

TOWN OF GILL

M A S S A C H U S E T T S



www.gillmass.org

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 26, 2017

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM.

Members Present: Randy Crochier, Greg Snedeker, John Ward

Members Absent: none

Others Present: Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant; George Brace, Lynda Hodsdon Mayo

Review of Minutes: Greg made a motion, seconded by Randy, to approve the minutes of 11/27/17. The vote was 2-0 in the affirmative, with John abstaining from the vote. Greg made a motion, seconded by John, to approve the meeting records of the 11/21/17 and 12/5/17 GMRSD Civic Leaders meetings. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. John made a motion, seconded by Greg, to approve the minutes of 12/11/17. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Gill Elementary Well: Ray has been trading phone calls and messages with DEP, seeking clarity as to what iron levels should be assumed for the design specs on the water treatment system.

Pam Lester joined the meeting at 6:23 PM.

French King Bridge Surveillance Cameras: Randy reported on a ride-along he did recently with Police Chief Redmond. As part of the ride-along, he had an opportunity to view nighttime images from the cameras mounted on the French King Bridge. While the image quality at night isn't ideal, the images are still useful, and much better than having nothing at all.

Gill 225th Anniversary: The first event in the year-long celebration will be a sing-along at the Town Hall on January 1st. The Planning Committee meets again on December 27th.

Bill Tomb joined the meeting at 6:25 PM.

Gill Elementary Alarm Panel: Ray reported on additional information he received from GMRSD officials about the current alarm panel at the Gill Elementary School and the desire to upgrade the panel. The current panel only has eight access codes, which means multiple people must be assigned the same access code. There have been problems in the past with not being able to determine the specific person who entered the building. Montague is using funds left in a school building security account to pay to upgrade the alarm panels at the Hillcrest and Sheffield school buildings. Greg noted the importance of having continuity and similarity in the District's security systems. Randy also commented the upgrade has the full support of Gill's Police Chief. Greg made a motion, seconded by John, to approve \$1,100 from the Building Maintenance budget for the alarm panel upgrade. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

FY18 Tax Rate Classification Hearing: At 6:30 PM the Selectboard and Board of Assessors held the tax rate classification hearing for FY18. Assessors Bill Tomb and Pamela Lester, as well as Assessors' Clerk Lynda Hodsdon Mayo, were present for the Board of Assessors.

Hodsdon Mayo led of the discussion of the Board of Assessors' recommendations: that the Town again have a single tax rate with no discount for Open Space, no residential exemption, and no small commercial exemption. It was explained that the Town doesn't have enough commercial and industrial businesses to be able to use a split tax rate. While the Town has plenty of open spaces, property is not formally classified as "Open Space" and therefore no discount is allowed. Residential exemptions are intended for cities and towns with large numbers of second homes (mainly on Cape Cod). The small commercial exemption is used in conjunction with a split tax rate, to lessen the impact on smaller business when extra tax burden is shifted to commercial and industrial taxpayers.

The FY17 tax rate was \$16.58/thousand, and the FY18 rate is anticipated to be \$17.18/thousand. The average value of a single family home in Gill increased slightly from \$199,246 to \$200,509. The annual property tax for a single family home will rise \$141.24 to \$3,444.74 for FY18. The projected FY18 tax rate is 2-cents lower than the figure presented at the Town Meeting in June.

During discussion, Greg mentioned it is likely recent Federal tax changes will drive more towns to adopt split rates, as corporations will be receiving significant Federal tax breaks under the new tax codes. Bill commented that for small towns, voters will continue to make the tough choice between raising taxes and reducing services, and further regionalization of services will be a likely outcome.

The Selectboard was also notified the excess levy capacity will be \$159,438.83, which represents the additional amount of taxes the Town can raise in future years and still be within the limits of Proposition 2 1/2.

John made a motion, seconded by Greg, to accept the Assessors' recommendations on the tax rate classifications. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. The Selectboard signed the Department of Revenue's Form LA-5. The classification hearing was adjourned at 6:35 PM. Hodsdon Mayo, Lester, and Tomb left the meeting.

