



THE

# Gill Newsletter

Spring 2025 Issue

## Disclaimer:

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## From the Town Administrator:

### Passing of Two Gill Officials

It is with heavy hearts that we report the recent passing of two of Gill's elected town officials:

Constable Fred O. Chase II and Tax Collector Thomas Hodak.

Both leave strong legacies as dedicated public servants.

Fred Chase passed away on March 12, 2025. At the time of his death Fred was one of three elected Town Constables, a position he held for over 40 years. He was a lifetime Gill resident and served on many town boards, including the Finance Committee, Capital Improvement Planning Committee, Machinery Advisory Committee, and likely many others. In his early years he was a member of Gill's Police Department and was also an Engineer in Gill's Fire Department. Fred loved history, and Gill's history was among his favorite subjects. Fred was especially proud of his collection of old maps of Gill and would lend the maps and share his knowledge and memories with whomever at Town Hall was working on a research project.

Thomas (Tom) J. Hodak passed away on March 30, 2025. At the time of his death Tom was the Town's elected Tax Collector and served as the Chair of the Personnel Committee. He previously served on the Capital Improvement Planning Committee and the Cable Advisory Committee, and was especially proud of the 10-year cable license negotiated with Comcast in 2016 that expanded cable (and high-

speed internet!) services to more than 80 previously unconnected Gill households. As Tax Collector, Tom was conscientious and highly principled, and cared deeply for the Gill residents he served. During Tom's 2+ terms as Tax Collector he oversaw the transition to new collection software and the implementation of online tax payments via the Town's website. Tom holds the distinction of being Gill's final elected Tax Collector, as voters last year approved converting the position from elected to appointed.

Thank you, Fred and Tom, for your many years of service to the Town of Gill. Your lasting contributions are deeply appreciated and you will be missed.

### Annual Town Meeting

This year's annual Town Meeting is scheduled to begin on Monday, May 5th at 7:00 PM upstairs at the Town Hall. As the meeting warrant, motions, and explanations become available, they will be posted to the Town's website.

Check in with the Gill Website

[www.gillmass.org](http://www.gillmass.org)

for up to date news, announcements and contact information!



Town Meeting will be held in two parts again this year. Part 1, on May 5th, will address non-financial and routine non-budget articles. Part 2, on Monday, June 9th at 7:00 PM upstairs at the Town Hall, will address financial articles and budget appropriations for the coming fiscal year beginning July 1st. Besides the usual budget matters, this year's Town Meeting will include a warrant article seeking approval of an updated charter for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The charter is the organizational document that outlines the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of the FRCOG. The current charter hasn't been changed since 1998 and the organization has evolved substantially since then.

**Vacancy: Tax Collector.** There is a vacancy in the position of Tax Collector. The Collector is responsible for printing, mailing, and collecting payment of property tax and motor vehicle excise tax bills and sewer use fees, handling cash receipts and collections, and issuing refunds for over payments. The Collector reconciles deposits and turnovers with the Treasurer and reconciles outstanding balances with the Accountant. The Collector also delivers exceptional customer service to residents, addressing inquiries about tax bills and payments. Qualifications include: high level of professionalism, attention to detail, and confidentiality; excellent organizational, communication (written/verbal), and customer service skills; strong-

proficiency handling money and financial math, proficiency with Microsoft Excel, Outlook, an Word; and proficiency with databases, online financial websites, Windows-based computers, an office equipment. Must be able to multitask, prioritize, problem-solve, and work independently. A knowledge of municipal governance, Open Meeting Law, and public records laws is desirable. This is a part-time position, currently 20-25 hours per week, with a competitive salary and benefits package including health insurance. The position is currently paid \$1,143.93 for each two-week pay period, although compensation effective July 1, 2025 has not yet been determined. The Collector must be able to obtain a tax collector bond, which is a type of surety bond that guarantees the tax collector's honest and faithful performance of their duties and protects the public and the municipality from financial harm if the collector mismanages or steals collected taxes. Anyone interested this position should contact the Town Administrator, Ray Purington, at (413)863-9347 or [administrator@gillmass.org](mailto:administrator@gillmass.org) .

