

June 8, 2026  
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 are 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

Finance Committee (Claire Chang, 413-626-3620)

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

Historical Commission (Kit Carpenter, 413-863-2505)

Memorial Committee (Merri Bourbeau, 413-863-8613)

Sewer Commission (Riverside resident)

Town Forest Committee (Ken Sprankle, 413-863-2975)

Veterans' District Advisory Board (Gill's rep, should be a veteran)

Zoning Board of Appeals (Suzanne Smiley, 413-863-8174)



The Gill Cultural Council wants your input! You may have seen paper surveys on this topic in past Gill Newsletters. We've gone digital! Please use the QR code to fill out our brief survey. It should take less than five minutes of your time.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

FRANKLIN, SS.

TOWN OF GILL

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING: MAY 4, 2026

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 Fourth day of May, in the year Two Thousand and Twenty Six (05/04/2026) at 7:00 PM then and there to act on the following articles.

The town meeting on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall is a continuation of the Annual Town Meeting originally opened on Monday, May 4, 2026. Articles 1 through 7 were addressed on May 4th. The motions and explanations for those articles have been omitted from this handout to reduce printing costs.

Article 8 (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.

Table with 2 columns: Position and Amount. Rows include Constable(s), Moderator, Selectboard Chair, Board of Assessors Chair, Board of Health Chair, Town Clerk, and Registrars.

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) and/or any Wage Compensation Plan updates that may be provided by the Town.

The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.

All amounts are level funded (with rounding) from Fiscal Year 2026. A COLA, if approved in Article 10, 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 10 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.

The Town Clerk is the only position listed above affected by the funding requested in Article 9 to implement updates to the Wage Compensation Plan. As an elected position, the Town Clerk is not included in the Wage Compensation Plan, however, for purposes of comparison and fair compensation, the position was included in an outside analysis of the Town's compensation that was conducted last year. The vote of Town Meeting will continue to be the way the Town Clerk's compensation is set. If Articles 9 and 10 are both approved, the Town Clerk's total compensation will be \$32,403.

Article 9 (Funds to Implement Changes to Wage Compensation Plan): 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 implement

updates to the Town's Wage Compensation Plan as recommended by the Personnel Committee and Selectboard, or take any action relative thereto.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$21,300.00 to implement updates to the Town's Wage Compensation Plan as recommended by the Personnel Committee and Selectboard.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 recused.*

*The Town of Gill's current wage scale is at least 20-25 years old, as is the classification system used to rank and place positions on the wage scale. The methodology is outdated, and job descriptions have not been kept current or standardized, largely due to relatively low turnover rates and an all-volunteer Personnel Committee. The wage scale has increased by an average of 2.46% annually for the past 20 years. Despite this, the entire first level and one-third of the second level of our existing wage scale is below the Massachusetts minimum wage of \$16/hour.*

*In the last 5 years when the Town has recruited and hired personnel we have often needed to start new hires possessing entry-level experience at the second or third step on the wage scale (which would take two to four years to reach as an employee) in order to be competitive with other towns in our area and, for positions requiring a CDL license, with the private sector as well. When other towns in our region advertise their vacancies, the starting wages are frequently significantly higher than ours for the equivalent position.*

*Recognizing we were overdue for an update to our job descriptions, classification system, and wage scale, the Town applied for and received a \$13,000 award from the State's Community Compact Cabinet to hire the Collins Center for Public Management to perform a Classification and Compensation Study. This work was completed in 2025, but too late to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2026. The Personnel Committee has completed its review of the proposed wage scale, although it is continuing to work on fine-tuning and finalizing the job descriptions. The remaining work on the job descriptions is not believed to have an impact on positions' placement on the new wage scale.*

*The current wage scale has 8 grades, and each grade has 6 steps. Typically, an employee will start on the first step, move up one step for every 2 years of employment, and reach the last step during their 11<sup>th</sup> year of employment. The new wage scale has 6 grades, and each grade has 10 steps. Employees will move up one step for each year of employment, reaching the last step during their 10<sup>th</sup> year of employment.*

*According to the Personnel Policy, it is the Selectboard's responsibility to adopt changes to the wage compensation plan. However, when those changes have a financial impact, Town Meeting must appropriate the funds to implement the changes.*

*In determining the cost to implement the new wage compensation plan, the current wage scale was used to determine each employee's wage rate effective on July 1, 2026, the start of Fiscal Year 2027. Then, from the appropriate grade level on the new wage scale, each employee was assigned a wage rate that is equal to or greater than the rate from the current wage scale (i.e. no employee will earn a lower rate because of the new wage scale). The estimated annual wages for each employee was calculated using the rates from the current and new wage scales, and the difference is the amount requested in Article 9.*

**Article 10 (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 \$24,200.00 to provide a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for the Police Chief and a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all other appointed Town employees and the elected Town Clerk.

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 recused.*

*The proposed 3% COLA for Fiscal Year 2027 is slightly higher than the 2.8% increase provided to Social Security recipients effective in January 2026 and the 2.9% increase indicated by the Consumer Price Index. In recommending the higher amount the Personnel Committee noted 1) the importance of keeping pace with inflation, and 2) the need to offset an almost 60% increase in the cost of employee's health insurance from Fiscal Year 2025 to Fiscal Year 2027.*

*The Police Chief's most recent employment contract, covering Fiscal Years 2026 through 2028, includes a clause by which any COLA increase to his salary must be proposed and approved by a majority vote of the Selectboard. At its June 1, 2026 meeting the Selectboard voted the 2% COLA for the Police Chief, noting the first year of the current contract included a significant increase to the Chief's salary.*

*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 11 (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 2027, 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 \$2,228,405.00 and transfer \$110,000.00 from Sewer Use Fees and appropriate \$82,500.00 from Fiscal Year 2027 Estimated Sewer Receipts and transfer \$11,967.00 from the Energy Stabilization Fund and transfer \$222,000.00 from the General Stabilization Fund for a total appropriation of \$2,654,872.00 for the maintenance of the several departments of the Town (the "Omnibus budget") for Fiscal Year 2027, and for other necessary charges, in accordance with the amount recommended by the Selectboard.