Riverside Sewer System Rate Hearing: The Selectboard discussed a rate increase for the Riverside Sewer System. It was noted the rate hearing was announced on the Town's website and Facebook page, in addition to being mentioned in the Montague Reporter. Ray reported receiving no feedback from residents other than a "thumbs up" and a "frowny face" on Facebook.

The same four scenarios from the 12/11/17 meeting were considered, and the impact of each on the average sewer customer was reviewed. Yearly starting balances in the Sewer Fund were looked at. FY18 started with a balance of \$92,203 versus an FY18 operating budget of \$96,065. There is a desire to continue to slowly increase the Sewer Fund to get back to FY10 levels, where the fund balance was roughly 1.5 times the annual operating budget.

In light of a high likelihood of larger rate increase from Montague next year, combined with the need to rebuild the balance in the Sewer Fund, it was felt the 3.37% increase does not seem too high or out of line. John made a motion, seconded by Greg, to adopt the 3.37% rate increase presented as Scenario D on the handout, effective for the sewer bills to be issued in January 2018. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2018 Liquor License Renewals: Randy disclosed he is a member of the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein, and would recuse himself from any discussion and vote on that license. Ray reported that all five licensees are in good standing, and their licenses are ready for renewal. John made a motion, seconded by Greg, to renew for 2018 the liquor licenses of the Oak Ridge Golf Club, Gill Tavern, Wagon Wheel, and Spirit Shoppe. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. Greg made a motion, seconded by John, to renew for 2018 the liquor license of the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein. The vote was 2-0 in the affirmative, with Randy abstaining from the vote.

2018 Auto Dealer License Renewals: Ray reported that eight auto dealer licenses are ready for renewal: Green River Powersports, Chappell's Automotive, Atlantic Wholesale, Town Line Auto, TEK Cycle, Doug's Auto Body, Riverside Radiator, and A-J Cycle. Greg made a motion, seconded by John, to approve the eight license renewals for 2018. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. New England Auto Network did not apply for a license renewal for 2018.

Regional Electricity Aggregation: The Selectboard discussed a 12/11/17 memo from Bob Dean of the FRCOG regarding a Regional Electricity Aggregation Project. The FRCOG will use grant funds to organize interested towns to come together as a group to issue an RFP to select one aggregation consultant to work on behalf of all the towns together. Preliminary research has indicated the consultant's costs will be paid by an adder to the aggregated electricity bid price, so the only costs to the towns will be for legal fees to review contracts and for staff time and mileage to attend meetings.

Gill previously pursued electricity aggregation with the Hampshire Council of Governments following a May 2011 Town Meeting vote. The Mass. Department of Public Utilities ultimately denied the HCOG's aggregation plans, with that process coming to an end in September 2015. Ray advised a new attempt at electricity aggregation would require a new vote by Town Meeting.

There was consensus that electricity aggregation is a way for Gill's residents and businesses to save money on their electric bills, and recent aggregation plans by Bernardston, Greenfield, Heath, Leverett, Orange, and Wendell show aggregation plans can be approved by the DPU and implemented. Ray was asked to let Bob Dean know the Town is interested in participating in the project.

Comcast Letter – Cable Expansion Project Update: The Selectboard discussed a 12/22/17 letter from Comcast’s Eileen Leahy detailing the company’s progress with expanding cable services to new locations in Gill. Most of the design work in Gill is complete, and Comcast is waiting on pole licenses and pole work from Eversource and Verizon. The letter stated Comcast will reach out to potential new customers via a door-to-door sales representative and an informational meeting. The Selectboard noted appreciation for the letter and being kept informed about the process and progress.

Recognizing Angelina Adie: The Selectboard paid tribute to Angelina Adie, a Gill resident who passed away on December 15th. Mrs. Adie was Gill’s oldest citizen, and for many years volunteered as a poll worker at Gill’s elections. She was a wonderful lady who left behind an equally wonderful family, and she will be dearly missed.

George Brace left the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Warrant: The Selectboard reviewed and signed the FY 2018 warrant #14.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.

