

Compact for Funding Education

Gill-Montague Regional School District

This is a Compact made among persons and entities interested in the education of students in the Gill-Montague Regional School District. It has been agreed upon among the persons and entities of interest because the funding of this District has become an unsustainable burden on the member Towns that threatens the quality of the education of their students.

The Parties

This Compact is endorsed and entered into by the State legislators representing the residents of the District; by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE); by the member Towns of the District through their respective Selectboards and Finance Committees; by the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee; and by the District administration.

Precepts

The basic precepts underlying this Compact are:

- (a) The children of this District must have the best possible education.
- (b) The funding of public education in Massachusetts is shared among the State and the respective Towns.
- (c) In order to make funding in this District sustainable over the long term, and thus to provide current and future students with excellence in education, costs must be controlled and revenues must be assured. In particular, growth in District expenditures, both fixed and non-fixed, must be supported by corresponding growth in revenues.
- (d) In order to find a path to sustainable financing for the District, a plan has been established that sets forth current and future levels of expenditure by the District and current and future levels of funding by the State and the member Towns. This plan, attached to this Compact, is entitled "Table B" and is intended to set forth a workable balance between necessary District expenditures and corresponding revenues from the State and the member Towns.
- (e) In the out years through FY15, Table B is based upon projections of expenditures and revenues that are both possible and necessary for reaching a state of balanced financing. The parties understand that future events may require modifications to specifics within the plan, but that the overall shape of the plan must be pursued to achieve the goals of this Compact.

The Compact

The parties pledge and agree as follows:

1. Table B is accepted as the long term plan for fiscal stability of the District, and the parties accept its requirements and projections as goals for achieving its purposes.

2. The parties shall each, in its own sphere, work actively to achieve the expenditure and funding levels anticipated in Table B. Specifically:

(a) The respective Town Selectboards and Finance Committees agree that an "affordable assessment" as set forth on Table B (showing an approximate 3% annual increase), supplemented through FY14 with additional contributions, is needed to stabilize District funding, and they commit to seeking funding from their respective Towns, based on existing allocation practices, in amounts necessary to meet the totals shown on Table B. If that level of local contribution proves to be unrealistic due to reduced Town revenues or other factors, Town officials will work with the District and State officials to find a viable budget for the District.

(b) State legislators and DESE agree that a 3% annual increase in Chapter 70 is needed to stabilize district funding, to be achieved by FY 13. If that level of aid proves to be unrealistic due to reduced State revenues or other factors, State officials will work with the district and member Towns to make the district budget viable with a lesser amount. State officials will consider the policy recommendations of the member Towns as the Chapter 70 program is revisited in the coming months.

(c) The School Committee and District agree to slow the growth of expenditures to keep them in line with projections in Table B (2.5% increase annually beginning in FY 13). If the District believes that it can not fulfill its goals within these projections, it will collaborate with the legislators, DESE and the member Towns to find a means toward financial sustainability.

3. Recognizing that a multi-year program is always subject to future events, it is agreed that any party may propose changes in the Table B plan if it feels assumptions are no longer viable or core projections are no longer realistic. Proposals will be evaluated by all parties with the goal of reaching consensus on a revision of the long term plan, if necessary.

4. The plan set forth on Table B for FY12 should be examined by the parties in detail at an early date, modified where necessary and then confirmed as quickly as possible due to the potential for a large revenue-expenditure gap that could undermine the plan in future years.

5. The question of total District expenditures as compared with state norms will be resolved as quickly as possible. Recommendations on whether and how to bring these expenditures in line with state norms will be reviewed and agreed to by all parties and then implemented by the District in collaboration with DESE.

6. The Oversight Group and Technical Panel will continue to meet as necessary to assist with continued collaboration among the parties and with review of the process toward fiscal sustainability.

7. The School Committee, the District and the member Towns agree to consider seriously any proposal for regional consolidation of school districts that is shown to have a positive educational, fiscal and social impact. DESE and the legislators agree that proposals for consolidation will include a specific model for the district including a formal, data-based analysis detailing educational, cost, and social issues.

Statement Approved and Supported by:

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Franklin County Legislators:

Senator Stanley Rosenberg

Representative Stephen Kulik

Representative Christopher Donelan

Representative-elect Denise Andrews

Gill Finance Committee

Gill Selectboard

Gill-Montague Regional School Committee

Gill-Montague Regional School District

Montague Finance Committee

Montague Selectboard