### **Committee Openings**

**Cable Advisory Committee:** The primary function of this committee is to negotiate cable TV licenses and renewals with Comcast. The current license was signed on May 17, 2016 and is a 10-year license. Negotiations on the next license will be starting this year. The Committee continues to explore

ways to bring cable and/or broadband service to homes in Gill that are unserved. In addition, the Committee makes decisions and recommendations on recording, sound, post-production, and broadcasting equipment used to produce and film town meetings and other Gill events for later broadcast on MCTV. There are several open positions on this committee. During license negotiations the Committee typically meets monthly. Once a new cable license is signed the Committee generally meets quarterly or as needed. There currently is no routine schedule for meeting dates and times. Members are appointed by the Selectboard.

**Personnel Committee:** The Personnel Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Selectboard concerning the administration of and updates to the Town's Personnel Policy. The Personnel Committee also evaluates compensation provided to Town officials and employees, and makes a recommendation on the annual cost of living adjustment (COLA). There is one vacancy on the Personnel Committee for a three-year term as an at-large member (open to any registered Gill voter). The Committee generally meets quarterly, and there currently is no routine schedule for meeting dates and times. At-large members are appointed by the Moderator. Anyone interested in either of these committees should contact the Town Administrator, Ray Purington, at



(413) 863-9347 or administrator@gillmass.org .

### Recycling Bins, Compost Pails, & Backyard Composters

Recycling bins are available at the Town Hall for new-to-town residents and for residents who need to replace damaged bins. The first one is free, and additional ones are \$5 each. Kitchen compost pails are also available free of charge at the Town Hall, with a limit of one per household. A limited number of Earth Machine compost bins are also available at Town Hall for a discounted price of \$25 each (regularly \$65 each). Payment can be made by cash or check payable to the Town of Gill.

### Six Town Regional Planning Board's Report Prepared for 2024 Annual Town Meeting

The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB) was formed by the towns of Bernardston, Gill Leyden, Montague, Northfield and Warwick to research the feasibility of creating a new regional school district that was affordable, sustainable and educationally advantageous for our students. Eighteen members, three from each town, were appointed to serve. The board also includes one non-voting member from the Town of Erving as Erving, and does its best to keep the Town of Vernon, VT informed. Both Vernon and Erving have a long history of tuitioning students into the Pioneer and Gill-Montague school districts.

The STRPB convened its first “in-person” meeting in November of 2019, followed by the Covid 19 epidemic. This outbreak, along with other unanticipated obstacles, considerably extended the planning board’s research timeline. With the support of grants from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Revenue (DOR), the services of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools Consulting Group (MARS), the Abrahams Group and Mary Broderick, an educational facilitator specialist were secured to investigate the educational and financial impacts of forming a new “super-regional pre-k through 12 district” by combining the Pioneer Valley and Gill Montague Regional School Districts with the possibility of Erving and Vernon (VT) tuitioning in their 7-12 students. Although Warwick has formed its own school district, it continues to be an interested and active partner in this research. The Planning Board concluded its research in December 2023. The findings of the research were clear. The benefits gained throughout all programs and services by combining the middle and high school enrollments would be significant. Just some of these benefits include an increase in the following: course offerings, approaches to learning, athletic teams (and the ability to field teams), support for students with disabilities, professional development and collaboration, clubs and afterschool programs, and more. With the increase in enrollment and teachers, some of the benefits found for teachers would

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be more colleagues in and outside their certification areas for collaboration on curriculum design and approaches to learning, more opportunities for specialized courses and cross/interdisciplinary work, and professional development. In response to these findings, the STRPB voted in January 2024 to move forward with drafting a proposed regional agreement (RA). In the Spring of 2024, the STRPB appointed a District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS) to craft a new regional agreement for the six towns to consider in the Fall of 2025 (October/November), if feasible. Members of the DRAS were recommended by each town's Selectboard and appointed by the Planning Board. For the basis of its work, the DRAS utilized the 2017 proposed regional agreement that was developed by the Honest Education and Retaining Trust (HEART) Committee, which was formed by the selectboards of Bernardston, Leyden, Northfield and Warwick. Currently, the DRAS is working with the MARS Consulting Group in finalizing a draft proposed regional agreement to recommend to the STRPB for its consideration and review. Once the planning board completes its review and approves the RA it will undergo a technical legal review to ensure it complies with state laws and regulations. It will also be sent to the Selectboards for their initial review. Any feedback from the attorney will be shared with Selectboards when the legal review is completed and we recommend Selectboards

