FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FRRSD WHITE PAPER, PART 1:

NOTHING BUT THE FACTS & DATA

Imagine for a moment that Otis and Sandisfield were one town, called Otisfield. The total assessment submitted to Otisfield by the FRRSD would be distributed to all Otisfield taxpayers according to property assessments. This is the way things are done in all municipal (single town) school districts in Massachusetts.

Per data from the MA Department of Revenue (DOR), in this scenario, the measure of Otisfield's total assessed property value, known as its equalized valuation (EV), would be just over \$1B, with **74%** of that comprised by the current Otis EV, and **26%** comprised by the current Sandisfield EV. Based on this, the Otisfield taxpayers formerly from Otis would pay 74% of the assessment from FRRSD, and those formerly from Sandisfield would pay the remaining 26% of the assessment. *See Appendix 1*.

Today Otis pays **60%** of the FRRSD assessment on their 74% of the aggregate EV, while Sandisfield pays the remaining **40%** of the assessment on their 26% of the aggregate EV. *See Appendix 2*.

The current Regional District Agreement (RDA) distributes the total FRRSD assessment to the towns via two different formulas: one for operating costs, and the other for capital costs. The RDA distributes the operating costs to the towns based on the enrollment split between the two towns – currently at **57%** Otis and **43%** Sandisfield – with no material consideration of relative wealth. As for the much smaller capital costs, the RDA distributes these costs using the average of the enrollment and EV splits, which currently stand at **66%** Otis and **34%** Sandisfield. And this is how the current 60% Otis, 40% Sandisfield split of the FRRSD assessed costs is arrived at. *See Appendix 2*.

When the RDA was put into place in 1992 the **difference** between the EV's of Otis and Sandisfield stood at **\$153M**, while today it stands at **\$494M**, an increase of **3.2x**. The founders of the FRRSD clearly could not have anticipated this drastic change. Unfortunately, the RDA hasn't been amended once since its inception 32 years ago. *See Appendix 3*.

Equally, and perhaps even more relevant here, the MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) computes each year a parameter known as the Combined Effort Yield (CEY) for each MA town. The CEY is viewed as the maximum the town could reasonably afford and be expected to contribute toward its education expenses. It's computed using a formula that considers both the EV of the town along with the total income of its residents. Currently the total cost assessed to Otis by the FRRSD is \$1.4M under its CEY, at 62% of its CEY, while Sandisfield is \$266K over its CEY, at 121% of its CEY. In short, Otis is paying significantly less than what DESE has determined it can afford, and Sandisfield is paying significantly more than what DESE has determined it can afford. See Appendix 4.

As indicated in the table below, the FRRSD assessment to each town comprises a significant portion of the tax levy the town must raise via property taxes. The last column of this table shows the percentage of the town tax levy attributable to the assessment from FRRSD, which is of course also the percentage of each tax bill the town sends out attributable to FRRSD. We refer to this as the FRRSD Tax Load (FTL). The Sandisfield FTL is 6.05 percentage points higher than the Otis percentage, rendering Sandisfield's FTL 14.75% greater than the Otis FTL. See Appendix 5.

F	Y24 Tax Levy	FY24 FRRSD Assessment	Assessment % of Tax Levy
Otis	\$5,617,441	\$2,302,417	40.99%
Sandisfield	\$3,290,075	\$1,547,397	47.03%

Lastly, the MA DOR provides data each year for each town in MA that indicates the property tax load on its residents. This data is shown in the table below for Otis and Sandisfield, along with a link to the DOR data source.

FY23	SF Values (\$)	SF Parcels (#)	Avg SF Value (\$)	Avg SF TB (\$)	SF TB % of Value	Income Per Capita (\$)	Avg TB % of Income
Otis	659,098,900	1,546	426,325	2,822	0.66	35,226	8.01
Sandisfield	204,324,100	594	343,980	3,643	1.06	19,338	18.84
Ratio (O/S)	3.23	2.60	1.24	0.77	0.62	1.82	0.43
Ratio (S/O)	0.31	0.38	0.81	1.29	1.61	0.55	2.35

SF = Single Family TB = Tax Bill

Source: https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill wRange

The columns highlighted in orange provide, for each town, the average single family tax bill (ASFTB), the income per capita (IPC), and the ratio of the ASFTB to the IPC. The last column can be viewed as a measure of the town tax load (TTL) on its residents, as it indicates on average what percentage of resident income is consumed by the town tax bill.