*A 2/3 majority is needed to transfer funds out of the Energy Stabilization Fund and the General Stabilization Fund.*

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 4 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 – 94 of the handout. The second sheet of this stapled handout contains general remarks about financial challenges faced in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.*

*As of May 31, 2026, and excluding any amounts approved to be used in other articles voted tonight, the Energy Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$43,089 and the General Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$649,511. A complete list of the Town's stabilization funds and balances can be found in the explanation for Article 20.*

*This use of stabilization is unprecedented, at least within the past several decades. The costs of necessary services in next year's budget have risen faster than the Town's revenues available to pay for them. Among the cost drivers are health insurance, school assessments, and the ripple-through effects of elevated costs of diesel fuel, gasoline, and heating oil. In building the budget for Fiscal Year 2027 the Town departments presented the minimum budgets required to continue the services residents require and expect, and the Selectboard and Finance Committee scrutinized department budget requests for ways to trim costs.*

*The other unusual twist to this year's budget discussions was the lack of certified Free Cash to use for one-time expenses (Articles 15, 18, and 19) and to reduce next year's tax rate and stabilize the tax levy (Article 21). Normally, by the time Annual Town Meeting is held, the Town's Free Cash from the prior year (Fiscal Year 2025) has been certified by the Department of Revenue. Gill's Free Cash has not been submitted for certification yet due to extra time required to reconcile the Accountant's figures with those of the Treasurer (cash book) and the previous Collector (tax payments), coupled with the steep learning curve for someone still relatively new to the Town Accountant role. We anticipate Free Cash will be submitted and certified in time for a Special Town Meeting on June 29th, at which time most or all of the Free Cash is likely to be recommended to be voted into the various stabilization funds.*

*A Proposition 2 ½ override was seriously considered and the ballot vote was even scheduled for June 15<sup>th</sup>. However, after extensive discussions the Selectboard and Finance Committee decided the Town's fiscal reserves (stabilization funds) were adequate and could be used without detrimental impact. One reason for placing money into stabilization funds is to have reserves to use in the event of a financial "rainy day." The Fiscal Year 2027 budget is certainly a "rainy day." The June 15<sup>th</sup> vote has been cancelled.*

*The use of \$11,967 from the Energy Stabilization Fund will cover the next-to-last year of the Town's payments for the bond (loan) taken out in 2012 as part of an energy conservation project at the Elementary School that included a new boiler, a building energy management system, and lighting upgrades. Roughly \$18,000 of the \$43,089 currently in the Energy Stabilization Fund was due to energy savings realized by the GMRSD in the early years after the equipment was installed and returned to the Town to help pay for the project.*

**Article 12 (GMRSD Assessment):** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate by taxation, transfer from available funds or otherwise provide \$2,149,571.00 for its Fiscal Year 2027 operating assessment 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 \$2,057,571.00 and further transfer \$92,000.00 from the Education Stabilization Fund to provide \$2,149,571.00 for its Fiscal Year 2027 operating assessment for the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD).

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

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*A handout from the GMRSD is attached (blue paper, immediately after the legal-sized paper in this handout), and District officials are in attendance to answer questions.*

*The GMRSD's total Fiscal Year 2027 "All Funds" budget increased by 3.1% over Fiscal Year 2026. Gill's assessment for the GMRSD's operating budget increased by \$163,760 (8.2%), driven partly by an increase in the Required Minimum Contribution calculated by the State and partly by enrollment changes of the two towns. There are no debt service costs for the high school/middle school renovation project, as the loan for that project was paid off this year.*

*Gill's enrollment in the District decreased 3.2% from 93 to 90 students at the same time Montague's enrollment decreased 5.0% from 637 to 605. Gill's share of the District's operating costs increased from 12.74% to 12.95% and Montague's share decreased from 87.26% to 87.05%.*

*"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 2027 assessments for the GMRSD (\$163,760 increase) and the Franklin County Technical School (\$17,348 decrease) have a net increase of \$146,412 (6.6%) over the Fiscal Year 2026 assessments. The Selectboard and Finance Committee agreed this is a "significant increase" and are recommending using \$92,000 from the Education Stabilization Fund to mitigate the need for a Proposition 2-1/2 Override vote. The balance in the Education Stabilization Fund as of May 31, 2026, was \$287,542.*

**Article 13 (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 Northfield Mountain LLC 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 \$4,000.00 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 Northfield Mountain LLC 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 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*In October 2025, after receiving approval from Town Meeting, the Town signed a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreement with FirstLight Power for the Turners Falls Dam and related assets and parcels of land. An appraisal of the dam will not be required for 10 years. However, in 2026, as part of the Fiscal Year 2027 recertification of property values and assessments by the Department of Revenue (DOR), the Assessors are being required to obtain an appraisal of the value of the Gill portion of FirstLight's Northfield Mountain pumped storage hydroelectric facility and related assets and parcels of land. Gill*

*will share the cost of this appraisal with the Towns of Erving and Northfield. 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, and funds will be used for the appraisals required for the Fiscal Year 2027 recertification. Any unspent money will be saved toward interim year appraisals and updates next year.*

**Article 14 (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.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to raise and appropriate by taxation \$3,000.00 to add to the Board of Assessors' Revaluation Account (001-142-5801).

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 5 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 adds money to the Revaluation Account to ensure there are adequate funds for this year's revaluation work. Any unspent money will be saved toward the next recertification in 2032.*

**Article 15 (Funds To Conduct A Financial Audit):** 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 Town Audit Account to be used toward the cost to conduct an independent financial audit of the Town, or take any action relative thereto.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$30,000.00 from the General Stabilization Fund to add to the Town Audit Account and to be used toward the cost to conduct an independent financial audit of the Town.