have their town counsels review the document once the technical review has been completed or collectively assign one to do this work. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) obligations will be calculated and shared with the towns for informational purposes. Additionally, Legal services would be required to identify all regional school district assets of buildings and property in the existing districts and these would be transferred to the new district through special legislation. It is our hope that the Planning Board will secure another grant to hire a firm to assist in holding multiple public forums and other pathways of communications so voters understand the complexities and potential of the newly formed super-regional school district. An aggressive timeline would be for the towns to schedule special Town Meetings on the same day in November for voters to consider creating a new district by approving the proposed Regional Agreement.. If the RA is approved in all six towns it then will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for approval. Finally, an eighteen month transition period would be necessary for the new school committee and transition superintendent to complete the associated tasks required. If the tasks noted above are completed within that timeframe, the new school district would begin operations in July 2027. We respectfully ask that each town provide a few minutes for a member of the STRPB to give an update on what to expect in the coming months.

Please contact Greg Snedeker at [strpboffc@gmail.com](mailto:strpboffc@gmail.com) regarding this request. For more detailed STRPB information please visit our website: <https://6towns.org/> Respectfully submitted, Alan Genovese, STRPB Chairperson Greg Snedeker, STRPB Vice-Chair/Secretary/Treasurer

## From the Town Clerk

### Town Election, Monday, May 19, 2025

Gill's annual Town Election will be held on Monday, May 19, 2025 from 10AM - 6PM upstairs at the Town Hall. In person early voting is not available for this election. Voters who wish to vote by mail may do so, and need to contact the Town Clerk at 413-863-8103 to request an application for a ballot. Applications must be returned to the Town Clerk by May 14th to allow adequate time to return completed ballots before the election. Vote by mail ballots must be returned to the Town Hall by 6 PM Monday, May 19, 2025. The following are the candidates, offices and terms on the ballot at this year's election.

John Ward, 4 Grove Street, has taken out papers for the Selectboard position for a 3-year term. John served as a Selectboard member in the past. Leslie Ann Wheeler, 39 River-view Drive has taken out papers for the Board of Health position for a 3-year term.

With the passing of Fred O. Chase II on March 12, 2025 we had a vacant Constable position, Ethan X. Chase, 278 French King Highway has taken out papers to



finish out the remainder of Fred's term, which is 1 year.

William C. Tomb, 90 Boyle Road is up for Re-Election as an assessor for a 3-year term.

Gary A. Bourbeau, 91 West Gill Road is up for Re-Election as a Cemetery Commissioner for a 3-year term.

Jacob B. Morrow, 7 Gilder Way is up for Re-Election as a Library Trustee for a 3-year term.

Ballots can be mailed or put in the drop box at the rear door of the Town Hall. To mail your ballots place in the provided envelope and mail to: 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.

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 date of the town election. Voter registration forms are available online at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>.

### Upcoming Town Meeting and Election Dates

Friday, April 25, 2025, 11AM-3PM - Last day to register to be able to vote in the Annual Town Meeting (05/05/2025). The Town Clerk's Office in the Town Hall will be open 11AM to 3PM. You can register to vote in future elections online at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>

Monday, April 28, 2025 - Vote by Mail applications are available. Please call the Town Clerk 413-863-8103 for instructions.

Monday, May 5, 2025 - Annual Town Meeting, 7PM upstairs in

the Town Hall

Tuesday, May 6, 2025- Vote by Mail ballots available from the Town Clerk for the Annual Town Election

Friday, May 9th, 2025, 11AM-3PM-Last day to register to vote in the Annual Town Election (5/19/2025) The Town Clerk's Office will be open 11AM to 3PM. Monday, May 19, 2025 - Annual Town Election 10AM- 6PM upstairs in the Town Hall. If you need to use the elevator, please use the ADA accessible entrance located at the rear of the Town Hall.

Monday May 19, 2025- Vote by Mail ballots must be placed in the drop box by 6PM sharp.