The difference between the Otis and Sandisfield TTL is quite substantial, with the Sandisfield TTL, at **18.84%**, being a factor of **2.35x** greater than the Otis TTL, at **8.01%**. This is of course a direct consequence of the Otis IPC being a factor of 1.82x greater than the Sandisfield IPC, combined with the Sandisfield ASFTB being a factor of 1.29x higher than the Otis ASFTB.

The same DOR data source used above can be used to compare the TTL's of Sandisfield and Otis to those of other nearby Southern Berkshire County towns, as well as to all other towns in MA. Doing so yields the table below:

Average S	ingle Fam	ily Tax Bill %	6 of Income Per C	apita
Town	%	MA Rank	MA percentile	Area Rank
Otis	8.0	8	2%	1
Tolland	11.2	36	10%	2
Becket	11.6	48	14%	3
Granville	12.0	58	17%	4
Blandford	12.3	67	19%	5
New Marlborough	12.5	76	22%	6
Sheffield	14.2	143	41%	7
Great Barrington	14.5	168	48%	8
Monterey	14.8	178	51%	9
Tyringham	17.1	267	76%	10
Sandisfield	18.8	301	86%	11

The local towns listed in this table are ordered by TTL %, from lowest to highest TTL %. Otis has the lowest TTL of all the local towns listed, while Sandisfield has the highest. Relative to MA, only **2**% of MA towns have a **lower** TTL than Otis, and Sandisfield has a TTL **higher** than **86**% of MA towns.

Perhaps even more relevant, by multiplying, for each town, the average single family tax bill (ASFTB) by the FRRSD tax load (FTL) percentage, we obtain the portion of each ASFTB attributable the FRRSD assessment, as shown in the table below. As can be seen, on average a single family taxpayer in Sandisfield pays \$557, or 48% more a year towards FRRSD than a single family taxpayer in Otis.

	FRRSD Tax Load %	Average Single Family Tax Bill	Portion of ASFTB attributable to FRRSD
Otis Sandisfield	40.99% 47.03%	\$2,822 \$3,643	\$1,157 \$1,713
Difference (S-O) Ratio (S/O)			\$557 1.48

This completes our presentation of relevant facts & data. Since this document is constrained to facts & data, we offer no opinions whatsoever, such as opinions on equity, fairness, etc. However, we believe the following conclusions are clearly and logically evident from the facts & data:

- The FRRSD is not financially sustainable as currently constructed and operated.
- Substantial amendment of the RDA assessment methodology will be required to achieve financial sustainability.

With these conclusions, Part 1 of this white paper is in essence completed.

Part 2 of this white paper will present a framework for determining a new RDA assessment methodology that renders the FRRSD financially sustainable.

We now close with a few clarifying comments regarding the last conclusion above, and some related asides that provide useful perspective:

To reduce FRRSD costs, the FRRSD could consider ceasing operation of the elementary school and put in place a tuition agreement(s) with an out-of-district elementary school(s), analogous to how it proceeds today with middle and high school pupils. This would result in significant cost savings, as the tuitions paid for the pupils would no doubt be considerably less than the current per pupil expenditures in the elementary school. This would render the FRRSD what is known as a non-operating school district, meaning that there are no in-district physical schools. This model is currently in use in MA, with just under 10 non-operating school districts currently in existence.

However, we believe this approach would be strongly opposed within the towns as well as highly problematic given the FRRSD union contract, and hence is not a viable path forward.

Related to the above, as an aside we mention that if Sandisfield was unable to continue with the FRRSD, it would likely form the Sandisfield School District as a non-operating municipal school district, and tuition all its pupils to out-of-district schools under tuition agreements, as this would no doubt reduce its education expenses appreciably from what they are today.

