

(Adopted as minutes for the Gill Selectboard)

Civic Leaders

Meeting #2 9/6/17

Gill-Montague Senior Center

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Facilitated by Debbie Lynangale of the Community Action Mediation and Training Collaborative

Notes by Jen Audley of the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership

17 Attendees:

GMRSD – Michael Sullivan, superintendent; Joanne Blier, director of business and operations

GMRSC – Timmie Smith, chair (also chair of Gill finance committee); Jane Oakes, vice chair; Christina Postera, assistant treasurer; Mike Langknecht; Cassie Damkoehler; Lesley Cogswell

Town of Montague – Rich Kuklewicz, Selectboard chair (also Franklin County Tech School board member); Steve Ellis, town administrator; Mike Naughton, finance committee vice chair; Richard Widmer, finance committee

Town of Gill – Randy Crochier, Selectboard chair; Greg Snedeker*, Selectboard; Ray Purington, administrative assistant; Tupper Brown, finance committee; Sandy Brown, finance committee

Also present:

Greenfield Recorder – Miranda Davis

Opening

School Committee Chair Timmie Smith called the meeting to order, noting that the GMRSD School Committee and Gill Selectboard each had a quorum of members present

Post-meeting survey results. Debbie Lynangale distributed a handout – “Survey results as of 9/6/17” and reviewed the results of a survey sent to 8/15/17 meeting participants (14 responses)

- Overall respondents felt meeting was helpful as a starting point
- Ready to move beyond introductions to action
- Desire for data, deeper exploration of causes

Comments from participants:

- Deeper understanding of school financing concepts is a good thing to do as a larger group
- Need to find out what legislators believe regarding adequacy of funding for GMRSD and other public schools in our region
- Superintendents in the area meet regularly in two configurations – both groups have meetings coming up. Superintendent communicate regularly with legislators, as individuals and collectively
- Overall interest in continuing to meet and work together is encouraging
- Short and long range planning both feel important, but maybe a smaller group should work on FY19 and larger focus on long range (5-10 years out)
- Solution for FY19 and FY 20 may depend on vision for long term

Group discussion of goals, meeting logistics, next steps

Preliminary discussion in 5 small groups, each comprised of 3 or 4 people, then compared notes with whole group

Purpose or goal of this group. List of options generated, no decision

- Long term strategic planning for district sustainability | & short term planning (FY19 work needs to be completed in 8 months) | & maybe looking beyond district to county or regional level
- Organize and generate stronger state support, possibly including support for Chapter 70 | cultivate legislative support for rural schools
- Increase knowledge and common understanding about school financing | & strategies used by other district | & the components of the school budget
- To figure out how to get more money for schools
- To establish a permanent committee and process for ongoing work on these issues

Meeting structures. These themes emerged from discussion:

- Interest in continuing large group meetings and also developing smaller groups that could meet to work on specific topics and present to the large group
- To maximize productivity, large group needs to meet frequently now, but could decrease frequency of meetings in future.
- Meeting at regular intervals (eg every 1st Tuesday, 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, etc.) is desirable.
- Large group meetings every two weeks is the interval that seemed to have the most support.
- Participants should expect to have tasks or other homework to complete between meetings
- Create an online archive for shared documents/information – Greg Snedeker set this up in Google docs during the meeting

The group agreed to meet at least 3 more times, and set their next meeting date as Tues. 9/19, 6:30-8:30 pm. Location tbd, but Senior Center is first choice.

A Doodle poll was suggested as a means to determine the following two dates. 1st and 3rd Tuesdays are feasible for some participants; 1st and 3rd Wednesdays are preferred by others.

Sandy Brown, Jane Oakes, Richard Widmer, Christina Postera, and Mike Naughton identified themselves as resources for continuing to work out details of groups structure, logistics, and process for meetings

Next steps – Topics this group might address in next 1-2 months (most popular choices are in bold)

- **Get up to speed on school financing** (this will likely take multiple meetings) Mike Naughton, Tupper Brown, and Joanne Blier identified themselves as expert resources and agreed to present at next meeting. (9/19)
- Economic development and growth plans from the towns
- More details on FY19 budget forecast
- Engaging legislators, getting them up to speed

- Developing shared understanding of population trends and demographics
- **Agree on key goals**

Underlying causes and current needs in GMRSD schools

Michael Sullivan directed group's attention to a handout: "GMRSD FY19 budget projections & Historical revolving and E&D." Joanne Blier walked through the document.

