



# ***SELECTBOARD AGENDA & MEETING NOTICE***

## ***December 1, 2025***

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

5:30 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)

### Old Business

- Review of Minutes: 3/24/25, 4/7/25, 4/22/25, 5/5/25, 5/20/25, 6/2/25, 6/16/25, 6/30/25, 8/11/25, 8/18/25, 9/8/25, 9/17/25, 10/6/25, 10/16/25, 10/20/25, 11/3/25, 11/17/25
- Board of Assessors – update on Assistant to the Assessors position

### New Business

- Six Town Regionalization Planning Board – request for feedback
  - Desirability of seeking change in law or special legislation in order to allow all towns to vote on proposed regional agreement at a ballot election
  - Merits of presenting voters with single regional agreement for 6 towns vs voting on two regional agreements (6-town model and 5-town model)
- Other business as may arise after the agenda has been posted.
- Public Service Announcements, if any
- Warrants
  - FY26 #11 – Vendors (\$80,304.99) & Payroll (\$38,650.40) – reviewed/signed on 11/17/25
  - FY26 #12 – review & sign

### Adjournment

### **Other Invitations/Meetings:**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Time</b> | <b>Event</b>                                      | <b>Location</b> |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mon 12/15   | 5:30 PM     | Selectboard meeting                               | Town Hall       |
| Mon 12/29   | 5:30 PM     | Selectboard meeting – Sen. Jo Comerford to attend | Town Hall       |
| Mon 1/12    | 5:30 PM     | Selectboard meeting                               | Town Hall       |
| Mon 1/26    | 5:30 PM     | Selectboard meeting                               | Town Hall       |

To: Selectboards and Town Administrators/Coordinators  
From: Alan Genovese, STRPB Chair  
Date: November 24, 2025  
Cc: Planning Board Members & State Representatives  
Re: Update and Feedback

I hope this communication finds you in good spirits and good health. Its purpose is threefold: Provide an update, solicit your feedback on several initiatives, and encourage you to reach out to our legislators to let them know your thoughts on a ballot question in all six towns and transitional funding.

### **Updates:**

**Proposed Regional Agreement:** The PB continues to work with DESE and the MARS consultants to finalize the proposed regional agreement. Our legislators have expressed an interest in joining some of our meetings to better understand the agreement and process. There are two issues that still need to be resolved in the agreement: 1) The process and timing of funding the transition period necessary to establish the Great River Regional School District (GRRSD) as outlined in the Long Range Plan, and 2) The timing and process of legislation that transfers all properties and assets of the Gill Montague and Pioneer Valley Regional School Districts to the new district. The meeting dates to discuss these issues are being finalized.

**Grant Funding:** DOR has agreed to provide one final grant extension until June 30, 2026. This is extremely helpful for us to utilize the remaining funds in support of our efforts to bring the proposed regional district to a vote. If you are so inclined, please extend your appreciation to Sean R. Cronin, Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services for granting this extension.

**Informational Brochure Report Culminating Findings:** You may have seen one of our draft brochures already, but if not, there is a finalized brochure that summarizes the culmination of our research. It shares the highlights of the PB's findings and provides an update for residents to better understand the next steps in the process. Additional brochures will not be the

responsibility of the Planning Board in communicating with the general public.

Looking forward, the Planning Board plans to conduct another series of Community Forums in the Spring. As noted in all our presentations and communication efforts, it is up to the voters to decide whether or not the Great River Regional District is formed.

**Planning Boards Website:** Although the [6towns](#) website has been recently updated, the plan is to make additional modifications to assist site visitors. In recent months the PB has noted that it might be helpful to provide more context to some reports to minimize misinterpretation and propaganda. Additionally, during Community Forums, PB members heard and received a number of excellent questions and concerns. These will be included in the Q & A section on our website so individuals that were unable to attend our forums may keep themselves informed.