Lastly, above we are considering the financial sustainability of the FRRSD only as a **regional** school district. If Sandisfield was unable to continue with the FRRSD, one could consider reverting the district to a municipal district run by Otis, continuing operation of the elementary school, with all the district costs borne by Otis. As an aside, we mention that in this scenario one would have to account for funding lost in the form of Sandisfield's assessment (\$1.5M) and their apportionment of Chapter 70 state aid (\$313K), as well as state regional transportation aid (\$197K), since the state doesn't provide transportation aid to municipal districts, only regional districts. It would also have to account for savings accrued by the district no longer having to pay tuitions for Sandisfield pupils (\$486K). And it would also have to account for funding potentially gained from choicing in 38 additional pupils to the elementary school (\$190K) – the same as the number of Sandisfield pupils currently enrolled in the elementary school – as a best-case scenario unlikely to be achieved near term, and perhaps never. It is estimated that this scenario would require Otis paying, in a best-case scenario, approximately \$1.4M a year more than it currently assessed by the FRRSD. We believe this approach would be strongly opposed by Otis, and hence is also not considered a viable path forward. See Appendix 6.

APPENDIX 1

CLASS	Assessed Value	Assessment Ratio	Estimated Full Value
RESIDENTIAL	653,481,095	0.93	702,667,800
OPEN SPACE	0		0
COMMERCIAL	15,330,205	0.93	16,458,500
INDUSTRIAL	3,395,700	0.93	3,651,300
PERSONAL PROPERTY	26,812,001	1.00	26,812,000
TOTAL REAL/PERSONAL PROPERTY	699,019,001	0.93	749,589,600
ESTIMATED GROWTH		0.80%	5,996,700
PROPOSED EQUALIZED VALUATION			755,586,300
CHAPTER 121A VALUE			0
2022 FINAL EQUALIZED VALUATION			755,586,300

LA-19

Equalized Valuation Report SANDISFIELD - 260 2022

						_	_
Jurisdiction	Sandisfield - 260	~	EQV Year	2022	~	Go	Back
						_	

LA19 (FINAL)

CLASS	Assessed Value	Assessment Ratio	Estimated Full Value
RESIDENTIAL	218,919,010	0.98	223,386,700
OPEN SPACE	0		0
COMMERCIAL	6,174,276	0.99	6,265,400
INDUSTRIAL	238,200	0.98	243,100
PERSONAL PROPERTY	30,134,612	1.00	30,134,600
TOTAL REAL/PERSONAL PROPERTY	255,466,098	0.98	260,029,800
ESTIMATED GROWTH		0.76%	1,976,200
PROPOSED EQUALIZED VALUATION			262,006,000
CHAPTER 121A VALUE			0
2022 FINAL EQUALIZED VALUATION			262,006,000

74.25 % 25.75 %

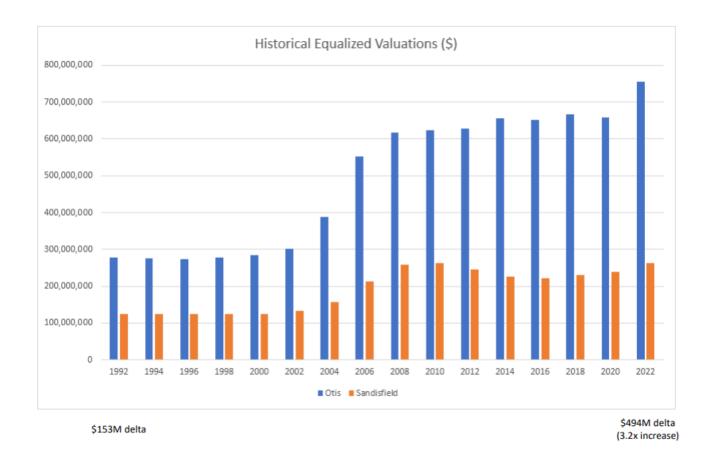
Reference: https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/gateway/DLSPublic/LA19