*A 2/3 majority vote is needed to transfer funds out of the General Stabilization Fund.*

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*As of May 31, 2026, and excluding any amounts approved to be used in other articles voted tonight, the General Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$649,511.*

*The Town's most recent financial audit was conducted on our accounts as of the end of Fiscal Year 2021. The next audit will be as of the end of Fiscal Year 2025 and is scheduled to be done this summer and fall. Funds have not been added to the Audit Account since 2021. This year's audit is estimated to cost approximately \$20,000. As part of each audit, the Town is required to obtain an updated calculation of its Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability, which was done in May 2026 at a cost of \$6,100. Any unspent money in the Audit Account will be saved toward the next financial audit, which will happen in three years.*

**Article 16 (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 \$2,000.00 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 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*The Town annually receives approximately \$20,000 in PEG (Public, Educational, and Governmental) Access funds from Comcast as part of its cable license. There is currently a balance of \$155,866 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 2026 with a balance of \$25,805 and is projected to spend approximately \$2,000 this year on equipment upgrades, technical support, and stipends for those who videorecord Selectboard meetings, Town Meetings, and other public events. This \$2,000*

appropriation will “refill” the balance to the roughly \$25,000 recommended for operations in Fiscal Year 2027.

The current cable license issued by the Town to Comcast expired in May 2026. The expected cost (\$10,000-\$12,000) of the Town’s legal expenses to negotiate the renewal license is the contributing factor in keeping a higher-than-normal balance in the PEG Access operating account for Fiscal Year 2027.

Negotiations with Comcast will be getting underway in July. The Cable Committee currently only has three members, so volunteers to serve are eagerly sought. You’ve only missed one meeting!

**Article 17 (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 to pass over Article 17.

*The Finance Committee recommends passing over this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*Considering the multiple financial constraints faced by the Town for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget and the lack of certified Free Cash, it is proposed to take a one-year hiatus from adding funds to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Liability Trust Fund.*

*The OPEB fund is used 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 May 2026 the Town received an updated calculation on its OPEB liability, prepared by Odyssey Advisors. As of June 30, 2025, our total OPEB liability was \$1,421,091, an increase of \$485,978 from the last update in 2022. For the most recent report we had funded \$161,480 – which is a funding ratio of 11.36%, compared to 9.38% from 2022. Based on the funding ratios in the most recently available (May 2026) OPEB Summary Report published by the Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), at 11.36% funded, Gill ranks 121 out of 348 OPEB plans in Massachusetts. As of May 31, 2026, Gill’s OPEB fund had a balance of \$195,234.*

**Article 18 (Tax Title Expenses):** 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 to be expended by the Town Treasurer for the purpose of paying legal fees, recording fees, land court proceedings, and other necessary expenses related to the enforcement, collection, and foreclosure of tax titles and tax takings, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 60, Section 50B and other applicable laws; or take any action relative thereto.

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$20,000.00 from the General Stabilization Fund to provide a sum of money to be expended by the Town Treasurer for the purpose of paying legal fees, recording fees, land court proceedings, and other necessary expenses related to the enforcement, collection, and foreclosure of tax titles and tax takings, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 60, Section 50B and other applicable laws.

*A 2/3 majority vote is needed to transfer funds out of the General Stabilization Fund.*

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*As of May 31, 2026, and excluding any amounts approved to be used in other articles voted tonight, the General Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$649,511.*

*As of June 3, 2026, there are 15 properties in Gill subject to tax title liens, with a total outstanding balance of taxes, interest, and fees of \$217,491. This article will provide the Town Treasurer with an account that can be used for the expenses associated with collecting the owed amounts while also abiding by the new (2024) property tax collection and foreclosure laws. Tax title and tax taking is a complicated legal process, and expert assistance is needed to protect the Town’s position as a lienholder.*

*This Tax Title Expense account provides the upfront funds needed to start the tax title and tax taking processes. The expenses will be allocated to each of the liened properties and when payment is ultimately received, all the Town’s collection costs will be recouped.*

**Article 19 (Replacing Woodchipper):** 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 purchase a woodchipper and related accessories for the Highway Department, including borrowing costs that may be associated with said purchase and authorize the Town Treasurer with the approval of the Selectboard, to borrow in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 7; all or some of which may be contingent upon a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion vote override, or take any other action relative thereto. (A 2/3 vote is required for authorization to borrow.)

**Motion:** It is moved the Town vote to transfer \$71,050.00 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to purchase a woodchipper and related accessories for the Highway Department.

*A 2/3 majority vote is needed to transfer funds out of the Capital Stabilization Fund.*

*The Finance Committee recommends this article by a vote of 2 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstentions. The Capital Improvement Planning Committee recommended this article by a vote of 4 in favor and 1 opposed. (Note: The membership of the CIPC has changed since this vote was taken.)*

*As of May 31, 2026, the Capital Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$225,418.*

*The Town's current woodchipper is 41 years old and is, according to the Highway Superintendent's capital project request form, "significantly outdated, inefficient, and lacks modern safety features." With the proposed new woodchipper, a Bandit model 15XP, "we aim to enhance operational efficiency, reduce repair expenses, and ensure the safety of our personnel." Additional information about the need for the new woodchipper, along with photos of both the current and the proposed chippers, has been provided by the Highway Superintendent and appears as the last two pages of this handout (ivory paper).*

**Article 20 (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 to pass over Article 20.

*The Finance Committee recommends passing over this article by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.*

