

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING

VIA ZOOM

Monday, August 31, 2026

AGENDA

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82996349052>

Meeting ID: 829 9634 9052 Password: 593068 Dial into meeting: +1 646 558 8656

Topics may start earlier than specified, unless there is a hearing scheduled

Meeting Being Taped

Votes May Be Taken

1. 6:30PM Selectboard Chair opens the meeting, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken
2. 6:30 Approve Minutes: Selectboard Meetings: August 24, 2026, if available
3. 6:30 **Public Comment Period:** Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Selectboard will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment
4. 6:32 **PUBLIC MEETING: Montague Power Choice Electrical Aggregation Plan**
 - Presentation of the draft Aggregation Plan. Public Comment period through September 16, 2026. (30 mins)
5. 7:00 **Licensing**
 - Montague Retreat Center, 34 Chestnut Hill Rd, Leverett, MA 01054, requesting One Day Liquor License. Malt Beverages and Wine Only, for September 11th, 2026, from 6pm to 9pm for a private rehearsal dinner. Pending updated Certificate of Insurance
6. 7:05 **Fall Special Town Meeting**
 - Set Date and warrant schedule for Fall Special Town Meeting: Meeting Date October 28, 2026, 6PM. Close warrant October 5th, 2026. Article Requests Due September 9th, 2026
 - Pre-Town Meeting Wed October 21, 2026.
7. 7:20 **Special Municipal Election- Great River Regional School District**
 - Call Special Municipal Election question for Great River Regional School District on October 6, 2026, from Noon to 8:00PM. (To coincide with the Franklin County School District Election)
 - Vote to opt out of vote-by-mail voting for this election

Montague Selectboard Meeting
August 31, 2026
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8. 7:30

Personnel Board

Selectboard

- First reading of FMLA policy

Town Clerk's Office

- Appointment Craig LeBlanc Board or Registrar

9. 7:45

Town Administrator's Business

- Updates from Elementary School Building Committee and the MSBA Eligibility Phase for the Elementary School Project
- Updates on First Street Habitat for Humanity Housing Project
- Topics not anticipated within 48 hour posting requirement

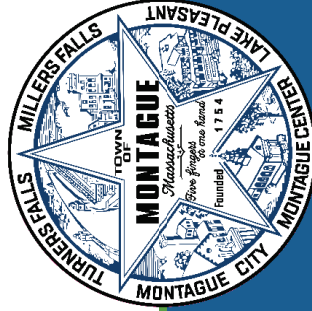
Next Meeting

Selectboard Meeting: Monday, September 14, 2026, at 6:30pm - HYBRID

An introduction to

Montague Power Choice

4



An electricity program from the Town
of Montague for residents and business owners

Why we are here

The Town of Montague wants to hear from community members about their **Aggregation Plan**. This presentation is to help the public understand the Plan.

Public comments are accepted until September 16, 2026.

Montague Power Choice is...

a municipal electricity aggregation program



To say it another way, it is...

a form of group electricity purchasing

It's a **municipal alternative** to the electricity marketing that you receive in the mail and over the phone.

Why participate?

- ▶ New electricity supply choices
- ▶ Stable electricity supply prices
with the potential for savings
Savings compared with Eversource cannot be guaranteed.
- ▶ Consumer protections
The freedom to leave at any time with no fee or penalty.



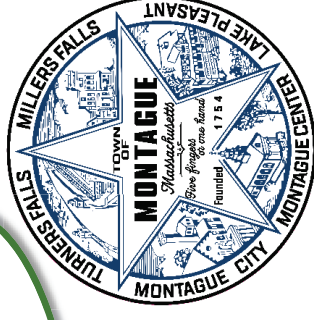
Montague Power Choice will NOT...

replace Eversource as your electric utility

We are the electric utility
for Montague no matter what.

But we get to choose
our electricity **supplier**.

EVERSOURCE



Three ways to buy electricity in MA:

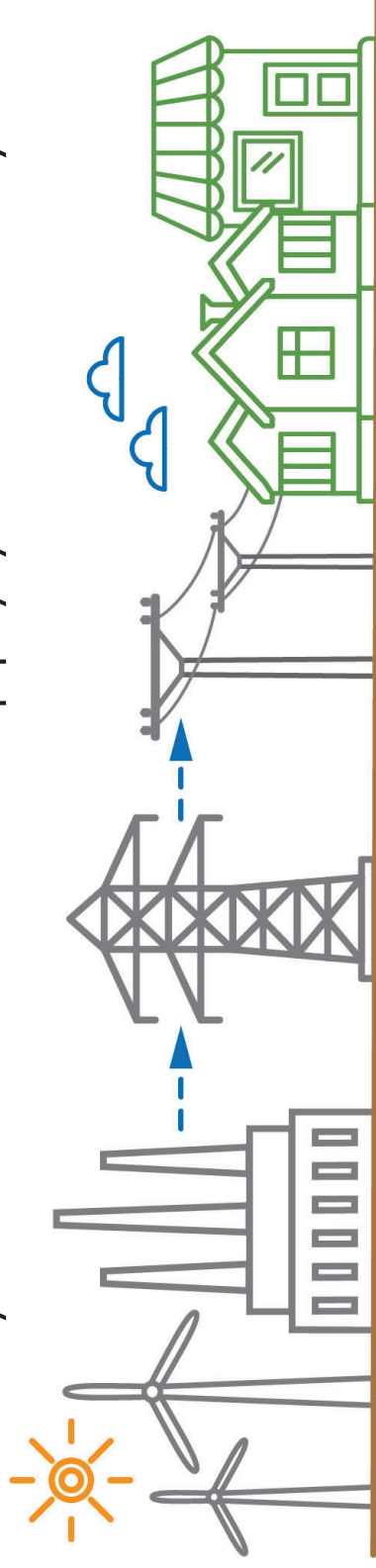
- 1 Your utility (**EVERSOURCE**) buys it for you = **Basic Service**
- 2 You sign a private contract with a commercial electricity supplier, and they buy it for you
- 3 The Town signs a contract with an electricity supplier that you can benefit from, and they buy it for you
= **municipal electricity aggregation**

How aggregation works

Before the program begins ► Basic Service

EVERSOURCE provides you with two services:

They both deliver and supply your electricity.



Supply & Delivery

Eversource both delivers and
supplies your electricity.

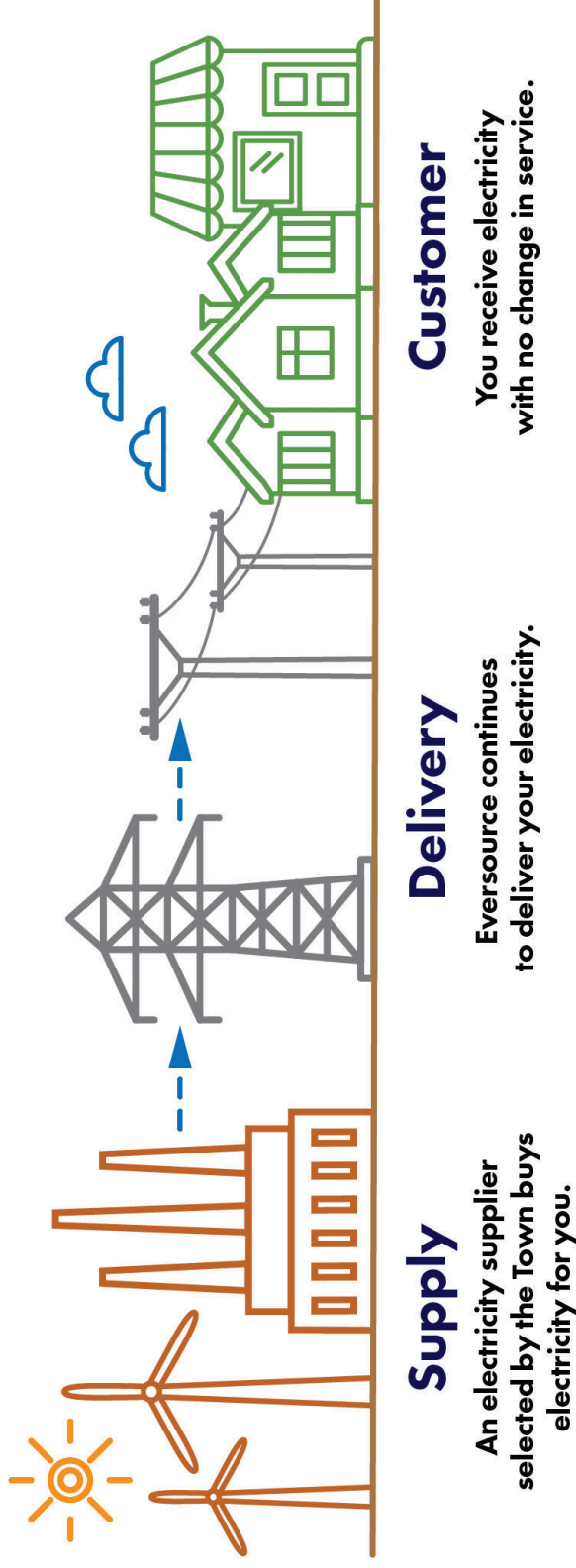
Customer

You receive electricity.

How aggregation works

► with Montague Power Choice

Eversource continues to deliver your electricity, but Montague buys electricity from a supplier it chooses.



Montague Power Choice

2 new consumer-friendly choices:

MONTAGUE
STANDARD

auto-enroll

Lowest program price

MONTAGUE
100% GREEN

option

100% from renewable
sources

EVERSOURCE

EVERSOURCE'S
BASIC SERVICE

opt out

**Price changes every
6 months or less.**

Prices fixed for longer than 6 months
(but savings cannot be guaranteed)

Montague Power Choice

will change your
electricity supplier
and your
electricity supply
price.

EVERSOURCE

Account Number: 0000 000 0000

Statement Date: 02/25/21

JOHN J CUSTOMER

ANY STREET

ANY TOWN MA 00000-0000

Total Amount Due
by 03/22/24

\$133.45

Amount Due On 02/21/24

\$268.77

Last Payment Received On 02/01/24

-\$268.77

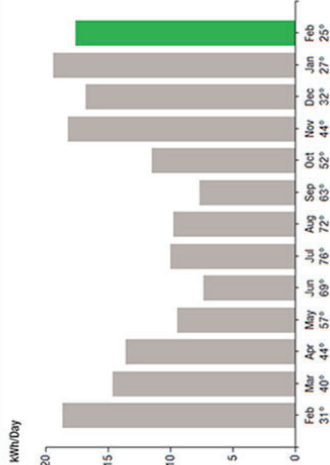
Balance Forward

\$0.00

Total Current Charges

\$133.45

Electric Usage History - Kilowatt Hours (kWh)



Electric Usage Summary

This month your
average daily
electric use was
18.0 kWh

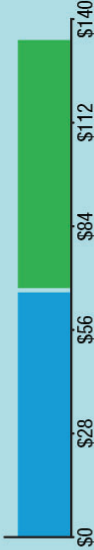
This month you used
5.3% less
than at the
same time last year

5.3%
↓
USAGE

Current Charges for Electricity

Supply
\$65.92
Cost of electricity from
YOUR ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER

Delivery
\$67.53
Cost to deliver electricity
from Eversource



Your electric supplier is
ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER NAME
MAILING ADDRESS
CITY, STATE 00000-0000
WWW.SUPPLIERNAME.COM
1-8XX-XXX-XXXX

News For You

Go paperless with E-Bill and receive an email reminder instead of a paper bill each month. It's easy, convenient and secure. Log into your account at Eversource.com and select "My Profile" to enroll in E-Bill today.

Remit Payment To: Eversource, PO Box 56005, Boston, MA 02205-6005

Montague Power Choice

will change your
electricity supplier
and your
electricity supply
price.