Monday, June 9, 2025 is the current plan for the continuation of Annual Town Meeting, 7PM upstairs at the Town Hall.

### Dog Licenses

March 31, 2025 was the deadline to license all dogs in Gill. If you have not yet licensed your dog for this year, please do so ASAP. All dogs in Gill must be licensed. Contact the Town Clerk at [townclerk@gillmass.org](mailto:townclerk@gillmass.org) or 413-863-8103.

Doreen Stevens Town Clerk [townclerk@gillmass.org](mailto:townclerk@gillmass.org)

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

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## From the Town Assessor

The Assessors' Office wants residents to know that they have contracted with Catalis to conduct the regular cyclical and building permit inspections that must be done in order to be in compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue guidelines. The purpose of the inspection process is to verify data in which assessed values are, in part based. Since soundly based equitable assessments require accurate property data, we ask that you permit our consultant, Catalis, to inspect your property. A complete inspection consists of an exterior as well as an interior inspection of your property. Typically, these inspections take only a few minutes and consist of a walkthrough of your basement and living areas, as well as an exterior measurement of your home. Pictures of the outside of your home will also be taken as the Massachusetts Department of Revenue has directed us to put pictures on all property cards. These visits will be done during the spring and summer months. If you have any concerns, please call the Assessors' Office at: 413-863-0138. Your assistance in this effort is greatly appreciated as we strive to maintain the accuracy of our parcel data. We appreciate your help in this matter.

## Clean Sweep Bulky Waste Recycling Day

The three collection locations are:

1. Erving Highway Garage on Public Works Boulevard (off Rt. 2 across from Erving Police Station);
2. Mohawk Trail Regional School at 26 Ashfield Rd. (Route 112 South), Buckland;
3. Whately Transfer Station at 73 Christian Lane in Whately.

Franklin County Solid Waste Management District is holding the Spring 2025 "Clean Sweep" Bulky Waste Recycling Day on Saturday, May 17 from 9 a.m. to noon. The three collection locations are Erving Highway Garage on Public Works Boulevard (off Rt. 2); Mohawk Trail Regional School at 26 Ashfield Rd. (Route 112 South), Buckland; and Whately Transfer Station at 73 Christian Lane in Whately. Residents and businesses from any of the District's 21 member towns may bring bulky items to one of the three collection sites. Acceptable items include tires, appliances, refrigerators, scrap metal, furniture, carpeting, construction debris, computers, televisions, propane gas tanks, and other large items. Materials will be recycled whenever possible. There are charges for most items. Disposal fees, cash only, will be collected during check-in at each site. A price list for the most common items is at: [franklincounty-wastedistrict.org](http://franklincounty-wastedistrict.org). Pre-registration is not required for this event. Mattresses and box springs will not be accepted at this collection. There are six regional mattress recycling locations across Frank-

lin County, which are open year-round. For locations, pricing, and hours, see [franklincountywastedistrict.org/mattress-recycling](http://franklincountywastedistrict.org/mattress-recycling). If you are unsure if your mattress and box spring can be recycled, call the District office at 413-772-2438. Electronics are accepted at the District's bulky waste day, but residents are also encouraged to recycle computer equipment and televisions at their town's transfer station, or at Greenfield Transfer Station. Staples stores accept most types of computer equipment (no TVs) free of charge: call store for details. Clean, dry textiles and books will be accepted for free reuse or recycling. Textiles must be contained inside a sturdy plastic bag. Textiles are banned from the trash in Massachusetts. Textile recycling accepts 95% of all textiles and shoes, including clothing or linens that are torn, stained, with missing buttons or broken zippers. Damaged textiles can be sold to manufacturers that make insulation or shop rags. Acceptable items include CLEAN & DRY clothing, shoes, and accessories; plus curtains, sheets, towels, and stuffed animals in any condition (except moldy or wet). Books can be in any condition (except moldy or wet) and can be hardcover or paperback. No encyclopedias. Bulky Rigid Plastics will be collected separately for a special recycling program; \$5 per load of acceptable items. This special recycling program only accepts these bulky rigid plastic items: clean and empty 5-gallon pails, plastic lawn furniture, laundry baskets, storage totes, plastic trash barrels, recycling bins,



and milk crates. Before sending unwanted items for disposal or recycling, consider offering them for reuse. Various charities, including local Salvation Army and Goodwill stores and non-profits, accept donations of household items and working electronics. Always call ahead to ask if they can accept your item. Or offer reusable items on a local "Buy Nothing" Facebook group, Freecycle group, or local town groups such as NextDoor. For more information, see [franklincountywastedistrict.org](http://franklincountywastedistrict.org), or contact the District office at [info@franklincountywastedistrict.org](mailto:info@franklincountywastedistrict.org) or 413-772-2438. MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.

