

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

Civic Leaders Meeting Notes

December 5, 2017

Gill-Montague Senior Center

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Facilitated by Debbie Lynangale of the Community Action Mediation and Training Collaborative.
Notes by Michael Sullivan, GMRSD superintendent

12 Attendees:

GMRSD – Michael Sullivan, superintendent; Joanne Blier, director of business and operations; Jen Audley, Community School Partnership

GMRSC – Timmie Smith, chair (also chair of Gill finance committee); Christina Postera

Town of Montague – Mike Naughton, finance committee vice chair; Fred Bowman, finance committee; Steve Ellis, town manager

Town of Gill – Greg Snedeker, selectboard; Ray Purington, administrative assistant; Tupper Brown, finance committee

HEART Committee - Ginger Robinson (Leyden, finance committee)

Opening

School Committee Chair Timmie Smith opened the meeting and welcomed all present, noting that none of the government bodies had a quorum in attendance.

The meeting began by hearing from our 3 working groups.

A. The Foundation Budget, Chapter 70, and Local Assessments group consists of Greg Snedeker, Tupper Brown, Mike Naughton, and Joanne Blier. They presented a list of suggestions and questions for the large group's consideration, in terms of roads we might go down for pursuing actions. Here is a summary of the handout:

Foundation Budget Formula:

- How does chapter land figure into towns' EQV calculations?
- How is municipal revenue growth factor arrived at?
- Should there exist a foundation budget escalator for rural districts similar to the one for high cost urban districts?
- Should there exist sped cost adjustments based upon actual spend enrollment?
- Should the economically disadvantaged factor be escalated?

Local Contribution

- Should the 82.5% cap on local contributions be eliminated?
- Should state collect income portion using income tax surcharge (1%)?

- Where is G-M in the classification system of wealth regions used by the state?

Chapter 70 Aid Calculation

- Should there exist some kind of protection for save harmless districts. Maybe a new line on the summary?
- Consider using the per pupil minimum increase mechanism to reflect actual cost increases both retroactively and going forward
- Investigate source of funds for and get better understanding of “Transitional relief for significant and negative impact of the change in low-income enrollment measurement”.

Most of these items were discussed. As an offshoot of this discussion, the group discussed a news story about the city of Brockton potentially leading a class action suit against the state for inequitable funding of school districts. The members of this subgroup may contact Brockton to learn more specifics of its intentions and of the possibility of districts with profiles like our joining in this action. Michael Sullivan will share the idea of such a suit at the next Rural School Coalition meeting on January 4 to see if there might be interest among these communities in what Brockton is doing, or something similar.

There was some discussion of the recent state auditor’s report on the fiscal challenges faced by regional school districts. Members had received a copy of this report electronically prior to the meeting. The report’s title is, *Supporting Student and Community Success: Updating the Structure and Finance of Massachusetts Regional School Districts*.

B. School programs/requirements sub group

Fred shared the topics this group is interested in learning more about. The idea of petitioning the legislature to change the charter school funding formula to be less negatively impactful on sending districts was discussed, as was the idea of limited the usage of school choice. Jen stated that she would share with the group district data about choice and charter enrollment and costs. Greg shared that a draft resolution was in the works for the Gill Select board’s consideration about charter schools.

C. Publicity/Communications sub group

The group has not met yet but will on December 19, at 5:15 pm at Supt. Sullivan’s office.

Towns’ Support

Deb asked the group if it wished to take up a topic periodically raised at these meetings: How does our schools’ situation fit into the future hopes and wishes for the future by our towns? A similar question that has been tabled has been, can we imagine scenarios in which the towns might be willing to contribute more towards G-M schools in FY19, and if so, what might inspire that?

The discussion was brief and turned to a request that Steve and other town officials share their ideas about the future direction/plans for Montague at our next meeting.

The meeting concluded with a decision to not request Deb's facilitation services for next meeting but to see if Jane Oakes would be willing to do this for us, as we seem to be operating well together.

The next meetings will be on January 11 and on January, both from 6:30 -830 pm at the Gill-Montague Senior Center.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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Signed copy on file. Accepted on 12/26/2017

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk