$3,000 this year on equipment upgrades, technical support, and stipends for those who video record Selectboard meetings, Town Meetings, and other public events. This \$11,500 appropriation will “refill” the balance to the \$25,000 recommended for operations in Fiscal Year 2026.*

*The current cable license issued by the Town to Comcast expires in 2026 and the additional funds being provided to the PEG Access operating account for Fiscal Year 2026 are intended to offset the Town’s legal expenses associated with negotiating the license renewal. Negotiations with Comcast will be*



*getting underway soon. The Cable Committee currently only has two members, so volunteers to serve are eagerly sought!*

**Article 11 (OPEB Fund):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$10,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) for the Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*This article continues to set aside money to meet future expenses of the Town's obligation to provide health insurance for current and future retirees. By placing money into its OPEB fund, the Town demonstrates to banks and other potential lenders it recognizes the financial liability and is making an effort to save for it. In turn, the Town receives slightly better loan rates when it borrows money for building maintenance, vehicle and equipment purchases, and other purposes.*

*In October 2022 the Town received an updated calculation on its Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability, prepared by Odyssey Advisors. As of June 30, 2022 our total OPEB liability was \$935,113 and we had funded \$87,689 – a funding ratio of 9.4%. Based on the funding ratios in the most recently available (December 2021) OPEB Summary Report published by the Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), Gill was in the top 20% of Massachusetts cities and towns. The OPEB fund has a current balance of \$151,402.*

**Article 12 (Money into Stabilization Funds):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$100,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be placed into the Capital Stabilization Fund AND further transfer \$100,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be placed into the Education Stabilization Fund AND further transfer \$2,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be placed into the Energy Stabilization Fund AND further transfer \$18,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be placed into the Fire Department SCBA/Air Packs Stabilization Fund AND further transfer \$247,278.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be placed into the General Stabilization Fund.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*This article transfers Free Cash into several of the Town's stabilization funds. Free Cash is the money that remains unspent in department budgets from the previous year, plus any revenues in excess of what was anticipated when the tax rate was set. The recommended amounts are intended to contribute toward the fiscal stability and financial reserves of the Town.*

*The certified Free Cash from Fiscal Year 2024 was \$667,094, which is significantly higher than usual. The Town's financial team is currently analyzing the sources of the Free Cash and will discuss their findings with the Selectboard and Finance Committee. Out of an abundance of caution, most of the Free Cash is being allocated to the Town's various Stabilization Funds.*

*From a budgeting perspective, Free Cash should be treated as a one-time or non-recurring revenue. That is, there is no certainty next year's Free Cash will be as much as this year's, and to avoid a structural deficit in future budgets Free Cash should be used very sparingly for recurring operating expenses.*

*There is currently \$117,238 in the Capital Stabilization Fund, \$262,107 in the Education Stabilization Fund, \$39,367 in the Energy Stabilization Fund, \$99,669 in the Fire Department SCBA/Air Packs Stabilization Fund, and \$378,265 in the General Stabilization Fund. (Totals do not include amounts voted in or out by other articles considered today.)*

*The \$100,000 in this motion for the Capital Stabilization Fund represents a continued effort by the Selectboard and Finance Committee to set aside funds for the Town's future capital expenses, mainly building maintenance and equipment replacement, and to reduce the need to borrow when those projects are undertaken.*

*The \$100,000 in this motion for the Education Stabilization Fund will replenish the funds that are proposed to be voted out as part of Article 7. It is hoped the Town's assessments for education will stabilize in the next couple of years. Until that time it is likely the Education Stabilization Fund will be tapped to help cover some of the increases.*

*The \$2,000 in this motion for the Energy Stabilization Fund is a portion of the savings created when the Town converted its streetlights to energy-efficient LEDs in 2015.*

*The \$18,000 in this motion for the Fire Department SCBA/Air Packs Stabilization Fund continues the savings program established in 2019 to set aside funds for the future replacement of the air packs used by the Fire Department. The 20 air packs were purchased new in 2017 using \$144,500 in grant and donated funds, and have 15-year certifications for use.*

