

# TOWN OF GILL

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



## SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

*November 18, 2024*

The meeting was held in the second floor meeting room at the Gill Town Hall, 325 Main Road, Gill.

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM.

Selectboard Members Present: Charles Garbiel, Greg Snedeker, and Randy Crochier      Members Absent: None

Finance Committee Members Present: Claire Chang, Tupper Brown, Sandy Brown, Peter Turban, Becca Mandel, and Julia Wallace      Members Absent: None

Others Present: Ray Purington, Town Administrator

Review of Minutes: For the Selectboard, Crochier made a motion, seconded by Garbiel, to approve the minutes of 10/28/24. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote. For the Finance Committee, Turban made a motion, seconded by T. Brown, to adopt the Selectboard's minutes of 10/28/24 in lieu of Finance Committee minutes for the same date. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

FY26 Budget Meeting Schedule: Members developed a schedule of 20 joint meetings of the Selectboard and Finance Committee for the development of the FY26 budget. Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for two parts, with non-money articles (mostly) on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 7:00 PM, and money articles on Monday, June 9, 2025 at 7:00 PM.

FY26 Budget Insights: Purington reported there are early indications to expect a 15-20% increase in health insurance rates for FY26.

Gill Elementary Roof Replacement: The Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) has been invited by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to participate in the Accelerated Repair Program (ARP), which will lead to a schematic design and feasibility study of a potential roof replacement project at the Gill Elementary School. The District has been applying to the (ARP) annually since 2017. One of the requirements to be accepted into the program is for the Town to fully fund the anticipated cost of the schematic design and owner's project manager (OPM) by April 2, 2025.

Purington presented an analysis of OPM and schematic design costs for recent (2020-2022) MSBA-funded roof projects, and suggested a total budget in the range of \$94,000 to \$97,000 would be a conservative estimate and should be adequate for Gill's project. The Town has previously appropriated \$48,439 toward this project. The General Stabilization Fund currently has a balance of \$419,827, and it was decided by consensus to use \$50,000 toward the roof project. Any excess funds will be put toward the construction costs for the new roof.

A special town meeting to vote on the appropriation for the roof project was scheduled for Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. The Selectboard will hold a special meeting on November 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM to sign the warrant for the town meeting, and the Finance Committee will meet on Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM to make their recommendations on the articles.

There was a brief discussion about possible members of the building committee for the roof project. Ray will followup with those who were suggested, and see if there is interest in serving on the committee to be appointed by the GMRSD School Committee.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee adjourned at 7:50 PM.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Town Administrator*

*Signed copy on file. Approved on 02/03/25*

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Charles Garbiel, Selectboard Clerk

Adopted by the Finance Committee in lieu of separate Finance Committee minutes on 02/03/25.



***SELECTBOARD &  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
AGENDA & MEETING NOTICE  
November 18, 2024***

\*\*\*Indicates item added after the 48 hour posting

**bold underlined** time = invited guest or advertised hearing

(all other times are approximate)

Location: Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, 325 Main Road, Gill

Joint Meeting – Gill Selectboard and Gill Finance Committee

6:30 PM Call to Order (If the meeting is being videotaped, announce that fact. If remote participation will occur, announce member & reason, & need for roll call voting)

- Introductions
- Review of Minutes from 10/28/24
- Schedule meeting dates for FY26 budget process
  - For FY25 there were 18 meetings scheduled, 2 were cancelled. (2-part ATM)
  - For FY24 there were 18 meetings scheduled, unknown # cancelled (1-and-done ATM)
  - Plus at least 1 meeting with Montague & GMRSD for school budget
- Discussion of general goals/expectations for FY26 budget requests
  - Seeing early signs health insurance may be this year's budget buster (15-20% or more)
- Gill Elementary Roof Replacement
  - Review of MSBA invitation letter and timeline
  - Review estimated cost of Schematic Design
  - Confirm source of needed funds to be General Stabilization Fund
- Timing and potential articles for Special Town Meeting: early December? mid January?
- GMRSD – contemplating stipends for School Committee members. Comments/questions?
- Topics not anticipated within the 48 hour posting requirements
- Adjournment

# TOWN OF GILL

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



## SELECTBOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

*October 28, 2024*

The meeting was in the second floor meeting room at the Gill Town Hall, 325 Main Road, Gill.