Signed copy on file. Approved on 01/08/2018

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk

**TOWN OF GILL
FY2018 Classification Hearing**

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Total Taxable Valuation.....Real Estate	\$143,304,098.00	\$141,745,289.00
Personal Property	\$ 10,758,310.00	\$ 11,227,120.00
Total of Personal and Real Estate	\$154,062,408.00	\$152,972,409.00

The Assessors attest that on Tuesday, December 19, 2017 notice was printed in the Greenfield Recorder that this Classification Hearing would be held with the Gill Select Board Meeting at the Gill Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. on December 26, 2017.

Levy.....	<u>(A x 1000)</u>	= Tax Rate	A: Previous Levy Limit	= 2,648,098	
	154,062,408.00				
			Amended 2017 Growth	= 0	
			2.5	= 66,202	
			Override	=	
			New Growth	= 32,823	
			New Levy Limit	2,747,123	
				+ 59,108	Debt Exclusion
			Maximum allowable Levy	2,806,231	
		(LA-5)	<u>Minus Excess Levy</u>	<u>159,438.83</u>	
			Actual Levy	2,646,792.17	

Actual Levy=2,646,792.17

$$\frac{2,646,792.17 \times 1000}{154,062,408} = 17.18 \text{ Tax Rate using Actual Levy}$$

Board of Assessors recommends voting residential factor of 1 which results in a single tax rate.

Motion for vote:

Adopt residential factor of 1, which results in a single tax rate.

Motion for a Negative vote on adoption of:

Open Space Discount

Explanation ---- We do not have open space

Residential Exemption

Explanation ---used in resort communities with large Second Home
Population

Small Commercial Exemption – Shifts some commercial tax burden from smaller business
to larger businesses. (10 or fewer)

Total New Growth valuation equals...1,979,674 Tax Levy Growth=\$32,823 /16.58 (FY2017 Tax Rate)
1,979,674/1000 X 16.58=\$32,823

$$\frac{88,223,950 \text{ (101 total value)}}{440 \text{ (# of 101's (Home sites))}} = 200,509 \text{ (Average 101 Value)}$$

$$\frac{200,509 \times 17.18 \text{ (2018 Est. Tax Rate)}}{1000} = \$3,444.74 \text{ (Est. Average Actual Tax)}$$

\$ 141.24 over FY2017 (Est. Average Actual Tax)

*Attached LA-4, LA-4 Comparison and New Growth Summary

CLASSIFICATION TAX ALLOCATION
Fiscal Year 2018

1. The selected Residential Factor is 1.000000

If you desire each class to maintain 100% of its full values tax share, indicate a residential factor of "1" and go to question 3.

2. In computing your residential factor, was a discount granted to Open Space?

Yes No

If Yes, what is the percentage discount? 0

3. Was a residential exemption adopted?

Yes No

If Yes, please complete the following:

Class 1 Total Assessed Value	=	115,923,319	X	<u>0</u>	=	<u>0</u>
Class 1 Total Parcel Count *		0		Selected Res. Exemption %		Residential Exemption

* Include all parcels with a Mixed-Use Residential designation

Applicable number of parcels to receive exemption 0

Net value to be exempted 0

4. Was a small commercial exemption adopted?

Yes No

% Selected 0

If Yes, please complete the following:

No. of parcels eligible	<u>0</u>
Total value of parcels	<u>0</u>
Total value to be exempted	<u>0</u>

5. The following information was derived from the LA-7. Please indicate in column D percentages (accurate to 4 digits to the right of the decimal point) which result from your selected residential factor. (If a residential factor of "1" has been selected, you may leave Column D blank.)

A Class	B Certified Full and Fair Cash Value Assessments	C Percentage Full Value Shares of Total Tax Levy	D New Percentage Shares of Total Tax Levy
Residential	115,923,319.00	75.2444%	75.2444%
Open Space	0.00	0.0000%	0.0000%
Commercial	10,839,379.00	7.0357%	7.0357%
Industrial	16,541,400.00	10.7368%	10.7368%
Personal Property	10,758,310.00	6.9831%	6.9831%
TOTALS	154,062,408.00	100.0000%	100.0000%

NOTE : The information is preliminary and is subject to change.