	1000			River Regional				4.000000		
	FY24	Assessment Calculati	on -	- Excess E&D ap 2023	plie	2024		d 3/23/23		
Step 1	Operating Budge	t		0.41%		4.77%				
	Total Budgeted Ex		\$	4,672,432.00	\$	4,895,205.00				
	Less Transportation		\$	399,677.00	\$	416,104.00	1			
	Adjusted Operati		\$	4,272,755.00	\$	4,479,101.00				
Step 2	Chap 70		\$	612,111.00	\$	618,910.00				
otop z	E&D Utilization		\$	200,000.00	\$	237,135.00	FR	D > 5%		\$134,213.0
	Earnings on Invest	lmonte	\$	1.000.00	\$	2.500.00	LCG	D- 3/0		\$104,210.0
	Local Fees	unono	\$	1,000.00	\$	2,300.00		***************************************		
	Total Anticipated	Revenues	\$	814,111.00	\$	858,545.00				
	Balance to be As	sessed	\$	3,458,644.00	\$	3,620,556.00	111)(4)()()	00014)))(
		***************************************		4,134,31134		-,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,				
Step 3	FY24 Required Lo	ocal Contribution					_	Change		
	a Otis		\$	1,370,021.00	\$	1,443,945.00	\$	73,924.00		5.409
	b Sandisfield		\$	861,252.00	\$	907,243.00	\$	45,991.00	3000	5.349
	Total		\$	2,231,273.00	\$	2,351,188.00				
	Balance to be ass	sessed	\$	1,227,371.00	\$	1,269,368.00				
Step 4			****					2023		202
	a Otis		\$	703,385.00	\$	726,459.00		57.31%	7	57.239
	b Sandisfield		\$	523,986.00	\$	542,909.00	1	42.69%		42.779
	Total		\$	1,227,371.00	\$	1,269,368.00				
Step 5	Transportation	••••••							1500)	
otop o	Regular Transport	ation	\$	367,677.00	\$	317,604.00				
	SN Transportation		\$	32,000.00	\$	98,500.00				
	Total Transportation		\$	399,677.00	\$	416,104.00)(
	Less Reg Transpo		\$	(226,979.00)	****	(196,846.00)				
	Trans Amount to		\$	recent the executive execu	\$	219,258.00				
							_			
Step 6							\vdash	2023		202
	a Otis		\$	98,973.00	\$	125,481.00	ļ	57.31%		57.239
	b Sandisfield		\$	73,725.00 172,698.00	\$	93,777.00 219,258.00	_	42.69%		42.779
Step 7	Total Op & Trans	Assess.	_	0 470 070 00		0.005.005.00				123.506.00
	Otis (1a+2a+3a)	- 25.1	\$	2,172,379.00	\$	2,295,885.00		5.69%	******	
	Sandisfield (1b+2b)+3D)	\$	1,458,963.00	\$	1,543,929.00		5.82%	\$	84,966.00
Step 8		Doors & Gym Ceiling		70,270.00	\$	10,000.00				202
	Otis 50% Enrollme		\$	20,135.00	\$	2,862.00				57.239
	Otis 50% Equalize	d Valuation	\$	25,761.00	\$	3,713.00				74.25
	Otis Total		\$	45,896.00	\$	6,575.00				
	Sfld 50% Enrollme	···	\$	15,000.00	\$	2,139.00				42.779
	Sfld 50% 50% Equ	ualized Valuation	\$	9,374.00	\$	1,287.00				25.75
	Sfld Total		\$	24,374.00	\$	3,426.00				
	Total Annual Ass		-90						1100	
	Otis (Step 7 + Step Sandiefield (Step 7		\$		\$	2,302,460.00 1,547,355.00	2000	3.80%		84,185.00 64,018.00
Enrollme	Sandisfield (Step 7	+ Step 6)	Φ	1,483,337.00	\$	1,347,333.00		4.32%	Ψ	04,018.00
		2021	LLUY	2022		2023		Combined Total		FY24
Otis		125		136		127		388	icelii	57.239
Sandisfie	ld	96		100		94		290		42.779
Total	**	221		236	11.00	221	33 113	678	CERTIFIC STATE	mm::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::
	l Valuation	FY2022 DLS Final I	Equ	alized Valuation		Total			% fc	or Each Town
Otis			\$	755,586,300	a herior				******	74.259
Sandisfie	ld		\$	262,006,000	\$	1,017,592,300			111111	25.75%

