(Accepted as a record of a posted meeting of the Gill Selectboard)

Civic Leaders

Meeting #5 10/17/17 Gill-Montague Senior Center 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Facilitated by Debbie Lynangale of the Community Action Mediation and Training Collaborative

Notes by Jen Audley of the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership

Recorded by Montague Community Access Television

Handouts: Medicaid issue 10/11/17 press release; Efficiency and Regionalization grant program information; Franklin County preK-grade 12 enrollment data as of 10/1/2016; Facilitation for Future Meetings

10 Attendees:

GMRSD – Michael Sullivan, superintendent; Joanne Blier, director of business and operations **GMRSC** – Timmie Smith, chair (also chair of Gill finance committee); Jane Oakes, vice chair: Christina Postera, assistant treasurer

Town of Montague –Mike Naughton, finance committee vice chair, Fred Bowman, finance committee **Town of Gill** – Greg Snedeker, Selectboard; Ray Purington, administrative assistant; Sandy Brown, finance committee

Opening

School Committee Chair Timmie Smith called the meeting to order, noting that none of the boards or committees present had a quorum of members present

Debbie Lynangale gave an overview of the agenda, noting that this was the 3rd of a series of 3 meetings she had been asked to facilitate, so group would need to decide how to proceed vis a vis facilitation at the end of the meeting.

Medicaid reimbursement issue

Michael Sullivan distributed a GMRSD Press Release "Update on Medicaid Reimbursement Issue" from 10/11/17 and gave an overview:

- In April/May 2017, district administrators and the School Committee became aware that from 2010-2015 GMRSD had received reimbursements through the School-Based Medicare Program that may not have been for qualifying expenses.
- The district informed the federal Medicaid Office about the situation, contracted with a law firm for assistance with this matter, and ended its contract with New England Medical Billing, the third-party vendor that managed GMRSD's participation in the program from 2009-2015.
- In September 2017, the federal Medicaid office in Boston notified the district that they believe the over-reimbursements from 2010-2015 total \$936,254, that the district should repay the funds to Medicaid, and that arrangements should be made for a payback schedule.

- The district has begun discussing the specific dollar amounts to be repaid and a repayment schedule with Medicaid officials. They are hoping for at least a 10-year payback period, and expect that NEMB will accept some responsibility.
- The impacts on district budgets going forward are two-fold: in 2016 and 2017, when the district ceased received the ineligible reimbursements, district revenue from Medicaid reimbursements declined considerably, and this will continue. Since the to-be-determined repayments to Medicaid will likely be taken in the form of further reduced reimbursement payments, that line will be further impacted.

A brief discussion generated these points and questions:

- The parties involved and potentially at fault in some sense include not only GMRSD and NEMB (a private company), but also MassHealth (a state agency). Why did it take seven years for the state to realize that the district was billing for ineligible expenses? What communication took place when new rules took effect in 2009?
- The Medicaid officials the district has been in contact with understand the challenges an unanticipated expense of this magnitude bring to a small district like GMRSD. They are willing to negotiate and they don't want to bankrupt us.
- Investigation happening about whether other school districts that use NEMB have made the same mistake in their billing- so far the answer seems to be "no."

Discussion

Each participant shared brief responses to these questions:

What are your top takeaways from the presentations and discussions on Chapter 70, Affordable Assessment and comparison data on expenditures? What key questions, issues or next steps are you seeing at this point?

RP: Impressed with level of knowledge of Chapter 70 in district, "the cap" is what stands out

GS: The 82.5% cap could be a rallying point for schools statewide

MN: 82.5% cap, we can raise awareness of it even if we can't change it. A broader issue is that Chapter 70 is based on student enrollment. Doesn't account for basic level of cost schools have to bear regardless of # of students. Comparison of expenditures seems to indicate that we are not very different from other districts.

JO: Charter school issues such as PVCIS requesting state's permission to expand again, tuition reimbursement issue.