## Gill Cultural Council

### ARTIST SHOWCASE at the GILL HARVEST FAIR

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025. Rain  
Date OCTOBER 5, 2025

We're gathering Gill artists to showcase their work at the Gill Harvest Fair and we hope you will take part! The intent is to share our work with our neighbors and friends, and to celebrate the great diversity of artistic work in our little town. Depending on the final number of artists we'll set up either in the Gill Library or upstairs in Town Hall; both spaces are immediately adjacent to the day's activities on the Town Green. Whether you painted portraits 20 years ago, made a quilt recently for a grandbaby, photograph hidden

places, do calligraphy, make paper mache puppets, weave the wool of your sheep, carve wood into utensils, make avante garde monoprints- or work in any other artistic form imaginable- we'd like you to show off your work. You can bring just one piece or many... one artform or the gamut of various arts or crafts. This will be a fun, low key kind of event and artists of all ages are welcome to take part! While not intended as a sale, those artists who sell art are welcome to have information available about how to purchase your work. If you would like to take part please contact Karen Larsen at [karenlarsen@earthlink.net](mailto:karenlarsen@earthlink.net) or by phone at 617.368.0954. Or if you know of someone whose artistic work you admire, please encourage them to contact her. Thanks. And watch this newsletter for notice of a casual gathering of artists at the Library in late Summer for those who may have questions about the event. See you at the Fair!

### UPCOMING CULTURAL COUNCIL FUNDED EVENTS

We hope some of these upcoming events will be of interest!

Musica Franklin, Inc.  
Fun Fest May 10, 2025 12:30-5:15 Unity Park, Turners Falls

Cheli Menella  
Butterfly Dreams- A SHadow Show As part of one of the Greenfield Arts Walks Held last Fridays of the month

Franklin County Pride, Inc. Franklin County Pride Parade and Festival 2025

June 7, 2025 Parade downtown leads to Energy Park, Greenfield, MA

LAVA- Festival of Play Readings LAVA Center on Main Street in Greenfield The Weekends of June 7, 14, 21, 28 <https://thelava-center.org/> for details

Antenna Cloud Farm, Inc. Antenna Cloud Farm Music Festival, Artist Retreat, and Institute 2025

July through September  
[www.antennacloudfarm.com](http://www.antennacloudfarm.com)  
Schedule on the website in late Spring

The Nolumbeka Project, Inc. A Celebration of Native American Art, Music, and Cultures August 2nd & 3rd, 2025 10-5 each day Unity Park, Turners Falls/Montague, Mass

## Gill Historical Commission

### Spring event: Commemoration of King Philip's War

The Gill Historical Commission, with other local Commissions and tribal groups, serves on an Advisory Board for a grant-funded study of King Philip's War. A colonial attack on Pocumtuck and other tribes took place here on May 19, 1676. Commemoration of the 349 th anniversary of this attack on Peskeompskut will be held at the Discovery Center, at the end of the Gill-Turners Falls Bridge in Turners Falls, on Saturday, May 17 from 1-3 p.m. Several tribal leaders will be



featured speakers. (See [www.nolumbekaproject.org/events](http://www.nolumbekaproject.org/events) for details.) This free event has been offered for many years. It has always offered a profound educational experience about our early history.

**Changes at RMB: GHC Expands**

Changes are under way at the dark green building at 54 French King Highway, once known as Riverside School. Much to our delight, the town has invited the Historical Commission to use more space in the building. As we reorganize and expand our displays, we welcome suggestions about parts of Gill’s history that intrigue you. Both new ideas and volunteers to help us in this exciting endeavor will be well received! We look forward to hearing from you and to celebrating the reopening the museum of the Gill Historical Collection. It’s fine to leave us a note in the mailbox at the Town Hall.