APPENDIX 2 (page 2 of 2)

CURRENT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY					Page 1 of 11	
	District Totals	District Totals Breakdown by Towns		% Breakdown by To		
		Otis	Sandisfield	Otis	Sandisfield	
District Foundation Enrollment (last 3 years average)	226	129	97	57.23%	42.77%	
Equalized Valuations	\$1,017,592,300	\$755,586,300	\$262,006,000	74.25%	25.75%	
50/50 Equal Weighting (Avg) of EV % & Enrollment %				65.74%	34.26%	
Adjusted Operating Budget to be assessed	\$3,620,556					
Required Local Minimum Contribution	\$2,351,188	\$1,443,945	\$907,243	61.41%	38.59%	
Remaining Adjusted Operating Budget to be assessed	\$1,269,368	\$726,423	\$542,945	57.23%	42.77%	
Transportation Budget to be assessed	\$219,258	\$125,475	\$93,783	57.23%	42.77%	
Capital Budget to be assessed	\$10,000	\$6,574	\$3,426	65.74%	34.26%	
TOTAL ASSESSMENT	\$3,849,814	\$2,302,417	\$1,547,397	59.81%	40.19%	
Tax Burden Factor: (% Total Assessment / % Total EV) - 1				-19.46%	56.11%	
CEY	\$4,979,284	\$3,698,113	\$1,281,171	74.27%	25.73%	
CEY - FY24 Assessment	\$1,129,470	\$1,395,696	-\$266,226			
FY24 Assessment / CEY	77.32%	62.26%	120.78%			

APPENDIX 3



 $\textbf{Reference:}\ \underline{https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.EQV.EQV}$

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education FY24 Chapter 70 and Net School Spending Formula Spreadsheet



08/10/23

	From DOR	Fro	m DOR				
	3	4 5	6		8		
Return to Index				1. Calcu	lation of effort goal	(target local share)	
More about the data	uni	iform property percentage 0.3534%	unifo	rm income percentage			
EA Town	total EQV 2022	local effort from property wealth	DOR total income 2020	local effort from income wealth	combined effort yield	FY24 foundation	
225 Otis	755,586,300	2,670,262	67,044,000	1,027,851	3,698,113	1,750,236	
260 Sandisfield	262,006,000	925,936	23,171,000	355,235	1,281,171	1,219,862	
Totals % Otis	\$1,017,592,300 74.25%		\$90,215,000 74.32%	\$1,383,086 74,32%	\$4,979,284 74.27%	\$2,970,098 58.93%	
% Sandisfield	25.75%		25.68%	25.68%	25.73%	41.07%	
Otis FY24 Assessment					\$2,302,417 \$1,547,397		
Sand FY24 Assessment							
					62.26%		
Otis Ass't % CEY					120.78%		
Sand Ass't % CEY							
011-4-4-1-1-4-604					\$1,395,696		
Otis Ass't Under CEY Sand Ass't Over CEY					\$266,226		
Sand ASS LOVEL CET							

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE	Otis
DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES	TOWN
BUREAU OF ACCOUNTS	

TAX RATE RECAPITULATION

Fiscal Year 2024

I. TAX RATE SUMMARY

la. Total amount to be raised (from page 2, IIe)

\$ 8,612,568.09

lb. Total estimated receipts and other revenue sources (from page 2, Ille)

2,995,126.69

lc. Tax Levy (la minus lb)

