

Town Coordinator's Report

Selectboard Meeting, June 1, 2026

J. David Young, Town Coordinator

Green Ribbon School Award

I am pleased to report that Warwick Community School has been designated a Massachusetts Green Ribbon School by the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with the Department of Energy Resources. Representatives from both agencies were at the assembly at the school on Wednesday to make the formal presentation. Warwick is one of only two schools in the state receiving this recognition this year. Special thanks to school consultant Dr. Faye Brady for entering Warwick into consideration.

The award recognizes sustainability and environmental education across several dimensions: nature- and project-based learning, renewable electricity use, the school's electric minibus, environmental science curriculum, and sustainability initiatives woven throughout daily instruction. What sets our school apart in this context is that these are not add-ons or programs bolted onto a conventional structure. They are natural expressions of the individualized and place-based learning environment we have built. Our small size and local autonomy make this kind of integrated approach possible in ways that are simply not available to larger, more standardized schools. This recognition belongs to our teachers, our students, the building and energy committee and the community that chose to build something different.

Six-Town Regional Planning Committee

The Selectboard recently voted to "support the work of the six-town regional planning committee." I want to offer some perspective on what that means in practice, because the language of the vote does not fully convey the stakes.

I served on that committee and I support the work it is doing. A merger of Pioneer Valley and Gill Montague districts was worth studying and may well make sense for those towns. But Warwick is a different matter. We spent three years and hundreds of thousands of dollars, backed by enormous amounts of volunteer time and resident commitment, to leave the Pioneer Valley district and establish an independent school answerable directly to this town. We did that because the alternative was having our school closed by towns who had no stake in keeping it open. The needs of a six town district will eventually result in efforts to close us. If it every makes sense in the future to regionalize we can do it then. I am a hard no because joining a new regional arrangement would reverse that work. We would move from an unclassified, non-union setting to a unionized one, with wages set at the higher end of the regional scale. We would absorb our proportional share of every special education cost across the district. We would go from five elected committee members fully accountable to Warwick voters to one seat on a board of eleven. We would not be driving the boat. The towns who voted to close our school would be at that table.

I hope the board will hear directly from every former member of the Education Committee before taking any further action on this question. These are the people who understood the process, did the work, and know what was gained.

Town Coordinator Search

The board will be selecting my replacement at this meeting. I recognize that only two members can vote on this item. I would ask that you give substantial weight to the preferences expressed by the many residents and municipal officials who participated in the interview and feedback process. Most of those participants are active in town government and have direct working relationships with this office. The scoring from that process is not close, and I think it reflects genuine and informed judgment about what this town needs going forward.