CP: Agrees with all said so far. Charter school expenses. Continue to work with Rural Schools Coalition

SB: Agreement with others' points, collaboration with other districts seems like an important step

FB: Charter schools have specialized in ways that weren't intended by the law and are not truly public schools. Pressure the state legislature to make changes.

JB: changing how charter schools are funded might happen sooner than changing Chapter 70. For instance, charter schools are not accountable to the towns/town meeting in the same way that other public schools are.

TS: The impact of charter schools is more severe for rural schools than in more densely populated areas. Collaboration with other districts as a way forward.

JA: Not a lot of options left for reducing expenses. Are there ways of generating revenue that haven't been considered? Enrollment numbers seem to indicate that declining enrollment is not as big a factor for GMRSD as for some neighboring districts. Some movement between schools is inevitable, but are there some families who give GMRSD more serious consideration if they had more accurate and positive information about the schools?

Responses to ideas raised above:

MN: focus on charter school funding as the issue, rather than on the existence of charter schools. FB agrees. Many reasons why families choice out, and charter schools increase the pool of available choices.

GS: Short term motive for focusing on 82.5% cap is to apply political pressure, not change Chapter 70. If we raise many different issues with our legislators, they are more likely to give us something

MN: Just getting the word out to the public on the inequity created by the 82.5% cap would be helpful.

There was some discussion about a coordinated campaign to raise public awareness and communicate with legislators and other towns/districts about a series of issues where change at the state level would help (charter school funding, Chapter 70 cap, etc.)

Formation of Work Groups

Debbie Lynangale noted that the group had expressed a desire to form action-oriented workgroups that will focus on specific topics and come back to large group to report and coordinate. Goal for tonight's meeting is to solidify a plan for creating those workgroups.

List of topics that had come up that a workgroup might focus on:

- Chapter 70 reform
- Charter/choice issues
- Regional issues/examples/models
- Revenue

- Enrollment
- Communication with legislators, getting them to pay attention to us
- Creative/innovative ideas
- Regionalization

Debbie noted that one informal workgroup has already begun pursuing answers to Chapter 70 questions that arose while preparing presentations for meetings #3 and #4. People involved in that are Joanne, Tupper Brown, Mike N., Greg. Will that group continue to meet?

Brief discussion about decline in attendance at civic leaders meetings and desire/need for more people to be invested and actively contributing to this effort. Noted that Montague Selectboard and Town Admin were not present tonight, and that Gill reps from GMRSC seem to be more involved than Montague reps. Clarified that Christina Postera is Montague rep, and Jane Oakes said that she and other GMRSC members don't see themselves as representatives of their Town's interests on School Committee – they all work for the good of the district.

The Chapter 70 group indicated willingness to continue meeting, and a second potential workgroup (JO, SB, FB) emerged based on shared interest in learning about/comparing programs at local schools. These two groups were directed to work on defining their initial goals and next steps while the others worked on determining the focus for a 3rd workgroup.

Outcomes of small group discussions:

Chapter 70/school financing group (MN, GS, JB)

Next steps: going to try to enlarge group, seeking ideas for issues and questions to explore, working via email for now Longterm goal is a coherent, coordinated approach to DESE

Programs group (JO, SB, FB)

Next steps: Each member agreed to research program at a local secondary school – graduation requirements, electives offered, options students have. They plan to meet on Oct 30, 2017 3pm

PR/Communication group – CP, JA, MS (if possible), will recruit Richard Widmer and Steve Ellis Explore concrete ways that district and the town could portray the schools in a more positive light.

Next step: Schedule a meeting

Decision to defer this agenda item to next meeting:

Creative discussion/brainstorm – Can we imagine scenarios in which towns might be willing to contribute more towards Gill Montague schools in FY19, and if so, what might inspire that?