*The \$247,278 in this motion for the General Stabilization Fund takes the remaining balance of unallocated Free Cash and directs it into a savings account that may be used for any purpose upon a favorable two-thirds majority vote by Town Meeting.*

*If any of the articles of the Annual Town Meeting are amended or defeated, it is anticipated the amounts in this article will be adjusted accordingly in order to maintain a balanced budget that does not require an override.*

**Article 13 (Using Free Cash to Reduce Tax Rate):** 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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$80,000.00 from unappropriated funds (Free Cash) to be used to reduce the tax rate and stabilize the tax levy for Fiscal Year 2026.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*Free Cash is the money that remains unspent in department budgets from the previous year, plus any revenues in excess of what was anticipated when the tax rate was set. The Free Cash from Fiscal Year 2024 was certified by the Department of Revenue to be \$667,094. The following are the recommended uses of this year's Free Cash:*

\$109,816	Article 6	Year 3 (of 3) loan payment for Highway truck (\$56,045) and Year 1 (of 3) loan payment for Fire truck (\$53,771)
\$10,000	Article 11	Other Post-Employment Benefits ("OPEB")
\$467,278	Article 12	Fiscal Year 2025 contributions to various stabilization funds
\$80,000	Article 13	(this article) to reduce the Fiscal Year 2026 tax rate

*Depending on the outcomes of the other "money" articles considered earlier in this meeting, a different amount may be recommended to be used to reduce the Fiscal Year 2026 tax rate*

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 24<sup>th</sup> 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:

Article 6 - Omnibus Budget

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY26			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/09/2025 Annual Town Meeting	FY24 Approved with COLA	FY25 Approved with COLA	Selectboard & Finance Comm. Recommended	Increase / (Decrease) ( D - C )	% Change	Notes
1	<b>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</b>						
2	Moderator (Stipend & Expenses)	408.00	408.00	408.00	-		
3	Selectboard Stipends	7,828.00	7,828.00	7,828.00	-		
4	Selectboard Expenses	4,059.68	4,075.93	3,725.00	(350.93)	-8.6%	Reduced bid fees, reduced dues
5	Town Admin & Admin Clerk (Salary&Exp.)	102,276.10	105,547.73	105,478.00	(69.73)		
6	Finance Committee	192.00	196.00	200.00	4.00	2.0%	
7	Reserve Fund	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	-		
8	Accountant Expenses	150.00	11,925.00	51,977.00	40,052.00	335.9%	FRCOG accounting program is ending; increase reflects salary to direct hire the Accountant, plus cost of annual Accounting school at UMASS
9	Assessors Stipends	9,508.00	9,508.00	9,508.00	-		
10	Assessors Clerical Salary	39,301.62	40,481.06	47,330.00	6,848.94	16.9%	Step increase on wage scale
11	Assessors Expenses	18,300.00	21,788.00	20,568.00	(1,220.00)	-5.6%	Fewer personal property accounts to be visited
12	Treasurer Salary	26,037.96	26,819.26	26,820.00	0.74		
13	Treasurer Expenses	9,155.00	9,455.00	10,550.00	1,095.00	11.6%	Unemployment service, payroll fees, postage, annual training conference
14	Tax Collector Salary	28,875.60	29,742.18	29,742.00	(0.18)		
15	Tax Collector Expenses	11,974.00	11,974.00	13,069.00	1,095.00	9.1%	Annual Collector school at UMASS, advertising
16	Legal	7,500.00	7,500.00	7,500.00	-		
17	IT Committee	8,230.00	9,985.00	10,247.00	262.00	2.6%	
18	Town Clerk Salary	25,641.46	29,742.18	29,742.00	(0.18)		
19	Town Clerk Expenses	3,900.00	4,360.00	4,310.00	(50.00)	-1.1%	
20	Elections/Registrars	10,950.00	10,950.00	10,950.00	-		
21	Conservation Commission	640.00	640.00	640.00	-		
22	Agricultural Commission	380.00	380.00	380.00	-		
23	Planning Board	785.00	785.00	785.00	-		
24	Zoning Board of Appeals	185.00	300.00	300.00	-		
25	Energy Commission	475.00	475.00	475.00	-		
26	Town Hall/Riverside Bldg. Operations	29,152.70	29,814.73	29,815.00	0.27		
27	Building Repairs & Maintenance	18,000.00	18,000.00	18,000.00	-		
28	Garage/Public Safety Bldg. Operations	25,992.00	27,505.00	27,500.00	(5.00)		
29	<b>GENERAL GOVERNMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>391,397.12</b>	<b>421,685.07</b>	<b>469,347.00</b>	<b>47,661.93</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	
30							