EVERSOURCE

Account Number: 0000 000 0000

Customer name key: CUST

JOHN J CUSTOMER

ANY STREET

ANY TOWN MA 00000-0000

Svc Addr: ANY STREET

APT#

ANY TOWN, MA 00000

Rate R1-Residential Non-Heating Cycle 18

Service from 01/27/24 - 02/25/24 29 Days

Next read date on or about: Mar 26, 2024

Meter Number	Current Read	Previous Read	Current Usage	Reading Type
000000000	2245	1734	511	Actual

Service Reference: 000000000

Monthly kWh Use

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
559	409	449	284	213	330	282
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
230	367	529	571			

Contact Information

Emergency: 800-592-2000

www.eversource.com

CustomerServiceMA@eversource.com

Pay by Phone: 800-592-2000

Customer Service: 800-592-2000

Total Amount Due
by 03/22/24

\$133.45

Electric Account Summary

Amount Due On 02/21/24

\$268.77

Last Payment Received On 02/21/24

-\$268.77

Balance Forward

\$0.00

Current Charges/Credits

Electric Supply Services

\$65.92

Delivery Services

\$67.53

Total Current Charges

\$133.45

Total Amount Due

\$133.45

Total Charges for Electricity

Supplier (YOUR SUPPLIER)

Meter 000000000

Generation Service Charge

\$65.92

Subtotal Supplier Services

\$65.92

.14500

453 kWh X

This price will be a Montague Power
Choice price. We do not yet know
what the Montague price will be.
The price shown is an example.

511.00kWh X .04944

511.00kWh X -.00117

511.00kWh X .02730

511.00kWh X .00478

511.00kWh X .00133

511.00kWh X .00090

511.00kWh X .00763

511.00kWh X .00001

511.00kWh X .00050

511.00kWh X .02154

511.00kWh X .00003

\$7.00

\$25.26

-\$0.60

\$13.95

\$2.44

\$0.68

\$0.46

\$3.90

\$0.01

\$0.26

\$11.01

\$0.02

Net metering recovery surcharge

Solar Program Cost Adjustment

Renewable Enrgy Chrg

Energy Efficiency

Atty Genl consultant exp adj

Your primary relationship for electricity will remain with



- ▶ Eversource will continue to **deliver** your electricity.
- ▶ You will continue to call Eversource **if the power goes out**.
- ▶ Eversource will continue to send your bill, you will continue to pay them, and this is the **only electric bill** you will receive.
- ▶ If you are eligible for a low-income discount or fuel assistance, **you will continue to receive that benefit**.

Participating in **Montague Power Choice** = **EASY!**

Electricity customers on Eversource's Basic Service will be eligible for **automatic enrollment** (state law).

You will receive a formal notification in the mail **bearing the Montague Town Seal** before you are enrolled.



Participation is NOT required. You may opt out before being enrolled or at any time in the future with no penalty or fee.



Wait! What if I have...

Signed a contract with an electricity supplier already?

- ▶ You will **not** be automatically enrolled, but you can join.

Solar panels or participate in community solar and receive credits on my bill or an incentive payment?

- ▶ **No change.** *Participating in Montague Power Choice will not change how credits or payments are calculated.*

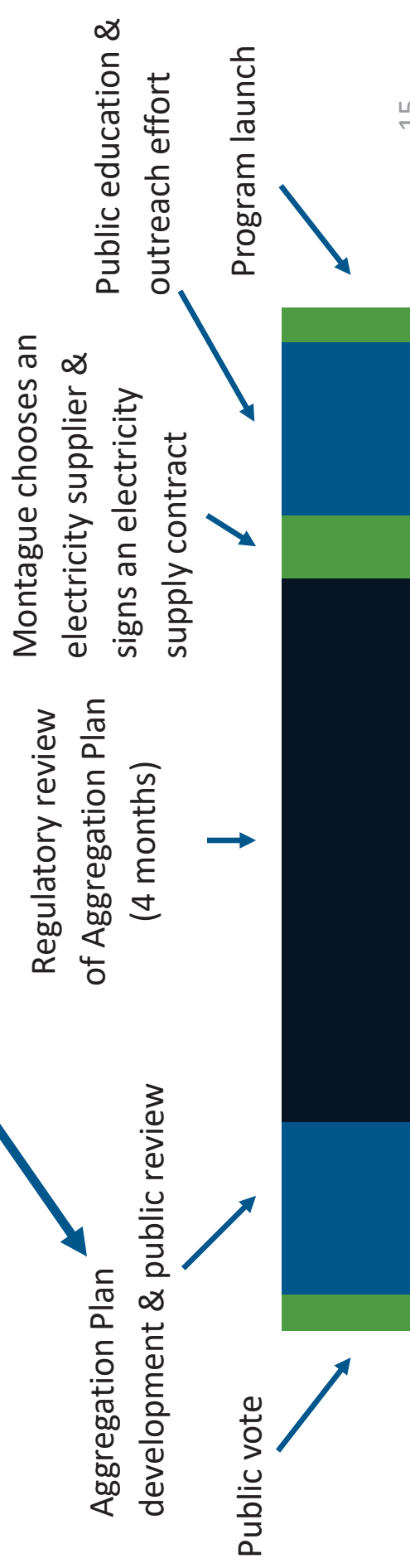
A low-income discount, fuel assistance, or Eversource's Budget Billing?

- ▶ **No change.**

What is the timeline?

The total process now takes about a year.

Montague is here



When/how will I get information?

Program details like pricing will be available approximately 6 - 8 weeks before launch.

Notice in the mail – to accounts eligible for automatic enrollment

Announcement

Program website – MontaguePowerChoice.com

Public information sessions

Customer Support – available now

Montague Power Choice



BENEFITS HOW AGGREGATION WORKS IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS CUSTOMER SUPPORT



MontaguePowerChoice.com

Visit today

Or call customer support: 888-235-3850

Public comments now accepted

The Aggregation Plan and associated documents are available for public comment until **5:00 PM on September 16, 2026**.

To obtain a copy of the Aggregation Plan:

- ▶ Visit **Montague-MA.gov** or **MontaguePowerChoice.com** and download the file.
- ▶ A hard copy is available from Town Hall.

Information about how to submit written comments is available at **Montague-MA.gov** or at **MontaguePowerChoice.com**.

TOWN OF MONTAGUE
Special and One Day License – Application Form
(M.G.L. Ch. 138 S. 14)

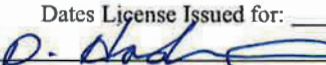
CHECK ONE

- x Application by a manager for one day special license for the sale of BEER & WINE to be drunk on the premises.
- Application by the manager of a nonprofit organization for one day special license for the sale of ALL ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES OR BEER & WINE to be drunk on the premises.

DATE OF EVENT BEING APPLIED FOR: 9.11.2026

1. Full name, address and phone number(s) of the organization making this application:
Montague Retreat Center, 177 Ripley Road, Montague, MA 01351
2. Full name, address and phone number(s) of manager who shall be responsible for the license:
Jason Cohen, 177 Ripley Road, Montague MA 01351, 617-435-3649
3. Is the applicant requesting the license TIPS Certified? If Yes, please attach appropriate documentation.
YES x NO
4. Nature of Event Wedding rehearsal dinner Number of Attendees 50
5. Is the applicant a non-profit organization duly registered with the Secretary of State? If Yes, please attach appropriate documentation. YES NO x
6. Location where event shall be held: Montague Retreat Center, 177 Ripley Road, Montague, MA 01351
7. Has the approval of the property owner been obtained? YES x NO
8. Exact times of the license: FROM 6 o'clock AM/PM TO 9 o'clock pm AM/PM
9. Has the applicant been issued similar licenses in Montague in the past 12 calendar months?
YES x NO If so, when? 07/31/26
10. Does the applicant have an application for license to sell alcoholic beverages pending before the licensing authority of the Town of Montague? YES NO x
11. Please attach a plan of the parking lot, showing the number of parking spaces available and adequate space for emergency access.
12. Proof of Liquor Liability Insurance provided? Date

The applicant hereby states that the applicant has received a copy of the Licensing Authority's regulations pertaining to Special and One Day Liquor Licenses and is aware of and shall comply with all applicable statutes, by-laws and regulations.

Authorized Representative and Title	Date
Office Use Only:	Date Approved: <u> </u>
# Days Permit Issued For: <u> </u>	Dates License Issued for: <u> </u>
Police Chief Signature: <u></u>	
Select Board Chair Signature: <u></u>	



CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This certifies that

Stephanie Stokes

is awarded this certificate for

TIPS On-Premise Android Server Training



Hours
5.00



Completion Date
04/24/2023



Expiration Date
04/23/2025



Certificate #
ON-000041590981

Official Signature

THIS CERTIFICATE IS NON-TRANSFERABLE

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PLT 7-0000



PLT 7-0000



Certification

Hours: 5.00

Certificate #: ON-000041590981

Stephanie Stokes
33 Dickens Way
Mansfield, MA 01753

CERTIFIED

Expires: 04/23/25



Phone: 800-416-9477

www.tips-training.com

This card was issued to successful completion of the TIPS program

Signature

Six Town Regionalization Planning Board

To: Selectboards of the Towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield & Warwick

From: Alan Genovese, Chair, Six Town Regionalization Planning Board

cc: Town Clerks of the Towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield & Warwick

Date: August 27, 2026

Re: Recommendation and Request to Schedule Election

Please be advised that at its meeting on August 26, 2026, the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board ("STRPB"), voted to recommend the establishment of the Great River Regional School District ("GRRSD") consisting of either six or five towns; to approve proposed regional agreements for both a six-town and a five-town regional school district model; and to request that each Selectboard schedule a special election to present the question of approval of the new regional school district to the voters of each town.

Copies of the proposed regional agreements and the STRPB's Long Range Plan are attached to this memorandum, and are available on the STRPB's website 6towns.org.

On August 25, 2026, the Governor signed into law special legislation enacted by the legislature authorizing all six towns to seek approval of the new regional school district by special election, notwithstanding the provisions of M.G.L. c. 71, § 15 which would otherwise have required approval in some towns by Town Meeting. The wording of the ballot question is being finalized and will be provided to each town in the coming days.

In the interest of efficiency, minimizing the burden on each Town's resources, and maximizing the opportunity for voters in all towns, the STRPB requests that all six towns schedule their elections to occur on October 6, 2026, during the same hours that the election concerning the financing for the Franklin County Technical School's building project is scheduled to take place in each of the six towns.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information.

Great River Regional School District Long-Range Plan (LRP)

Executive Summary

In response to persistent declining enrollment and the accompanying financial challenges, the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB/PB) was formed in 2019 by the towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield, and Warwick to evaluate the feasibility of creating a PreK–12 "super-regional" school district: **The Great River Regional School District (GRRSD)**. This initiative aims to consolidate the Pioneer Valley (PVRSD), the Gill-Montague (GMRSD) Regional School Districts and the Warwick School District (WSD) into one cohesive and sustainable educational system.

The GRRSD would combine the high school and middle school enrollments, placing the high school students in the Turners Falls High School/Great Falls Middle School Regional building and the middle school students in the Pioneer Valley Regional building, while retaining elementary school students in their existing school buildings within their respective towns (currently Bernardston, Gill, Montague (Hillcrest/Sheffield), Northfield and Warwick). The Town of Leyden does not have an elementary school and would continue to send their students to the Bernardston Elementary School.

The PB was originally formed by the towns included in the GMRSD and PVRSD, with Warwick subsequently leaving the PVRSD to form its own municipal district in 2023. The PB will present two Regional Agreements (RAs) to the towns for consideration: a **Six (6) Town RA** that includes Warwick, and a **Five (5) Town RA** that does not include Warwick, if Warwick voters vote not to be included in the Six Town RA.

Key Findings and Rationale All supporting reports and links for this Long-Range Plan can be found on the STRPB's website [Reports](#) page.

Declining Enrollment: Studies by New England School Development Council ([NESDEC Reports](#)) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) [DART data](#) confirm a long-term decline in student enrollment across these districts over the past 30 years. Both GMRSD and PVRSD total district enrollments have declined between 48 and 53% since they peaked in 1996. (Note: During most of this time period Warwick was a member of PVRSD).

Forming a new PreK-12 School District: Will increase enrollments at the middle and high school levels and improve the quantity and quality of educational offerings for all students at the elementary and secondary level. These benefits are explained in more detail in the LRP.

Academic & Programmatic Benefits: Combining middle and high school populations will allow for increased course offerings and variety of courses, restore and develop new extracurricular programs, broaden special education and English Language Learners (ELL) support (by aggregating students receiving special education services and ELL students it would help to develop stronger and more structured programming), and advance more teacher collaboration and professional development at all grade levels.