Grant opportunity - Efficiency and Regionalization Program

Michael Sullivan provided information about an opportunity to collaborate with the Franklin County Tech School on an application for FY18 funding through the MA Department of Revenue. The program has financed exploratory and planning efforts by a variety of school districts and other municipal entities in past rounds. The deadline is Nov 16, 2017. The group expressed support for pursuing this grant.

Future meetings and facilitation

Debbie Lynangale left at this point, and Michael Sullivan led the remainder of the meeting

The group decided to schedule two more meetings of the large group, at the Senior Center if it is available, and to retain Debbie to facilitate them:

Nov 7 (already scheduled):

Creative discussion/brainstorm – Can we imagine scenarios in which towns might be willing to contribute more towards Gill-Montague schools in FY19, and if so, what might inspire that?

Nov 21 Workgroups report on progress to date, large group discusses & determines next steps

Expectation is that the three workgroups will continue working independently through the holidays and that large group will reconvene in 2018.

GMRSD has been paying for meeting facilitation and will continue to do so for the next 2 meetings. If group continues to meet after that and wishes to use a paid facilitator, regionalization & efficiency grant could be a funding source, and/or Community Compact.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Accepted as a record of a posted meeting of the Gill Selectboard

Signed copy on file. Accepted on 11/27/2017

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk

10/17/17

Gill-Montague **Regional School District**

35 Crocker Avenue Turners Falls, MA 01376 tel 413-863-9324 fax 413-863-4560

Press Release

From: Michael Sullivan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools Date: October 11, 2017 Re: Update on Medicaid Reimbursement Issue

For many years, Gill-Montague, along with other school districts, has participated in the federal School-Based Medicaid Program. This program partially reimburses districts for the costs of providing Medicaid eligible services to students. To help oversee and manage this program the district employed a third-party vendor, New England Medical Billing (NEMB), from April, 2009 until June 2017.

In April, 2017 NEMB informed the district that some of the FY2016 reimbursement claims it had submitted to the Massachusetts Medicaid program, known as MassHealth, on the district's behalf, may not have been eligible for reimbursement. Specifically, MassHealth was questioning reimbursements submitted for services provided by personal care service providers, employees commonly referred to as para-professionals in the district.

The district began investigating the situation right away, notified the school committee, and contracted with a law firm to assist us. Shortly thereafter the district wrote to the federal Medicaid office in Boston, informing officials there that the district believed overreimbursements may have been received by the district dating back to 2010 or earlier.

On September 28, 2017 officials from the Boston Medicaid office informed the district that they believe the over-reimbursements from 2010-2015 total \$936,254. These officials stated that the district will be required to pay these funds back to Medicaid and that arrangements should be made for a payback schedule.

The district is currently engaged in discussions with Medicaid officials concerning the specific dollar amounts to be repaid and to establish a repayment schedule. The district is also exploring the responsibilities of all of the parties involved in this situation.

- 2009 Switched to New England Medical Billing
- Hopin, for 10t year payback, asked Medicaid for 30 years going back through emails & correspondence
- there were regulation changes in reimburstments around the time GMRDD surfaced to NEMB

Gill Montague Cost Report Amendments

	Ori	ginal	Amendment			Difference				
FY	Net Distribution Provider		Net Distribution Provider			(Over- Reimbursement)	Fees paid to NEMB on the Over-Reimbursements			
2010	\$	293,982.77	\$	100,107.40	\$	(193,875.37)	\$	10,663.15	5.50%	
2011	\$	385,205.20	\$	187,755.03	\$	(197,450.17)	\$	10,859.76	5.50%	
2012	\$	342,044.32	\$	178,770.35	\$	(163,273.97)	\$	8,980.07	5.50%	
2013	\$	99,817.05	\$	53,906.42	\$	(45,910.63)	\$	2,525.08	5.50%	
2014	\$	320,879.63	\$	160,433.65	\$	(160,445.98)	\$	8,824.53	5.50%	
2015	\$	352,053.00	\$	176,754.54	\$	(175,298.46)	\$	9,641.42	5.50%	
TOTAL	\$	1,499,999.20	\$	757,619.99	\$	(936,254.58)	\$	51,494.00		

Q,

2016 District received \$130,544 less than budgeted in FY2017 Medicaid revenues.

2017 District needed to adjust FY18 budget by \$160,000 in anticipated Medicaid revenues.

Efficiency and Regionalization grant program FAQ

Answers to your frequently asked questions about the Efficiency and Regionalization grant program.