CLASSIFICATION TAX ALLOCATION
Fiscal Year 2018

6. Notice was given to taxpayers on 12/19/2017 (date), 6:30 PM (time), at the Gill Town Hall (place), by legal ad in The Recorder (describe type of notice) that a public hearing on the issue of adopting the tax levy percentages for fiscal year 2018 would be held on 12/26/2017 (meeting date).

7. We hereby attest that on 12/26/2017 (date), 6:30 PM (time), at the Gill Town Hall (place) in a public hearing on the issue of adopting the percentages for fiscal year 2018, that the Board of Assessors presented information and data relevant to making such determination and the fiscal effect of the available alternatives, and that the percentages set forth above were duly adopted in public session on (date).

8. The LA-5 excess capacity for the current fiscal year is calculated as 159,438.83

The LA-5 excess capacity for the prior fiscal year is calculated as 161,010.46

For cities : City Councilors, Aldermen, Mayor

For towns : Board of Selectmen

For districts : Prudential Committee or Commissioners

Signatures

No signatures to display.

12/26/17 Sewer Rate Proposal

Information on Proposed Sewer Rate Increase

Dec 11, 2017

Expense Summary

	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11	FY10
Category	Budgeted	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Alarm Services	280	270	264	264	258	252	252	246	240
Bill Printing	565	417	556	553	552	552	553	551	543
Dues	112	112	112	112	112	-	-	-	-
Electric	1,500	1,184	1,314	1,413	1,192	1,109	1,239	1,317	1,407
Inspections/Calibrations	685	50	-	100	685	100	569	569	70
I&I Work & Smoke Test	2,500	-	-	-	2,485	-	-	-	-
Maintenance	5,000	371	4,231	6,704	3,045	3,674	1,224	130	-
Mileage	1,200	969	1,027	1,076	1,038	1,127	1,249	1,046	1,080
Mowing	450	275	330	320	350	335	440	275	290
Other/Supplies	200	155	923	-	-	803	-	26	480
Payroll	11,983	10,547	10,688	11,456	11,110	9,303	9,998	9,162	10,774
Postage	350	-	59	-	32	-	-	-	110
Sewage Disposal	71,000	71,257	59,422	50,625	61,643	59,053	63,897	52,029	47,070
Telephone	240	227	227	225	222	225	213	222	176
Expenses grand total	96,065	85,834	79,152	72,848	82,724	76,534	79,633	65,573	62,240

Omnibus Budget Voted	96,065	92,585	87,865	87,865	79,230	79,042	67,740	66,166	66,047
Extra Voted to Budget	-	-	-	-	3,500	-	12,000	-	-
Budget minus Expenses	-	6,751	8,713	15,017	6	2,508	107	593	3,806

	Average								
% expenses - Sewage Disposal	76%	83%	75%	69%	75%	77%	80%	79%	76%
% all other expenses	24%	17%	25%	31%	25%	23%	20%	21%	24%
total all other expenses		14,578	19,730	22,222	21,081	17,480	15,736	13,544	15,170
incr all other expenses/prior yr	-1.4%	-26.1%	-11.2%	5.4%	20.6%	11.1%	16.2%	-10.7%	-16.1%

36-month total gallons sent to Montague	28,485,200	average yearly non-disposal expenses (last 3 years)	18,843
average gallons for 12 months	9,495,067	average increase to non-disposal expenses (last 3)	-11%
estimated disposal cost - old rate \$7.41/1000	\$ 70,358	(A) average yearly non-disposal expenses plus 5%	19,785
(B) estimated disposal cost - NEW rate \$7.66	\$ 72,732	budgeted for non-disposal expenses	25,065
budgeted for disposal	\$ 71,000		
expected shortfall	\$ 1,732	non-disposal costs (average) (A)	\$ 19,785
		estimated disposal costs (new rate) (B)	\$ 72,732
Montague rate increase	3.37%	contingency for nonpayments & build reserves	\$ 10,000
		total to bill	\$ 102,518

Revenue Summary

There are currently 112 sewer accounts (as of 9/28/17), but this will soon go to 114 (Gill Mobil & 2 Oak St)

Current Rate	0.193 \$/cubic foot (adopted for bills in Dec 2016)
less 10% discount	0.0193 (all customers receive the discount)
Effective Rate	0.1737