*Normally, by the time Annual Town Meeting is held, the Town's Free Cash from the prior year (Fiscal Year 2025) has been certified by the Department of Revenue. Gill's Free Cash has not been submitted for certification yet due to extra time required to reconcile the Accountant's figures with those of the Treasurer (cash book) and the previous Collector (tax payments), coupled with the steep learning curve for someone still relatively new to the Town Accountant role. We anticipate Free Cash will be submitted and certified in time for a Special Town Meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup>, at which time most or all of the Free Cash is likely to be recommended to be voted into the various stabilization funds.*

*The May 31, 2026, fund balances, excluding any amounts voted out by other articles this evening are as follows:*

\$225,418	Capital Stabilization Fund
\$287,542	Education Stabilization Fund
\$43,089	Energy Stabilization Fund
\$122,446	Fire Department SCBA/Air Packs Stabilization Fund
\$649,511	General Stabilization Fund
<u>\$1,328,006</u>	Total in all stabilization funds

**Article 21 (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 2027, or take any action relative thereto.

**Motion:** It is moved to pass over Article 21.

*The Finance Committee recommends passing over this article by a vote of 5 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. Normally, Free Cash from the prior year (Fiscal Year 2025) is certified by the Department of Revenue in plenty of time to be factored into the budget development for the coming fiscal year. Gill's Free Cash has not been submitted for certification yet due to extra time required to reconcile the Accountant's figures with those of the*

*Treasurer (cash book) and the previous Collector (tax payments), coupled with the steep learning curve for someone still relatively new to the Town Accountant role. We anticipate Free Cash will be submitted and certified in time for a Special Town Meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup>, at which time most or all of the Free Cash is likely to be recommended to be voted into the various stabilization funds.*

*At last year's Annual Town Meeting voters approved using \$80,000 of Free Cash to reduce the tax rate and stabilize the tax levy for Fiscal Year 2026. Had Free Cash been certified in time for tonight's meeting, a similar or greater amount would have been recommended for Fiscal Year 2027. The motion for the Omnibus Budget (Article 11) includes using \$222,000 from the General Stabilization Fund. At least \$80,000 of that amount is a substitution for the Free Cash we are unable to use tonight.*

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 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April in the year Two Thousand Twenty Six (04/23/2026).

**Selectboard of Gill**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles J. Garbiel II, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
John R. Ward, Board member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory M. Snedeker, Board member

A true copy Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doreen J. Stevens, Town Clerk

Date: April 23, 2026

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 11 - Omnibus Budget**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY27			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/08/2026 Annual Town Meeting	FY25 Approved with COLA	FY26 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	4,075.93	3,760.55	3,223.00	(537.55)	-14.3%	
5	Town Admin & Admin Clerk (Salary&Exp.)	105,547.73	108,076.08	108,708.00	631.92	0.6%	
6	Finance Committee	196.00	200.00	152.00	(48.00)	-24.0%	
7	Reserve Fund	1,500.00	1,500.00	500.00	(1,000.00)	-66.7%	Budget reduction measure
8	Accountant Expenses	11,925.00	52,941.70	52,935.00	(6.70)		
9	Assessors Stipends	9,508.00	9,508.00	9,508.00	-		
10	Assessors Clerical Salary	40,481.06	48,513.25	39,895.00	(8,618.25)	-17.8%	New Assistant is at lower hourly rate than previous person
11	Assessors Expenses	21,788.00	20,568.00	25,314.00	4,746.00	23.1%	Contract increase for cyclical property visits & person property accounts
12	Treasurer Salary	26,819.26	27,490.58	31,200.00	3,709.42	13.5%	First raise (besides COLA) since taking position in 2019
13	Treasurer Expenses	9,455.00	10,550.00	10,550.00	-		
14	Tax Collector Salary	29,742.18	30,485.52	30,486.00	0.48		
15	Tax Collector Expenses	11,974.00	13,069.00	12,454.00	(615.00)	-4.7%	Cut funds to support FRCOG appeal of MassDEP's 401WQC issued to FirstLight
16	Legal	7,500.00	7,500.00	5,000.00	(2,500.00)	-33.3%	
17	IT Committee	9,985.00	10,247.00	9,907.00	(340.00)	-3.3%	
18	Town Clerk Salary	29,742.18	30,485.52	30,486.00	0.48		
19	Town Clerk Expenses	4,360.00	4,361.50	4,482.00	120.50	2.8%	
20	Elections/Registrars	10,950.00	10,950.00	12,237.00	1,287.00	11.8%	More elections in FY27 (Sept primary, Nov state election)
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	300.00	300.00	300.00	-		
25	Energy Commission	475.00	475.00	475.00	-		
26	Town Hall/Riverside Bldg. Operations	29,814.73	29,881.73	29,778.00	(103.73)	-0.3%	
27	Building Repairs & Maintenance	18,000.00	18,000.00	18,000.00	-		
28	Garage/Public Safety Bldg. Operations	27,505.00	27,500.00	33,610.00	6,110.00	22.2%	Higher cost of heating oil projected for FY27 (\$5/gal)
29	<b>GENERAL GOVERNMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>421,685.07</b>	<b>476,404.43</b>	<b>479,241.00</b>	<b>2,836.57</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	
30							