\$ 5,617,441.40

Id. Distribution of Tax Rates and levies

93.8452	5,271,699.12	042 524 040 00	morani i	
		813,534,010.00	6.48	5,271,700.38
0.0000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1.8616	104,574.29	16,137,590.00	6.48	104,571.58
		i i		
0.4971	27,924.30	4,309,700.00	6.48	27,926.86
96.2039		833,981,300.00		5,404,198.82
3.7961	213,243.69	32,907,806.00	6.48	213,242.58
100.0000		866,889,106.00		5,617,441.40
	1.8616 0.4971 96.2039 3.7961	1.8616 104,574.29 0.4971 27,924.30 96.2039 3.7961 213,243.69	1.8616 104,574.29 16,137,590.00 0.4971 27,924.30 4,309,700.00 96.2039 833,981,300.00 3.7961 213,243.69 32,907,806.00	1.8616 104,574.29 16,137,590.00 6.48 0.4971 27,924.30 4,309,700.00 6.48 96.2039 833,981,300.00 3.7961 213,243.69 32,907,806.00 6.48

MUST EQUAL 1C

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES

TOWN

BUREAU OF ACCOUNTS

TAX RATE RECAPITULATION

Fiscal Year 2024

I. TAX RATE SUMMARY

 Ia. Total amount to be raised (from page 2, Ile)
 \$ 4,570,769.44

 Ib. Total estimated receipts and other revenue sources (from page 2, Ille)
 1,280,694.79

 Ic. Tax Levy (Ia minus Ib)
 \$ 3,290,074.65

ld. Distribution of Tax Rates and levies

(b) Levy percentage (from LA5)	(c) Ic above times each percent in col (b)	(d) Valuation by class (from LA-5)	(e) Tax Rates (c) / (d) x 1000	(f) Levy by class (d) x (e) / 1000
87.0313	2,863,394.74	286,626,115.00	9.99	2,863,394.89
0.0000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.6052	85,713.02	8,579,958.00	9.99	85,713.78
0.0847	2,786.69	278,900.00	9.99	2,786.21
89.7212		295,484,973.00		2,951,894.88
10.2788	338,180.19	33,851,829.00	9.99	338,179.77
100.0000		329,336,802.00		3,290,074.65
	Levy percentage (from LA5) 87.0313 0.0000 2.6052 0.0847 89.7212 10.2788	Levy percentage (from LA5) lc above times each percent in col (b) 87.0313 2,863,394.74 0.0000 0.00 2.6052 85,713.02 0.0847 2,786.69 89.7212 10.2788 338,180.19	Levy percentage (from LA5) Ic above times each percent in col (b) Valuation by class (from LA-5) 87.0313 2,863,394.74 286,626,115.00 0.0000 0.00 0.00 2.6052 85,713.02 8,579,958.00 0.0847 2,786.69 278,900.00 89.7212 295,484,973.00 10.2788 338,180.19 33,851,829.00	Levy percentage (from LA5) Ic above times each percent in col (b) Valuation by class (from LA-5) Tax Rates (c) / (d) x 1000 87.0313 2,863,394.74 286,626,115.00 9.99 0.0000 0.00 0.00 0.00 2.6052 85,713.02 8,579,958.00 9.99 0.0847 2,786.69 278,900.00 9.99 89.7212 295,484,973.00 9.99 10.2788 338,180.19 33,851,829.00 9.99

MUST EQUAL 1C

APPENDIX 6

CURRENT OTIS ASSESSMENT	\$2,302,417	
Funding Lost By Sandisfield Withdrawal	\$2,056,862	
Sandisfield Assessment		\$1,547,397
Sandisfield Share of Chap 70		\$312,619
Reg Transportation Aid		\$196,846
Savings Accrued By Sandisfield Withdrawal	-\$485,811	
Tuitions for Sandisfield Pupils (est)		-\$485,811
Funding Potentially Gained By Sandisfield Withdrawal	-\$190,000	
Additional FRE Choice In (best case)		-\$190,000
NEW OTIS ASSESSMENT	\$3,683,468	
\$ INCREASE % INCREASE	\$1,381,051 79.08%	
FY24 Total Tuitions Paid FY23 % Sandisfield Enrollment Estimate of Sandisfield Tuitions	\$1,142,278 42.53% \$485,811	
# Sandisfield FRE Students Additional FRE Choice In (best case) Choice In Revenue per Pupil Choice In Revenue (best case)	38 38 \$5,000 \$190,000	