Sewer Commitments - aka Invoices to Users

Period	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11	FY10
		86,976.16	93,303.22	86,514.47	85,216.25	73,688.53	\$ 49,266	\$ 51,262	\$ 52,310

(only 10 months of billing fell in FY17 due to shift in quarterly cycle)

Current Projected Revenue

RWD Water Use (current average)	12,496 gal/day	(average of last 8 quarters)
equals	4,561,040 gal/year	
equals	609,765 cu ft/year	
x current Effective Rate	0.1737 \$/cu ft	
Total Invoiced to Sewer Users	\$ 105,916	

12/26/17 Sewer Rate Proposal

Proposed Projected Revenue - FULL YEAR

Scenario A			Scenario B		
No Rate Change	0.193	\$/cu ft	Possible New Rate (+ 1 %)	0.195	\$/cu ft
Effective Rate	0.1737	\$/cu ft	Possible Effective Rate	0.1755	\$/cu ft
Estim. Total Full Year	\$ 105,916		Estim. Total Full Year	\$ 107,014	
Scenario C			Scenario D		
Possible New Rate (+ 2 %)	0.1970	\$/cu ft	Possible New Rate (+ 3.37 %)	0.1995	\$/cu ft
Possible Effective Rate	0.1773	\$/cu ft	Possible Effective Rate	0.1796	\$/cu ft
Estim. Total Full Year	\$ 108,111		Estim. Total Full Year	\$ 109,483	

FY18 Proposed Projected Revenue - July/Oct bills @ Old Rate, Jan/Apr bills @ New Rate

	Scenario A			Scenario B		
	Avg Cu. Ft	Disc. Rate	Bill Total \$	Avg Cu. Ft	Disc. Rate	Bill Total \$
Bill Date						
July '17 - Actual			\$ 25,423			\$ 25,423
October '17 - Actual			\$ 26,664			\$ 26,664
January '18 (avg last 2 seasonal bills)	156,402	0.1737	\$ 27,167	156,402	0.1755	\$ 27,449
March '18 (avg last 2 seasonal bills)	138,996	0.1737	\$ 24,144	138,996	0.1755	\$ 24,394
			\$ 103,398			\$ 103,929
Scenario C			Scenario D			
Bill Date	Avg Cu. Ft	Disc. Rate	Bill Total \$	Avg Cu. Ft	Disc. Rate	Bill Total \$
July '17 - Actual			\$ 25,423			\$ 25,423
October '17 - Actual			\$ 26,664			\$ 26,664
January '18 (avg last 2 seasonal bills)	156,402	0.1773	\$ 27,730	156,402	0.1796	\$ 28,090
March '18 (avg last 2 seasonal bills)	138,996	0.1773	\$ 24,644	138,996	0.1796	\$ 24,964
			\$ 104,461			\$ 105,140

Impact on Average Sewer User

	Cubic Feet	Discounted Rate	Billed Amount	Amount Over Current	% Over Current	Scenario
Current Avg. Quarterly Amount (last 8 quarters)	1390	0.1737	\$ 241			
Current Avg. Annual Amount (last 8 quarters)	5561	0.1737	\$ 966			
Possible Avg. Quarterly Amount	1390	0.1737	\$ 241	\$ -	0.0%	A
Possible Avg. Annual Amount	5561	0.1737	\$ 966	\$ -	0.0%	
Possible Avg. Quarterly Amount	1390	0.1755	\$ 244	\$ 2.50	1.0%	B
Possible Avg. Annual Amount	5561	0.1755	\$ 976	\$ 10.01	1.0%	
Possible Avg. Quarterly Amount	1390	0.1773	\$ 246	\$ 5.00	2.1%	C
Possible Avg. Annual Amount	5561	0.1773	\$ 986	\$ 20.02	2.1%	
Possible Avg. Quarterly Amount	1390	0.1796	\$ 250	\$ 8.20	3.4%	D
Possible Avg. Annual Amount	5561	0.1796	\$ 999	\$ 32.81	3.4%	