What is the Efficiency and Regionalization Program?

The purpose of the \$2 million Efficiency and Regionalization *competitive* grant program is to provide financial support for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term local government sustainability. The grant program will be administered by the Division of Local Services.

Who is eligible?

The Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program is open to: municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments. Regional planning agencies and councils of governments may also serve as the administrative or fiscal agent on behalf of municipalities.

What is the deadline to apply for an Efficiency and Regionalization Program grant?

There will be one competitive application round for this grant program. The application period will run from October 16 through November 16.

What can grant funds be used for?

Grant awards will provide one-time funds to assist in the planning and implementation of regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that support long-term municipal sustainability:

- Regionalization: shared services, joint or regional facilities, intergovernmental agreements, consolidations, mergers and other collaborative efforts.
- Internal Efficiencies: for a single entity to plan and implement innovative strategies that improve the quality and efficiency of municipal service delivery.

Planning and implementation activities are eligible.

Examples of eligible expenses include:

- Small capital purchases or improvements that are integral to the implementation of a functional program such as equipment or software;
- Technical assistance including consulting services, assistance in drafting contracts or other agreements; and
- Transition or project management costs, not to exceed one year.

If an applicant seeks to initiate a new program with an Efficiency and Regionalization Program grant, the applicant should be able to show how the new program will be self-sustaining within one year.

Funds cannot be used for grant writing.

How will applications be evaluated?

The Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance will make final decisions based on the criteria set forth below.

Criteria for selection will include but not be limited to:

- Innovation;
- Potential for impact;
- Cost savings and/or other tangible benefits such as service enhancements, service delivery efficiencies;
- Demonstrated feasibility of successful implementation;
- Speed of project timeline for completion; and
- Potential applicability to other local governments (including, in the context of regionalization proposals, opportunity for other local governments to join effort).

Bonus Points

Bonus Points will be awarded to:

- A municipality that applied for the Community Compact Best Practice program before submitting an Efficiency and Regionalization Program grant application. Note that all municipalities that enter into a Best Practice Compact maintain their "Compact Community" status through FY19. Cities and towns that entered into Compacts in FY16 are eligible to enter into another Compact, but are not required to do so in order to maintain the "Compact Community" status.
- An application that is specifically associated with a municipality's best practice(s) agreed to as part of their Community Compact.
- An application that is aligned with any of the FY18 Community Compact Best Practices, which are located <u>www.mass.gov/CCC</u>.

For any application that involves multiple communities, all involved communities must have signed up for the Community Compact Best Practice program in order to qualify for the bonus

points. In the case of a regional school district, all member municipalities must have entered into a Compact in order to qualify for the bonus points. For an application submitted by a regional planning agency or council of government, all municipalities associated with the application must have entered into a Compact in order to qualify for the bonus points.

May an eligible entity apply for more than one grant award?

Municipalities are eligible to submit one individual application and may participate in one multijurisdictional application. Regional planning agencies and councils of governments can be the lead applicant for more than one multi-jurisdictional application. Non-regional school districts are eligible to apply if considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services.

What is the maximum grant award?

Grant requests from a single government entity of up to \$100,000 will be considered. Grant requests from multi-jurisdictional applications of up to \$200,000 will be considered.

If an application is awarded a grant, what is the next step?

Once grant announcements have been made, the Division of Local Services will contact the grant recipient(s) to arrange for the execution of the grant contract.

By when must projects be completed?

