



THE

Gill Newsletter

Spring 2020 Issue

Disclaimer:

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Hello neighbors.

This issue of *The Gill Newsletter* will focus on time-sensitive, essential, and otherwise useful information about our Town and resources available to residents and businesses during “these unprecedented times” (how I’ve grown to hate that phrase...). Rather than being printed on donated machine time at the Northfield Mount Hermon and collated and folded by a crew of *Newsletter* volunteers, this issue will take physical form on Town Hall’s photocopier with a built-in collator and stapler.

While there is much uncertainty in our world today, we are fortunate to live in Gill. Our forests and fields are greening from the warmth of the sun. Wild turkeys and deer are disbanding their winter congregations, and birds are full of song as they feather their nests. True, our Town buildings and schools are closed to the public, many businesses are closed or have reduced hours, and residents are staying home from work in government-ordered isolation. However, we are beginning to hear reports that our efforts are paying off, social distancing is working, and plans are being made to bring life back to a new normal. Hope springs eternal. Even though we are apart, we will get through this together. Be well, my friends.

Ray Purington,
Town Administrator

Emergency Operations

The Town of Gill declared a State of Emergency on Monday, March 16th. The Town’s Emergency Management Team

is communicating on a regular basis to keep abreast of new developments and is taking action to help keep our community safe. Important announcements will be distributed using the CodeRED Reverse-911 system. If you have not signed up, please take a minute to enroll by following the link on the home page of www.gillmass.org.

The Town Hall, and the Police, Fire, and Highway Departments are closed to the public and walk-ins until further notice. Town employees are still reporting to work and can be contacted by telephone and email. Contact information is available on the Town website. The Library is closed until at least May 5th.

Police, fire and other emergency personnel will respond promptly to all calls of an urgent nature. Trash and recycling collection remain on the Friday schedule.

We remind all residents to continue practicing social distancing and continue to follow Centers for Disease Control and state Department of Public Health recommendations for preventing the spread of the virus.



Check in with the Gill Website

www.gillmass.org
for up to date news,
announcements and
contact information!





Property Taxes Due Date Extended to June 1st

The Selectboard is deeply aware of the economic crisis the coronavirus pandemic has caused for so many Gill residents and businesses, and is hopeful these tax due-date extensions and interest waivers will provide some measure of relief. At the Gill Selectboard meeting held on Monday, April 13, 2020, it was voted to:

- a) change the official due date for payment of the second-half property tax bills (real estate and personal property) from May 4, 2020 to June 1, 2020;
- b) change the official deadline for filing applications for property tax exemptions (such as elderly, blind, veteran) to June 1, 2020; and
- c) waive any penalties and interest for late payments made between March 10, 2020 and June 29, 2020 on all bills (motor vehicle excise taxes, property taxes, sewer charges added to property taxes, and sewer charges) with due dates between March 10, 2020 and June 29, 2020.

The statutorily-required notice to taxpayers of these local options adopted by the Town of Gill can be found as a News item on the Town's website, www.gillmass.org. Because Town Hall is closed to the public, we encourage you to mail your payments or use your bank's online payment system.

If a late payment is made on June 30, 2020 or after that date, interest will be calculated based on the due date of the bill. The calculation

of interest will be based on the due date of June 1, 2020 for property taxes and the specific due dates for any motor vehicle excise bills or sewer bills.

The waiver described above does not include bills that had a due date before March 10, 2020. For instance, there will be no waiver of interest on a late payment made for a property tax bill that was due on November 4, 2019.

Like any business or household, the Town depends on adequate cash flow to pay its bills. If you are financially able to make your tax payments on time or early, it is greatly appreciated. If your real estate taxes are paid by a mortgage company, we ask you to contact them and request they submit your payment for the original due date.

Annual Town Meeting

This year's Annual Town Meeting has been postponed indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic. A date will be chosen and announced once social distancing requirements have been relaxed and gatherings of more than 10 people are allowed. In light of the difficult situation facing all Massachusetts cities and towns, legislation was passed that allows towns to delay town meetings beyond the June 30th end of the fiscal year and to start the new fiscal year with a "one-twelfth" budget sufficient to continue town operations and services until a town meeting can be held.

Trash Stickers by Mail

If residents want to purchase trash stickers by mail, send a check pay-

able to **Town of Gill** along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to **Town Hall, 325 Main Road, Gill, MA 01354**. Trash stickers are \$3 apiece. Please include a note or indicate on your check that you are purchasing trash stickers. Trash stickers continue to be available at the following locations during their posted business hours: Upinngil, Spirit Shoppe, The Mill, Wagon Wheel, and Scotty's.

Clickable Links

Sometimes internet links can be longer than you want to type. Most links in the newsletter are in a "clickable" format in the online version that can be found at www.gillmass.org/newsletter.

Senator Jo Comerford's Constituent Guide to COVID-19

Senator Jo Comerford and her outstanding team have compiled an impressive list of resources covering personal health and safety, unemployment, health insurance, taxes, small businesses, and much more. If you are uncertain where to begin looking for information, this is a good place to start: senatorjocomerford.org/constituent-guide-to-covid-19

Resources for Businesses Impacted by COVID-19

While the health crisis is a major challenge to Gill and Franklin County, the economic impacts of this outbreak are also already severe. Visit frcog.org/publication/view/business-development-resource-guide/ to learn more about resources for businesses.



Help for Families

This is a particularly difficult time for many people in our region, with the stressors of unemployment, school cancellation, and social distancing piling up. Some important resources include:

- The Look4Help Resource Directory (www.look4help.org) – with up-to-date information on local resources for families in need, including emergency food support (bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList)
- The Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition (4SC) and Gill-Montague Community School Partnership have shared resources for families, including a new weekly newsletter for parents (greenfield4sc.org/covid-19-resources).
- The Opioid Task Force has gathered recovery and treatment resources at www.opioidtaskforce.org/covid-19-resources.

Other Information Resources

Here are some public resources residents should know about:

- Center for Disease Control (CDC) – for up-to-the-minute information on COVID-19, please visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) – for up-to-the-minute information on COVID-19 in Massachusetts, please visit www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19
- Daily updates, summaries, and links to state & federal actions related to COVID-19 – senator-jocomerford.org/covid-19-state-federal-updates

From the Town Clerk

Town Election

The Selectboard has voted to postpone the Town's annual election to June 22, 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We hope that by this date we will be able to carry on a more normal election. Absentee ballots will be available **beginning on April 29, 2020** for those who wish to vote but are concerned about maintaining proper social distancing. Please contact the Town Clerk's Office for an application and ballot.

We will install a drop box at the rear door of the Town Hall for absentee ballots. Ballots can also be mailed to the **Town Clerk, Town Hall, 325 Main Rd, Gill, MA 01354**. The Town Clerk will be glad to help explain the process if you have any questions, and more information will be posted on the Town website www.gillmass.org as it becomes available. There will also be notices in the Greenfield Recorder and the Montague Reporter.

The Town is always looking for election workers if anyone is interested in working at the elections. This is a great way to contribute to our community and get to know your fellow "Gillbillies." Please call the Town Clerk at 413-863-8103 to learn more.

To register to vote you must be a U.S. citizen, a resident of Gill and at least 18 years old on or before the town election or town meeting. You may register in person, online or by mail (postmarked no later than the final registration date). Voter registration forms are available at the Town Hall or you may register online at www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr.

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Upcoming Election Dates

April 29, 2020

Absentee ballots available from the Town Clerk's office

June 11, 2020

Last day to register to vote or make changes to voter registration

June 22, 2020

Annual Town Election
12-4PM at the Fire Station
196C Main Rd.

September 1, 2020

State Primary Election

November 3, 2020

State/Presidential Election

Dog Licenses

Dog licenses for 2020 are still available in the Clerk's Office.

April 1, 2020 was the deadline to license all dogs in Gill. If you have not yet licensed your dog, please do so ASAP.

Doreen Stevens, Town Clerk
townclerk@gillmass.org

Office hours: Monday 9AM to 4PM
Wednesday 9AM to 3PM
Tuesday 9AM to 1PM
Thursday 3PM to 6PM
The Town Clerk is also available by appointment 413-863-8013

Health Resources

Since early March Regional Public Health Nurse Lisa White, in coordination with the Board of Health and newly-hired FRCOG nurses Melanie Zamojski and Meg Burch, have been working with residents and town officials to respond to COVID-19 as guided by the CDC and Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health. **FRCOG's website** frcog.org is one place to find comprehensive

links to municipal, public health, human service and emergency response to COVID-19.