Article 6 - Omnibus Budget

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY26			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/09/2025 Annual Town Meeting	FY24 Approved with COLA	FY25 Approved with COLA	Selectboard & Finance Comm. Recommended	Increase / (Decrease) ( D - C )	% Change	Notes
31	<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>						
32	Police Department	247,751.98	250,337.99	273,165.00	22,827.01	9.1%	Salary increase in new 3-year contract with Police Chief
33	Fire Department	130,547.30	136,652.79	136,653.00	0.21		
34	Emergency Management	6,322.08	6,412.66	6,413.00	0.34		
35	Animal Control	2,936.00	2,761.00	2,832.00	71.00	2.6%	
36	EMS/Ambulance	15,000.00	25,000.00	55,745.00	30,745.00	123.0%	Increased assessment from Northfield Ambulance
37	<b>PUBLIC SAFETY TOTAL</b>	<b>402,557.36</b>	<b>421,164.44</b>	<b>474,808.00</b>	<b>53,643.56</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	
38							
39	<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>						
40	Trees and Forestry	17,715.00	16,115.00	16,115.00	-		
41	Highway Department	369,813.28	391,974.95	412,963.00	20,988.05	5.4%	Increases in cost of contracted services, road materials, machinery maintenance
42	Highway Dep't. - Snow & Ice Removal	101,440.00	101,440.00	106,522.00	5,082.00	5.0%	Increase in cost of winter materials (sand & salt)
43	Bridges and Street Lights	2,290.00	2,353.00	2,684.00	331.00	14.1%	Increase to electric rates; equipment maintenance
44	Solid Waste & Recycling	135,548.00	142,957.00	153,719.00	10,762.00	7.5%	Contractual increase for collection service; compost collection program
45	Solid Waste District Assessment	4,164.00	4,164.00	4,372.00	208.00	5.0%	
46	Hazardous Waste Collection	-	-	-	-		State grant covers this expense
47	Sewer	185,000.00	185,000.00	185,000.00	-		
48	Cemetery Commission	10,000.00	12,150.00	12,381.00	231.00	1.9%	
49	Memorial Committee	951.00	1,005.00	1,010.00	5.00	0.5%	
50	<b>PUBLIC WORKS TOTAL</b>	<b>826,921.28</b>	<b>857,158.95</b>	<b>894,766.00</b>	<b>37,607.05</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	
51							
52	<b>HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES</b>						
53	Board of Health Salaries	4,308.00	4,308.00	4,308.00	-		
54	Board of Health Expenses	5,578.08	5,608.24	5,609.00	0.76		
55	Council on Aging	10,338.00	10,612.00	11,046.00	434.00	4.1%	
56	Veterans District Assessment	3,674.00	4,013.00	4,129.00	116.00	2.9%	
57	Veterans Benefits	4,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	-		
58	<b>HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>27,898.08</b>	<b>26,541.24</b>	<b>27,092.00</b>	<b>550.76</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	
59							