Projects must be completed before or by January 1, 2019.

For a project to be considered complete, grantees must submit a final report that certifies the project is complete, identifies the results achieved, and how the entity will benefit from the project in the long-term.

How do I access the application?

The application can be found in the Application tab above once the application period opens. **NOTE: You will need a passcode to fill out the grant application.** If your organization is eligible for the Efficiency and Regionalization Program, a passcode was emailed to your organization's Chief Executive on August 15th. The Chief Executive is the Mayor or City Manager in a City, Town Manager/Administrator in a Town, Selectboard Chair if no Manager/Administrator, Superintendent in a Regional School District and Regular School District, Regional Planning Agency Executive Director, and Council of Governments Executive Director. Please see the designated Chief Executive for your organization before seeking to complete an application on your organization's behalf.

Where can I find out more information?

If you have questions not answered above or your organization's Chief Executive needs assistance with a passcode, please contact the Division of Local Services by sending an email to Sean Powers at <u>powersse@dor.state.ma.us</u>.

FY17 Efficiency and Regionalization grant recipients

Find out more about the recipients of the Fiscal Year 2017 Efficiency and Regionalization grants.

Round One Grant Recipients

Regionalization and Shared Services

- Regional Animal Shelter / Animal Control (North Adams, Adams, Williamstown) -\$200,000
- Establish a SPED Collaborative for Northern Berkshire County Districts (North Adams Public Schools, Northern Berkshire School Union, Adams Cheshire Regional School District, Williamstown Public Schools, Lanesboro Public Schools, Mount Greylock Regional School District, Northern Berkshire Regional VocTech) - \$148,099
- MAPC Public Health Collaborative (Chelsea, Revere, Winthrop) \$50,150
- Regionalize vocational educational services between Medford Public Schools and Everett Public Schools \$45,000
- MVPC Housing Production Plans (Amesbury, Andover, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newbury, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, West Newbury) - \$50,000
- Shared Conservation Agent (Easthampton and Southampton) \$48,300
- Establish the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (Deerfield, Greenfield, East Longmeadow Montague, Palmer, South Hadley, Southampton) \$35,310
- Shared Planning Services (Millville and Uxbridge) \$30,000
- Shared Highway Services (Phillipston and Royalston) \$12,500
- Regional Dispatch (Dunstable and Groton) \$9,990

Municipal and School Efficiencies

- Chicopee City/Schools HR and Facilities Management Integration \$60,000
- Explore Hull Joining South Shore Regional VocTech \$22,700

Environmental

- Regional Wastewater Management with Joint Base Cape Cod (JBCC) (Falmouth, Bourne, Mashpee, Sandwich) \$135,000
- FRCOG Planning for Climate Resilient Communities in the Deerfield River Watershed (Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Rowe, Shelburne) \$131,280
- PVPC Regional Approach to Wastewater and Stormwater Management for Connecticut River Communities (Agawam, Chicopee, Granby, Hadley, Ludlow, Northampton, Southwick, Springfield, West Springfield) - \$111,550

 MAPC Regional Approach to Stormwater Management (Acton, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Sudbury) -\$50,000

Round 2 Grant Recipients

Regionalization / Shared Services

- Rural Economic Development Planning (Chester, Blandford, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, and Russell) \$100,511
- Joint Economic Development (Boston, Braintree, Cambridge, Chelsea, Quincy and Somerville) \$100,000
- Lenox + Lee Shared Town Administrator \$86,000
- MAPC On-line Permitting Platform and Shared Permit Data Standard (Ayer, Milton, North Reading, Westborough) \$70,619
- Regional Animal Control (Lunenburg, Townsend) \$42,257
- BRPC Economic Development Planning Services (Clarksburg, Great Barrington, Hinsdale, and Lanesborough) \$22,735