**Article 11 - Omnibus Budget**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY27			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/08/2026 Annual Town Meeting	FY25 Approved with COLA	FY26 Approved with COLA	Selectboard & Finance Comm. Recommended	Increase / (Decrease) ( D - C )	% Change	Notes
31	<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>						
32	Police Department	250,337.99	276,016.38	276,016.00	(0.38)		
33	Fire Department	136,652.79	138,661.33	139,441.00	779.67	0.6%	
34	Emergency Management	6,412.66	6,490.83	6,491.00	0.17		
35	Animal Control	2,761.00	2,832.00	2,957.00	125.00	4.4%	
36	EMS/Ambulance	25,000.00	55,745.00	84,375.00	28,630.00	51.4%	Increased assessment from Northfield EMS/Ambulance
37	<b>PUBLIC SAFETY TOTAL</b>	<b>421,164.44</b>	<b>479,745.54</b>	<b>509,280.00</b>	<b>29,534.46</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	
38							
39	<b>PUBLIC WORKS</b>						
40	Trees and Forestry	16,115.00	16,115.00	16,957.00	842.00	5.2%	
41	Highway Department	391,974.95	417,989.93	440,177.00	22,187.07	5.3%	Increased cost of diesel, contracted services, road materials, machinery/vehicle maintenance, step increase
42	Highway Dep't. - Snow & Ice Removal	101,440.00	106,522.00	122,695.00	16,173.00	15.2%	Increased cost of winter materials (sand/salt) & diesel fuel
43	Bridges and Street Lights	2,353.00	2,684.00	2,684.00	-		
44	Solid Waste & Recycling	142,957.00	153,719.00	159,123.00	5,404.00	3.5%	Contractual increase for collection service; higher cost for processing recyclables
45	Solid Waste District Assessment	4,164.00	4,372.00	4,465.00	93.00	2.1%	
46	Hazardous Waste Collection	-	-	-	-		State grant covers this expense
47	Sewer	185,000.00	185,000.00	192,500.00	7,500.00	4.1%	Sewage disposal costs; anti-grease chemicals
48	Cemetery Commission	12,150.00	12,381.00	12,380.00	(1.00)		
49	Memorial Committee	1,005.00	1,010.00	1,075.00	65.00	6.4%	
50	<b>PUBLIC WORKS TOTAL</b>	<b>857,158.95</b>	<b>899,792.93</b>	<b>952,056.00</b>	<b>52,263.07</b>	<b>5.8%</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	5,608.24	5,635.00	6,235.00	600.00	10.6%	
55	Council on Aging	10,612.00	11,046.00	11,558.00	512.00	4.6%	
56	Veterans District Assessment	4,013.00	4,129.00	4,711.00	582.00	14.1%	
57	Veterans Benefits	2,000.00	2,000.00	1,000.00	(1,000.00)	-50.0%	Budget reduction measure; no veterans receiving benefits
58	<b>HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>26,541.24</b>	<b>27,118.00</b>	<b>27,812.00</b>	<b>694.00</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	
59							

**Article 11 - Omnibus Budget**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
				FY27			
	Omnibus Budget for 06/08/2026 Annual Town Meeting	FY25 Approved with COLA	FY26 Approved with COLA	Selectboard & Finance Comm. Recommended	Increase / (Decrease) ( D - C )	% Change	Notes
60	<b>CULTURE &amp; RECREATION</b>						
61	Library	37,043.30	37,646.10	38,265.00	618.90	1.6%	
62	Recreation Committee	1,700.00	2,350.00	2,350.00	-		
63	Historical Commission	915.00	965.00	995.00	30.00	3.1%	
64	<b>CULTURE &amp; RECREATION TOTAL</b>	<b>39,658.30</b>	<b>40,961.10</b>	<b>41,610.00</b>	<b>648.90</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	
65							
66	<b>FIXED COSTS</b>						
67	Town Insurance	57,347.00	59,289.00	62,743.00	3,454.00	5.8%	6% increase to premiums
68	Highway Truck Loan (debt exclusion)	58,330.00	56,045.00	-	(56,045.00)	-100.0%	Loan was paid off in FY26.
69	Fire Truck Loan (debt exclusion)		53,771.00	-	(53,771.00)	-100.0%	Selectboard will use NMH Donation for FY27 payment
70	Energy Bond	11,467.00	11,967.00	11,967.00	-		Energy Stabilization fund will cover FY27 bond payment
71	Retirement System	114,027.00	121,591.00	130,666.00	9,075.00	7.5%	Assessment increase from Franklin Reg'l Ret. System
72	Group Health and Life Insurance	134,250.00	169,776.00	200,508.00	30,732.00	18.1%	12% incr to health insurance rates; plan participation
73	<b>FIXED COSTS TOTAL</b>	<b>375,421.00</b>	<b>472,439.00</b>	<b>405,884.00</b>	<b>(66,555.00)</b>	<b>-14.1%</b>	
74							
75	<b>FRCOG ASSESSMENT</b>						
76	Statutory & Reg'l Services Assessments	9,159.00	9,108.00	9,499.00	391.00	4.3%	
77	Accounting Program	33,552.00	-	-	-		Program ended; see Line # 8
78	Health Agent/Cooperative Public Health	12,791.00	13,120.00	14,422.00	1,302.00	9.9%	CPHS program added 1/3-time inspector
79	Cooperative Inspection Program	7,600.00	7,873.00	7,873.00	-		
80	<b>FRCOG ASSESSMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>63,102.00</b>	<b>30,101.00</b>	<b>31,794.00</b>	<b>1,693.00</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	
81							
82	<b>EDUCATION</b>						
83	Gill-Montague Reg. Sch. Dist.						To be discussed and voted under Article 12
84	GMRSD Bldg. Loan (debt exclusion)						Loan was paid off in FY26
85	Franklin County Technical School	205,322.00	224,543.00	207,195.00	(17,348.00)	-7.7%	Gill's enrollment decreased from 16 to 14 students (-12.5%)
86	<b>EDUCATION TOTAL</b>	<b>205,322.00</b>	<b>224,543.00</b>	<b>207,195.00</b>	<b>(17,348.00)</b>	<b>-7.7%</b>	
87							
88	<b>OMNIBUS BUDGET TOTAL</b>	<b>2,410,053.00</b>	<b>2,651,105.00</b>	<b>2,654,872.00</b>	<b>3,767.00</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	
89	Less Transfer of Sewer Use Fees	125,000.00	150,000.00	110,000.00			Sewer use fees offset 100% of Sewer Budget
90	Less Estimated Sewer Receipts	60,000.00	35,000.00	82,500.00			Sewer use fees offset 100% of Sewer Budget
91	Less use of Energy Stabilization	-	-	11,967.00			Amount covers cost of Energy Bond payment, Line 70
92	Less use of General Stabilization	-	-	222,000.00			In lieu of Free Cash to reduce tax rate & stabilize tax levy
93	Less use of Free Cash for Vehicle Loans	58,330.00	109,816.00	-			
94	<b>TOTAL RAISED BY TAXATION</b>	<b>2,166,723.00</b>	<b>2,356,289.00</b>	<b>2,228,405.00</b>	<b>(127,884.00)</b>	<b>-5.4%</b>	