Article 6 - Omnibus Budget

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY26			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/09/2025 Annual Town Meeting	FY24 Approved with COLA	FY25 Approved with COLA	Selectboard & Finance Comm. Recommended	Increase / (Decrease) ( D - C )	% Change	Notes
60	<b>CULTURE &amp; RECREATION</b>						
61	Library	36,041.16	37,043.30	37,044.00	0.70		
62	Recreation Committee	1,700.00	1,700.00	2,350.00	650.00		Fall dance; signs & advertising
63	Historical Commission	880.00	915.00	965.00	50.00	5.5%	
64	<b>CULTURE &amp; RECREATION TOTAL</b>	<b>38,621.16</b>	<b>39,658.30</b>	<b>40,359.00</b>	<b>700.70</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	
65							
66	<b>FIXED COSTS</b>						
67	Town Insurance	48,003.00	57,347.00	59,289.00	1,942.00	3.4%	
68	Highway Truck Loan (debt exclusion)	60,619.00	58,330.00	56,045.00	(2,285.00)	-3.9%	FY26 is 3rd year of 3-year loan; using Free Cash to pay
69	Fire Truck Loan (debt exclusion)			53,771.00	53,771.00	100.0%	FY26 is 1st year of 3-year loan; using Free Cash to pay
70	Energy Bond	10,967.00	11,467.00	11,967.00	500.00	4.4%	Increase is part of schedule for paying off bond in FY28
71	Retirement System	108,495.00	114,027.00	121,591.00	7,564.00	6.6%	
72	Group Health and Life Insurance	113,365.00	134,250.00	169,776.00	35,526.00	26.5%	16-20% increase to health insurance rates; Accountant position is eligible for benefits
73	<b>FIXED COSTS TOTAL</b>	<b>341,449.00</b>	<b>375,421.00</b>	<b>472,439.00</b>	<b>97,018.00</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	
74							
75	<b>FRCOG ASSESSMENT</b>						
76	Statutory & Reg'l Services Assessments	9,415.00	9,159.00	9,108.00	(51.00)	-0.6%	
77	Accounting Program	33,552.00	33,552.00	-	(33,552.00)	-100.0%	Program is ending; Town is direct-hiring its Accountant
78	Health Agent/Cooperative Public Health	12,791.00	12,791.00	13,120.00	329.00	2.6%	
79	Cooperative Inspection Program	7,600.00	7,600.00	7,873.00	273.00	3.6%	
80	<b>FRCOG ASSESSMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>63,358.00</b>	<b>63,102.00</b>	<b>30,101.00</b>	<b>(33,001.00)</b>	<b>-52.3%</b>	
81							
82	<b>EDUCATION</b>						
83	Gill-Montague Reg. Sch. Dist.						To be discussed and voted under Article 7
84	GMRSD Bldg. Loan (debt exclusion)						To be discussed and voted under Article 7
85	Franklin County Technical School	227,550.00	205,322.00	224,543.00	19,221.00	9.4%	Gill's enrollment increased from 13 to 16 students (23%)
86	<b>EDUCATION TOTAL</b>	<b>227,550.00</b>	<b>205,322.00</b>	<b>224,543.00</b>	<b>19,221.00</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	
87							
88	<b>OMNIBUS BUDGET TOTAL</b>	<b>2,319,752.00</b>	<b>2,410,053.00</b>	<b>2,633,455.00</b>	<b>223,402.00</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	
89	Less Transfer of Sewer Use Fees	125,000.00	125,000.00	150,000.00			Sewer use fees offset 100% of Sewer Budget
90	Less Estimated Sewer Receipts	60,000.00	60,000.00	35,000.00			Sewer use fees offset 100% of Sewer Budget
91	Less use of Free Cash for Highway Truck Loan and Fire Truck Loan		58,330.00	109,816.00			Using Free Cash instead of taxation in order to limit the amount property taxes go up in FY26
92	<b>TOTAL RAISED BY TAXATION</b>	<b>2,194,752.00</b>	<b>2,226,723.00</b>	<b>2,338,639.00</b>	<b>111,916.00</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	