Sewer Fund Balances

	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11	FY10
Starting Balance	92,203.31	78,330.04	51,007.40	47,215.67	75,623.82	57,467.72	89,251.00	99,559.18	100,773.71
minus Transfer to Omnibus	57,200.00	53,720.00	49,000.00	49,000.00	45,000.00	45,000.00	67,600.09	66,165.55	66,046.70
minus Extra to Omnibus		-	-	-	-	-	12,000.00	-	-
plus Actual/Estimated Receipts	TBD	99,707.72	91,457.41	91,656.73	84,675.85	63,156.10	47,816.81	55,857.37	64,832.17
plus Transfer from Free Cash			15,017.20						
plus Unspent from Omnibus	TBD	6,750.55	8,713.03						
minus Reserved from Receipts	38,865.00	38,865.00	38,865.00	38,865.00	68,084.00	-	-	-	-
Ending Balance		92,203.31	78,330.04	51,007.40	47,215.67	75,623.82	57,467.72	89,251.00	99,559.18

Notes

 = Higher than it should have been. \$34,042 of Reserved from Receipts wasn't transferred to General Fund until following fiscal year.

 = Lower than it should be. Special Town Meeting vote is needed to transfer \$15,017 (unspent from FY15 sewer budget) from Free Cash back into Sewer Fund.

	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11	FY10
Ending Balance after adjusting for two "Notes" boxes		92,203.31	78,330.04	66,024.40	47,215.67	41,581.82	57,467.72	89,251.00	99,559.18



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

To: Franklin County Select Boards

From: Robert Dean, Director of Regional Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Dean", is written over the printed name.

Date: December 11, 2017

Re: Regional Electricity Aggregation Project

Energy committee members from towns across Franklin County have expressed interest in the idea of bringing multiple towns together to aggregate the purchase of residential and commercial electricity. Concurrently, a group called "Franklin County CPR" has been working on an aggregation project. Many of you have been visited by energy committee and/or Franklin County CPR members to discuss your town's participation in a regional project. The FRCOG was asked to help organize a multi-town effort and has agreed to do so.

This letter is intended to inform you about the process of electricity aggregation and to ask if you are interested in being part of the process to select an aggregation consultant. FRCOG staff will work to organize interested towns to come together as a group to issue an RFP to select one aggregation consultant to work on behalf of all towns together. Once selected, the FRCOG will cease its involvement in this project and the chosen consultant will guide you the rest of the way through the process. Any costs of the selection process will be paid for with grant funds, so there will be no up-front costs to your town.

You may remember that several towns in Franklin County participated in a similar effort organized by the Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG) a few years ago. That process resulted in a denial of applications by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU). Since then, a few individual Franklin County towns (Bernardston, Greenfield, Heath, Leverett, Orange and Wendell) have aggregated their residents and businesses, but many have not, yet they remain interested in moving forward together with other communities.

The goal of this project is for towns to collectively control the electricity supply purchase process and to take advantage of economies of scale to realize better pricing and/or encourage the development of renewable energy resources across New England.

If interested, I would appreciate your reply by January 19th. I am available to meet with you if you would like to discuss your potential participation prior to making a decision.

The following information is provided to give you more details about the electricity aggregation process in general and this regional project in particular. I hope that you will find answers to your questions. If not, please contact me and I'll track down the answers for you.

What is Electricity Aggregation?

1. Municipal electricity aggregation is the process by which a municipality purchases electricity in bulk from a competitive supplier on behalf of the residents and businesses within the community
2. Chapter 164, Section 134 of the Massachusetts General Laws authorizes and lays out the process
3. A municipality may join with other municipalities to collectively procure competitive supply.
4. Residential and commercial customer participation is voluntary. Each municipality must provide customers an opportunity to opt-out of participating in a municipal aggregation program. Customers who do not opt out will be automatically enrolled in the aggregation program, but may opt out at any time after that and return to the utility company default rate with no penalty.
5. Your utility company, Eversource or National Grid, still handles all customer billing and the maintenance of transmission lines. Everything will look the same to the customer.
6. Going out to bid for electricity on behalf of all combined residents and businesses can lead to better pricing, pricing stability by locking in over a longer term, and/or a broader choice of green electricity to help encourage a shift to more renewable energy production and away from the use of higher polluting fossil fuels.

How does a Municipality Create a Municipal Aggregation?