### **Feedback:**

**Ballot Question:** Some members of the Planning Board, as well other community members, have expressed that they feel somewhat disenfranchised because Montague, which has a Representative Town Meeting, has the opportunity for residents to vote at the election polls. Voting at the polls provides more flexibility and hours to vote. The other five towns are required to hold their vote at an Annual or Special Town Meeting, which is much less convenient for residents to cast their vote. This has been brought to the attention of Senator Jo Comerford and she has inquired about how the towns feel about this disparity. It seemed reasonable to the Planning Board to petition the State to see if all towns could cast their votes at the polls. This would help ensure that as many citizens as possible in our communities have the opportunity to vote on the proposed new district. This was also recently brought to the attention of the Gill-Montague School Committee at one of their meetings. The consensus of the committee was that it is a good idea. If it could be coordinated with town elections in the Spring it would likely draw even more voters to the polls.

This would have to be brought forward through the legislative process so timing may become an issue. Amending Chapter 71 Section 15 would take a considerable amount of time, and if it needed to be accomplished through a Home Rule petition it could potentially take even longer. The Home Rule petition process requires each town to have it as a warrant article at their Annual or Special Town Meeting. However, the PB wants to bring this to a Town Meeting vote this Spring. Perhaps our legislators know of another pathway to accomplish this. In the meantime, the PB voted to have me bring this to your attention. If there is interest in having an election ballot in all six towns, please let your State representatives know. Leyden and Warwick voted at their Selectboard meetings to support this initiative. Warwick would like to see this done in a timely manner. If you have any other ideas, please feel free to contact me or Greg Snedeker.

**Transitional Funding:** If the towns approve the RA then legislation needs to be filed to support the transition period where a part-time Superintendent, Director of Business and Finance, Special Education Director will need to be employed (or this could be done through a stipend to the existing personnel) and legal counsel to negotiate contracts, etc.

Currently, our estimate for transitional funding is \$1.9 million, but we will continue to explore ways to reduce this amount. The warrant article will need to contain language that, if approved by our towns, it will be contingent on securing funding. The PB is well aware that this is not something our towns can be responsible for appropriating, and the State needs to step up to help us address our declining student enrollment issue along with modifying the Chapter 70 and 71 formula to provide additional funding for rural districts. It is important that our legislators hear you are in support of this transitional funding.

**Five/Six Town Regional Agreements:** In a recent meeting with DESE the idea was floated to solicit opinions of having two proposed agreements on which to vote - one agreement that includes all 6 towns, and a second agreement that subtracts out Warwick (municipal district) and only includes the five towns of Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley regions. As you may or may not be aware, state law gives the PB the option of recommending a regional agreement or agreements. Having two agreements would provide the option of forming a 5 town school district should all the towns approve, except Warwick. This would eliminate

repeating the process. Warwick would only have one ballot question - to vote on forming a six town school district. We are sensitive to the fact that the ballot question(s) would need to be extremely clear so as not to create any confusion. This may be worth exploring. I am personally optimistic that if a town-wide ballot question is put to voters, it has a good chance of passing.

This may be a viable solution for the 5 towns if Warwick votes no. We have already run assessments for the 5 towns twice so that information is known. I checked with the MARS consultants and they believe once the six town agreement is finalized, it would not be a heavy lift to modify it to be a five town agreement. DESE is going to talk with their legal department. In the meantime, your feedback is important. If you feel this is worth exploring, the PB will continue to move forward with this option. If not, the idea will be shelved. Please let us know. If this idea has some transaction, perhaps we could have a meeting with Selectboards and Fincoms to further discuss the idea.

**Support Chapter 70 & 71 Reform:** We are seeing more articles being written about rural funding and the challenges of small rural districts. However, unless there is a realistic link between more funding and combining resources to create a larger student population at the middle and high school levels, we will be missing the opportunity to address both the enrollment declines and the financial challenges under the present Chapter 70 and 71 formula.

These are some aspects you might want to encourage our legislators to support:

- \* Bills H.517 (Blais) / S.314 (Comerford)
- \* Gradually raise the 82.5% Local Contribution Cap while also simultaneously gradually shifting the 59%/41/% State - Local contribution funding mix.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update. We hope it is helpful. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions, concerns or information you would like to share.

On behalf of the full Planning Board, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving Day.