Financial Planning & Equity: The Abrahams Group developed and reviewed ten assessment methodologies to allocate costs fairly among the towns in 2023. These findings were shared with all town officials in a “Six Town” meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, town officials (Selectboards and Finance Committees) were asked if they wanted the Planning Board to continue its work. It was unanimously agreed that the Planning Board should continue its work. In September/October 2025 the Abrahams Group conducted a similar financial study, using present salaries and operating costs, to determine if the previous assessment methodology approved by the Planning Board in the proposed regional agreement remained viable. The study confirmed this decision.

Financial Economies of Scale: By creating a larger PreK-12 school district that includes 5 or 6 towns, this will significantly increase the economies of scale across a larger tax base and population, reducing the cost/tax burden.

Facilities Utilization: The proposed GRRSD plan designates the PVRSD regional building as the new middle school and GMRSD Turners Falls HS/Great Falls MS regional building as the new high school, maximizing existing infrastructure while preserving local elementary schools at the time of the plan. Because both buildings accommodate both middle and high school grade levels, the PB did not conduct studies regarding retrofitting either building.

GMRSD is currently planning to close the Hillcrest Elementary School (grades PreK-1) and renovate/add an addition to the Sheffield Elementary School (currently grades 2-5, would expand to PreK-5). Both of these schools are in the Town of Montague. This will create more efficiencies for the proposed GRRSD.

The PVRSD was considering several options for potential Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) projects, after completing a facilities master plan of its elementary schools and regional school building, but the School Committee decided not to move forward. If voters in these towns vote to form a new GRRSD, it may influence the status of these projects considering there may be a reconfiguration of the PVRSD and GMRSD regional buildings.

Transportation: Revised studies indicate minimal changes to bus routes and ride times. The existing bus transportation provider for all these districts, Travel Kuz (aka, Kuzmeskus Bus Company), indicated in 2023 that an additional bus may be needed for secondary routes. Joanne Blier, the Gill Montague Director of Business and Finance, recently noted that because enrollment has declined further since the time of the transportation study, there may not be a need for any additional buses, or an existing bus may be repurposed to assist in shortening bus ridership times. Bus times and routes are modified yearly depending on students' residential location and it would not be cost effective to do another study. As noted in earlier reports, elementary school student bus ride times would not change, but some middle and high students may have times modified by up to 20+/- minutes.

Stakeholder Engagement

Through surveys, public forums, school visits, and collaboration with consultants and town officials, the PB's prioritized transparency and stakeholder engagement.

All PB in-person and remote meetings were posted in accordance with Open Meeting Laws and remote weblinks were provided for public access. All remote meetings, with the exception of possibly one or two, were recorded (as a courtesy to the public) and archived on the [STRPB YouTube Channel](#). The superintendents of both GMRSD and PVRSD were sent invitations and agendas to PB meetings. Over the six years, none of the PVRSD superintendents attended any meetings, nor were they collaborative in this process. It was difficult to gain access to PVRSD information and stakeholders throughout the process. Since the Planning Board's formation, with the exception of a few members, the PVRSD School Committee has, in general, not been supportive of the efforts of the STRPB's work, in spite of the STRPB being created by all six towns through Annual Town Meeting votes. The PVRSD School Committee recently voted not to support the STRPB's regionalization efforts. School committees being in opposition to regionalization is not uncommon in Massachusetts, as local control is often prioritized and protected. The PVRSD Superintendent publicly denounced the Planning Board's regionalization efforts even prior to the School Committee taking its non-supportive vote, and this has been communicated on their website and published in the various newsletters of the district that are sent to parents, staff and others but not to the general public. However, it should be noted that the PV Superintendent has recently assisted in providing requested information necessary for the PB to complete the LRP.

For most of the initial years of the PB's work, its membership maintained three representatives from each town, one of which was required to be a school committee town representative. This created the opportunity for these members to provide updates at their regularly scheduled school

committee meetings. The PB has gone through various membership changes due to the pandemic and lifestyle changes. Now that most of the work has been accomplished, the PB membership is currently at its lowest level of 13 members.

Warwick was a member town of the PVRSD for the majority of this research. Once Warwick formed its own municipal district in 2023, the chair of the STRPB was elected chair of the Warwick School Committee to serve in the first two years and updates were provided to the Selectboard and the School Committee for the first three years of its PreK -12 municipal school district. Because of the work that went into Warwick becoming a new independent school district, the success it is presently experiencing in students achieving competency goals, the school committee's autonomy of implementing programs that benefit students, and community involvement, the five member Warwick School Committee voted 4-1 not to support the regionalization efforts. Additionally, the superintendent sent out a communication, dated October 10, 2025, recommending that Warwick citizens vote against the new 6 Town proposal in November at Town Meeting" (the November 2025 vote was postponed by the STRPB). Again, this is not unique or a surprise in Massachusetts due to the state's decentralized local control approach to education. The dissenting vote expressed the belief that the Town of Warwick, with approximately 770 residents, cannot afford to financially sustain its school district but it would continue to thrive as part of the proposed GRRSD, especially because of its unique programs that are attracting potential school choice students from surrounding communities. The Warwick Superintendent agrees with the school committee and expressed a concern about Warwick only having representation of one school committee member on the GRRSD School Committee. Because of Warwick's reservations, and the fact that the PB board was formed originally by the two regional districts of GMRSD and PVRSD (Warwick was included in PVRSD at that time), the PB voted to present a Six Town Regional Agreement (RA) and a Five Town RA to be voted. If Warwick votes "No" on a RA for the Six Towns, it allows the five remaining towns of the GMRSD and PVRSD to vote on a Five Town RA.

On the other hand, the Gill Montague Regional School Committee and administration have been very supportive of the Six Town Regionalization efforts. They provided information in a timely manner and participated in some of the PB's meetings, public forums and joint staff forums. The PB's Chair and Vice-Chair provided an update in a meeting with the GMRSD School Committee in October 2025. The School Committee embraced the PB's work and is looking forward to the proposed GRRSD agreements being brought to the towns for a vote.

Regional Agreements and Implementation Strategy

In January of 2024, the STRPB voted to recommend regionalization of the towns that comprise the current GMRSD, PVRSD and WSD, and concluded that the regionalization would be in the best interest of the students and towns that comprise the regional and municipal school districts. It would create a larger educational community with more educational opportunities for students and greater educational and financial economies of scale for the towns. A District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS) was formed shortly afterwards. The DRAS finalized a draft proposed regional agreement after fourteen (14) months of research, debate and deliberation. To ensure community participation in this process, the Selectboards recommended individuals to serve on the DRAS and the PB appointed them to craft a proposed regional agreement under the leadership of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) Consultant Group. After due diligence, the PB unanimously approved the draft of the proposed Six Town RA and voted to send it to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for administrative and legal review. Next, a proposed Five Town RA was developed and approved by the PB and also sent to DESE officials. Both RAs were also sent to the PB's attorney for review. This LRP is a part of the required regionalization process to outline how the new district will operate and to provide information to the general public, voters, and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (Commissioner).

DESE officials are in the final stages of reviewing the proposed Five and Six Town RAs and will be completing this work shortly. DESE's legal team and the PB's attorney have been sent the RAs and local town counsels will be invited to also review both RAs. The final drafts of the proposed RAs will be presented to voters at their respective Special Town Meetings/Special Election ballot which will be held in each of the six towns in 2026. State legislators, Representative Whipps and Senator Comerford, will file Special Legislation for the vote to be held through a special election ballot vote in all six towns.

Senator Comerford has sponsored Bill S-3026, An Act providing equal opportunity for residents to vote on establishment of the Great River regional School District which will be heard at the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government on April 8, 2026. If the Act passes, this special legislation would provide equitable access to voting in all six towns, allowing voters to have an entire day to vote on the agreements. The goal is to achieve a larger democratic turnout, giving the towns and state a more accurate reflection of the town residents' support. If the legislators' efforts are not successful, then Montague, having a Representative Town Meeting, will have votes cast through a special election ballot and the other towns will have the ballot question(s) decided at their respective Open Town Meetings.

Upon voter and Commissioner approval the “Transition Period.” (The Transition Period is defined as the time that spans from the appointment of the Transition School Committee, following voter and Commissioner approval, until the GRRSD becomes operational on July 1, 2028.)

Mission & Guiding Principle

Drawing from the missions of the current districts, the GRRSD mission centers on equity, opportunity, and community. Guiding principles include:

- Equitable access to high-quality education,
- Optimal class sizes for personalized and engaged learning,
- Strong support for staff development and student growth and,
- Smooth transition processes for all students.

Next Steps

- Additional public forums will be held prior to the GRRSD vote to complement the ones offered in all communities in the Fall of 2025. Town newsletters, newspaper articles, and online/digital media will also be utilized.
- Receive the finalized proposed RAs from DESE, have the PB vote to approve and recommend them for the town voters to consider, and publish them on the PB’s website.
- Share finalized RAs with town officials and make them available at Town Halls.
- Respond to DESE’s suggestions regarding the Long-Range Plan (LRP).
- Publish the LRP on the Website once it has been reviewed by DESE and approved by the Planning Board.
- Send warrant articles to towns for a Town Meeting ballot according to Chapter 71, Sec 15 or, if the legislators are successful in having the aforementioned special legislation enacted, there would then be a special election ballot in each town. It is expected that the ballot votes, whether it be a special election ballot or Town Meeting ballot, will likely be held in September. If all towns are allowed to hold the vote by special election ballot, the hope is to have the two RA ballot questions on the State primary election ballot. The PB and State legislators are checking on deadlines for local ballot questions to be placed on a state primary ballot. Additionally, regardless of the voting process, Warwick residents will be encouraged to cast their votes prior to the other towns to clarify the options in approving a 5 or 6 towns RA. All six towns will vote in 2026 as to whether or not to approve the warrant article(s)/ballot questions. Only one agreement/article question can be approved: either a 5 or 6 town, not both. If all six towns approve the 6 Town RA, then

GRRSD will be formed and include all six towns. If Warwick does not vote for the GRRSD 6 Town RA, and the remaining five towns vote to accept the 5 Town RA/article question, then GRRSD will be formed and include the five towns. To clarify further, if Warwick votes in favor of the 6 Town RA, but another town votes not in favor of the 6 Town RA, then the vote 6 Town RA fails. If the 5 Town RA passes in all five towns, then the five towns will form the GRRSD.

- If approved, the implementation of the Transition Period will begin. A proposed additional special legislation will be filed relative to the Act Relative to The Creation of the Great River Regional School District. (example: GRRSD [Special Legislation](#))

Conclusion

With strong educational, financial, and community-based evidence supporting the formation of a new regional school district, the STRPB recommends approval of the **Great River Regional School District's** proposed Regional Agreements to the Commissioner. This LRP reflects a sustainable path forward by addressing the impacts of declining enrollment, building financial economies of scale, preserving local identity, offering students the educational opportunities they deserve, expanding professional collaboration of staff, creating greater efficiencies of utilizing staff to serve students, and eliminating redundancies in three Central Offices.

Great River Regional School District Long-Range Plan

Overview and Historical Background for The Proposed Great River Regional School District

Section I

Super-Regionalization (Merging Districts)

“Super-regionalization” is defined by the Planning Board as two or more regional districts and/or municipal school districts regionalizing to form a larger district with the goal of increasing enrollment to achieve economies of scale in academic, co-curricular and athletic programs as well as financial economies of scale by including more population/towns and a larger tax base. This term is applicable to districts merging and is not intended to imply the student population of the new district is super large which in and of itself would create a host of new challenges, but rather, creates enrollments that will allow for more educational opportunities for students and more collaboration opportunities for staff certified in similar areas.

The Six Town Regional Planning Board's Inception

Faced with declining enrollments that have persisted for almost three decades and the resulting educational and financial pressures that have accompanied these declines, the GMRSD and PVRSD (of which the town of Warwick was a member until 2023) struggle to compete with larger school districts in offering a comprehensive educational experience to their respective students. Many programs and services that larger districts can offer have been either eliminated, do not run, or struggle for support due to the protracted structural declines in enrollment (i.e., academic, sports, and other extra-curricular opportunities).

In 2019, the six towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield, and Warwick, which now operates its own independent municipal school district, voted in their respective Annual Town Meetings to form a Regionalization Planning Board to consider the feasibility of combining GMRSD and PVRSD to create a new Six Town PreK-12 School District. The Planning Board subsequently voted to name it: **Great River Regional School District**. A state representative suggested it might be helpful to view our regionalization effort as “super regionalization,” because our effort to combine two existing regional districts and a municipal school district into a new (super) regional district is more complex than municipal school districts combining to form a new regional school district.

Composition of Planning Board

The initial STRPB is comprised of 3 volunteer members (18 total/Moderator appointed) from each town with diverse backgrounds: parents, teachers (active and retired), school committee members (past and present), administrators, Selectboard members (two chairpersons), Finance Committee members, Town Administrators and Coordinators, as well as a non-voting member from the Erving School Committee (Erving has a vested interest via a tuition agreement with the Gill-Montague Regional School District). These volunteers have devoted hundreds of hours in meetings, reviewing research, sponsoring parent, staff and community forums, meeting with students and senior citizens, analyzing survey results and more, to better understand the complexities of creating and proposing a new unique regional school district, as defined above.

Funding Sources and Consultants Utilized

With the support of 4 grants from DESE and one from the Department of Revenue (DOR) which has been extended several times, and the final extension will end on June 30, 2026, the following consultants and services were contracted:

- New England School Development Council (NESDEC) analyzed present and future enrollment trends (June 14, 2018/June 17, 2021); ([NESDEC Report 2018](#), [NESDEC Report 2021](#))
- Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools Consulting Group conducted a feasibility study; ([Regionalization Planning Study](#), [Facility Report](#))

- Transfinder/Travel Kuz bus transportation study. ([Transportation Report](#))
- Abrahams Group explored 10 potential operating/transportation assessment methodologies in 2023 and presented to Selectboard and Finance Committees in an “all town” meeting and recently updating these assessments; ([AG Assessments 2023](#), See [Reports](#) for updates 5 and 6 Towns Assessments)
- Mary Broderick, an educational specialist, focused on staff, student and parent educational perspectives, conducted community/staff forums; ([report 1](#) | [report 2](#))
- Jake Eberwein, an Outreach Consultant and previous project manager for the 8 Town Regionalization Planning Board, and project manager for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District, recently developed a presentation; ([Presentation](#))
- Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane, LLP Law Firm will prepare the draft special town meeting warrants/special election ballot and the proposed draft legislative language that creates the new district, dissolves the existing districts and transfers assets and liabilities among other legal requirements (Sample warrant articles: [Montague STE Article](#), [Bernardston Open Town Meeting Article](#), [Special Legislation](#), subject to change)
- C. Odyssey Advisors projected the OPEB obligations for the proposed regional school district. ([Odyssey Report](#))

Research Conclusions

The Planning Board’s research maintained the assumption that the new PreK-12 district would continue to educate its elementary students in the buildings as they are currently planned within the respective districts. Elementary school parents indicated that they were generally satisfied with the education their children were receiving. On professional development days elementary teachers would benefit tremendously from the expansion and sharing of best practice ideas when multiple perspectives are explored among teachers at each grade level and this will in turn enhance students’ learning in all elementary schools. The Planning Board’s research was primarily focused on the benefits and challenges of combining high school students in both the GMRSD and PVRSD into the Turners Falls High School regional building, with the middle school students being educated in the Pioneer Valley regional building in this new PreK-12 school district. The proposed PreK-12 super regionalization findings were clear: The potential benefits gained throughout all programs and services by combining the middle and high school enrollments of each district in the designated middle and high school buildings would significantly, increase course offerings (both required and elective), diverse approaches to learning, restoring/introducing athletic teams (ability to field teams), alternative support systems for students with special needs, more professional development and collaboration for staff, and restoring/introducing clubs and after school programs. Furthermore, a larger district would increase the number of resources and support for special education, English Language Learning, and PreK students throughout the District.

A district with more students and teachers also benefits all PreK-12 teachers, which in turn would benefit students in all grade levels, in several ways, including: more collaboration with colleagues in and outside their certification areas on curriculum design and approaches to learning, more opportunities for specialized courses and instruction, and exciting opportunities for cross/interdisciplinary work and professional development. More clubs and after school programs could be made available not only because of the larger enrollment but also because of a larger faculty to take on some additional responsibilities. The Planning Board concluded its research in December 2023. After due diligence and deliberation, the Planning Board [voted](#) on January 3, 2024 to recommend forming a new PreK-12 Great River Regional School District.

Appointment of District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS)

In the Spring of 2024, the STRPB appointed a District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS) to craft a new regional agreement for town consideration in the Fall of 2025. In order to expand community involvement, the PB decided to have Selectboards recommend DRAS members, who were subsequently appointed by the PB. As a basis of its work, DRAS utilized the 2017 proposed regional agreement that was developed by the Honest Education and Retaining Trust (HEART) Committee for the PVRSD, which was formed by the Selectboards of Bernardston, Leyden, Northfield and Warwick.

In March 2025, DRAS completed its work and voted to recommend the 6 Town proposed RA to the PB. In April, the PB voted to have a legal technical review of the Regional Agreement. However, when that process was delayed, the PB voted in May to have the MARS Consulting Group review the proposed 6 Town RA with DESE and its legal counsel to ensure it complies with State laws and regulations. This review has been underway with DESE officials for the past 8 months due to the complexities in merging two regional school districts and one municipal school district to form a new regional district. The Planning Board shared the 6 Town RA with its attorney for legal review.

Naming of the New Regional School District

In August 2024 two members of the PB volunteered to solicit prospective names for the new regional district. They compiled a list of 46 names from a variety of sources, including elementary, middle and high school students and staff; Montague, Gill, Leyden, Northfield and Bernardston residents; and Gill-Montague and Pioneer alumni. The Turners Falls High School Student Council also participated in this process. Additionally, an article appeared in the Greenfield Recorder asking that suggestions be made to specific email addresses which garnered more suggestions. This list of names was reduced to 5. The PB voted in April 2025 to name the new district: **Great River Regional School District (GRRSD)**.

Section II

Executive Summary of Research

An Enhanced Enrollment Projections and Efficiency Study was performed by the **New England School Development Council (NESDEC)** in June of 2018 that clearly documents the decline in enrollment in the GMRSD, PVRSD and the Franklin County Technical School Districts.

Researching the cumulative effects of factors that affect enrollments such as, migration of families, changes in school programs, dropout/transfers of students, retention in same grade, births and deaths, housing growth and other demographics, it suggests that the declining trend will be less than previous years and began trending almost flat in 2020 in the GMRSD and declined slightly in the PVRSD.

The report noted that projections are most reliable for 1-4 years into the future; beyond this point important factors may have shifted, thus projections become less reliable for 5-10 years out. In reviewing recent data, it was noted that its projections were fairly close to actual enrollments, however, the decline continued a bit longer than anticipated.

DESE's District Analysis Review Tools ([DART](#)) data also shows declines in enrollment in these districts dating back to the early 1990s to the present. GMRSD's total district enrollment peaked in 1996 with 1643 students. Total enrollment for the 2024-25 school year was 858 students, or a decline of 48%. PVRSD's total district enrollment also peaked in 1996 at 1242 students. Total enrollment for the 2024-25 school year was 581 students, or a decline of over 53%. The middle and high school enrollment declines are where the most dramatic negative impacts on programs and services were found in the Planning Board's research. Using the high school enrollments as an example, GMRSD's Turners Falls High School enrollment peaked in 2000 at 455 students. For the 2025-26 school year, enrollment was 199 students, a 56% decline. PVRSD's High School enrollment peaked in 2012 at 343 students. Enrollment is currently 107 students for the 2025-26 school year, a 69% decline. These important findings lead to the recommendation to combine students at the high school and middle school levels by merging districts to form a new regional school district that would have a larger student body.

Combining these levels will potentially create student enrollments of over 310 students in the proposed high school (grades 9-12) and upwards of 400 students in the proposed middle school (grades 6-8). The increased enrollment will create more educational opportunities for students and staff, and build economies of scale, sustainability and resilience in educational programs and services.

Although the proposed plan is for the elementary school students to remain in their current buildings, the inclusion of these schools in the proposed district would create a larger middle and high school feeder system. This would create more opportunities and flexibility for District-wide curriculum development.

The **MARS Consulting Group and Mary Broderick** compiled two reports ([report 1](#) | [report 2](#)) through interviews, surveys, community forums, small group meetings with parents, students, staff and community members. These reports captured the effects of lost programs and student services and identified courses and extracurricular activities that could be offered if the GMRSD and PVRSD high schools enrollments combined through regionalization. This was also echoed with the merger of the two middle schools. It was noted that a merged District with a larger enrolled middle and high school could reduce the number of out-going school choice students as there would be more educational opportunities within the District to keep them from looking elsewhere. With the possible inclusion of six elementary schools in the proposed new district, elementary school teachers would also have more opportunity to share best practices in ELA and Math, to build a more comprehensive and robust curriculum across a larger community. The increase in elementary schools would also allow parents more intra-district choice among the schools, creating more educational support and broader approaches to teaching and learning.

Building/Facilities

Both PVRSD (located in Northfield) and GMRSD (located in Turners Falls) own their secondary buildings. These district buildings would be transferred to the GRRSD upon passage of legislation needed to transfer real property as well as assets and liabilities of the PVRSD and GMRSD. Both of these regional districts are also assessing their elementary facilities, which are owned by the respective towns and leased by the districts. This process occurs in all districts/towns as potential improvements are considered. The existing leases of the town-owned buildings are multiple years (some 20 years). Any current leases would transfer to the GRRSD via the RA. This allows the GRRSD school committee to create new leases with minimum effort. Additionally, the proposed district offers a clear progression in enhanced educational environments as students move through elementary, middle and high school grades. Each campus is inviting and unique to support each age group as students mature and interests expand.

The elementary schools are considered by many to be the heart of their community. They are located in their respective towns (except Leyden children, who are educated at the Bernardston Elementary School) and enjoyed by students, parents, staff and the community. The Pioneer Valley Regional campus, with its athletic fields, spacious woods and trails, well-lit and maintained building, would be ideal for a state of the art middle school. More teachers will be collaborating to improve instruction and assist students in their learning. Its library, gym, cafeteria, theater, and building design would be an enhanced change from their elementary

schools for these maturing students. Culminating their education at Turners Falls High School would continue this progression with its expanded sports complex, swimming pool, dance studio, and recently renovated performing arts theater, band room, and more.

Programming, Curriculum and Transition

As supported by our [research](#), the PB concluded that the proposed Great River Regional School District would provide the potential to expand and improve educational opportunities and outcomes throughout all areas of the students' experience. These opportunities are made possible by combining students and pooling resources. Implementation will rest in the hands of the administration, faculty and staff, the experts in the current three school districts, with input from community stakeholders, and overseen by the new Great River Regional School Committee. The new GRRSD School Committee will be comprised of 13 members elected through District-wide elections, as defined in Section II of the regional agreement. To mitigate any disruption of the students' education, the PB proposes that the present curriculum offerings in the respective districts would continue in its first year of operation. It is also the expectation of the PB that with the increased enrollment, the current offerings in both districts would be combined and expanded.

It is important to note that the configuration of elementary schools in the new proposed GRRSD would not change, so elementary school students in their current buildings would not be moved to another building. Although there are differences in the current districts' middle and high school math and ELA curricula, in meeting with teaching staff from all districts, there was consensus that finding a common, or blended curricula, would not be challenging. In these meeting discussions, teachers found they had more in common than not.

During the Transition Period, the Transition School Committee will review the current courses being run and offered in both districts. The proposed plan is to ensure in the middle and high schools, courses that are being run continue to run in the first year of operation, and if possible, run additional courses that are being offered but not run due to low enrollment which causes staffing and schedule constraints. A larger enrollment and staff at the secondary levels will allow for more course offerings to be run, as second sections of required courses can be scheduled, opening up the daily schedule for more electives.

Mission and Vision Statements

Transitioning to the proposed GRRSD will be made easier because of the common themes contained in the current school districts' respective mission and vision statements: This in and of itself will expand the instructional learning experiences and approaches to be even more inclusive in addressing the needs and interests of students.

PVRSD: The Pioneer community is committed to creating a learning environment that fosters universal respect, personal responsibility, and academic excellence. Pioneer recognizes that to meet the challenges of the 21st century we must critically and creatively engage in real world tasks, adapt to new situations and technologies, and solve problems collaboratively. By designing equal opportunities and multiple approaches to growth in a heterogeneous setting, we will facilitate the success of our students in a rapidly evolving, diverse and dynamic global society. ([Link](#))

GMRSD mission is to challenge and support every student to succeed through strong leadership, excellent teaching, and community engagement. Their vision is to be a community that empowers every student for continuous learning, active citizenship, and personal fulfillment.... With a vision to provide a supportive and challenging educational environment where every student can thrive in a community that fosters lifelong learning, responsible citizenship, and individual success for all students. ([Link](#))

WCESD: The Warwick Community Elementary School and District is committed to providing an innovative, engaging, and hands-on education to its students. Through nature-centered, place- and project-based learning, students will study in and about the environment on its 25-acre woodland campus. Students will learn to think critically and develop solutions for challenges being faced both in Warwick and around the globe, especially those related to the environment and social justice. ([Link](#))

These blended missions are powerful and were the foundation for the STRPB's draft mission statement:

The Great River Regional School District (GRRSD) mission recognizes that every child deserves a high-quality PK-12 education. All students will be challenged through a wide range of experiences, including nature-centered project-based learning, to become engaged and curious learners and problem solvers who effectively communicate, respect diversity, and improve themselves and their community. All students will be inspired to be resilient, curious, and ethical global citizens who embrace the challenges of an ever-changing world through a commitment to core values of opportunity, excellence, character, and community.

Initial Guiding Principles:

1. Ensure that all students have equitable access (special populations included) to the broadest range of high-quality academic programming, enrichment activities, and targeted services. Through combined efficiencies and scale, advance new program offerings that expand educational opportunities and improve outcomes for students.
2. Optimize class size to allow for both personalized learning and multiple student voices for engaging classroom discussion and activities.
3. Provide more opportunities for students to make special connections with staff members who can encourage and inspire the students to not only achieve their learning outcomes but help them to reach their personal goals.
4. Support student growth and development, ensuring faculty and staff have the necessary resources, a robust network of peers, and access to high-quality professional learning and growth experiences that reflect contemporary, research-validated teaching and learning practices.
5. Continue the focus on students, especially throughout the transition period, including maintaining consistent one-on-one student/mentor relationships. Student advisors will need to keep in close communication with the Transition School Committee and superintendent to ensure students are being given accurate information about the future new district and how any changes will impact the students' academic life.

The above presents a promising future for our students when taken as a whole. It is the expectation that the staff, students, parents, school committee and administrators will participate in a comprehensive process that would amend the mission/beliefs accordingly to reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders of this new district.

It is expected that the faculty and staff will fully engage in crafting a mission and guiding principles to reflect their unique perspectives in this process and assume ownership. The intent of the above is to potentially frame the concepts for this important work.

It should also be noted that the PB acknowledges that the strength of a district begins in the elementary schools. Much of our work has been at the 7 - 12 level where subject matter becomes more focused and additional learning opportunities expand. Our elementary schools have unique and creative approaches to learning (environmental, project based, etc.) and must have the flexibility to implement these as deemed appropriate because they provide a stronger foundation

for students entering middle and high school. The parents of elementary children are well-connected to their school and share their child's needs directly with teachers and staff. This allows the school to enhance student learning and tailor curriculum and programs to meet the needs of all children while meeting the standards the State has set in what students should know and be able to do. With that said, curriculum design and coordination between elementary schools, and between elementary and secondary schools, will still be necessary to fulfill the goals of the district across all grade levels. It is the PB's expectation that the increase in approaches to learning, due to more teachers and staff, will inevitably bring a more comprehensive spectrum of best practices to be shared and implemented.

As students thrive in their respective elementary schools, the benefits from regionalization will also manifest at the middle and high school levels. The teachers and administrators are charged with meeting or exceeding the state standards which are explicit on what the students should know and be able to do. These common competency standards are the fabric of every school district in Massachusetts. It is important that the district staff coordinate their efforts but also maintain flexibility to use their creativity in helping students achieve these competency levels as they progress through the grades.

Transportation Findings

Transfinder Corporation and SM Kuzmeskus, or aka Travel Kuz, conducted a comprehensive transportation study to determine modifications to the existing transportation routes in the PVRSD and GMRSD, which are neighboring school districts. ([2021 Transportation study](#)) This company presently provides transportation for GMRSD, PVRSD and Warwick School Districts. The elementary routes remained the same although the start and stop times were adjusted slightly to accommodate the secondary runs.

Specific findings in the 2021 report indicate the proposed district may require 1 additional bus for a total of 21 buses (15 full size and 6 mini/half) for the middle and high school routes. The extra bus would likely accommodate Warwick high school students due to the distance between Warwick and the proposed high school building located in Turners Falls. The ridership time for elementary students would not change.

For middle and high school students, ride times would change slightly depending on the address. Middle School students in Montague might expect a slightly longer bus ride to the proposed middle school building in Northfield. The high school students in Bernardston, Northfield, Leyden and Warwick might have a slightly longer or shorter ride, depending on their address as they travel to the proposed high school. Ridership times are highly dependent on where students reside in those towns. It is also worth noting that some of the students who choose to attend the Franklin County Technical School may have longer rides than if they were attending their

respective high schools, but because of course offerings and extracurricular activities, among other reasons, they choose the vocational school for their secondary education.

Presently, the three districts use the same bus company, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments recently advertised a consolidated bus collective bid, whereby districts could choose from various options. All three districts took advantage of this process. The expectation is this process would continue with the GRRSD.

As noted earlier, after speaking with the Gill-Montague School District's Director of Business and Finance, she was of the opinion that spending money to reevaluate the bus routes would not be a prudent decision at this time because routes will change and there are fewer students in the district now than in the previous studies and it is possible that fewer buses may be needed. Therefore, a third study will not be undertaken.

Assessment Methodology

In 2023, the **Abrahams Group** conducted a comprehensive budget review of the PVRSD and GMRSD and made some underlying assumptions regarding salary and benefits, such as the insurance plan most staff would likely migrate to. Additionally, because no staff member can make less in a new district, a hypothetical salary schedule was developed, and staff was placed on it accordingly. The above generated a budget that was assessed to member towns using 10 different assessment methodologies. This [report](#) was presented to members of the public in a six town meeting of Selectboards, Finance Committees and other interested parties, including the press. Three assessment methodologies appeared promising. The capital/debt costs that are assessed to member towns in the former Gill-Montague Regional School District and former Pioneer Valley Regional School District, and in each District's annual budget, at the time of regionalization into a 6 Town District shall remain the responsibility of the towns that are responsible for the capital/debt costs prior to regionalization. These capital/debt costs will be in the regional school budget and paid through the regional assessment process. The assessments will be based on the former regional agreements.

After the presentation and question and answer period, town officials were asked if the Planning Board should continue to move forward in its work. They were instructed to do so. Because the financial landscape has changed since the last assessment was done in 2023, the Abrahams Group calculated new operating/transportation assessments in October 2025 as noted earlier. These new assessments were shared in the recent community forums in October/November. They are also available on the [6 towns.org](https://6towns.org) website in the slide presentation. It is important to note that this updated analysis confirmed that the Planning Board's methodology selected in the proposed regional agreement for assessing towns using a 5-year rolling foundation enrollment averages is appropriate and viable. The Planning Board accepted the report.

Section III

Community Forums and Public Outreach

During the months of September, October and November, the Planning Board sponsored the following community forums (below), provided brochures, social media releases, updates for town newsletters and updated its information on the 6town.org website.

Hosted public forums in 2025 as follows:

<u>Town</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Gill	Monday, September 15	6 pm	Town Hall
Northfield	Thursday, September 25	6 pm	Library
Northfield	Saturday, September 27	6 pm	Library
Leyden	Tuesday, September 30	6 pm	Town Hall
Warwick	Thursday, October 2	6 pm	Warwick Community School
Warwick	Tuesday, October 7	1 pm	Town Hall
Bernardston	Friday, October 3	1 pm	Bernardston Senior Center
Bernardston Center	Wednesday, October 8	6 pm	Bernardston Senior Center
Montague	Thursday, October 9	6 pm	Senior Center
Northfield	Saturday, October 18	10 am	Library
Bernardston	Saturday, October 25	10 am	Bernardston Senior Center
Northfield	Thursday, October 30	6 pm	Library
Leyden	Wednesday, November 5	6 pm	Town Office

Additionally, a meeting was scheduled to provide the Warwick Community School Staff an opportunity to ask questions and share their ideas and concerns. Another opportunity was provided at a Warwick School Committee meeting in October for staff, community, and the School Committee.

A presentation was provided to the Gill Montague School Committee which resulted in excellent dialogue. The above presentations were not recorded so there are no links. However, we did a thorough presentation in the Turners Falls High School Auditorium that was recorded by Montague local TV. It was going to be broadcast many times in the coming months. However, they made a technical error, and the meeting was not recorded properly in that there was no sound with the presentation, and therefore not broadcast as originally planned.

In March, April and May of 2026 the following activities will be undertaken:

- Distribute and post multiple QR codes directing people to the STRPB website and the proposed regional agreement along with other important documents;
- Make materials available in public buildings, such as town libraries;
- Participate in small group gatherings with parents and others to have conversations and answer questions;
- Submit articles for the respective town newsletters.
- Work with town officials in scheduling Town Meeting/Special Elections.
- If all six towns and the Commissioner approve the Proposed Regional Agreement, the Transition Period and process begin with the appointment of the Transition School Committee. If the 6 town RA vote does not pass but the 5 town RA passes and is approved by the Commissioner, the Transition Period will begin when the 5 Town Transition School Committee is appointed. In either case, if one of the RA passes, its first operational year will begin on July 1, 2028. If neither RA passes, the districts will remain as they are currently configured and continue operating.

Among previous Planning Board efforts to inform/engage the public were:

- Creating two versions of a PowerPoint presentation (comprehensive and abbreviated) for the general public to view on our website and in community forums;
- Making available a slide presentation with a voice over available on You tube: Click, Watch, Listen ([Link](#));
- Updating Website through soliciting proposals for quotes to assist to do so;
- Mailing an informational brochure to all households reviewing findings and notifying residents of the vote in the Spring.

Section IV

An Example of a Proposed First Operational Year (FY2029) Central Office Staff and its Operational Budget

<u>Position</u>	<u>Salary (\$)</u>
Superintendent of Schools	\$180,000
Superintendent's Executive Assistant	57,000
School Committee Secretary	10,000
Director of Business and Finance	152,000
Director of Special Education	135,000
Special Education Assistant	55,000
Treasurer	16,000
Employee Payroll,	

Employee Benefits	
Employee Bookkeeping,	
Employee Accounts Payable	175,000
Director of Technology	125,000
Data Technicians	60,000
Director of Curriculum (Teaching/Learning)	120,000
Director of Facilities and Grounds	98,000
Shared Admin. Asst. F&G/Food Service	60,000
Custodial Supervisor to Facilities	60,000
Director of Food Services	68,000
TOTAL	\$1,371,000

It is important to note that this is only one example of many that the new school committee might consider. The salaries will depend on the responsibilities assigned to each position and the market value at the time. However, to provide a comparison of potential savings the next section captures the present positions in the respective districts and their salaries.

Section V

Potential Central Office Savings

Although it is difficult to determine the exact savings because of stipends, longevity payments and other benefits contained in the respective contracts, the following is intended to provide some insight into the potential savings that could be achieved in eliminating the redundancy of services in three relatively small districts. These positions will be serving a student population of approximately 1,446. (DESE DART 2026)

Position titles associated with the essential responsibilities of CO are captured even if not assigned to a space in the Central Office and are abbreviated for space purposes.

Gill Montague Regional School District (FY 26)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Salary (\$)</u>
Superintendent	\$180,000
Director of Business and Finance	152,000
Accounts Payable/Data Manager	57,712
Director of Facilities	92,000
Director of Pupil Services (Sped)	112,000
Coordinator of Ed. Data Services (Dir. of Technology)	120,000
Executive Assist to Superintendent	57,000
Food Service Director	55,000
Business Office Manager	75,250
Student Registration/C.O. Data Asst.	54,392

Technology Manager	62,305
Special Project Liaison	60,000
Treasurer	<u>15,000</u>
TOTAL	\$1,092,659

Pioneer Valley Regional School District (FY 26)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Salary (\$)</u>
Superintendent	\$179,634
Director of Finance and Operations	145,600
Executive Asst. to Superintendent	75,000
Student Services Office Manager	36,000
Director of Teaching and Learning	118,976
Director of Student Services/Early Childhood Coord.	20,000
Treasurer	16,000
Payroll and Benefits Coordinator	64,000
Coordinator of Family and Community	35,053
Director of Technology	87,000
Director of Food Services	65,000
Data Coordinator	30,290
Accounts Payable/Financial Technician	51,160
Network Administrator	<u>63,250</u>
TOTAL	\$986,963

Warwick Municipal School District (WMSD)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Salary (\$)</u>
Superintendent	53,556
Business Administrator	25,000
Special Education Director	25,000
Instructional Technology Support	13,000
Exec. Asst.to Superintendent/Multiple additional tasks	59,189
Special Ed. Administrator Services	<u>10,000</u>
TOTAL	\$185,745

Apart from the Executive Assistant to the superintendent, all District-wide positions are part time. The Warwick Municipal School District presently funds positions in the school department budget through Town appropriations, and school grants. Other essential services, such as treasurer, accountant, payroll and other school building needs and related matters are handled by the Town Hall staff, with assistance from the Town Coordinator, in conjunction with the superintendent. Insurance benefits are also handled

by the Town of Warwick. All school related expenses provided by the Town are included in the End of Year Report filed with DESE.

Section VI

Summary of Potential Central Office Salary

Potential Savings in First Year

<u>District</u>	<u>Savings</u>
GMRSD	\$1,092,659
PVRSD	986,963
WMSD	<u>185,745</u> (not included if 5-town RA is voted)
Total	\$2,265,367

\$2,265,367 - GRRSD \$1,371,000 (Central Office budget) = **\$894,367/yr in savings**

It is also important to note that the above salaries do not include health insurance which are budgeted in other line items and may be funded by indirect funding sources. (Grants, etc.)

Regarding Central Office salary savings, it was suggested that the Planning Board might want to consider forming a Union School District to share administrative services. However, that would not address the problems resulting from the low enrollment of the current middle and high schools; the benefits for students would be addressed in a combined environment and the potential Central Office savings could be repurposed to support more learning opportunities for students.

Incentive or Transition Funding

Continuing the model the state employed when towns were initially encouraged to form regional school districts in the 1950s/60s, monetary incentives were provided to support these endeavors. The benefits of forming larger regional school districts are increased enrollment that results in providing more programs and services through economies of scale, greater efficiency in administrative Central Office functions, more social diversity, and other educational benefits: more instructors = more approaches to teaching and learning, more opportunities for courses and electives. History appears to be repeating itself, with a declining and aging population in Massachusetts, enrollment has declined in various areas of the state, especially Western Massachusetts, where, as an example, PVRSD has a current 2026 senior class of 16 students.

Within the context of these widespread enrollment declines, it would be beneficial for the state to provide incentive funding or appropriate funding through the legislative process to create “Super-Regional School Districts” as defined in **Section I** of this report, or other combinations of school district mergers that will increase the enrollment of a proposed district. To support this

effort, the state might consider 1) providing structural support for advocacy and education for regionalization (perhaps a Regionalization Department within DESE as proposed in Bill S. 314), 2) provide funding over several years to complete the comprehensive process that needs to be followed by a Regionalization Planning Board, 3) provide technical expertise and guidance throughout the process, 4) provide transition funding to implement the establishment of the new districts, and 5) Ensure that Ch. 71, Sec. 16D subsection (g) is included in the calculation of state aid.

The STRPB is following the blueprint established in the past by the state when regionalization was needed to create economies of scale throughout the K-12 system. The state's leadership role in promoting the formation of regional school districts in the 50s and 60s reduced inefficiencies and redundancies in Central Office, while providing more affordability for the towns in supporting education of their children, by increasing educational opportunities, such as more required and elective course offerings, as well as more of a variety of course offerings, extra-curriculars activities and program enhancements for students. This occurred when the student population exploded in the state, so towns were encouraged to form regional school districts. Presently, with the student population declining, the PB has been exploring the feasibility and sustainability of forming a Super-Regional School District to create the economies of scale once achieved to support student learning, with a pathway in its regional agreement to expand the proposed district for other towns or districts to become members.

This Six Town Planning Board was initiated by an affirmative vote to do this research and will require all 6 towns to approve the proposed 6-town GRRSD Regional Agreement at their respective Town Meetings/Election in the fall of 2026 for the new district to be formed. If the 6-town RA vote does not pass, but the 5-town RA does, then the five towns of GMRSD and PVRSD will form the new (5 town) GRRSD. This major endeavor, if approved, may inspire other towns/districts to explore the possibilities for the betterment of students.

However, the challenge of passing either proposed RAs in all six or five towns is a very high bar, therefore, it is difficult to predict if the towns will vote in the affirmative. Despite this reality, as noted previously, Planning Board members have given hundreds of hours, over almost seven years, with no compensation. Their primary motivation has been to provide more learning opportunities for students because they care deeply about the education of all students and this passion is not limited to only the students in each member's respective district.

Notwithstanding the present financial status of the state, it is the hope of the STRPB that the DESE Commissioner will not only approve the proposed RA but will better understand the benefits for students and perhaps support legislation to provide transition period funding.

The Planning Board is grateful for the four grants received from DESE and the most recent grant from the Department of Revenue (DOR), and for the multiple grant extensions given to the PB to complete this work. Without this funding it would not have been possible to have a proposed

regional agreement for the Commissioner to consider. The Planning Board is also grateful to Jay Sullivan, Associate Commissioner, who was helpful in supporting these initial grants. It is the Planning Board's hope that its work will create educational benefits that extend beyond these three districts and across the state. One of the greater challenges is educating the general public about the benefits of regionalization for districts with low and declining enrollment. Town leaders have a better understanding of the educational and financial challenges that accompany declining enrollment, and therefore more readily accept regionalization proposals for addressing these challenges.

If one of the RAs passes and a new region is formed, the Planning Board respectfully requests that the state fund the Transition Period. During this period, the GRRSD will be in a non-operating status - meaning it is not yet legally responsible for daily operations but is authorized to prepare the district for full operation during the transition period. This may include part-time or stipend positions.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Compensation</u>
Superintendent:	\$35,000
Business Administrator (Director of Business and Finance)	\$20,000
Transition School Committee Administrative Assistant/Clerk:	\$10,000
Legal Services to negotiate 5 Collective Bargaining Agreements.	\$20,000
Technology Software/Equipment Upgrades:	\$65,000
Stipends: Curriculum Alignment/development/scheduling	\$30,000
Contingency Fund	<u>\$70,000</u>
Total Request for Transition Funding	\$250,000

Informational note: in addition to the above request for transition funding, the PB also requests Regional Bonus Aid be appropriated during the implementation phase: \$50 per student year one of operation, \$40 per student year two, \$30 per student in third year, \$20 per student in year four and \$10 per student in year five. (Chapter 71, Sec. 16 D subsection g.)

Although it would be encouraging and appropriate in the PB's opinion for the state to provide the transition funding for the betterment of the education of students in this new district, if state funding is not possible the Transition School Committee will explore other options, such as town funding, the E & D in the districts that will be dissolved, districts' indirect funding accounts (ex. School choice accounts), or a combination of these, private donations, grants, and other possibilities.

Section VII

Summary of Steps for Formation and Operation of The Great River Regional School District

A new Six or Five Town Great River Regional School District (GRRSD) would be formed after an affirmative vote by the majority of voters in each of the towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield and Warwick (Warwick Six Town RA only), upon approval of the proposed GRRSD Regional Agreement by the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Following such approval, the six or five towns would appoint members to serve on the Transition School Committee in accordance with the terms of the Six or Five Town GRRSD RA. This appointed Transition School Committee will serve until the District-wide elections of the Great River Regional School Committee (with residency requirements as provided in the GRRSD Regional Agreement) in the November 2028 biennial year. As noted above, the vote to form the GRRSD is anticipated to take place in all towns in the Fall 2026 and if successful, the appointed Transition School Committee would begin the process of “setting up” the GRRSD. However, the GRRSD would not become fully operational until July 1, 2028, and the existing regional districts would not dissolve until the following additional conditions are met, as provided in the GRRSD Regional Agreement.

Regional Agreement:

Passage of additional special legislation permitting (a) the transfer of the regional buildings/properties and other assets and liabilities of each of the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) and the Pioneer Valley Regional School District (PVRSD) on the date the transition period ends and the new Six or Five Town GRRSD becomes fully operational; and (b) the dissolution of the GMRSD, the PVRSD and the Warwick School District (WSD, if the Town votes in the affirmative) on that same date without further action by any public body.

Should either of those conditions not be satisfied by the date specified in the Six or Five town GRRSD District Agreement, the District RA would terminate, the GRRSD would dissolve, and the GMRSD, the PVRSD and the WSD would continue to operate separately.

Section VIII

Geographic/Cultural Consideration

One contributing factor in recommending these six towns regionalize is that they are contiguous towns. Additionally, the topography is similar in all towns, with the exception of the Town of Leyden in the PVRSD which is contiguous but has a hilly topography. Travel Kuz provides transportation in all three districts, and the bus drivers are familiar with the roads and slight deviations in bus routes should be an easy adjustment.

From a cultural perspective, combining the districts will create a more diverse population. It is interesting to note that the Franklin County Technical School District draws from nineteen communities, including the 6 communities in this proposed regional school district. It is thriving, in part, because of its larger enrollment that supports more electives and more extracurricular opportunities. The cultural diversity likely adds to its success as students gain more insight from different perspectives. The hope is that the proposed Great River Regional School District would experience similar results.

Section IX

Inventory of Educational Facilities

The educational facilities under the jurisdiction of the various school committees are as follows:

Gill-Montague Regional School District: Turners Falls High School, Great Falls Middle School, Gill Elementary School, Sheffield Elementary School and Hillcrest Elementary School.

Pioneer Valley Regional School District: Bernardston Elementary School, Northfield Elementary School and the Pioneer Valley Regional School, which houses both middle and high school students.

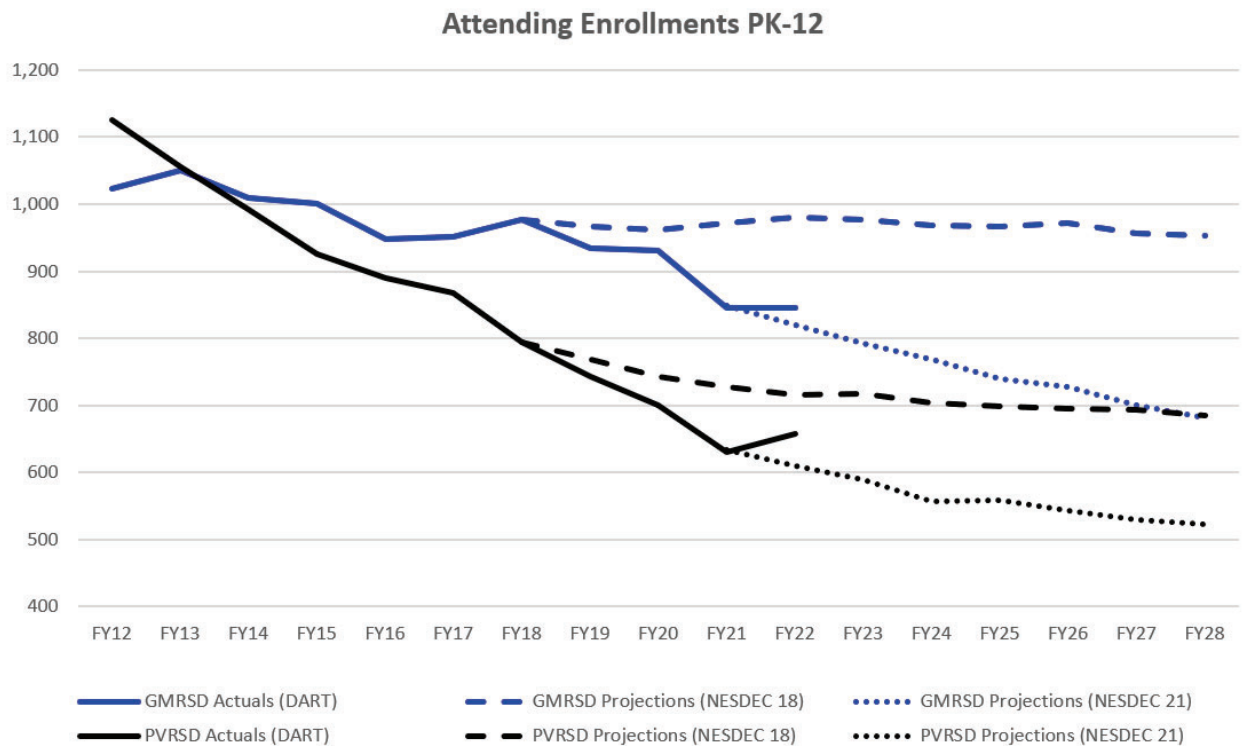
Warwick Municipal School District: The Warwick Community School

For more detailed information on facilities, see pp. 10-22 of the 2021 Abrahams Group Report.

Section X

Projected Enrollment

The enrollment projections noted earlier in this report indicated a declining enrollment trend over the past 30 years and projected that it will begin to level off in 2020. Despite these projections being calculated in June of 2018 and again in 2021 the report was spot on in the Pioneer Valley Regional School District with the district leveling off, while the Gill Montague Regional School District continued with a slight decline. This trend is consistent with the 2025 DART information. The total (projected 2027) population of the proposed GRRSD is 1,465 students. The most significant benefits are at the middle and high school levels. The high school would have 306 students which would create more flexibility in scheduling and more opportunities for students to take the required and elective courses offered. The middle school would have a population of 376 students. This would also provide an opportunity to have more clubs, and other activities for students and field more sports teams to feed into the high school.

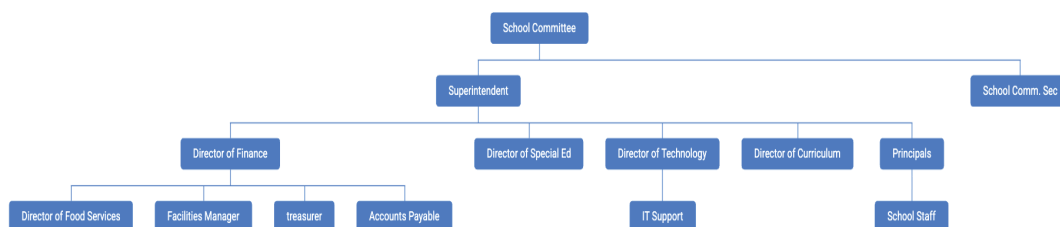


Attending Enrollment includes all students that attend the schools in the district. Includes Choice In, but not Choice Out or Charter Out. GMRSD has declined gradually over the past decade. PVRSD has declined more rapidly.

Section XI

Organizational Structure

Each district posts an organizational Flow Chart on their respective Websites, and it is included in their policies. The Proposed Great River Regional School Committee may wish to consider the following:



Note: The organizational chart is provided only as an example of what positions the Great River Regional School Committee may wish to include in its Central Office design. It should be noted that some titles of Central Office personnel in the existing school districts may differ from one another slightly but have similar or expanded responsibilities. For example, the Gill Montague Regional School District has a Director of Business and Finance and also has a Director of Facilities. Whereas, the Pioneer Valley Regional School District has a Director of Finance and Operations who also assumes the responsibilities of a Director of Facilities. The job descriptions and responsibilities will dictate the appropriate titles, and the Planning Board believes this flexibility is important in forming a new school district. The purpose of the above is provided as a starting point.

Section XII

Other Considerations Regarding Facilities Assessments

The Planning Board is aware that both PVRSD and GMRSD are exploring options regarding their facilities. These options continue to be fluid. PVRSD has completed a Facilities Master Plan, as well as a facilities assessment (see link below). GMRSD has also completed a facilities assessment (see link below) and is exploring closing the Hillcrest Elementary School and renovating/adding an addition to the Sheffield Elementary School. GMRSD and the Town of Gill is currently considering an MSBA roof replacement project for the Gill Elementary School. The Town of Warwick has been upgrading and maintaining the Warwick Community School and there are no capital projects necessary. Elementary schools in all these districts are owned by the towns in which they reside; therefore, costs of capital improvements are funded by the owner town and sometimes the state. Regional buildings are owned by their respective districts. It should be expected that school capital improvement projects will continue for the betterment of our students. However, if the towns pass the proposed RA, no new district regional building projects should be considered until the Transition School Committee is seated. The links below will provide a detailed overview.

PVRSD [Facilities Master Plan](#), [Facilities Assessments](#)

GMRSD [Facilities Assessment](#)

Section XIII

Recognition

It is also important to note that throughout this process, concerted efforts were made by the Planning Board to keep all stakeholders informed of our progress through emails to town officials, Annual Town Meeting Reports, brochures, forums, meetings with students and staff

and with Senator Comerford and Representatives, Susannah Whipps and former Representative Natalie Blais. Additionally, a number of Planning Board members remained on this board for over six years, volunteering hundreds of hours with no compensation for the betterment of the education of students in the six towns. They deserve recognition. Also deserving of recognition are Michelle Griffin and Christine Lynch of DESE for their support in reviewing the RAs and the Long-Range Plan which has helped move the process forward in a timely manner. The residents of these towns will soon have an opportunity to vote on the future of their children's education!

Section XIV

Summary

After reviewing all the reports, meeting with consultants and taking under consideration the preponderance of evidence and positive findings, the PB requests the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Great River Regional School District Agreement approved by voters.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Alan D. Genovese, Chairperson of the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board
Dr. Greg Snedeker, Vice Chairperson/Secretary/Treasurer of the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board

Current STRPB Board Members (by town):

Bernardston - Jane Dutcher
Gill - Deb Loomer, Greg Snedeker, Bill Tomb
Leyden - Michele Giarusso, Karen O'Neil, Steve Richter
Montague - Clifford Spatcher, Dorinda Bell-Upp
Northfield - Reina Dastous, Deb Potee, Pat Shearer
Warwick - Alan Genovese

Non-voting Members:

Erving - Kelly Sykes

Past STRPB Board Members (by town):

Bernardston: Renee Keir, Kristie Sulda
Leyden: Lance Fritz, Abby Pratt
Montague: Heather Katsoulis, Lynn Reynolds, Mike McNaughton
Warwick: Dawn Maggie, David Young
Erving: Non-voting: Jennifer Eichorn

The following members served on the District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS) Recommended by Selectboards and appointed by the Planning Board.

Bernardston: Stephan Nestanpower

Gill: Tupper Brown

Leyden: Katherine DiMatteo, Ginger Robinson

Montague: Matt Lord,

Northfield: Chris Hinkle

Warwick: Jessica Foote

Also serving on DRAS were PB members: Jane Dutcher/Bernardston, Alan Genovese/Warwick, Michele Giarusso/Leyden, Dorinda Bell-Upp/Montague, Deb Potee/Northfield, Greg Snedeker/Gill

Consultants:

Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS): Jay Barry, Stephen Hemmen, Mac Reid

Abrahams Consulting Group: Mark Abrahams, Matt Abrahams

Facilitation and Public Outreach Consulting: Mary Broderick

New England School Development Council/NESDEC

Transfinder

Travel Kuz

TOWN OF MONTAGUE



Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

Policy Owner	Selectboard Office	Effective Date	_____
Approved By	Selectboard	Adoption Date	_____
Related Form	FMLA Request Form (Form SB-01)	Review Cycle	As needed / legal update

I. Purpose

The Town of Montague provides eligible employees with family and medical leave in accordance with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), applicable federal regulations, Massachusetts law, the Town Personnel Policy Manual, and applicable collective bargaining agreements. This policy establishes a consistent process for requesting, reviewing, designating, tracking, and administering FMLA leave.

II. Eligibility

To be eligible for FMLA leave under this policy, an employee must have been employed by the Town for at least twelve (12) months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-month period preceding the commencement of the leave.

III. Qualifying Reasons for FMLA Leave

Eligible employees may take FMLA leave for qualifying reasons recognized under federal law, including:

- The birth of a child and care for the newborn child;
- Placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- Care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- The employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform one or more essential functions of the employee's position;
- A qualifying exigency arising out of the covered military service of an eligible family member; or
- Care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness when the employee meets the relationship requirements established by the FMLA.

Eligible employees generally may take up to twelve (12) workweeks of FMLA leave during the applicable 12-month period. Eligible military caregiver leave may provide up to twenty-six (26) workweeks during a single 12-month period, as provided by federal law.

A. Spouses Employed by the Town

When spouses are both employed by the Town and eligible for FMLA leave, they are limited to a combined total of twelve (12) workweeks of FMLA leave for the birth and bonding with the same child, placement and bonding with the same child through adoption or foster care, or care of a parent with a serious health condition.

This combined limitation does not apply to leave for an employee's own serious health condition, including qualifying pregnancy or childbirth-related incapacity or recovery; care of a spouse or child with a serious health condition; or a qualifying exigency. This limitation applies only to employees who are spouses as defined under the FMLA. Spouses employed by the Town may also be subject to the FMLA's combined twenty-six (26) workweek limitation when military caregiver leave is involved.



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

B. Birth, Adoption, Foster Placement, and Bonding

FMLA leave for bonding following the birth of a child or placement of a child through adoption or foster care must be completed within twelve (12) months of the birth or placement.

Bonding leave generally must be taken as a continuous period of leave. Intermittent or reduced-schedule bonding leave may be taken only with the Town's approval, except where otherwise required by law.

IV. Calculation of the 12-Month FMLA Period

The Town uses a "rolling" 12-month period measured backward from the date of any FMLA leave usage.

Each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave is the balance of the twelve (12) weeks not used during the twelve (12) months immediately before the FMLA leave is to start.

The Selectboard Office will determine the amount of FMLA leave previously used during the applicable look-back period and will advise the employee of the amount of FMLA leave available, consistent with the U.S. Department of Labor notice and designation process.

V. Requesting FMLA Leave

Employees who believe they may need FMLA-qualifying leave should notify their supervisor and the Selectboard Office as soon as practicable and should complete the Town of Montague Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) Request Form (Form SB-01). The completed form should be submitted to the Selectboard Office.

When the need for leave is foreseeable, employees should ordinarily provide at least thirty (30) days advance notice. When thirty days' notice is not feasible, notice must be provided as soon as practicable.

The Town's internal request form is intended to support consistent leave administration. An employee is not required to use the term "FMLA" or to have completed the internal form before the Town evaluates an absence that may qualify for FMLA protection. If a supervisor receives information indicating that an absence may be FMLA-qualifying, the supervisor must promptly notify the Selectboard Office.

Supervisors should not request detailed medical information and should not maintain medical certifications or other medical records within departmental personnel files.

VI. Town Review and U.S. Department of Labor Process

Upon receipt of the Town's FMLA Request Form, or whenever the Town otherwise becomes aware that an employee's leave may qualify under the FMLA, the Selectboard Office will administer the request using the applicable U.S. Department of Labor procedures and forms, including Form WH-381 (Notice of Eligibility and Rights & Responsibilities) and Form WH-382 (Designation Notice), or successor forms.

Potential FMLA-Qualifying Absences

Supervisors and department heads are not responsible for determining whether an employee qualifies for FMLA leave. However, they must promptly refer an absence to the Selectboard Office



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

when information received from an employee reasonably indicates that the absence may qualify for FMLA protection.

Examples may include an expected absence of more than (3) three consecutive calendar days involving continuing medical treatment, hospitalization or inpatient care, surgery, pregnancy or prenatal care, recurring absences associated with a chronic health condition, an anticipated extended medical absence, or an absence to care for a qualifying family member with a potentially serious health condition.

These examples are administrative referral indicators only and do not determine whether an absence qualifies for FMLA leave. The Selectboard Office will make a determination in accordance with applicable law.