Municipal / School Shared Services

- Wareham Town/School HR Functions \$72,499
- Carver Town/School Facilities Department \$41,500
- Easthampton City/School IT Department Consolidation \$38,000
- Southbridge Town/School Facilities Management Team \$35,000
- Norwell Town Hall / School Administration Building Consolidation \$25,000

School Regionalization

- Exploration of further consolidation of the Quabbin Regional School District \$100,000
- Exploration of further school regionalization (Orange Elementary School District and Petersham Center School District to the Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District) -\$53,000
- Exploration of forming a Regionalization School District (Acushnet Public Schools and Fairhaven Public Schools) \$40,000
- Exploration of further consolidation of the Adams-Cheshire Regional School District -\$28,000

County-wide Pix-G12 Enrollment Oct 1, 2016

DISTRICT	РК	ĸ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	9 - 12	TOTAL	Change 2015 to 2016
Conway	9	17	15	15	16	19	24	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	141	(13)
Deerfield	39	49	39	52	52	51	59	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	401	(12)
Erving	26	11	19	11	17	18	22	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	136	3
Four Rivers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	37	38	38	37	34	147	220	3
Franklin County Tech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	128	129	118	113	488	488	(19)
Frontier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	106	127	104	95	85	89	373	606	(5)
Gill-Montague	38	66	77	70	75	67	73	89	86	79	58	57	55	58	228	948	8
Greenfield	122	158	135	126	155	133	131	129	125	90	84	87	86	99	356	1660	23
Hawlemont	10	17	15	17	7	17	14	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	105	3
Mohawk Trail	105	74	69	77	58	62	51	47	76	92	58	67	67	58	250	961	(43)
New Salem-Wendell	31	17	18	17	21	20	21	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	169	8
Orange	73	72	81	71	90	89	73	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	629	27
Pioneer Valley	41	51	56	58	41	60	71	80	72	94	44	65	64	70	243	867	(22)
Ralph C Mahar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	116	119	121	109	143	144	517	752	(47)
Rowe	10	12	3	8	4	6	10	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	5
Sunderland	25	39	36	22	39	25	31	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	257	25
Whately	12	15	12	16	16	18	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	129	(2)
Total	541	598	575	560	591	585	600	621	617	638	635	647	655	665	2602	8528	(58)
Change 2015 to 2016	48	18	11	(35)	21	(12)	(30)	1	(3)	40	(58)	0	(15)	(44)	(117)	(58)	

10/17/17

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT & CIVIC LEADERS Discussion of future meetings and facilitation (Oct. 17, 2017)

Facilitation, in this context, can involve:

- Creation of meeting agenda or plan, coordinating with individuals who will be presenting or leading sections*
- Helping to run a meeting being an "emcee", leading discussions per the agenda, balancing participation, helping to surface and work with conflict or divergent views, etc.*
- Designing (or co-designing) a process that helps a group reach its goals*
- Preparing materials or documents for use during a meeting*
- Gathering and distributing information between meetings (surveys, interviews or meetings)*
- Facilitating public meetings or larger gatherings in support of a group's goals
- Working between meetings to ensure that working groups or individuals follow up on commitments
- Other duties all agree on

Groups can determine which of these duties are appropriate for the facilitator in their situation, and how much they want the facilitator to be present – every meeting, every other meeting, upon request, or some other arrangement.

The Mediation & Training Collaborative (TMTC) generally charges \$125/hour for each facilitation hour, which includes general preparation, minimal materials and copies, transportation, set-up and the actual meeting time. When significant other work is required between meetings (creating a survey and distributing results, in-person meetings with key stakeholders, customized materials or handouts, etc.), we generally charge \$75/hour for the time required to do that work.

So far, including this meeting, there have been five 2-hour facilitated meetings and approximately 4 hours of between meeting preparations since we began this process.

If a group knows that it will be using a facilitator for a period of time or for multiple meetings, or if there is financial hardship but an expressed need for services, TMTC may be able to negotiate a somewhat lower hourly rate. We try to make our services as accessible as possible while covering our costs.

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