**Article 11 - Omnibus Budget**

Supplemental Info for Article 11 - Omnibus Budget		Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2027				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
				Selectboard & Fin. Comm. Fiscal Year 2027	Dollar Change	Percent Change
	Omnibus Budget for 06/08/2026	FY25	FY26			
1	Omnibus Budget (Town Operations)	2,410,053.00	2,651,105.00	2,654,872.00	3,767.00	0.1%
2	Warrant Articles for Projects & New Expenses (Spending)	52,175.00	40,500.00	175,550.00	135,050.00	333.5%
3	Warrant Articles for Stabilization Funds (Saving)	85,904.00	467,278.00	-	(467,278.00)	-100.0%
4	Miscellaneous (Overlay & Cherry Sheet Deducts)	90,683.81	20,102.29	44,253.00	24,150.71	120.1%
5	Total Town Spending & Saving	2,638,815.81	3,178,985.29	2,874,675.00	(304,310.29)	-9.6%
6	GMRSD School Assessment (Operating & Debt)	1,769,126.00	1,994,553.00	2,149,571.00	155,018.00	7.8%
7	<b>Grand Total Budget</b>	<b>4,407,941.81</b>	<b>5,173,538.29</b>	<b>5,024,246.00</b>	<b>(149,292.29)</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>
8	State Receipts	352,934.00	362,926.00	373,162.00	10,236.00	2.8%
9	Local Receipts	251,900.00	274,700.00	318,700.00	44,000.00	16.0%
10	Available Funds	381,409.00	869,594.00	641,517.00	(228,077.00)	-26.2%
11	Free Cash to Reduce the Tax Rate	40,000.00	80,000.00	-	(80,000.00)	-100.0%
12	<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>1,026,243.00</b>	<b>1,587,220.00</b>	<b>1,333,379.00</b>	<b>(253,841.00)</b>	<b>-16.0%</b>
13	Grand Total Budget	4,407,941.81	5,173,538.29	5,024,246.00	(149,292.29)	-2.9%
14	Total Receipts (Excluding Property Taxes)	1,026,243.00	1,587,220.00	1,333,379.00	(253,841.00)	-16.0%
15	Property Tax Assessment	<b>3,381,698.81</b>	<b>3,586,318.29</b>	<b>3,690,867.00</b>	<b>104,548.71</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
16	Town-wide Property Valuation (FY27 is in process)	209,357,945	240,531,072	235,621,650	(estimated)	
17	Tax Rate If All Articles Pass (per 1,000 valuation)	<b>16.15</b>	<b>14.91</b>	<b>15.66</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
18	Average Valuation of Single-Family Residence	320,271	337,267	337,267	-	0.0%
19	Average Annual Taxes of Single-Family Residence	5,173	5,029	5,283	254	5.1%



# Gill~Montague

## REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

### FY27 Executive Summary

*“Challenging and supporting every student to succeed through strong leadership, excellent teaching, and community engagement. “*

#### Challenges and Changes in the 2026-2027 School Year:

- **Budgetary Pressures:** Balancing contractual salary increases and the evolving costs of Special Education services.
- **The Case for Change:** Current achievement data—highlighted by percentiles of 8%, 9%, and 13%—underscores the need for immediate, systemic intervention to move us out of "assistance" status.
- **Investing in Excellence:** Redesigning staffing models to prioritize roles that directly improve classroom instruction and student outcomes.
- **Enrollment Decline:** Due to the decline in foundation enrollment we again only received the minimum Chapter 70 increase for FY27 (\$75 per pupil).

#### FY27 Revenue & Expenses:

- 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 anticipated increase in state allocation.

#### Our Strategy for Fiscal Sustainability:

- Halting the fill of current open positions and non-essential personnel requests to protect existing staff.
- Capturing savings through planned retirements and voluntary resignations.
- Right-sizing staff levels to align with documented declines in student enrollment and caseloads.
- Addressing the "fiscal cliff" as one-time prior grants have reached their expiration and are no longer able to cover these additional costs.

GMRSD At-A-Glance	
Foundation Enrollment	872
Special Education	28.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	53.2%
High Needs	64.3%
Students Per Computer	1:1
School Choice In	109
School Choice Out	146
Dual Enrollment at GCC	17
Charter Out	48
Innovations Pathways Enrollment	31
2025 Graduation Rate (5yr)	91.5%

