

## RDA narrative

Farmington River Regional School District (FRRSD) is at a crossroads. Under the current Regional District Agreement (RDA), the district is not financially sustainable and soon, voters in Sandisfield and Otis will determine at special town meetings whether the district continues intact or if the agreement is to be terminated. If either town votes down the new RDA, the town of Sandisfield may vote to withdraw from, and, thus seek to terminate, the district.

In 1992 an RDA was approved by both towns, creating the district. The RDA contains provisions for how the towns of Sandisfield and Otis would work together to establish, maintain, and fund a regional school district, all while creating a quality educational experience for the children of both towns. As a region, we are able to continue to educate our students close to home with local control through the School Committee.

Beginning in 2022, the School Committee took on the critical task of reviewing and revising the current RDA. In that review, a disparity was found between what the towns can afford to pay (according to the state) and how costs are currently divided between the towns. Recommended changes to the document include a new apportionment model, ensuring the financial sustainability of the district and that the school will continue to thrive and be a local and vital source of quality education for the children of Sandisfield and Otis. This apportionment model is grounded in the Combined Effort Yield (CEY), a number calculated by the state department of education to illustrate what each town can afford to pay toward operational costs, based on taxes and overall financial wealth. CEY was not something the state or towns calculated in 1992, when the region was formed.

On September 23, 2024, the School Committee unanimously voted FOR an amended RDA. Additionally, the Farmington River Regional Educators Association wrote a letter of support for the amended RDA, noting “the essential role that BOTH towns play in fostering a positive learning environment.”

Along with other guidelines for operating the district two significant provisions in the amended RDA are as follows:

1. The RDA will now be reviewed every five years.
2. The RDA contains a new apportionment model that more evenly distributes the educational costs associated with the average single family tax bill across both towns.

What does this change in the apportionment methodology mean to the taxpayers of Otis and Sandisfield? In summary, if the total changes were to be assessed through typical tax distribution, Otis taxpayers would have a slight increase in their annual taxes while Sandisfield taxpayers would have a slight decrease in taxes paid toward education. Under the current RDA, the portion of the average single family tax bill in Sandisfield attributable to FRRSD is \$600 more per year than what it is in Otis. The new apportionment methodology has the portion of the average single family tax bill that goes to FRRSD nearly equal for the two towns.

The amended RDA provides a comprehensive way for the two towns to collaborate, preserve a nurturing community for students and families, and maintain local oversight of our children's formative education.

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Proposed