Article 6 - Omnibus Budget

	Supplemental Info for Article 6 - Omnibus Budget	Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2026					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
				Selectboard & Fin. Comm. Fiscal Year 2026	Dollar Change	Percent Change	
	Omnibus Budget for 06/09/2025	FY24	FY25				
1	Omnibus Budget (Town Operations)	2,319,752.00	2,375,928.00	2,633,455.00	257,527.00	10.8%	
2	Warrant Articles for Projects & New Expenses (Spending)	50,379.47	86,300.00	58,150.00	(28,150.00)	-32.6%	
3	Warrant Articles for Stabilization Funds (Saving)	150,720.00	85,904.00	467,278.00	381,374.00	444.0%	
4	Miscellaneous (Overlay & Cherry Sheet Deducts)	32,827.98	90,683.81	20,738.00	(69,945.81)	-77.1%	
5	Total Town Spending & Saving	2,553,679.45	2,638,815.81	3,179,621.00	540,805.19	20.5%	
6	GMRSD School Assessment (Operating & Debt)	1,689,154.00	1,769,126.00	1,994,553.00	225,427.00	12.7%	
7	Grand Total Budget	4,242,833.45	4,407,941.81	5,174,174.00	766,232.19	17.4%	
8	State Receipts	336,411.00	352,934.00	366,220.00	13,286.00	3.8%	
9	Local Receipts	248,200.00	251,900.00	274,700.00	22,800.00	9.1%	
10	Available Funds	377,361.47	381,409.00	869,594.00	488,185.00	128.0%	
11	Free Cash to Reduce the Tax Rate	40,000.00	40,000.00	80,000.00	40,000.00	100.0%	
12	Total Receipts	1,001,972.47	1,026,243.00	1,590,514.00	564,271.00	55.0%	
13	Grand Total Budget	4,242,833.45	4,407,941.81	5,174,174.00	766,232.19	17.4%	
14	Total Receipts (Excluding Property Taxes)	1,001,972.47	1,026,243.00	1,590,514.00	564,271.00	55.0%	
15	Property Tax Assessment	3,240,860.98	3,381,698.81	3,583,660.00	201,961.19	6.0%	
16	Town-wide Property Valuation (FY26 is in process)	209,357,945	230,675,226	230,675,226	(estimated)		
17	Tax Rate If All Articles Pass (per 1,000 valuation)	15.48	14.66	15.54	0.88	6.0%	
18	Average Valuation of Single-Family Residence	285,084	320,271	320,271	-	0.0%	
19	Average Annual Taxes of Single-Family Residence	4,413	4,695	4,976	280	6.0%	

# Gill-Montague Regional School District

## FY26 Budget Proposal

GMRSD has developed an FY26 budget based upon Montague's affordable assessment. The total all funds budget for FY26 represents a 4.2% increase, totaling \$28,822,940.

Gill	Enrollment %	Total Operating Assess.	Operating Assess. Increase/ (Decrease)	% Increase/ (Decrease)	Share of HS Debt	Debt Assess	Total Operating & Debt Assessment	% incr from prior year		
FY22	11.98%	1,711,376	(74,511)	-4.17%	10.30%	13,259	1,724,635	-3.95%		
FY23	11.76%	1,741,616	30,240	1.77%	7.80%	9,672	1,751,288	1.50%		
FY24	10.20%	1,680,351	(61,265)	-3.52%	7.38%	8,803	1,689,154	-3.55%		
FY25	10.59%	1,761,646	81,295	4.84%	6.53%	7,480	1,769,126	4.73%	5 yr	Average
FY26	12.74%	1,985,811	224,165	12.72%	7.96%	8,742	1,994,553	12.74%	2.3%	Increase