Revolving Funds and E&D

School Choice revolving fund depends on previous year #'s of students choosing into GMRSD schools. Funds in this account are typically spent on instructional costs.

Circuit Breaker revolving funds are used for high-cost special education services (such as tuitions for out-of-district placements). The funding source is state reimbursement, based on previous year's numbers. Can be used for emergencies. Ending year balance must be lower than current year revenue.

Certified E&D (Excess and Deficiency) is like the Towns' "Free Cash" -- the amount of money available and unspoken for at the beginning of each fiscal year. In the past few years, the district has reduced the balance in E&D significantly, deploying the funds for necessary designated spending instead. The strategy of using E&D contributions to reduce assessments appears to have run its course.

GMRSD FY19 Budget Projections

The \$450,000 deficit in the FY19 budget projection is typical of how GMRSD budgets have started out for the past few years. Typically, many things shift during the budget development process, but making cuts to expenses has been necessary to achieve a balanced budget each year.

Projections are based on FY18 budget as it's been revised to reflect new information, rather than the FY18 budget that was approved.

The numbers for many of the lines in the FY19 projected budget are based on knowledgeable assumptions and estimates. Some contracts have locked in rates and COLAs for up to 3 years. Some numbers will come later this fall (for example, benefits numbers will come in Nov/Dec, and choice out/charter out numbers will come in Dec).

As of the 2nd day of the 2017/18 school year, enrollment was up compared to last year (+35 students, for a total of 984.)

Next steps, facilitation, and closing

Debbie Lynangale left the meeting at this point so the group could discuss whether to continue having a facilitator organize and run these meetings, and whether to continue with Debbie as the facilitator.

The consensus of the group was that having a professional facilitator was helpful and to engage Lynangale for at least 3 more sessions. The district paid for her services for the first two meetings at a rate of \$125/hr; Michael Sullivan will inquire about rates for continued services.

There was a suggestion that Community Compact funding could be used for this sort of thing if it becomes a longer term initiative.

Gill-Montague Regional School Committee adjourned (Christina Postera motioned and Mike Langknecht seconded).

The Gill Selectboard adjourned as well.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Adopted as minutes for the Gill Selectboard

Signed copy on file. Approved on 09/18/2017

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Clerk

9/6

GILL MONTAGUE CIVIC LEADERS AND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SURVEY
Results as of 9/6/17 (14 responses)

1. How useful was the Aug. 15 meeting? Any feedback for the organizers or facilitator?

- Useful (2), great (1), remains to be seen (1), essential (1)
- A start, first step (4)
- Need to have everyone in room, hear everyone's (diverse) views (4)
- Want to get to concrete details, action steps (2)
- Remains to be seen, liked neutral location

2. How knowledgeable are you on the following topics? Please use the Comments section to address any specific requests or suggestions for ensuring that everyone in the group has the information they need for our discussions.

- 11 out of 14 people want at least some, if not significant, additional information on Chapter 70 formulas, Affordable Assessment calculations, and other concepts related to school funding.
- 3-5 people identified themselves as very knowledgeable on those topics.
- Other topics of interest are other funding sources, details on expenses, minimum required contributions (how GM compares to others), collective bargaining and unionization, building ownership and use.
- One person offered to make "expert" videos to share with others on funding topics

3. To what degree are you interested and willing to continue to participate in discussions with this group past September 6? If group goals, frequency of meeting times or other conditions would affect your participation, please describe.

- Very interested (9)
- Need to get something done, get somewhere, focus seriously on solutions (5)
- Scheduling may be issue (2) – frequency, time of day?
- Want group to break into sub-committees (1)

4. At our last meeting, it seemed that many were in agreement that we need to be very creative and action-oriented in our discussions. Some other ideas were proposed in terms of what the group would need to properly explore possible solutions. Please rate the importance of each suggestion below, and use the Comments section to provide details or to propose other supports for the group's process.

- See list below. All suggestions had at least 10 people who thought they were either somewhat or very important.
- Bolded ones had 8-10 people who described it as very important.
- Those mentioned by at least 2 people as not very important have an asterisk.

- **understanding how others have approached similar problems**
 - access technical assistance/expertise*
 - collaborate with like-minded partners
- **engage the community and key stakeholders**
 - use outside facilitators for at least some meetings
- **ensure regular and effective communication with key stakeholders**
 - use sub-committees or work groups for some work*

5. At our last meeting, participants suggested some possible solutions to Gill Montague's fiscal situation. Based on your current view of the situation, please rate the importance of each approach and use the Comments section to provide additional information or suggestions.

- By weighted average, with most important potential solutions at the top, here's the **revised** list:

Increase enrollment (marketing, specialization, more choice-in/less choice-out, etc.)

Consider more regionalization of educational services

Collaborate with other districts on any of these approaches

Work with legislators and the state government to increase state funding for GM schools

Consider changes to town priorities

Revisit agreements or approaches to town contributions towards schools (tied at bottom)

Reduce costs (changes to programs, staffing, use of facilities, etc.) (tied at bottom)

- Other options included: Consider ways to restructure education to meet local needs, conduct deeper analysis of school roles and causes for situation, adding programs and services that make staying in district more attractive, shared services/programming
- Comments: Need to look at this from every/multiple angles, clarify whether this is a short-term or permanent situation

6. Assuming this group continues to meet, to what degree and in which ways should FY19 budget discussions be included in this group's work?

- Unsure (2); would be helpful (1); it's necessary, essential (5); it's not a huge priority (1)
- Comments: Concerns go beyond FY19. FY19 makes this work necessary and focuses group beyond generalities. Need to avoid repetition, overlap and redundancy (some issues will need to be discussed, have decisions made in other meetings). Obviously part of picture, but not much this group can do to affect FY19. Need to get at FY19 deficit, definitely need more detailed info on FY19.

7. Anything else you want the group to know?

- Crisis as opportunity, crisis has been coming for a while
- Tweaking the current system isn't the answer.
- Need to focus on strengths, not weaknesses
- Need to keep an open mind

9/6/17

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
HISTORICAL REVOLVING AND E+D Certification and Use

Do Σ of
all 3, year
by year.
How close?
694855
769639
707928
889312
1014150
936709
905265

Received
when students
choice in

School Choice Revolving				
	Beginning Balance	Revenue	Expense	Ending Balance
FY12	\$ 121,559	\$ 640,098	\$ (659,853)	\$ 101,804
FY13	\$ 101,804	\$ 707,783	\$ (643,318)	\$ 166,269
FY14	\$ 166,269	\$ 713,056	\$ (692,092)	\$ 187,233
FY15	\$ 187,233	\$ 841,826	\$ (557,260)	\$ 471,799
FY16	\$ 471,799	\$ 803,098	\$ (654,666)	\$ 620,231
FY17	\$ 620,231	\$ 909,984	\$ (899,688)	\$ 630,527
FY18 Project	\$ 630,527	\$ 750,000	\$ (763,950)	\$ 616,577

High Cost
SPED
students

Circuit Breaker Revolving				
	Beginning Balance	Revenue	Expense	Ending Balance
FY12	\$ 309,061	\$ 472,658	\$ (438,668)	\$ 343,051
FY13	\$ 343,051	\$ 338,497	\$ (298,178)	\$ 383,370
FY14	\$ 383,370	\$ 300,731	\$ (533,406)	\$ 150,695
FY15	\$ 150,695	\$ 153,340	\$ (286,523)	\$ 17,513
FY16	\$ 17,513	\$ 229,501	\$ (153,095)	\$ 93,919
FY17	\$ 93,919	\$ 224,974	\$ (202,711)	\$ 116,182
FY18 Project	\$ 116,182	\$ 200,000	\$ (177,494)	\$ 138,688

Per State program
Balance can't be
more than what was
received that year.

Updated History of E&D certification & use to reduce assessments (1/31/17)				
Certified E&D		Overages returned to Towns	E&D used to reduce assessments	
7/1/2011	\$821,827		\$247,662	FY13
7/1/2012	\$752,836	FY14		\$220,000
7/1/2013	\$1,094,457	FY15		\$370,000
7/1/2014	\$741,221	FY16		\$400,000
7/1/2015	\$568,751		FY17	\$300,000
7/1/2016	\$390,484		FY18	\$190,000
7/1/2017	\$330,000		FY19	\$150,000

Gill-Montague Regional School District
 FY19 Budget Projections- All Funds

EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES	FY17 Approved	FY18 Approved	FY19 Projected	Expenditure Assumptions
TOTAL BUDGET				
ADMINISTRATION (1000)	\$ 750,652	\$ 648,044	\$ 661,005	2% Increase (administrators & associated expenses)
INSTRUCTIONAL (2000)	\$ 9,502,954	\$ 9,681,722	\$ 9,720,900	3% Increase (Teachers/para salary & all other instructional expenses. Includes steps & 1.5% COLAs.) Based on current projected staffing.
STUDENT SERVICES (3000)*	\$ 1,944,200	\$ 1,891,933	\$ 1,929,772	2% Increase -- (Includes transportation, nurses, athletics, school lunch)
OPERATIONS (4000)	\$ 1,529,058	\$ 1,612,391	\$ 1,660,763	3% Increase -- (Utilities, custodial, maintenance)
BENEFITS & INSURANCE (5000)	\$ 4,136,483	\$ 4,395,157	\$ 4,577,012	3% increase + \$60K for additional retirees benefits
TUITION (9000)	\$ 3,143,235	\$ 3,183,493	\$ 3,350,493	Estimated increase for Choice/Charter and SPED OOD Tuition
CAPITAL DEBT (8000)	\$ 151,515	\$ 147,052	\$ 142,538	Based on current Debt Schedule
CAPITAL DEBT (8000) Window Project (new)		\$ 68,145	\$ 66,552	Based on estimated window project (montague only)
TOTAL BUDGET	\$ 21,158,097	\$ 21,627,937	\$ 22,109,033	
Total projected annual budget increase	705,737	469,840	481,096	

REVENUE ESTIMATES	FY17 Approved	FY18 Approved	FY19 Projected	Revenue Assumptions
REVENUE ESTIMATES				
CHAPTER 70 STATE AID	\$ 6,114,489	\$ 6,177,674	\$ 6,212,014	Add \$25 per pupil x 1080 students over the FINAL FY18 Cherry Sheet (FY17 actual est Chapter 70 = \$6,152,674 - increase due to lost K grant)
MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT	\$ 500,000	\$ 530,000	\$ 300,000	New projection estimate - will get revised estimate from LPVEC
INTEREST INCOME	\$ 3,300	\$ 3,300	\$ 4,000	slight increase
EXCESS AND DEFICIENCY	\$ 300,000	\$ 190,000	\$ 150,000	reduce based on projected availability - need to bring usage down to become sustainable
ERVING TUITION	\$ 900,000	\$ 770,000	\$ 730,000	Decrease based on FY17 actual enrollment-- cost per pupil goes up annually -enrollment is trending down to pre FY15 levels - 14 student reduction from FY16 to FY17 Current 11th grade is a large class signifying another potential drop in enrollment in FY20
CHARTER REIMBURSEMENT	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 150,000	Dependent on the number of students going to charter schools each year and where they went to school in prior years. This number will be updated once we receive December estimates
CHAPTER 71 TRANSP REIMB	\$ 300,000	\$ 316,100	\$ 322,422	Fy18 based on 70% regular transp and 40% homeless transp (based on historical spending)- using a 2% increase in reimb/revenue in out years
OPERATING ASSESSMENT	\$ 10,293,621	\$ 10,772,100	\$ 11,041,403	Estimate 2.5% increase in FY19
TOTAL CAPITAL DEBT ASSESSMENT	\$ 151,515	\$ 147,052	\$ 142,538	Based on current Debt Schedule (high School)
CAPITAL DEBT ASSESSMENT Window Project (new)		\$ 68,145	\$ 66,552	Based on current Debt Schedule (Sheffield window project - Montague only)
GRANTS/REVOLVING ACCOUNT BUDGET	\$ 1,513,414	\$ 1,512,122	\$ 1,537,122	\$25K increase - school lunch, sped grants possible increases
CIRCUIT BREAKER REVOLVING BUDGET	\$ 176,426	\$ 177,494	\$ 180,000	Increased special ed placements equal increased circuit breaker reimbursement
SCHOOL CHOICE REVOLVING BUDGET	\$ 705,332	\$ 763,950	\$ 820,000	This assumes annual expenditures remain less than anticipated revenue.
TOTAL BUDGET	\$ 21,158,097	\$ 21,627,937	\$ 21,656,050	
Total projected additional annual revenue available	705,736	469,840	28,113	
Deficit needed to be covered	\$ (0)	\$ (0)	\$ (452,983)	