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:38 PM.

Selectboard Members Present: Charles Garbiel, Greg Snedeker, and Randy Crochier      Members Absent: None

Finance Committee Members Present: Claire Chang, Tupper Brown, Sandy Brown, Peter Turban, and Becca Mandel      Members Absent: Julia Wallace

Others Present: Ray Purington, Town Administrator; Chris Redmond, Police Chief; Erin-Leigh Hoffman, and Steve Connell.

Police Department & 3<sup>rd</sup> Full Time Officer: Police Chief Chris Redmond met with the Selectboard and Finance Committee to discuss the idea of adding a third full time officer to Gill's Police Department. Since approximately 2007 or 2008, when Gill's third full time officer resigned to take a position in Deerfield, Gill's staffing model has relied heavily on the availability of part time officers to fill shifts. However, Massachusetts' police reform legislation that was signed into law on December 31, 2020 has made it difficult to find and retain part time officers. Currently the department is staffed with 2 full time officers (Chief Redmond and Sergeant Richardson) and 3 part time officers, all of whom have full time police or fire department positions in other towns. A recent retiree, Jason Bassett, is expected to return as a part time officer later in the year. In the past the department relied on as many as 8-10 part time officers regularly covering shifts.

Handouts for the discussion included a comparison of full time staffing levels and population for Gill and 9 other police departments, a summary page and supporting details of police calls in Gill from 2018 to 2024 (through 8/31/24) that were responded to by the State Police, and a graph and supporting details of Gill's own police call activity for 2023 and 2024 (through 10/25/24).

In response to a question about part time coverage, Redmond explained the current budget for part time officers is about \$30,000. If a third full time officer was hired, he estimated the budget for part time labor could be reduced by \$10,000 to \$15,000. A third officer would likely require a budgeted annual salary of \$60,000 to \$63,000 plus roughly \$12,000 to \$16,000 for the Town's share of benefits.

With respect to call volume, it is trending upward. The population, for Gill and society in general, seems to be getting more needy and less self-reliant. Also, in today's world, more officers are responding to calls in pairs. For a town like Gill, which rarely has two officers on duty at the same time, it means relying more on mutual aid from neighboring towns. Redmond noted the call data shows Gill's volume of calls covered by the State Police is holding steady or increasing, while the State Police are simultaneously covering more small towns in Franklin County due to limited police staff or shifts in those towns.

The grant program which provides a mental health clinician to ride along with police and provide co-response and follow up to mental health, substance abuse, and domestic calls is a successful model. The clinician is provided by Clinical Support Options (CSO), and works 40 hours per week spread across 6 police agencies covering 8 towns. The CSO worker is able to connect people to a broader array of services faster and more directly than the court system. The co-responder program helps to divert people from hospitals and jails. The clinicians have Master's degrees in mental health and are able to activate services quickly.

When asked about the possibility of a regional police model, Redmond responded those conversations happen weekly, sometimes formally and mostly informally. The idea has been discussed for more than 30 years. If regionalization is done correctly, it could be the answer to providing adequate and reliable coverage to the area's small towns. However, there should not be any expectation it will cost the town less or that a solution will be found quickly.

There was a brief discussion about the possibility of multiple towns sharing a police clerk, which could free up police officers from the hours spent doing grant reporting, budgets, paying bills, firearms licensing, payroll, and invoicing for off-duty details.

No conclusions were reached regarding adding a third full time position to Gill's Police Department. The topic will continue to be discussed during the Selectboard's and Finance Committee's meetings to develop the FY 2026 budget.

Redmond and Connell left the meeting at 6:53 PM.