**More about our history: “Farming Then and Now”**

“I like to remember the more relaxed days of farming. I would go with my grandfather to “fix the ram”, which pumped water to a barrel in the kitchen, take the dog and drive the cows in from pasture at milking time, jump in the new-mowed hay in the barn with the neighbor girls. Our children learned by having projects of their own; David began growing sweet corn to sell at his roadside stand, and all our children carried on with this. Doug grew high-density tomatoes for several years. Our grandchildren have carried on providing fresh sweet corn for roadside sale. Today’s farmer must be a

top-notch operator to financially survive, with costs rising more rapidly than income, coupled with costly and confining federal, state and local restrictions. I believe that farming as we now know it in our small rural community will become “history.” ‘

Excerpt from Chapter 1 of History of Gill, Vol. II, 1943 - 1993 by Shirley Flagg.

**Agricultural Commission**

**Save The Date For The Great Annual Gill Harvest Festival**

Sunday September 28, 2025 Rain Date 10/5/25 from 12-3 p.m. The Common, Town Center, Gill If you are interested in displaying farm or farm-related products or presenting crafts for sale please contact a member of the Ag Commission - Info available on the Town Website. Ag Commission Members are Tom Chalmers, Gary Stevens Ed Golembeski, Roger Augustine, Dick French And Zoe Fox

**Slate Library News**

Spring is in the air and you can find many spring things at your local library. We have beautiful books for our most avid gardeners including “Floret Farm’s Cut Flower Garden” by Erin Benzakein, “A Year in the Edible Garden” by Sarah Raven, “What Plant Where? by Ron Lancaster, and “Perennial Combinations” by C. Colston Burrell. For our younger enthusiasts, you can find “Foraging with Kids” by Adele Nozedar, “Millie Fleur’s Poison Garden” by Christy Mandin, “Moomin and the Springtime Surprise” by Tove Jansson, and “Gardening Projects for Kids” by Jenny Henty.

Did you know that we have a seed library? Come check out some seeds! And you don’t have to return them! Our seed library has veggies, herbs and flower seeds. We are also participating in the “Common Seed Project”, a community garden initiative that fosters a sense of shared experience and engagement through gardening and seed saving. Inspired by “common read” programs, the project selects a “common seed” each year, providing libraries in western Massachusetts with free seeds. For 2025, the common seed is the Provider Bean. Come pick up a pack, and be part of our gardening initiative!

On Saturday, May 31 we will host a seedling swap. Do you start seeds in the spring while dreaming of your summer garden? You might end up with more seedlings than you need. A seedling swap is a community event where you can exchange young



Maggie Donahoe and her horse Stormy collecting trash on Bascom Road





plants that you have in excess for other seedlings that you may need. Trade those extra peppers for some eggplants! Or zinnia's for a different colored cosmos! It's a way to share plants, meet fellow gardeners, and expand your garden's diversity. While visiting Slate, you just might find some new titles for springtime relaxation once you put down that gardening trowel!

Slate Library is open on Tuesday (2-6 pm), Wednesday (3:30 - 7:30 pm), Thursday (2 - 8 pm) and Saturday (10 - 2 pm)

Jocelyn Castro-Santos  
Director, Slate Library  
Gill, MA  
(413)863-2591

## **Town Forest Committee**

Developments for the Town Forest Committee include completing a well marked loop trail, approximately 1 mile long, on the Mountain Road Forest Property. This 11 acre parcel was donated by Dick French (easement via Mount Grace land Trust) and is located immediately behind the Town Garage and contains some interesting ledges and other forest habitat features from a non-intensive cutting a few years ago. Currently there is no road sign for this parcel, but one is in the works. From Main Road, parking and trail access is 1,200 ft (.22 miles) in, on Mountain Road, on the right side of the road, where the old logging road access is visible\*. In addition, the Committee was awarded two grants from the Massachusetts Dept of Conservation and Rec., that will be used to develop and complete

both a Forest Climate change and a Bird Plan. We have contracted with Forester Toby Carter and have begun the process for this project that will be focused on the Blake Town Forest. If anyone has any questions on the above, or the committee, please contact Ken Sprankle (Chair) at sprankle1@gmail.com. \*(Lat 41.627077, Long - 72.516643)