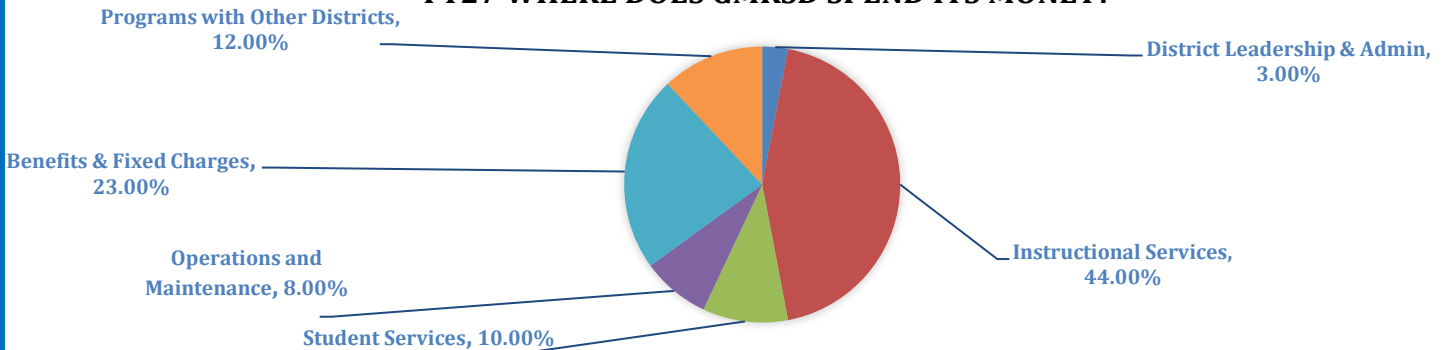
## BUDGET SUMMARY for 2026-2027

GMRSD General Fund Budget: \$25,805,169

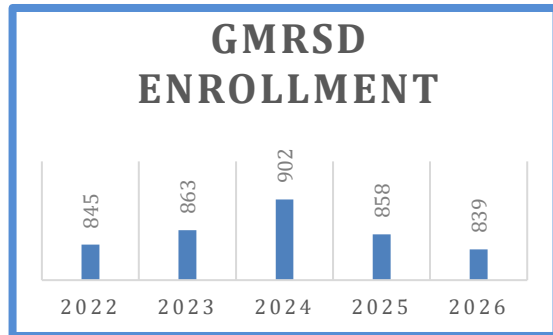
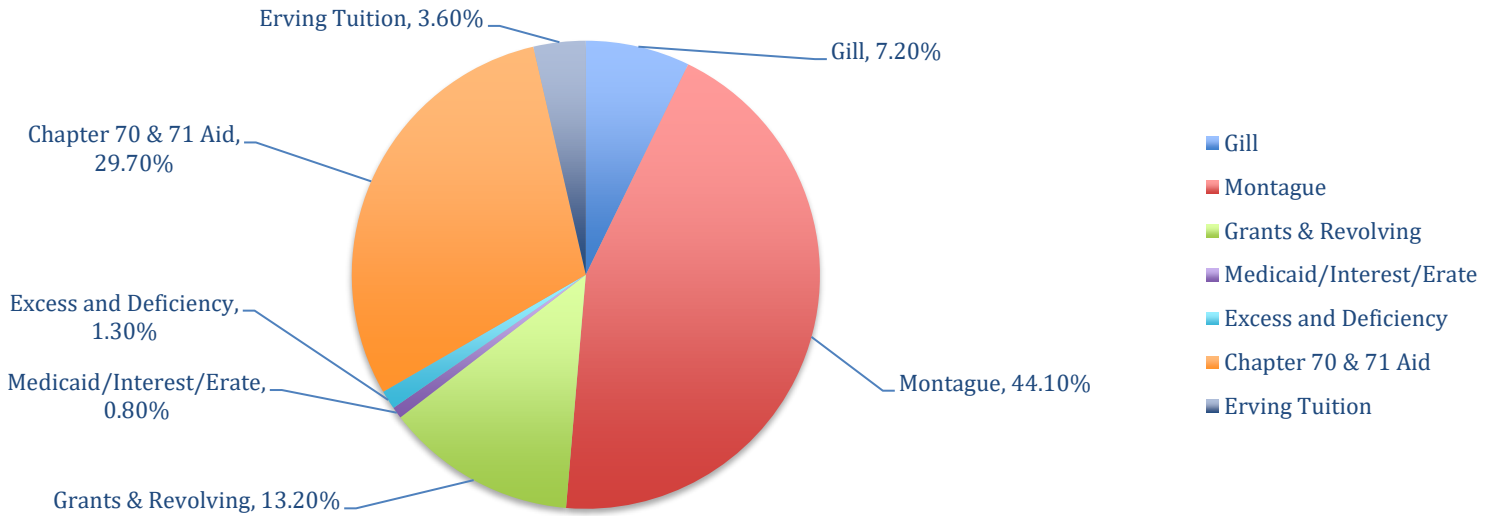
*(Meets Town of Montague's Affordable Assessment)*

**Montague:** \$13,120,375      3.61% increase      \$457,198  
**Gill:** \$2,149,571      7.77% increase      \$155,018

### FY27 WHERE DOES GMRSD SPEND ITS MONEY?



# Financial Resources for Gill-Montague Regional



## Historical Town Assessments

Montague	Montague's FY22 Assessment	Montague's FY23 Assessment	Montague's FY24 Assessment	Montague's FY25 Assessment	Montague's FY26 Assessment	Montague's FY27 Assessment	\$ Change	% Change
Operating	10,773,745	11,227,134	11,698,714	12,036,367	12,562,089	13,120,375	558,286	
Capital	177,109	114,333	110,477	107,075	101,088	0	(101,088)	
<b>Total Assessment</b>	<b>10,950,854</b>	<b>11,341,467</b>	<b>11,809,191</b>	<b>12,143,442</b>	<b>12,663,177</b>	<b>13,120,375</b>	<b>457,198</b>	<b>3.61%</b>
Operating Assess. Change	2.04%	3.57%	4.12%	2.83%	4.28%	3.61%		
Gill	Gill's FY22 Assessment	Gill's FY23 Assessment	Gill's FY24 Assessment	Gill's FY25 Assessment	Gill's FY26 Assessment	Gill's FY27 Assessment	\$ Change	% Change
Operating	1,711,376	1,741,616	1,680,351	1,761,646	1,985,811	2,149,571	163,760	
Capital	13,259	9,672	8,803	7,480	8,742	0	(8,742)	
<b>Total Assessment</b>	<b>1,724,635</b>	<b>1,751,288</b>	<b>1,689,154</b>	<b>1,769,126</b>	<b>1,994,553</b>	<b>2,149,571</b>	<b>155,018</b>	<b>7.77%</b>
Operating Assess. Change	-3.95%	1.55%	-3.55%	4.73%	12.74%	7.77%		
<b>Operating Assessment Increase:</b>							<b>722,046</b>	
Montague's Average increase	3.41%							
Gill's Average Increase	3.22%							

To: Annual Town Meeting Voters  
From: John Miner, Highway Superintendent  
Date: June 8, 2026  
Re: Article 19: Woodchipper Replacement

Thank you for taking the time to review this information about Article 19. As your Highway Superintendent, I am asking Town Meeting voters to vote in favor of Article 19 so the Town can continue to own a safe and dependable woodchipper for routine work. The chipper is needed for roadside cleanup, storm response, trimming, and brush work throughout the year. Because this work is ongoing, it makes more sense for the Town to own this equipment than to keep renting one or hiring the work out.

