



THE

Gill Newsletter

Winter 2021 Issue

Disclaimer:

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COVID Vaccinations

COVID vaccinations have started, and by now most of Gill's first responders have received the first of two doses of the vaccine. Similarly, most healthcare workers have received one or both doses. Vaccinations will begin to be available for the general public age 75 and older on February 1st. Supply of the vaccine remains limited, so please be patient.

For up-to-date information, please visit the Franklin Regional Council of Government's COVID vaccine page: <https://frcog.org/covid-vaccine/> You can also call their COVID Vaccine Information Hotline at 413-774-3167 x 153 for an updated message about current vaccine status in our region.

When information about vaccination clinics becomes available, the Town will use its CodeRed notification system to distribute the message. If you do not receive the CodeRed alerts (most often used to notify of trash & recycling schedule changes), you can sign up through the Town website.

Residents of Franklin County are encouraged to volunteer at vaccine clinics by joining the county's Medical Reserve Core (MRC). More information on joining the MRC can be found here: <https://www.mamedicalreservecorps.org/covid19>

Town Election Vacancies

Two incumbents have announced they will not seek re-election in this year's town election. John Ward is stepping down after 12 years on the Selectboard,

and Randy Crochier is leaving the Board of Health after 27 years. Both will be missed, and their contributions to the Town will be recognized as we get closer to the election.

The Selectboard serves as a town's chief executive body and has overall responsibility for the general operations of town government. The Board of Health, with professional assistance from its Health Agent and Public Health Nurse, is required by state statutes and regulations to perform many important and crucial duties relative to the protection of public health, the control of disease, the promotion of sanitary living conditions, and the protection of the environment from damage and pollution. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of both these elected boards.

If you are interested in taking out nomination papers for either position, please contact Town Clerk Doreen Stevens at townclerk@gillmass.org or 413-863-8103 by March 25th. They must be returned with signatures to the Town Clerk by April 12th.



Check in with the Gill Website

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





Dog Licenses and (Human) Census

Dog licenses can be obtained through the mail or by filling out the dog license form included in the Town Census paperwork. Please be sure to update, sign and return your census to the Town Clerk's office.

Winter Parking Ban

The winter parking ban is in effect through April 15. There is NO on-street parking allowed between the hours of 1 AM and 6 AM. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Winter Sand for Driveways

The Highway Department keeps a pile of winter sand (sand & salt mix) at the Public Safety Complex (196 Main Road) for Gill residents who need a few buckets for driveways and walkways. Use the driveway on the left (Fire Department side of the building), and look for the pile behind the building, off to the left. The pile may not be used by snow removal companies and other private contractors.

Fred W. Wells Trust Scholarship

Applications for 2020-2021 Fred W. Wells Trust scholarships are now available on the Town's website www.gillmass.org in the News section. Scholarships are available to graduating seniors and full-time college students who have resided in Gill (and other eligible towns) for at least two years immediately before application. The completed applications must be postmarked on or before March 20th. If you are unable to download or print

the application, please contact Town Hall to make arrangements to pick one up.

From the Tax Collector

The second tax bill for FY21 will be mailed in February. The bills will have a new look to them as the Town has implemented new tax collection software. Residents are reminded tax bills are not sent to mortgage companies. It is your responsibility to notify your mortgage company and ensure an on-time payment. If you use your bank's online bill payment to send a check, be sure to include the current Bill # as part of the memo line.

If you mail in your tax payment, include the tear-off portion of the bill, and write the Bill # on the memo line of your check. If you wish to have a receipt of payment, be sure to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

To drop off a tax payment or motor vehicle excise bill, you may use the secure drop box located next to the back door of the Town Hall.

*Thank you, Tom Hodak,
Tax Collector*

Gill Fire Department

Warm. Keep Safe.

Heating is the second leading cause of fires in the home in Massachusetts. Home fires peak from December through February when the cold weather drives people indoors, heating systems are in regular use, and people turn to alternatives such as space heaters and wood or pellet stoves.

No one thinks fire will happen to them, but it is more important than ever to consider safety when heating your home. Give furnaces an annual check-up because efficiently running furnaces save money and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Certified professionals will check chimneys for cracks in the mortar and clean accumulated creosote to prevent chimney fires.

Heating is also the leading cause of carbon monoxide poisoning in homes, so make sure you have both working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on each floor of your home. Carbon monoxide is an invisible killer because it has no color, taste, or smell, and the symptoms are just like getting the flu. Test all the alarms once a month and change alkaline batteries twice a year. Replace smoke alarms that are older than ten years and CO alarms older than seven years. **When replacing alarms, look for models with a ten-year, sealed, non-replaceable, non-rechargeable battery.**

Store wood outdoors and pellets for stoves indoors, but away from heat sources. Dispose of the ashes in a metal container, with a secure lid, away from the house. A single ember can stay hot for days without being detected and easily fanned back to life. So many fires have started when ashes were placed inside cardboard boxes, paper bags or plastic containers, and then stored inside the garage, the breezeway, or under the porch.