Update on FY 2025 Tax Rate: Purington reported the Assessors have received approval from the Department of Revenue (DOR) for real estate and personal property valuations for FY 2025. Based upon the spending levels approved at the June town meeting, a tax rate of \$14.66 per thousand is anticipated, which is \$0.82 less than the FY 2024 tax rate (\$15.48) and \$1.52 lower than the \$16.18 tax rate projected at the time of the town meeting. However, property valuations generally increased from FY 2024 to FY 2025, and in the case of single family homes, increased by 12.3% due to elevated prices in recent home sales. The handout used at the town meeting estimated the taxes on an average single family home would increase by 4.5% from \$4,413 in FY 2024 to \$4,612 in FY 2025. With the new valuations and projected tax rate, the increase will be 6.4% and taxes of \$4,695 in FY 2025.

Work will begin on setting the tax rate for FY 2025, although it may be delayed if a special town meeting is needed to appropriate funds from taxation to cover the cost of the schematic design for a roof replacement project at the Gill Elementary School.

Gill Elementary School Roof Replacement: Purington reported that after 7 years of applications, it appears the Gill Elementary School will be invited by the Massachusetts School Building Authority's (MSBA) Board of Directors to participate in their Accelerated Repair Program for a roof replacement project. The Board is meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup> to decide which of the 70 eligible projects will be invited. MSBA has already advised the reimbursement rate for the project will be 77.47% of all eligible costs.

Once invited, the Town will have 90 days to complete the project prerequisites, which notably includes appropriating the full cost of the schematic design (scope of work, ADA compliance, solar readiness, etc). Although the Town has already set aside \$48,439 for this purpose, given inflation in recent years it seem likely more funds will be needed. MSBA will assign an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the project; there is a maximum fee of \$15,000 for the OPM during the schematic design phase. The MSBA will also assign the designer (architect) for the schematic design; the Town will be able to negotiate with the designer on the fee. Both assignments by the MSBA will be made at random from their pool of approved OPMs and designers.

Given the overall increase to property taxes for FY 2025, there was consensus that any additional funds needed for the schematic design should be taken from a stabilization fund. Current fund balances were provided by Peter Turban, and there was consensus the General Stabilization Fund, with a balance in excess of \$430,000, would be tapped for the schematic design.

It was noted the Gill-Montague Regional School District is technically the applicant and invitee for the MSBA program. The District has expressed a desire to establish a building committee to guide the project and make decisions with the OPM and architect. Members felt strongly the Town's appointees on the committee should outnumber the District's appointees.

Stipends for School Committee Members: Purington reported the GMRSD has floated the idea of paying stipends to its School Committee members as a way to attract and retain members, and was looking for reactions and feedback from the Selectboards and Finance Committees of Gill and Montague. Due to the late hour there wasn't time for a

full discussion. It was suggested that what's needed are more people who are truly interested in children's educations, and money won't solve this need.

Next Meeting: The two boards will meet next on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM after the Selectboard's regular business meeting. The main focus of the meeting will be selecting meeting dates for the upcoming FY 2026 budget cycle.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee adjourned at 7:50 PM.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Town Administrator*

*Signed copy on file. Approved on \_\_\_\_\_*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charlies Garbiel, Selectboard Clerk

Adopted by the Finance Committee in lieu of separate Finance Committee minutes on \_\_\_\_\_.



# Massachusetts School Building Authority

Deborah B. Goldberg  
*Chair, State Treasurer*

James A. MacDonald  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Mary L. Pichetti  
*Executive Director / Deputy CEO*

October 30, 2024

Mr. Brian Beck, Superintendent  
Gill-Montague Regional School District  
35 Crocker Avenue  
Turner Falls, MA 01376

Re: Gill-Montague Regional School District, Gill Elementary School

Dear Superintendent Beck:

I am pleased to report that on October 30, 2024, the Board of Directors (the “Board”) of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (the “MSBA”) voted to invite the Gill-Montague Regional School District (the “District”) into the Accelerated Repair Program (the “ARP”), to partner with the MSBA in conducting a Schematic Design Study at the Gill Elementary School for a potential roof replacement project (the “potential project”).