1. Vote at Town Meeting to initiate the municipal aggregation program
 - a. Many Franklin County towns have already voted at Town Meeting (TM) several years ago to allow the BOS to enter into aggregation contracts, and several joined the HCOG regional effort.
 - b. The DPU may want to see a new TM vote if there has been a lag time of several years. At a minimum they will want to hear an explanation of why there has been a lag time between the vote and implementation.
2. Prepare a municipal aggregation plan in consultation with the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), often in partnership with an aggregation consultant
3. Allow an opportunity for citizen review of the municipal aggregation plan
4. Submit a municipal aggregation plan to the DPU for review and approval

Why Do a Regional Aggregation?

Learning all the details involved in electricity aggregation is time-consuming. If we work together as a group we can save time and feel more comfortable about our collective decisions.

How will a Regional Aggregation Work?

1. Combine the buying power of multiple towns together in one process.
2. Interested towns will appoint a representative to a selection committee that will prepare and issue an RFP for an electricity aggregator. Then they will review proposals and choose one aggregator

for all towns. The aggregator is a consultant that will work on behalf of the towns to get you through the rest of the process, including going out to bid and contracting for electricity supply.

3. The aggregator will work with each town to prepare an aggregation plan and consult with DOER. The aggregator will then file the energy plan with the DPU and assist the town with answering follow-up questions.
4. The aggregation plan includes an organizational structure (roles and responsibilities of all players), operations (education, outreach, opt-out process), program funding (what are the fees collected? Who is collecting? Who is paying program expenses? etc.), activation and termination of the plan, rate setting and other costs to participants, rights and responsibilities of customer participants
5. Once approved, the plan guides the process the aggregator will follow to prepare a bid document, solicit bids, compare bids and recommend a supplier.
6. The goal is to set up a multi-tiered bid in which there is a basic price and then other pricing if residents want to choose greener options. This allows towns to join together in a single group process, but still meet the varied desires of residents and businesses with competing goals.
7. Each town select board authorizes its own agent(s) to represent the Town to review the bids and sign a contract on behalf of the town. Electricity bids are only good for a short time, perhaps only for an hour, so the aggregator crunches the numbers on the bids and recommends the supplier. Decisions must be made by the group and individual contracts signed by each Town within the hour that the bids are guaranteed.

Costs

1. Based on the experience of another similar project in the southeastern part of Massachusetts, we believe that towns can participate with no up-front outlay of money. FRCOG will use grant funds to do the legwork to get an RFP off the ground to select an aggregator, and to attend meetings to educate local officials and citizens about aggregation.
2. Potential town costs could include legal fees to review contracts and to pay staff time and/or mileage reimbursement to attend meetings.
3. FRCOG will not make any money on the project and will not be involved after a consultant aggregator is chosen.
4. The aggregator makes its money with an adder (usually 1 mil) on the supplied electricity; either by the supplier building it into the bid price, or as an adder on everyone's monthly bills.

Conclusion

A regional aggregation will work if:

- All participating towns agree to move forward together to take advantage of economies of scale.
- All municipal aggregation plans use a similar format with similar content so that the aggregator can move them forward through the approval process together.

- All towns go out to bid for electricity supply at the same time. The strength of the program is in the aggregated load across multiple towns.
- If every town is doing the same thing at the same time so that the aggregator can effectively manage a large number of towns as if it was one very large town.

Next Steps:

- Decide if you are interested in moving forward as a participating town, at least with the selection of an electricity aggregation consultant. If so:
 - Appoint a Town representative to the selection committee that will search for and choose that consultant, and
 - Notify me of that appointment.
- Determine if your Town has voted to authorize electricity aggregation. If so:
 - Is a re-vote necessary or desired?
 - If a vote is needed, decide when that will happen.

Town Commitment Requested:

If you are interested in moving forward as a participating town, please let me know by January 19th. I am available to attend a Board meeting to discuss the project with you in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.