Have a safe, comfortable heating season. For more information on



winter heating and fire safety, visit www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe

Ice Safety Tips

Ice on moving water in rivers, streams and brooks is never safe. The thickness of ice on ponds and lakes depends upon water currents or springs, depth and natural objects such as tree stumps or rocks. Daily changes in temperature cause the ice to expand and contract, which affects its strength. Because of these factors, no one can declare any ice surface to be absolutely safe.

For your safety, never go out onto the ice alone. A companion may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through the ice. Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice do not attempt to rescue your pet, go for help. New ice is usually stronger than old ice. As the ice ages, the bond between the crystals decays, making it weaker, even if melting has not occurred. Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but can also insulate it to keep it from freezing. Snow can also hide cracks, weak, or open ice. Slush is a danger sign, indicating that ice is no longer freezing from the bottom and can be weak or deteriorating. Ice formed over flowing water is generally 15% weaker than ice on still water. Finally, ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be one foot thick in one spot and be only one inch thick only ten feet away. Stay safe and make good decisions before you step out on the ice.

Open Burn Season

Open burning is allowed from January 15 until May 1 with a permit

from the Fire Department. State fire wardens determine each day whether conditions are safe for open burning. Weather and air quality can change rapidly, especially in the spring, and fire departments can rescind permits when that happens.

Open burning must be done between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. from January 15 to May 1. Fires must be tended at all times by a responsible adult and at least 75 feet from all dwellings.

You are allowed to burn brush, cane, driftwood and forestry debris (but not from commercial or industrial land clearing), agricultural materials including fruit tree and bush prunings, raspberry stalks, and infected bee hives for disease control, trees and brush from agricultural land clearing, and fungus-infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available.

You may not burn leaves, brush, trees, cane or driftwood from commercial or industrial land clearing, grass, hay, leaves, stumps, tires, construction materials, or household trash.

Gill residents may apply for a single-day burn permit online at www.fcburnpermits.com or, if you do not have internet access, call Shelburne Control at 413-625-8200. Applications must be made between 8:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on the day you wish to burn.

Street Numbers

Gill's new street number signs make it easier for first responders to find you in an emergency. The Fire Department has nearly finished this important project. Please try to fix

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Robin Paris
ABR, SRES



any signs that are bent or damaged by plows this winter. If you are unable to repair a number sign, please call the fire station at 413-863-8955 and firefighters will fix it for you.

Join the GFD

The Gill Fire Department is always looking for community-minded members who want to help their neighbors. Our members receive training in all aspects of firefighting and basic first aid, including CPR and defibrillation. If you are interested in becoming a member, please call the fire station at 413-863-8955 for more information, or stop by the station at 196A Main Road on any Thursday evening during our weekly drill sessions. Check it out. It's one of the most rewarding ways a citizen can help the community.

Local Farms, A Humanizing Force During the Pandemic

At the beginning of the pandemic, when many people and communities were shutting their gates, closing their doors and making people feel unwelcome, or at the very least, as if they were biological hazards, local farms such as Upinngil, located in Gill, chose to open their doors and do so safely. They have provided staple ingredients, fresh eggs and produce for family kitchens, and supported local businesses and restaurants by selling their prepared food items. More importantly, they've offered a warm greeting and even a freshly baked

croissant. I, for one, was especially grateful for the tips offered by Upinngil founder, Clifford Hatch, on how to make great sourdough bread during the sourdough baking frenzy of the early days in lockdown. In the late summer and early fall, as COVID numbers began to drop, local farms became the location for a chance meeting of neighbors and friends on their way to pick up their CSA shares. Going to the farm stand became an opportunity to quickly share updates and congratulate one another on missed milestones such as graduations and birthdays — masked and six feet apart, of course. Now, in the new year, when we begin to imagine a different reality, I want to take the time to express my gratitude to local farmers for their material and social provisions for their local community during these challenging times. When this is all over, I hope we can throw you a parade. You deserve it!