The reality of illness caused by this novel virus has tragically touched a number of us, and the stressors of unemployment, school cancellation, and social distancing are piling up for many more. We would like to share some important resources with residents, including places to find answers to questions about COVID-19 and resources for staying healthy and on course.

- **Buoy** is a Coronavirus prevention and treatment website. This site walks you through a set of questions about your symptoms and helps you determine if you should seek medical attention or testing. For more information, visit www.buoyhealth.com.
- **The Mass 211 call center** connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community. For more information, visit www.mass211.org or just call "211".
- **The Greenfield Community Resource Line** is available to all residents of Franklin County for answers to questions about COVID-19 or to find a list of resources available to support them 413-775-6411.
- **Samaritans** is continuing operations 24/7, as always. During this unprecedented time, it can feel overwhelming to receive constant messages about COVID-19. Call or text their 24/7 helpline any time at 877-870-4673.
- **Look4Help Public Resource Directory** (a program of Community Action Pioneer Valley) is a free, web-

based public information service on local resources for families in need, including emergency food support available 24/7 at www.look4help.org

- **The Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition (4SC)** and **Gill-Montague Community School Partnership** also have shared resources for families including a new weekly newsletter for parents. More at greenfield4sc.org

Lisa is not holding regular monthly walk-in hours but is still available to Gill residents to assist with on-going health needs by arrangement. Call her at (413) 665-1400 x114.

There is so much we can do to help one another. Please stay tuned to public information and guidance on prevention and response and continue doing what you can to keep you, your loved ones, and our whole community in good health!

Energy Commission

Most residents of Gill have been getting their electricity from Eversource. Some have contracted with other companies in the hopes of finding cheaper options. We are excited to announce that Gill is joining together with other Franklin County towns to form a municipal aggregation where collective bargaining will provide for the possibility of cheaper electricity as well as options for greener electricity. Eversource will still deliver and charge for the electricity, and anyone who does not want to participate in the plan that Gill chooses has the right to opt out.

Gill has finally received DPU approval for the thirteen Franklin



county towns to join this municipal electrical aggregation program organized by Colonial Power Group. Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Huntington, New Salem, Northfield, Shelburne, Sunderland, Warwick and Whately are all expected to participate in an aggregation to provide three different prices and levels of renewable electric energy for each town's ratepayers. Colonial will be securing firm pricing on May 13, 2020. The Selectboard will determine the best pricing and renewable energy level. Given current electricity pricing, we are likely to choose a 36-month term with a higher renewable energy percentage but still cost equal or less than Eversource Basic Service rate.

All towns will sign up for the final pricing and terms by May 22, 2020. The new pricing is expected to start August 2020, and then be renewed in January 2021 for a 3-year term. Remember, there will be options to opt out and return to Eversource's basic service rate, or you may choose a higher renewable energy percentage components. More information to come!

Police Department

The police department is available and responding to calls during the COVID-19 pandemic. We may change practices and contact the public via phone if feasible, to maintain social distancing. Emergency situations will still be responded to in person.

With authorization from the Select Board, the department has added a temporary full-time position to

add redundancy to our patrol coverage. This position will be invaluable if the need arises due to quarantine or sickness among the officers or increased call volume. Mitchell Waldron, a Gill resident, will be working extra hours as needed. Officer Waldron was already a part time officer with department, and also serves on the Gill Fire Department. We thank him and all of the part-time staff for continuing to serve the community during these trying times.

Many of the Registry of Motor Vehicles expiration dates for driver's licenses, registrations and inspection stickers have been extended. Refer to mass.gov for further information.

Firearms licensing is still available. Please contact Officer Nikol Schreiber's email: nschreiber@gill-mass.org if you have any questions.

Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) has been distributed to the department several times with the assistance of MEMA and the National Guard. Some of the donated masks from the Kraft donation have even made it to Gill as well as New York City.

If you have a child who is having a birthday or other special occasion, the police department may be available for a drive-by parade if time permits. Please call the station to arrange (413) 863-9398.

Finally, the department would like to thank several of our residents who have made face masks for our officers and donated PPE equipment such as N95 masks, Tyvek Suits and cleaning supplies. It is truly appreciated.

Christopher J. Redmond
Chief of Police



66 French King Highway
Gill, MA 01354



Robin Paris
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Have you completed your 2020 U.S. Census questionnaire?

