

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE / MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD  
GILL SELECTBOARD / GILL FINANCE COMMITTEE  
GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Final Minutes**

**Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

**This was a hybrid meeting at Turners Falls High School and Zoom.**

**Recording: <https://vimeo.com/794734524>**

**PRESENT:** **Montague Finance Committee** – Chair Francina Wisnewski, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp, Fred Bowman, and Jennifer Waryas.  
**Montague Selectboard** – Chair Rich Kuklewicz, Vice-Chair Chris Boutwell and Matt Lord.  
**Gill Selectboard** – Chair Randy Crochier and Charles Garbiel  
**Gill Finance Committee** – Chair Claire Chang, Peter Turban, Tupper and Sandy Brown  
**Gill-Montague Regional School District** – Brian Beck, Superintendent of Schools; Joanne Blier, Director of Business and Operations; Diane Ellis, Director of Student Support Services; Jane Oakes, Chair Gill-Montague Regional School Committee.  
Town Administrator Steve Ellis

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – Chair Francina Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Each committee/board called the meeting to order through roll call. Francina stated this joint meeting is to present the preliminary FY24 budget as well as an informational meeting.

**2. GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FY24 BUDGET AND TOWN ASSESSMENTS**

Superintendent Beck opened by placing a PowerPoint presentation on the screen for all attending to view. He shared the budget process timeline from January 10, 2023 through the annual town meetings of Gill and Montague in May. The overall budget proposal reflects a 4.8% increase with dependence on school choice revolving and E&D. The district is expecting a higher State aid in spite of the decline in enrollment. The Esser III grant will potentially fund 13 positions. A graph showed how the budget is created using research, analysis, action and management. The district is in year 2 of the 3-year long term goals which engage family and students, growth and achievement, grade-appropriate instruction and finally inclusion and equity.

Jane spoke of many grants and initiatives to support students and staff. She gave highlights of the secondary schools such as skilled-based psychoeducational groups, common writing assessments to measure growth and robust Arts curriculum. In the elementary schools, there is an increase in the ELA, Math and Science which are grade specific. She showed a comparison chart for MCAS over the last two years of State vs GMRSD measuring ELA, Math and Science which reveals the district is only slightly behind but significant gain is made year-to-year.

Joanne shared student enrollment figures which showed increased trends in choice-in and decline in choice-out. There has also been a drop in charter school numbers.

Brian explained the budget needs in relation to the pandemic with increases in staff which in turn increases health insurance, retirement assessment and workers comp costs. The Student Support Services full-time transportation coordinator is now a shared position with the Greenfield School District.

The members were shown a spreadsheet of the overall budget as \$27,589,059 and its breakdown by State Aid, assessments, Erving tuition, other GF revenue, E&D, revolving funds and grants. Chapter 70 funds will not be released until the first week in March. The school choice revolving, food service, excess and deficiency expenses and ESSER III accounts were displayed and described.

Joanne Blier discussed the capital needs and expenses for the Gill Elementary School, Hillcrest Elementary School, Sheffield Elementary School as well as the Great Falls Middle and Turners Falls High School.

There were questions from the audience regarding committee participation as well as the E & D for FY24. District consolidation was also discussed. The members of the GMRSD then took turns and summarized the beneficial changes throughout the district.

Francia thanked everyone for the opportunity to gather and discuss tonight's presentation. The Chairs of each committee attending made motions to adjourn the meeting with roll call vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet  
Scribe

Approved by Montague Finance Committee – February 8, 2023