The ARP will focus on the preservation of existing assets by performing energy-efficient and cost-saving upgrades, which will result in direct operational savings for districts. I do want to emphasize that this invitation to partner on a Schematic Design Study is *not* approval of a project but is strictly an invitation to the District to work with the MSBA to explore potential solutions to the building needs that have been identified. Moving forward in the MSBA’s ARP process requires a partnership with the MSBA, and communities that “get ahead” of the MSBA without MSBA approval will not be eligible for grant funding. To qualify for any funding from the MSBA, local communities must follow the MSBA’s statute, regulations, and policies, including the ARP requirements, as outlined on page three of this letter, which require MSBA partnership and approval at each step of the process.

Districts that are invited into the ARP will be required to use Owner’s Project Managers and Designers who are pre-selected and randomly assigned by the MSBA. Districts must also adhere to other requirements that are unique to this Program, such as implementing an accelerated project schedule.

The District’s commencement date is January 2, 2025 and several prerequisites must be completed in accordance with the schedule on page three of this letter. The District must approve funding for the Schematic Design portion of this potential project within 90 calendar days of the commencement date. Submission of the properly certified documentation that the District has appropriated its funding must be submitted to the MSBA within 120 days of the commencement date. Districts will be expected to complete a Schematic Design Study and

October 30, 2024

Gill-Montague Regional School District, Gill Elementary School Invitation to ARP Board Action Letter

receive authorization to execute a Project Funding Agreement by the Board of Directors no later than 14 months from invitation. Future funding for the total project budget will be required within 90 days after the date of the MSBA's approval to execute a Project Funding Agreement. Districts seeking reimbursement under the ARP will be allowed to submit requests for reimbursement monthly, but only if the total value of the invoices being submitted equals more than \$50,000.

During the Schematic Design Study phase, the MSBA will partner with the District and its assigned Owner's Project Manager and Designer to find the most fiscally responsible, educationally appropriate and sustainable solution to the building needs identified at the Gill Elementary School. If during the Schematic Design Study phase, the District determines that the potential project does not meet the qualifying criteria of the Board's invitation, the District will be required to remove its Statement of Interest and will not be authorized for a Project Funding Agreement for the project. For the 2024 ARP, the qualifying criteria included roofs of 25 years or more (installed in or before 1999) and window and door systems of 30 years or more (installed in or before 1994).

Once the District has completed the prerequisites in accordance with the schedule on page three of this letter and to the MSBA's standards, the MSBA will assign an Owner's Project Manager and Designer using the MSBA's list of pre-selected and randomly assigned consultants for the ARP. In the meantime, I wanted to share with you the Board's decision and provide a brief overview of what this means for the Gill-Montague Regional School District.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as part of the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program. As always, feel free to contact me or my staff at (617) 720-4466 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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Mary L. Pichetti  
Executive Director

Cc: Legislative Delegation  
Joanne Blier, Director of Business Operations, Gill-Montague Regional School District  
Jane Oakes, Chair, Gill-Montague Regional School Committee  
File: 10.2 Letters



**Accelerated Repair Program  
Prerequisite Documents Schedule of Deliverables**

**Gill-Montague Regional School District  
Gill Elementary School**

**MSBA Board of Director Meeting – October 30, 2024**

**Accelerated Repair Program Commences – January 2, 2025**

| <b>Deliverable</b>  | <b>Days</b> | <b>Due Date and Status</b> |
|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| Initial Compliance Certification  | 90          | April 2, 2025<br>Required  |
| Maintenance and<br>Capital Planning Information                         | 90          | April 2, 2025<br>Required  |
| Local Authorization for<br>Schematic Design Funds                       | 90          | April 2, 2025<br>Required  |
| Certified Copy of Local Vote Authorization<br>of Schematic Design Funds | 120         | May 2, 2025<br>Required    |