Every household in America will receive an invitation (and reminders) to complete the 2020 Census questionnaire. It can be done online, over the phone, or by mail. **It is important that everyone is counted.** The number of people counted is used for the next ten years to determine how much federal and state money will come to your community to help pay for schools, roads, healthcare and more; and it will help define new state and congressional



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legislative districts. If only 3 out of every 100 people are not counted in Franklin County, it could mean we will lose about \$50 million in state and federal funds over a ten-year period.

Most households receive their questionnaire in the mail. However, in some rural areas, the questionnaire is dropped off at people's homes. Due to COVID-19, the U.S. Census Bureau had to suspend its field operations. This means that in some areas there has been a delay in the questionnaire packets being dropped off. The U.S. Census Bureau's current schedule is to resume field operations after June 1st. For more information about the U.S. Census Bureau schedule, go to 2020census.gov/en/news-events/operational-adjustments-covid-19.html.

If you are one of the homes that has not received the questionnaire, you have the option of waiting for the packet to be dropped off after June 1st, or you can complete the questionnaire online at my2020census.gov (just click on "If you do not have a Census ID, click here" to move forward with the survey) or by telephone at 844-330-2020 (phone lines are open 7 am – 2 am).

Do you want to see how many people have responded in your community so far? The U.S. Census Bureau provides daily updates at 2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html. As of April 21, 2020, Franklin County's self-response rate was 56.3%, higher than the state (53%) and the nation (51.6%).

To view frequently-asked questions (such as "What if my Census let-

ter has the wrong zip code for my address?" Or "What if I have a PO Box?" Or "How do I know if it is a scam?") and more information, go to frcog.org/publication/view/census-2020-preparation.

The 2020 U.S. Census is SAFE, EASY, and IMPORTANT!

Announcements

THE GMEF ANNUAL GALA 'THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY CASH' RESCHEDULED to SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2020.

All advance tickets purchased will be honored. Tickets are \$25 and are available ONLY at the GMEF website: www.thegmef.org

Memorial Committee Events

Memorial Day Program, Sunday, May 24, 2020 begins 10 AM at the Gill Church

July 4, 2020 reading of the Declaration of Independence on the steps of the Gill Church, 12 noon.

Both events will be held pending state guidelines for social distancing.

Contact Gary or Merri Bourbeau at 863-8613 for up-to-date information.

GILL HISTORICAL COMMISSION

In his *History of Gill, vol. 1*, Ralph M. Stoughton writes about the crowds who came to the River's bank in the spring to fish for shad and salmon: Annually when the delicate blossoms of the shad-tree burst into bloom, a signal to the settlers as it had been to the Natives before them that the fishing time had arrived, crowds



[flocked to favorite fishing places]. Farmers . . . came too with carts and wagons, to purchase [fish for two or three cent each from piles stacked like haystacks on the bank. Dried and salted, the fish were a year-round staple, used so commonly they became known as "Gill pork."]

Josiah D. Canning (1816-1892) was the third son of the Reverend Josiah W. Cannon, Gill minister from 1806 to 1827. During his years in Gill, the son was a farmer, printer, postmaster, town clerk and treasurer. Writing poetry about the charms of rural life, he became known as the "peasant bard." Published posthumously in *Connecticut River Reeds* (1892), Canning's 1854 poem "The Shad-Fishers" describes the spring activity of the River and its then-abundant shad and salmon.

The Shad-Fishers

*All in the merry-month of May,
When snowy shad-trees blossomed gay,
To tell the fisherman the time,
When fish were plentiful and prime:*

*All in the merry month of May,
Where Turner's pouring waters play,
And lash, and dash, and roar, and bray,
Were wont to gather, there and then,
All in the merry month of May,
Back many years on Time's highway, Fishers of SHAD . . .
Upon old-time "Election Day,"
I've heard gray-headed worthies say,
Not only fishermen, so wet
With sweeping seine and scooping net,
And other folk would muster there . . .*

*There Burnham with his hardy few,
A daring, danger-loving crew,
Were wont their long-armed scoops to ply
For the fine salmon springing by; -
Those SALMON! of all fish most precious;
When dished, of flavor most delicious.
Ah, gray-haired dames of other days!
How often have I heard you praise,
As thought restored, those princely fish,
And tell the serving of the dish! . . .*

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