↑ Number to Vote

FY26 REVENUE SOURCES	FY25 Approved	FY26 Proposed	Change
Chapter 70 State Aid	\$ 7,863,011	\$ 8,001,123	\$ 138,112
Medicaid Reimbursement	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ -
Medicaid Contra Revenue	\$ (47,000)	\$ (47,000)	\$ -
Interest income	\$ 132,000	\$ 160,000	\$ 28,000
Excess & Deficiency	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ -
Erving Tuition	\$ 980,000	\$ 890,000	\$ (90,000)
E-Rate Reimbursement		\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000
Charter Reimbursement	\$ 156,500	\$ 200,000	\$ 43,500
Chapter 71 Transportation Reimb	\$ 451,800	\$ 468,000	\$ 16,200
Total Operating Assessment	\$ 13,798,013	\$ 14,547,900	\$ 749,887
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET (NO CAPITAL DEBT)	\$ 23,934,324	\$ 24,844,023	\$ 909,699
Capital Assessment (HS Debt)	\$ 114,555	\$ 109,830	\$ (4,725)
CAPITAL DEBT ASSESSMENT (Sheffield Windows)			\$ -
<b>TOTAL OPERATING &amp; CAPITAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$ 24,048,879</b>	<b>\$ 24,953,853</b>	<b>\$ 904,974</b>
Grants & Revolving Accounts	\$ 1,722,438	\$ 1,754,998	\$ 32,560
Transportation Revolving	\$ 300,000	\$ 100,000	\$ (200,000)
ESSER Grant Funds	\$ 210,000	\$ -	\$ (210,000)
Circuit Breaker Revolving	\$ 210,000	\$ 367,000	\$ 157,000
School Choice Revolving	\$ 1,176,061	\$ 1,167,089	\$ (8,972)
Rural Aid		\$ 480,000	\$ 480,000
<b>TOTAL ALL FUNDS BUDGET</b>	<b>\$ 27,667,378</b>	<b>\$ 28,822,940</b>	<b>\$ 1,155,562</b>
<b>OVERALL BUDGET % INCREASE</b>			<b>4.2%</b>

Expense Summary	FY26 General Fund	FY26 Circuit Breaker	FY26 Sch Choice Revolving	FY26 Rural	FY26 Grants/Revolving	FY26 All Funds
Administration (1000)	745,596	-	-	-	-	745,596
Instructional (2000)	11,753,419	-	945,597	63,871	529,601	13,292,488
Student Services (3000)	1,576,989	-	66,201	-	1,020,000	2,663,190
Operations (4000)	2,243,948	-	72,791	-	-	2,316,739
Benefits & Insurance (5000)	5,637,857	-	-	390,000	36,637	6,064,494
Community Programs (6000)	1,400	-	-	26,129	-	27,529
Tuition (9000)	2,884,814	367,000	82,500	-	268,760	3,603,074
Capital Debt (8000)	109,830	-	-	-	-	109,830
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>24,953,853</b>	<b>367,000</b>	<b>1,167,089</b>	<b>480,000</b>	<b>1,854,998</b>	<b>28,822,940</b>



## Educational Highlights

- Innovation Pathways program has an enrollment of 37 Turners Falls High School students, up from 14 in prior year
- Elementary Math, Reading and Science Family Nights
- Maintained Elementary Math Interventionists
- National Honor Society inducted 23 new members in bilingual ceremony with 8 inductees of EL students
- Ricky Pareja earned The Commonwealth Seal of Biliteracy, with Distinction
- Addition of weekly positive student recognition and celebration program at elementary schools
- 14 students selected to participate in Western Mass Junior & Senior Music Festival
- Addition of Cross-Country Program
- Varsity Softball Clinched State Title in FY24

## FY26 Revenue/Expense

- Gill-Montague received a minimal Chapter 70 increase due to the decline in Foundation Enrollment
- Choice & Charter enrollments and expenses remain relatively flat
- Generosity from our towns in the form of Town Assessment increases
- Increase in Rural Aid due to our enrollment decline pushing us into Priority 2 of the funding calculation
- Continuation of many of the former ESSER positions
- Elimination of three positions to balance budget: Instructional Assistant, Curriculum Director and SRO

## Enrollment Trends

While our Foundation Enrollment declined again this year, it dropped us into Priority 2 for rural aid increasing our Rural aid. Our choice out continues to trend in the right direction while Choice in and Charter out are relatively flat.

YEAR	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Foundation Enrollment	1020	947	938	916
District Enrollment	842	866	917	862
YEAR	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Gill Enrollment	115	105	114	111
Hillcrest Enrollment	145	152	137	122
Sheffield Enrollment	207	210	215	199
Middle School Enrollment	191	206	239	228
TFHS Enrollment	184	193	202	202
Year	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Choice In	63	90	100	91
Choice out	216	179	154	142
YEAR	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Charter	77	60	49	52