## **From the Gill Memorial Committee**

Committee members, along with the Community Service Crew from the Sheriff's Office will be planting geraniums and placing flags at each veteran's grave on May 22 nd with a rain date of May 23 rd starting at 8AM at the Riverside Cemetery. We invite you to attend our service this year on Sunday, May 25,2025 beginning at 9:30 AM at the Gill Church with hymns, music, a Memorial Day address by Chris Demars and continuing at the war memorials with a rose ceremony, flag raising, gun salute and taps. Participants include the Northfield VFW and the Oakridge Marine Corp. Detachment. We are in the planning stages of adding a new memorial to recognize those in conflicts since 1975. We welcome suggestions and donations to the project. There is a matching grant available to the town donation. If you would like to participate, please contact a committee member. We welcome new members or participants to honor our veterans.

Gary and Merri Bourbeau (413/768-9543)(413/863-8613)  
Doug and Elaine Smith (413/863-3115)  
Tony Zager

(413/522-6915)

## **From the Gill Cemetery Commission**

### **Gill has a Natural Cemetery**

If you are looking for a more environmentally friendly way to be buried, perhaps green burial in Riverside Woods, Gill's 5 th cemetery, is an option for you. After years of research, planning, and implementation, the first burial took place there five years ago, in winter's colorless days. But the burial was all green, following a practice that was common prior to the Civil War. Also called natural burial, the term means an un-embalmed body in a biodegradable shroud or coffin, made of cardboard, wicker or soft wood such as pine, is placed directly in the ground without a vault. 3.5 to 4-foot-deep grave with only biodegradable materials allows aerobic bacteria to hasten natural decomposition and for the soil to be enriched. In keeping with their natural setting, graves are marked with locally sourced flat stones; for ease of location, GPS coordinates and mapping identify each site.

For more information about green burial, <https://greenburialma.org> and <https://www.greenburialcouncil.org> Although a 2016 survey by the Gill Cemetery Commission to determine interest in a green cemetery garnered just 36 responses, 22 of them (61%) were in favor. In September 2016, the Town of Gill accepted ownership of the Riverside Cemetery and the adjacent wood lot. With the approval of the Gill Selectboard and



state agencies, the Cemetery Commission began the work of creating a green cemetery in those woods. A Franklin County House of Correction crew helped by cutting and piling brush; the town highway crew soon arrived with their chipper. On a work day, volunteers set about creating a walking path and marking burial lots. Then came the first burial in January 2020.

Now, five years and 4 burials later, our wish list includes collecting suggestions for names of the paths, finding volunteers for a spring cleanup workday, and teaching volunteers how to manage a green cemetery. Many Massachusetts towns offer green burial: Amherst (Wildwood Cemetery); Barnstable; Brewster; Cambridge (Mount Auburn); Chesterfield (Butterfly Green Cemeteries); Chilmark; Hawley; Heath; Montague; Leyden (West Leyden Cemetery); Shutesbury; Sharon; South Wellfleet; Springfield (Hillcrest Park); Warwick; Wendell; Wenham; Westfield; West Tisbury; Williamsburg (Mountain Street Cemetery); and Worthington. Given that Massachusetts residents who want a green burial generally prefer a final resting place in their own town, rather than far from home, many other towns are considering the option.

### **Center Cemetery grave stone cleaning day**

Volunteers needed for grave stone cleaning at Center Cemetery May 17th 10am - 2pm. Come join us it is fun! Wear rubber gloves and an old credit card

or rubber spatula makes good gentle scrappers. Gill Cemetery Commission members are available for local information. Contact Chair Joan Pillsbury Jpillsbury@Gillmass.org to be placed on the agenda of one of our meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m. in the town hall upstairs meeting room.

