

TOWN OF GILL

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



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SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES *March 15, 2018*

Called to Order: The Selectboard and Finance Committee meetings were called to order at 6:05 PM.

Selectboard Members Present: Randy Crochier, John Ward, Greg Snedeker Members Absent: None

Finance Committee Members Present: Claire Chang, Sandy Brown, Timmie Smith, Ronnie LaChance, Tupper Brown Members Absent: None

Others Present: Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant; GMRSD Superintendent Michael Sullivan

Review of Minutes: There were no minutes ready for review.

Review of FY19 Budget Requests:

GMRSD Assessment: GMRSD Superintendent Michael Sullivan presented and reviewed a March 15th update to his March 6th memo to the School Committee. The memo outlines recommended changes to the District's assessments to Gill and Montague based upon a February 28th revision to Montague's affordable assessment calculation. Item 3 on the memo outlines estimated costs for a School Resource Officer (SRO) for the district, and was the topic of significant discussion.

Sullivan explained he has held back on requesting an SRO until now. His position changed recently based on 1) a nationwide increase in the frequency of school violence and shootings, 2) the February school shooting in Florida, and 3) his own new perspective on how school-age children relate to police and ways an SRO can develop relationships that can prevent incidents of violence.

The concern was raised that by having an armed police officer in our schools, we will be teaching children a "new normal," one of a fear-based society with a prevalence of militarization, violence, and guns. Sullivan responded that, unfortunately, many of the negative aspects of this "new normal" are already here. The GMRSD and Mohawk District are believed to be the only school systems in Franklin County without SROs.

Others expressed the hope that a really good SRO could be a role model to students of the "right kind of public official." Ideally, the SRO would not be armed.

Sullivan explained no new positions were cut from the District's budget in order to create or fund the SRO. The four positions being cut were originally identified in January, long before the SRO was ever discussed as a possibility for FY19. It was pointed out the FY19 funding for the SRO is from one-time savings. For future years, the cost of the position will be added in to the overall mix of funding priorities. The Montague Selectboard and Finance Committee discussed the SRO position at their meeting on March 14th, but took no position on the matter.

Sullivan left the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Discussion of the SRO continued, with consideration of type of feedback, if any, the Selectboard should provide to the School Committee. On one hand, the decision to add an SRO is the School Committee's to make. On the other hand, the SRO is a late-in-the-game addition to the FY19 budget, and was not part of the public hearing on the budget, and was not discussed in the initial budget meeting between the District and Town officials.

The Selectboard decided by consensus to send a letter to the Superintendent and School Committee stating the reasons the Selectboard is against the SRO position: 1) four positions are being cut from the F19 budget, and the Selectboard would rather prioritize funds for a teacher than an SRO, and 2) concern for the financial sustainability of the position in future years. The letter will point out the SRO position was not part of the public hearing on the

budget, and this letter is the Selectboard's method of weighing in on the matter. The District will be thanked for their continued efforts to explore new and innovative methods of cutting costs and saving money.

The Finance Committee and Selectboard adjourned their meetings at 7:10 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.

Signed copy on file. Approved on 06/25/2018

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk

Adopted by the Finance Committee in lieu of separate Finance Committee minutes on 06/25/2018.