Jennifer Keator

HONOR ROLL

1st Quarter

Pioneer Valley Regional School

Grade 11

Highest Honor: Isaac Damon

Grade 10

Highest Honor: James Staelens

Grade 7

Highest Honor: Anthony McNamara, Elizabeth Polatin and Charlotte Relyea-Strawn

Honor: Taj Diaby

Turners Falls High School

Grade 12

First Honors: Leah Timberlake, Hailey Wheeler and Olivia Whittier

Second Honors: Taylor Murphy

Grade 10

First Honors: Adeline Riley

Second Honors: Anna Baskowski

Grade 9

Second Honors: Owen LaValley and Megan Leveille

Great Falls Middle School

Grade 8

First Honors: Maren Batchelder, Pamela Gomez and Josiah Little

Third Honors: Zachary Zilinski

Grade 7

First Honors: Lincoln Coleman, Shayla Freeland, Christopher Halla, Olivia Hunt, Vaughn LaValley, Emma Little and Kainen Stevens

Grade 6

Second Honors: Myra Glabach

Gill Elementary School

The Gill Elementary School has been unusually quiet thus far this school year. Students have not been in classrooms since mid-March of 2020. Given the current pandemic situation, the Gill students have been working remotely since that time. However, we are now planning and preparing to have students return in early February in a Hybrid model. What this means is that students are placed in one of three in-person cohorts. "A Cohort" students will attend on Monday and Tuesday, and learn remotely for the remainder of the week. "B Cohort" students will be remote



for Mon-Wed, and attend in person on Thursday and Friday. High needs students will attend four days a week, with Wednesday remaining a stay-at-home day for all students to allow for deep cleaning and planning for teachers. A number of families have decided to keep their students fully remote for the time being, whereas others have been homeschooling their students. There has been approximately a 20% decrease in student enrollment as compared to the 2019-2020 school year.

In order to ensure optimal air flow exchange, the school has done a considerable amount of work to provide air quality standards to meet the standards established by the Department of Health and Safety. Classrooms are clean and ready to welcome students back; however we've had to adjust for some longtime flooring issues which still need to be addressed. We are very much looking forward to students returning and restoring a sense of normalcy for them. I'd like to commend the Gill School staff for the incredible amount of work they've put into learning to teach students remotely and for their flexibility and creativity in taking steps to keep students engaged and communicating with families. As a school community, we expect to come out of this COVID time period armed with many tools and capacity for innovative teaching tools and strategies. The most daunting task is to measure student learning gaps and take the necessary steps to adjust teaching and learning to address the identified areas.

I'd like to extend a huge thank you to the town of Gill for supporting Gill Elementary School and the programs. I'm very interested in building community connections, and as the new principal I welcome hearing from the Gill residents with any questions or feedback. I can be reached at Lisa.Desjarlais@gmrds.org or (413) 863-7456.

Lisa Desjarlais, Principal

Four Winds School

Due to the rising number of COVID cases, Four Winds School has been fully remote since November vacation. The transition was bumpy at first, but we worked with parents and students to totally revamp our remote plan and found a schedule and system that seems to work much better for everyone! We have decreased our total daily screen time, while making our time together more productive and meaningful. We've particularly enjoyed the fun group activities (usually an online game we can play over Zoom) on Fridays. All that being said, we are looking forward to being in school in-person again sometime soon. Please check our website to learn more (www.fourwindsschool.info), or send us an email at fourwindsteachers@gmail.com if you have any questions. Stay well!

Slate Library News

The Slate Library will be holding a Puzzle Swap on February 13th from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Masks will be required. Bring your adult and children's puzzles in exchange for

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ones that are new to you. Donated puzzles must be in their original boxes, in good condition, and with all of their pieces. Please bring your puzzles to the library on the day of the swap in a clear plastic bag that has been sealed for at least three days prior OR drop off your puzzles at the library when it is open by Tuesday, February 9th. If you don't have a puzzle to donate, no worries! You can just take one! We hope to see you there.

GMEF Annual Gala Cancelled Due to Death of Philip Bauer

The Gill-Montague Education Fund Annual Gala "The Legend of Johnny Cash" has been cancelled. Executive Producer Joyce Phillips said, "It is with extreme sadness that we learned that Philip Bauer passed away on November 24, 2020 of stage 4 colon cancer." Philip had been scheduled to perform on April 20 for the 2020 GMEF Annual Gala. It was postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic. Philip Bauer was known world-wide as the number one Johnny Cash tribute artist. He brought the sound and charisma of "The Man in Black" to life in his 90-minute stage show. W.S. Holland (Johnny Cash's' only drummer) recognized Philip as "the best I have ever seen."

Because of the pandemic, the GMEF was unable to raise money with the Gala which supports student enrichment. Phillips said the GMEF will continue to award three scholarships in June and the roses for seniors they give annually at graduation.

Anyone who purchased advanced tickets for the 2020 Gala may wish to donate their ticket money towards student enrichment. Please contact us via our website: www.thegmef.org or email info@thegmef.org. We will send you a letter recognizing your 2020 tax deductible contribution. If patrons desire a full refund, they may return their tickets to The GMEF – TICKETS, PO Box 383, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

Our annual Galas will return when it is safe for everyone to gather. Thank you for your support.

Energy Commission

What's New?