### **Why we are asking for this replacement**

- **This is regular Town work.** We use a chipper for roadside cleanup, storm response, trimming, and general maintenance throughout the year.
- **Safety is a critically important part of the picture.** The current chipper does not meet today's standards, and newer equipment has safety features the old machine does not.
- **The Town needs this equipment available when needed.** Owning a chipper means the crew can keep the work on the Town's schedule instead of waiting for rentals or contracted tree companies. When a chipper is required for storm cleanup, renting or contracting for a chipper means the Town is waiting in line with every other property owner and business in the county who needs a chipper.
- **Without a dependable chipper, the work takes more time and more effort.** Because the Town does not own a grapple for its equipment, brush and branches must often be picked up by hand, loaded into trucks, hauled away, and dumped elsewhere. That can still mean hiring a contractor with a larger chipper to chip the accumulated brush before we run out of room, which can be expensive.
- **Owning a chipper saves money over time.** Spread over 40 years, the total cost works out to be about \$1,775 a year. Renting a chipper locally costs \$433 a day, so roughly four rental days cost about the same as a full year of ownership. Hiring the work out also adds ongoing expense and gives the Town less control over when the work gets done.
- **The current chipper is 41 years old.** It has served the Town for decades and is now at the end of its useful life.
- **It clogs often and slows the work down.** That means delays, interruptions, and more time spent getting through routine jobs.

### **What a new chipper would help us do**

- **Work safely** – the new chipper has modern safety devices like last chance cables, emergency shut-off bars, extended infeed chute, reversing auto-feed to back out jammed material, safety curtains, lockout/tagout systems for maintenance, and full compliance with current ANSI and OSHA standards

- **Reduce strain on employees** – with a hydraulic winch to help move heavier material
- **Work more reliably** – with fewer clogs, fewer delays, and less downtime during routine jobs
- **Do the work when it needs to be done** – giving the Town the flexibility to address routine work without waiting on rentals or outside contractor schedules
- **Respond more quickly when problems come up** – allowing the Town to clear storm damage, fallen limbs, and roadside brush without waiting for a rental or contractor
- **Work more efficiently** – allowing the crew to handle brush once instead of piling it up and coming back later to chip it
- **Help protect other Town equipment** – keeping the sides of the road clear of large brush helps prevent damage to the mower and tractor during roadside mowing
- **Supply free wood chips to residents** – by stockpiling chips at the Town garage for residents to take at no cost

### **Cost and purchase details**

**Total requested amount:** \$71,050.00, including the quoted price of \$67,638.75 plus a 5 percent contingency. Proposed replacement: Bandit Model 15XP, purchased through the Massachusetts State Contract.

### **Questions residents may have**

#### **Why replace the current chipper now?**

Because the Town needs safe, dependable equipment for routine work instead of continuing to rely on an old machine that slows the work down and is less safe to use.

#### **Is this an upgrade or a replacement?**

This is a replacement for old equipment that has reached the point where it should no longer stay in service. The new chipper will have a 15-inch chipping capacity, the same as the current chipper.

#### **Is safety part of the issue?**

Yes, absolutely. Using a chipper is dangerous enough as it is, and the risk only increases when employees are working with a machine that is not operating properly. The current chipper does not meet today's standards, and newer equipment includes safety features the current machine does not have. The new chipper will also have a hydraulic winch, which is a crucial component for safely and efficiently pulling branches and logs to the chipper.

#### **Why not just keep repairing the old one?**

Because repairs do not solve the larger problem. Continued repairs on a 41-year-old machine are not a practical or economical long-term answer, especially when parts are obsolete.

#### **Why not just rent one when needed?**

Because we use a chipper regularly. Renting a chipper for a day from West County Equipment in Greenfield costs \$433. At that rate, the quoted purchase price of \$67,638.75 is roughly

equal to 156 rental days, and the total requested amount of \$71,050.00 is about equal to 164 rental days. Renting also adds scheduling issues, lost time picking up and returning the machine, and office time in multiple departments to pay the rental invoices. Owning one gives the Town dependable equipment on hand when it is needed.

**Why not hire contractors for this work?**

Contractors are still used for larger tree removal jobs, but owning our own chipper lets the Town take care of routine brush work, roadside cleanup, and smaller tree work with its own crew and on its own schedule. Hiring it out also costs more and gives the Town less control over when the work gets done.

**How much is being requested?**

The total requested amount is **\$71,050.00**, which includes the quoted price of **\$67,638.75** plus a 5 percent contingency.

I understand that financial resources are limited right now, and there is never an ideal time to ask the Town to replace a piece of equipment. This purchase will give the Town safe, dependable equipment for routine work, help the crew continue handling this work in-house when needed, and provide a practical long-term investment that will serve the Town for years. I respectfully ask voters to support Article 19 as a responsible investment in safer operations, dependable equipment, and long-term value for the Town.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this request.

John Miner  
Highway Superintendent, Town of Gill

Current 1985 Morbark Woodchipper



Proposed Bandit 15XP 15" Drum Style chipper