1. Eligibility and Rights & Responsibilities. The Town will determine FMLA eligibility and provide the required eligibility and rights-and-responsibilities information within the time required by federal law.
2. Certification. When permitted by law, the Town may require appropriate medical or other certification supporting the need for FMLA leave. Employees will be given the period required by law to provide requested certification.
3. Designation. Once sufficient information is available, the Town will notify the employee whether the leave is designated as FMLA leave and, when known, the amount of leave that will count against the employee's FMLA entitlement.
4. Ongoing Administration. The Town may require status updates, recertification, or fitness-for-duty documentation when permitted by law and identified in the applicable notice.

VII. Coordination of FMLA and Paid Leave

A. FMLA Protection and Employee Pay

FMLA and the Town's paid leave benefits serve different purposes.

FMLA provides eligible employees with federal job and benefit protections during a qualifying absence. Sick leave, vacation leave, personal leave, compensatory time, and other applicable paid leave provide the employee with pay during that absence.

When an absence qualifies for FMLA protection and the employee has paid leave available to be used for the reason for the absence, paid leave and FMLA will run concurrently.

The Town will designate qualifying leave as FMLA leave in accordance with applicable law. An employee may not defer or postpone FMLA designation by electing to use sick leave, vacation leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or another paid leave benefit instead of FMLA.

B. Required Concurrent Use of Paid Leave

The Town requires employees to use available paid leave during FMLA leave when that paid leave may properly be used for the reason for the absence under the Town Personnel Policy, applicable collective bargaining agreement, and applicable law.

Any paid leave used for an FMLA-qualifying absence will also be designated as FMLA leave and counted against the employee's available FMLA entitlement during the Town's applicable rolling twelve-month period.

Accordingly, paid leave and FMLA leave run concurrently. They are not separate or consecutive leave entitlements.



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

An employee may not elect to take unpaid FMLA leave in order to preserve applicable paid leave for later use, nor may an employee elect to use applicable paid leave first in order to delay the designation or use of FMLA leave.

C. Maximum Compensation During Leave

The substitution or concurrent use of paid leave during FMLA leave is intended to provide continued compensation during an otherwise unpaid period of FMLA leave.

In no event will the coordination of FMLA leave with Town paid-leave benefits result in an employee receiving more than 100% of the employee's regular wages for the same period of absence, except where otherwise expressly required by law, collective bargaining agreement, or another applicable benefit program.

D. Birth, Adoption, Foster Placement, and Bonding

For FMLA leave associated with the birth of a child, placement of a child for adoption or foster care, or bonding with a newly born or newly placed child, the employee will use available paid leave that is applicable to the absence under the Town Personnel Policy or applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Where more than one applicable paid-leave category is available, the employee may select the order in which the available balances are charged, subject to the rules governing those leave benefits.

Once all applicable paid leave has been exhausted, any remaining approved FMLA leave will be unpaid.

E. Employee's Own Serious Health Condition or Care of a Covered Family Member

For FMLA leave taken because of the employee's own serious health condition, or to care for a covered spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition, available sick leave to be used for the absence will be used first.

If applicable sick leave is exhausted before the employee's FMLA leave ends, the employee will continue to use other available paid leave to be used for the absence, including applicable vacation leave, personal leave, and compensatory time.

Where more than one such paid-leave category remains available, the employee may select the order in which those remaining balances will be charged.

The employee's ability to select the order of the remaining paid-leave categories does not constitute an election whether to use paid leave. Applicable paid leave is required to run concurrently with FMLA leave.

After all applicable paid leave has been exhausted, any remaining approved FMLA leave will be unpaid.

F. Military Caregiver Leave

An eligible employee may take up to twenty-six (26) workweeks of FMLA leave during a single twelve-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness, as provided by federal law.

When available sick leave may properly be used to care for the covered servicemember under the Town Personnel Policy or applicable collective bargaining agreement, applicable sick leave will be used first.



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

After applicable sick leave is exhausted, the employee will continue to use other available paid leave to be used for the absence, including applicable vacation leave, personal leave, and compensatory time. Where more than one such category is available, the employee may select the order in which those remaining balances will be charged.

Once all applicable paid leave has been exhausted, the remaining portion of the employee's approved military caregiver FMLA leave will be unpaid.

G. Qualifying Exigency Leave

An eligible employee may take FMLA leave for a qualifying exigency arising from the covered active duty or call to covered active duty of the employee's spouse, child, or parent, as provided by federal law.

Because qualifying exigency leave does not necessarily involve an employee's or family member's illness or injury, sick leave will not be used for qualifying exigency leave unless its use for the particular absence is independently permitted by the applicable Town Personnel Policy, collective bargaining agreement, or law.

Available vacation leave, personal leave, compensatory time, and any other paid leave to be used for the absence will be used concurrently with qualifying exigency FMLA leave.

Where more than one applicable paid-leave category is available, the employee may select the order in which those balances will be charged.

After all applicable paid leave has been exhausted, any remaining approved qualifying exigency FMLA leave will be unpaid.

H. When FMLA Leave Becomes Unpaid

FMLA leave will become unpaid only when:

- the employee has exhausted the paid leave that is available and applicable to the FMLA-qualifying absence;
- the employee has no available paid-leave category to be used for the particular absence; or
- applicable law or an applicable collective bargaining agreement otherwise requires or permits the leave to be unpaid.

Once applicable paid leave has been exhausted or is unavailable, the employee will continue on unpaid, job-protected FMLA leave for the balance of the employee's available FMLA entitlement.

Nothing in this policy expands the purposes for which a particular paid-leave benefit may be used under the Town Personnel Policy or an applicable collective bargaining agreement.

I. No Stacking or Deferral of FMLA and Paid Leave

FMLA leave and applicable paid leave run at the same time, not one after the other.

For example, if an eligible employee is absent for six weeks because of an FMLA-qualifying serious health condition and receives six weeks of paid sick leave, those same six weeks will also be designated and counted as six weeks of FMLA leave. The employee does not receive six weeks of paid sick leave followed by a separate twelve weeks of FMLA leave.

Likewise, an employee cannot request that the Town delay FMLA designation while the employee first uses sick leave or another applicable paid-leave balance.



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

The source of the employee's pay during the absence is the applicable paid-leave benefit. The source of the employee's federal job and benefit protections is the FMLA. When both apply to the same absence, they run concurrently.

VIII. Collective Bargaining Agreements

Employees represented by a collective bargaining unit remain subject to the applicable collective bargaining agreement. FMLA leave and contractual leave will run concurrently when the same absence qualifies under both the FMLA and the applicable collective bargaining agreement, to the extent permitted by law and the agreement.

Nothing in this policy is intended to diminish, waive, or supersede a negotiated benefit or right. Where an applicable collective bargaining agreement provides a more generous leave benefit or expressly provides that a more liberal provision applies, the Town will administer the leave consistent with that agreement and applicable law.

IX. Intermittent and Reduced-Schedule Leave

FMLA leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule when permitted by the FMLA. When intermittent or reduced-schedule leave is medically necessary, employees must make reasonable efforts, consistent with medical necessity, to schedule planned treatment in a manner that does not unduly disrupt Town operations.

Intermittent or reduced-schedule leave for bonding with a newborn or newly placed child will be permitted only as required by law or when otherwise approved by the Town. Employees using intermittent FMLA leave must comply with the Town's normal call-out and absence-reporting procedures unless unusual circumstances prevent compliance.

X. Health Insurance and Other Benefits

During approved FMLA leave, the Town will maintain the employee's group health insurance coverage on the same terms and conditions that would apply if the employee had continued working. The employee remains responsible for the employee's regular share of applicable insurance premiums.

Accrual of vacation, sick leave, seniority, or other benefits during periods of leave will be governed by the applicable Personnel Policy, collective bargaining agreement, benefit plan, and law.

XI. Retirement / Creditable Service During Leave

Retirement credit during a leave of absence will be administered in accordance with applicable regulations of the Montague Retirement Board. Supplemental regulations the Montague Retirement Board provide:

"Members on an unpaid leave of absence (who are not receiving workers compensation) will receive up to one-month creditable service for the leave of absence. Members will receive full service credit for a fully compensated leave of absence. Those members who are granted partial compensation for a leave of absence will receive partial service credit. This provision is retroactive to January 1, 1997."



TOWN OF MONTAGUE

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

Accordingly, an employee whose FMLA leave transitions from paid to unpaid status should be aware that retirement credit may be affected. The Town will report compensation and leave status in accordance with applicable retirement requirements. Employees with questions regarding individual retirement credit should contact the Montague Retirement Board.

XII. Return to Work

Upon return from FMLA leave, an employee will be restored to the same position held when leave began or to an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment, as required by the FMLA.

When permitted by law, the Town may require an employee returning from leave for the employee's own serious health condition to provide a fitness-for-duty certification. Any such requirement will be communicated to the employee in the applicable FMLA notice.

XIII. Confidentiality

Medical certifications, medical records, and other medical information received in connection with an FMLA request will be maintained confidentially and separately from the employee's general personnel file, in accordance with applicable law. Supervisors will receive only the information necessary to administer the employee's absence, work restrictions, scheduling, and return to work.

XIV. Non-Retaliation and Non-Interference

The Town prohibits interference with an employee's lawful exercise of FMLA rights and prohibits retaliation against an employee for requesting, using, or seeking information concerning FMLA leave.

XV. Relationship to Other Laws, Policies, and Benefits

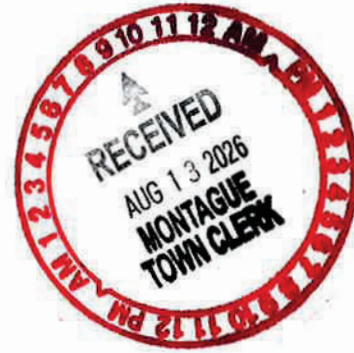
This policy is intended to be administered in coordination with the Town Personnel Policy Manual, applicable collective bargaining agreements, the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act and other applicable Massachusetts leave laws, workers' compensation requirements, retirement system requirements, and other applicable state or federal benefits and protections.

When an absence qualifies under more than one leave law, Town policy, or collective bargaining agreement, applicable leaves will run concurrently to the extent permitted by law. If a conflict exists between this policy and applicable federal or state law, the law will control.

XVI. Administration and Questions

The Selectboard Office is responsible for administering this policy, maintaining FMLA records, providing required notices, tracking FMLA usage, and coordinating with departments regarding approved leave. Employees with questions regarding FMLA leave, paid-leave coordination, benefits, or the Town's FMLA Request Form should contact the Selectboard Office.

Administrative references: U.S. Department of Labor FMLA forms WH-381 and WH-382; Town of Montague Personnel Policy Manual; applicable Town collective bargaining agreements; Town of Montague FMLA Request Form (Form SB-01).



August 13, 2026

Wendy Bogusz
Town Clerk
Town of Montague
1 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Dear Wendy,

As a resident of the Town of Montague for nearly 30 years, I have decided I would like to become more involved in town government.

After our conversation around elections and possible opportunities in that area, I am interested in becoming an election worker or a registrar if an opportunity should arise.

Please accept this letter as my formal statement of interest in becoming a registrar or election worker.

Please contact me with any questions at craigsleb@yahoo.com.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig LeBlanc".

Craig LeBlanc
7 Lyman St.
Millers Falls, MA 01349

Name: LEBLANC, CRAIG

MONTAGUE APPOINTED OFFICIAL

NAME:

Craig LeBlanc

DATE:

08/31/26

COMMITTEE:

Board of Registrars

TERM:

1 Year

TERM EXPIRATION:

06/30/27

SELECTMEN, TOWN OF MONTAGUE

TERM STARTS: 09/01/26

Craig LeBlanc personally appeared and made oath that he/she would faithfully and impartially perform his/her duty as a member of the Board of Registrars according to the foregoing appointment.

Received _____ **and entered in the records of the**
Town of Montague.

MONTAGUE TOWN CLERK

This is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of Chapter 30A, Sections 18 - 25, of the General Laws, the Open Meeting law.

APPOINTED OFFICIAL

*****If you choose to resign from your appointed position during your term, you must notify the Town Clerk in writing before such action takes effect.**