### **Gill Middle School**

This winter Amy Gordon, assisted by Emily Samuels and Isaac Bingham, revived the after school theater program known as ACT. Starting in January, and rehearsing 2 afternoons a week, the group of students and directors coalesced into a working theater company with stellar performances in mid-March. Imagine an active group of 23 nine to twelve year olds in your workplace, dropping off backpacks, coats, basketballs, snacks, and amping up energy like a microburst. Community comes in many guises, and giving up hallways and working spaces to accommodate costume changes is community at its best. Town officials seemed pleasantly bemused by the transformation of town hall into a theater, and it is a credit to them that they offered no resistance, only support, despite what must have been quite a level of inconvenience. Theater is a classic example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Actors, directors, costumer, set design and creation, parent support, are all key in the formula. In this setting, the actors found themselves taking risks - being a

character, speaking with volume, working together to create the fabric of a tale and bringing it to life. There are not a lot of 9-12 year olds who may be trusted with a wooden sword, but each of the actors promised to be safe, and they did so, clacking swords effectively in a fight, in protecting the weak, in a mock beheading, and finally, knighthood. Casting was thoughtful but a lot was left to chance - we didn't really know the kids very well at that point. Will this child rise to the demands of learning lines, remembering scene changes, be loud and expressive? Each performance showed growth and proved to each actor that they are capable in a new way. While not a musical, the songs of the show served as enhancers, setting the scene, emphasizing action, and drawing all to conclusion. The kids soaked up the melodies with a great thirst, and sang with gusto. Costuming was transformational, as it should be. The fancy ladies, the rough and ready outlaws, the homely family, the regal prince, lord and lady, the stalwart sheriff, captain and guards wore their outfits with enthusiasm and grace. (It should be noted that Emilie Long, the costumer is a brilliant seamstress and helped to make everyone's costume really work.) Rotating panels that had been painted by the kids (with assistance from Jocelyn Castro-Santos, our Art Teacher) allowed for clever and convincing scene changes. In part with the sponsorship of the Gill Rec committee, theatrical lights had been rented, and with the window curtains drawn, the effect was magi-



cal. The value of the arts should be so obvious that it is beyond discussion, and yet, time and again, when budgets are pushed, it is the arts that take the hit. As the community watched these children, some almost young adults, the faces of the performers were a true measure of the importance of this experience.

Thanks to all who helped!



## PRESIDENT'S LIST AND DEAN'S LIST

Kole Broderick was named to the President's List for the fall semester at Fitchburg State University. Kole had a 3.75 average in each of three successive semesters.

Jessica Tricolici was named to the dean's list for the fall semester at Fitchburg State University. Daniel Ware was named to the dean's list for the fall semester at Springfield Technical Community College.

Charles Kenyon and Julie Sprankle were named to the fall semester dean's list at Endicott College. Charles is majoring in English and Julie is majoring in marketing.

## HONOR ROLL

Franklin County Technical

School  
First Semester  
Grade 12  
High Honors: Zachary Zilinski  
Honors: Josiah Little  
Grade 11  
High Honors: Emma Little and Ella Vassar  
Frontier Regional High School  
Second quarter

Grade 9  
High Honors: Sophia Kwader  
Turners Falls High School  
Second Quarter  
Grade 12  
Second Honors: Sheni Ovale Roblero  
Grade 11  
First Honors: Ella DeLorenzo and Lily DeLorenzo  
Second Honors: Rojelio Galvez Mendez and Kainen Stevens  
Grade 9  
First Honors: Madison Haight and Jacelyn Ovalle Roblero  
Great Falls Middle School  
Second Quarter  
Grade 8  
First Honors: Santiago Buri Rosales  
Second Honors: Alison Raymond  
Third Honors: Owen Zilinski  
Grade 7  
First Honors: Kaelynn Dudek and Josephine Hayman  
Grade 6  
First Honors: Evelyn Galvez Mendez  
Second Honors: Carter Greene

## Gill Neighbors

### Offering Help to Gill Seniors

We are a group of volunteers who give rides to appointments, pick up prescriptions, pick up pre-ordered groceries, deliver library

books...

Are you a senior who could use some neighborly help? Do you know of someone else who might? Would you be interested in becoming a driver?

Please call Emily Samuels at 413 863-9446 and leave a message

Town Hall  
325 Main Road  
Gill, MA 01354-9747

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM Retail

LOCAL  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

GILL, MA 01354

Where in Gill do you think this is? ...we'll let you know in August



Last issues photo was of the Gill side of Munns Ferry Crossing  
by the Roving Gillbilly