

## **Six Town Regionalization Planning Board Update**

### **Final Steps Before Town Meeting Vote**

The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB) was formed by the towns of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield and Warwick to research the feasibility of creating a new regional school district that was affordable, sustainable and educationally advantageous for our students. Its first in-person meeting was held in 2019 before the COVID 19 epidemic.

Eighteen members, three from each town, were appointed to serve. Grants from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Revenue supported our study and research over a five year period. The STRPB voted in January 2024 to move forward with crafting a proposed new regional agreement (RA).

The STRPB established a District Regional Agreement Subcommittee (DRAS). Its members were recommended by the respective Selectboards to serve with a few Planning Boards members. This subcommittee deliberated for a year and in March 2025 recommended a proposed RA for the Planning Board's consideration.

The Planning Board reviewed and voted to have the proposed RA undergo a technical legal review to ensure it complies with DESE regulations and state laws. This document will be shared with town officials. With these steps being completed the Planning Board will review, deliberate and recommend a final proposed Regional Agreement for the Town's consideration.

A comprehensive outreach effort will be implemented to share our research which resulted in the crafting of a proposed regional agreement that would combine the Gill-Montague Regional, Pioneer Valley Regional and the Warwick School District to form a "Super-Regional School District".

In the next 7 months, the STRPB will provide print and social media releases and updates for town newsletters/websites, public meetings/forums, multiple posted QR codes directing people to the STRPB website and the proposed regional agreement. Materials will also be available at public buildings, such as town libraries. We welcome other outreach efforts suggested by the general public, including information relating to a coordinating Special Town Meeting in November.

If this can be scheduled on the same day in all six towns prior to December 30<sup>th</sup> we will meet the deadline for consideration by DESE to begin the transition process (which requires a year and a half) to form a new district. This vote must pass in all six towns. Our efforts will focus on voters having as much information as possible.