December 22, 2017

Selectboard
Town of Gill
Gill Town Hall
325 Main Road
Gill, MA 01354

Re: Cable Expansion Project Update

Dear Honorable Members of the Selectboard:

I am writing as a follow-up to Comcast's November 16, 2017 letter to Edmund Donnelly, Deputy Director, Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), a copy of which was sent to you. That letter provided an update and details on our Cable Expansion Project pursuant to our Grant Disbursement ("Agreement") with the MBI. Although the cable expansion in the town of Gill is not part of the MBI Agreement, Comcast is committed to completing the cable expansion build in the same manner as the towns included in the Agreement. As the primary point of contact for each of the towns, I wanted to provide you with some further details with respect to the Cable Expansion Project and ensure you had my contact information should you have any questions.

As we reported to the MBI, overall, the project is progressing on schedule and Comcast is confident that we will meet all deliverables as outlined in the MBI Grant Disbursement Agreement, including completion of activation of fifty percent (50%) of the homes included in the project by February 15, 2018. In fact, Comcast has completed construction and activated 202 homes and we are in the process of constructing plant to 207 additional homes. To date, the majority of the construction and activation of plant has occurred in Chester, Pelham, Shelburne and Northfield. The order of construction is dictated by no other reason than the completion of the pole work that occurs prior to our construction.

Construction in your town will proceed as the licenses to attach to the poles are issued by the pole owners, which is when they complete the construction necessary to make the poles ready for our attachments. As a general guide, we have completed construction in the areas covered by the licenses obtained within 3 months of the receipt of those licenses. The utilities have informed us that they must set new poles in each of the towns before they will grant the remaining licenses we require. Comcast holds weekly conference calls with the utility companies to monitor their progress. It is important to note that pole licenses are not issued for individual poles, but rather the utility companies' wait until approximately 200 poles are completed before issuing a license.

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With regard to our construction process, we will construct our plant so that each home or business along the plant route will be serviceable. Residents and businesses along the route need take no action; we will notify them as soon as the plant is activated and they can decide at that time if they want to subscribe to service.

For homes and businesses that are located 200 feet from the public right of way (measured from the Trunk and Distribution System), some action by owners would be helpful in the next several weeks. The Trunk and Distribution System that I reference is a technical description for the plant that we are constructing in the public right of way. The action that I reference will vary by location and is further detailed below. Comcast intends to complete construction to as many of these homes and businesses as possible while we are working in your town. It is not our intention to construct the areas with standard drops first and then to go back for the homes or businesses located in excess of the standard distance known as long drops.

We have identified all homes and businesses which will require additional construction. With respect to these homes and businesses, it is important to point out that the owners do not need to sign up for services at this time; rather, we simply need to know whether they would like a drop to the location. In this way, we can prepare an estimate of the additional cost, if any to reach the location and plan the construction accordingly.

Comcast will make contact with these owners in two methods: by a door-to-door sales representative and at Informational Meeting. Comcast has assigned one sales representative to your town who will attempt to make contact these owners. I would like to work with you to set up a time when members of the Comcast team can meet with interested residents to answer questions, provide information about our services or make an appointment for a construction estimate.

I will be coordinating our sales team with our construction crew. After the sales representative meets with a customer, a survey will be completed by our construction team to determine the cost, if any, of additional construction. Comcast charges only our actual costs for construction. These costs can and do vary by a number of factors, including the amount and type of underground trenching required, pole access, distance, or whether an easement is required, among other factors. Once the cost is determined, the owner will be notified of the cost estimate. As noted, in some instances there will be no additional cost to the customer because Comcast will cover up to \$1,400 of additional construction costs. This process takes approximately two (2) weeks to complete.

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Further, owners may also choose to construct their own conduit. If they choose this option, they will still need to work with our construction team to ensure the conduit is appropriate. There is no one set of standards for underground conduit. While it must be placed with a minimum 18" ground cover to the top of the conduit and be a minimum 2 inches schedule- 40 PVC, our team will look at the individual circumstances and provide guidance on the best option.

Comcast is pleased and excited to see how this project progressing. Should you have any questions regarding the project or any other cable related matter please do hesitate to contact me at (413) 730-4513 or eileen_leahy@comcast.com. I will contact you after the holidays to schedule an Informational Meeting in your town. Please be assured that in the meanwhile, we will continue to diligently work toward completion of the project.

Very truly yours,



Eileen B. Leahy
Senior Manager, Government & Regulatory Affairs