

# TOWN OF GILL

MASSACHUSETTS



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## SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING MINUTES May 11, 2010

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Selectboard: Ann Banash, Nancy Griswold and John Ward, Selectboard members; Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant

Finance Committee: Colleen Sculley, Claire Chang, Tupper Brown, Ronnie LaChance, Timmie Smith, Lee Stevens, Alden Booth, Jim Poulsen

Others Present: Randy Crochier

Highway Department: Mick LaClaire, Highway Superintendent, presented his requested budget for FY11, and explained that it keeps the same road maintenance programs and other services in place. He feels his request is a "workable" budget. As a side note, he reported that paving of Walnut Street will take place next week, 5/17 - 21. For the rest of FY10 he projected approximately \$26,000 in expenses.

For asphalt road projects, this year and next year the work will be in the Riverside area, as that pavement is 18-22 years old, and needs to be redone. The work must be performed while the sub grade is still good; otherwise it becomes very expensive. The next project after Riverside will be Main Road from the Route 2 lights up to Smith's and West Gill Road from Main to South Cross.

Mick explained that hardtop roads have a life of 10 to 15 years and cost \$72,000 per mile to pave. By comparison, oil & stone roads need to be redone every 5 years at a cost of \$14,000 per mile. He also briefly explained the Chapter 90 road aid formula, and that it's based on a town's road miles and number of employees who work anywhere within the town.

For capital needs, a high priority is the 20+-year old highway truck, which has 8,200 hours on the engine, and a dump body that is disintegrating. A new truck with a sander is \$149,000. To re-use our sander on a new truck is only \$128,400. Mick will also get quotes on replacing the truck body, which could extend the life until the loan for our newest truck is paid off.

Another high priority is to replace the 40-year old membrane roof over the front section of the Public Safety Complex. The membrane is very porous, and we have had several roof leaks and repairs in recent years, including another one this past winter.

The third priority is to replace the chipper. It gets a lot of use, and is getting tired.

Slate Memorial Library: Lissa Greenough and Jocelyn Castros-Santos presented the library's budget for FY11. They explained that 20% of their overall budget must be spent on materials. For Gill, roughly half of that expense comes from State Aid to Libraries, and the other half from the Town's appropriation. Our library, along with all small Western Mass libraries, will be facing severe cuts in services due to State budget cuts to the regional library system. All regional services will be consolidated to a Quincy (eastern Mass) location by 2012.

They expressed a need for more funds that could be used for maintenance needs at the library. An immediate project is to seal the basement from wetness. Lissa will get approximate costs for the work. They are hopeful that some energy conservation work will be done as part of the Siemens project.

Lissa expressed frustration with the fire alarm system at the library – it has been quirky and has needed several expensive repair service calls. She asked if the Town's insurance cost would increase if we didn't have alarm monitoring.

Fire Department: Gene Beaubien, Stuart Elliott, Ken Sears, Mike Crochier, Eric Vassar, and Luke Winn presented the Fire Department budget. The discussion and questions mostly centered on capital items.

Gene reported that the Department did not receive the FEMA grant to replace all 20 air packs. The current air packs, which were acquired with a grant in 2003/4, do not meet current NFPA standards. As part of the Tri State Mutual Aid Program, of which Gill is a member, every fire department must be able to provide a Rapid Intervention Team with air packs equipped with buddy breathing capabilities. Currently only Greenfield and Orange departments are fully trained as R.I.T. The cost to replace all the air packs is estimated at \$87,000. It might be possible to retrofit our current air packs to be buddy-breathing capable; Gene will investigate this further.

It was noted that guidelines recommend replacing turnout gear every 5 years, and Gill tries to do this through its operating budget, buying four sets each year.

There was also discussion about the need to replace our 30-year old fire truck, and that delaying this many more years will run into the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of our second oldest truck. Industry guidelines and best practices recommend a 30-year life for fire trucks.

Gene explained the department is looking into a surplus equipment pickup truck in Amherst that is available at no cost, and could be converted into a brush truck. Replacement of our "homemade" brush truck was another recommendation of the HRS consultant report. Gene will get a cost for an insert unit that would convert the pickup to a brush truck.

It was suggested that next year's budget meeting be held at the Fire Station. The idea was well received.

It was also noted that it is probably time to schedule another meeting between the Town and NMH officials to discuss the possibility of a donation, payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or other form of contribution.

Town Clerk: Lynda Hodsdon Mayo presented her FY11 budget for the Town Clerk and reviewed the range of services provided and noted several of the important responsibilities. Chief among those responsibilities is the safekeeping of the Town's vital records. She raised concerns about the adequacy of the vault in the basement of Town Hall, citing questions about dampness and fire resistance. Lynda and Ray will work together to find out what must be done to make the vault adequate. It was suggested that UMASS Archival Services might be a resource for information.

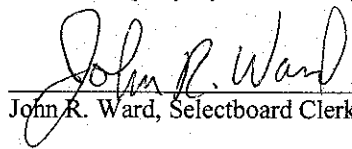
Lynda also noted that in an effort to conserve money, Gill uses three fewer people during its elections than are required by state regulations.

She also requested the Selectboard and Finance Committee consider an increase to the Town Clerk's salary, and suggested a figure of \$22,768 for a 20-hour week. This equates to Grade 7 Step A, as was recommended by the HRS consultant report. Lynda is aware that as an elected position, any salary must be voted by Town Meeting, and is willing to make a motion or amendment if necessary.

School Budget: In a brief discussion of the GMRSD budget, Timmie emphasized the importance of Town Meeting voting on the "assessment" and not simply the "budget". If we voted a "budget", and the district's state aid was cut, the town could be responsible for making up the shortfall. Voting an assessment would mean we would still only be responsible for that assessment and the district would have to make up the shortfall.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.*

  
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John R. Ward, Selectboard Clerk

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Claire Chang, Finance Committee Secretary