The Energy Commission is working to save the town and its residents money while also reducing use of fossil fuels. Through our efforts the town was awarded full funding in last spring's Green Communities Grant which is helping to finance two exciting projects - two electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the Riverside Municipal Building on Route 2, and the installation of air source heat pumps (ASHPs) for Town Hall.

We are currently focusing on finding cost savings that would also make the Public Safety Complex more comfortable for our Highway, Police, and Fire Departments.

Community Choice Power Supply

Thirteen Franklin County towns, including Gill, have formed a municipal aggregation in order to

reduce electric costs and increase the percent of renewable energy in our portfolio. It is not too late to opt in to reduce your electric rates and choose more renewable energy generation. Dynergy will be providing the electrical energy supply component of rate payers' electric bills. Eversource will still send the bills, collect payments and provide distribution of electricity.

Currently Eversource requests bids for energy supplier rates twice a year. In January 2021, Eversource basic service rate is \$0.10795/kWhr. The Gill Community Choice Power Standard rate is \$0.10190/kWhr until Dec 31, 2023.

The Town of Gill has negotiated a 3-year contract to lock in electric supply rates for a standard of 25% additional renewable energy credits over Eversource's basic supply of 16%. If thriftiness is your main consideration you can choose the Green 5% renewable energy rate at \$0.09432/kWhr; if you prefer a greener option you can choose 100% renewable energy rate at \$0.13032/kWhr.

Why not pay less for greener electricity? Call Dynergy at (866) 220-5696. To opt in go to <http://www.colonialpowergroup.com/gill> or call (866) 485-5858 ext 1.

To see if you are eligible for Eversource's low income 36% discount rate or other programs, check this link: <https://www.eversource.com/content/ema-c/residential/my-account/billing-payments/help-pay-my-bill/discount-rate>



Check out the energy savings tips and information from the Energy Commission’s past newsletters on the town website. Go to gillmass.org and click on the heading “News.” Please also continue to check the Gill Energy Commission Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Gill-Energy-Commission-521949641188728/> and Mass Save’s website at masssave.com to take advantage of the programs they offer, everything from rebates to no-cost home energy assessments.

If you are interested in joining us in this exciting work, please send us an email at encom@gillmass.org.

The Gill Energy Commission: Alden Booth, Tupper Brown, Claire Chang, Andy Cole, Vicky Jenkins, and Janet Masucci

Exciting News for Electric Vehicle Enthusiasts

Two Level 2 Electric Vehicle chargers have been installed in the parking lot of the Riverside municipal building with the capacity to charge Electric Vehicles at the rate of approximately 20 miles in an hour. The Gill charging station will be listed on the ChargePoint & EVgo apps and helps to fill a void of charging stations located along Route 2 in Western Mass.

A variety of electric vehicles (with ranges as high as 300 miles per full charge) are now available for purchase in the Commonwealth. With a state rebate of \$2500 and a federal tax credit of \$7500, the purchase of such a car is an excellent investment to help reduce toxic car emissions that lead to air pollution and climate change. Studies show that electric vehicles have a lower impact than do gas and diesel vehicles, especially if charged with solar-generated electricity.

Some of the state monies received from the Volkswagen Settlement went to utility companies to finance the groundwork of installing the underground power lines, the meter, and the cement pedestal and bollards at approved EV charger sites. A state Green Communities Grant of \$7500, applied for by the Energy Commission, paid for most of the installation of the dual head ChargePoint charging station. The Selectboard agreed that the Town would pay for the electricity during the first two years of operation at which point there will be a per kW hour user fee to charge a car.

Gill Historical Commission

New Book Coming April 2021

Wounded twice in the Civil War, Francis Williams, Gill stonemason, writes home to his daughter Jennie about her romance with a freight agent in Brattleboro. Jennie leaves Gill to board in Easthampton and work in the button factory before her marriage to George Bardwell in 1873. What happens to Jennie and death in 1930?

The Gill Historical Commission expects to publish its second book this coming April 2021. The Jennie (Williams) Bardwell book will include an 1870s view of the center of Gill, family letters from 1863 to 1930, 1873 and 1876 diaries with annotations, and numerous spreads on the lives of Jennie’s Williams, Hosley, LeVitre, Boynton, Wyart, and Knowlton relatives. As a preview, this News issue includes a sample from the 1876 Diary. Watch for order forms in the next Gill News issue.

26 July 1876 – Up late. Leave the breakfast table and Celia, Eddie, and I go huckleberrying in Mr. Barton’s lot. Come down to dinner when George, Fronie and May Wyart come. A man called to mend tin. Mended Mother’s coffee pot. Celia and Eddie went up to her house and he mended C.’s boiler. I went out after some more berrys. Got a few and come home. F. went to the store tonight and got some things with the berrys. Uncle H. Scott here this a.m. Fred Johnson here this p.m. . . .



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