



Rivendell Interstate School District
10 School Drive, Orford, NH 03777
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To: Vermont State Board of Education

RE: Rivendell Interstate School District, Proposed Changes to the Articles of Agreement

From: Jennifer Botzjorns, Interim Superintendent

CC: Sean Toohey, Lynn, Lynn, Blackman & Toohey, P.C

Date: December 18, 2024

Dear Vermont State Board of Education,

Rivendell Interstate School District (RISD) includes the towns of: Fairlee, VT; Orford, NH; Vershire, VT; and West Fairlee, VT. We serve approximately 400 students and operate three schools, two preK-5: Westshire (West Fairlee, approximately 80 students) and Samuel Morey (Fairlee, approximately 115 students) and one 6-12th grade building -Rivendell Academy (Orford, approximately 240 students). The district was formed in 1999 and is governed by the NH/VT Interstate Compact, and the Articles of Agreement.

The citizens have asked that the RISD Board put before the electorate, at the Annual Meeting on March 15, 2025, an article to change from voting from the floor at the Annual meeting to voting by Australian Ballot. The RISD Board has approved the actions, a hearing was conducted, and now the Board presents to you, as part of the prescribed timeline and procedures, the proposed changes to the RISD Articles of Agreement.

The proposal will then go to the NH State Board of Education (January 9, 2025) and then, if approved, shall be warned and presented to the voters, who must approve the measure by a 2/3 majority. If approved this would go into effect in March, 2026.

Proposed Amendments to the

Rivendell Interstate School District

Articles of Agreement

Pursuant to Article J, shall the voters of the Rivendell Interstate School District amend the Articles of Agreement to adopt all budgets by official ballot and adjust polling times by making the following additions and amendments to the Articles and Appendix A:

The following Articles and paragraphs shall be stricken in their entirety and replaced with the following:

Articles of Agreement

Section C: School Board Members and Other District Officers

The election of school board members, moderator, clerk, treasurer, and auditors of the Interstate District, as well as the budget vote, shall take place each year within a week following the annual Interstate School District meeting. The location of the District elections and official budget vote shall be the polling place in each individual town. The date, time, and locations of polling places shall be published in all warnings as required elsewhere in the Articles of Agreement.



Appendix A

Election Procedures

1. The election of school board members, moderator, clerk, treasurer and auditors of the Interstate District and the budget vote shall take place each year within a week following the annual Interstate School District meeting. The location of the District Elections and Official Budget Vote shall be in each individual town polling place. The date, time and locations of polling places shall be published on all warnings as required elsewhere in the Articles of Agreement.

2. The school board shall post a special warrant for the election of school district officers and official Budget, prescribing the place, day and hours of the election and budget vote in at least one public place in each member district at least 30 days not counting the date of posting and the date of voting) before the date of the earliest voting. In addition, the school board shall cause such special warrant to be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation in the District on at least one occasion, such publication to occur at least 10 days (not counting the day of publication and not counting the date of the election) before the date of the first voting. The school board may give such further notice of the voting as it deems appropriate under the circumstances.

4. The Clerk shall designate in writing to the school board the name assistants to be present at the individual town polling places to follow all applicable law and procedures regarding voting and the handling of ballots and checklists. The designated assistant(s) acting under the supervision of the Clerk shall have the authority to perform the duties of the Clerk under these election procedures.

11. The Moderator, in coordination with the Clerk and assistant clerks and local election officials, shall appoint a sufficient number of qualified voters from each of the member districts to serve as election officers of the Interstate District in both the town and District polling place.

18. The Clerk shall store the ballots, in a secure place, and 20 days prior to the vote shall present the ballots to assistant clerks and election officials in the individual town polling place in a manner consistent with all VT and NH statutory requirements.

23. The polls for voting by official ballot shall be open from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

33. Upon receipt of an envelope containing the marked ballot of an absentee voter, the Clerk or assistant clerks shall record the fact on the list of absent voters and safely keep the envelope, unopened, until the day of the election. During the hours polls are open, the Clerk shall handle all absentee ballots in a manner consistent with the general election procedures as prescribed by local election law.

44. After the closing of the polls, the election officials shall cause the unopened ballot boxes from each member district, together with a statement of any discrepancies in the list of absentee voters to be sealed and delivered to the Moderator, together with any spoiled or unused ballots. The voting shall take place in each individual town, ballots shall be transported to the Moderator's location at Rivendell Academy in Orford, NH in a manner consistent with Vermont statutory requirements regarding the transportation of official ballots.

The following paragraphs shall be added to Appendix A:

53. The vote to adopt the budget of the Interstate District shall be by official ballot and shall take place each year on the same date and at the same location as the election of school district officers.



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54. The budget vote shall be written in the form of a question, with boxes indicating a choice of “yes” and “no” directly to the right side of the question.

55. The budget ballot shall be entitled “OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR THE RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT” followed by the date of the budget vote and a facsimile signature of the Clerk who prepared the ballot. Immediately below, the following instruction shall be printed: “Instructions to Voters: To vote on the budget, mark a cross (X) in the square at the right of question.” This budget ballot question may appear on the same ballot as that used for the election of district-wide school district officers.

56. Budget ballots cast by the voters of the Interstate School District shall be commingled and shall not be counted according to the town in which a voter resides.

57. All election procedures in Appendix A concerning the election of school district officers shall apply to the budget vote by official ballot, except that with regard to a request for a recount of the budget vote, at least one registered voter from each town of the Interstate School District may together demand a recount of ballots if the margin by which the budget passed or failed is less than five percent of the total votes cast on the budget. The request shall be filed with the clerk within 10 days after the budget vote.

58. The District board, in consultation with the district Clerk and Moderator, shall establish policies and procedures to address: cost and reimbursement for personnel and assistant clerks utilized in the voting process, Australian ballot procedures as outlined in Vermont Title 17 Section 2680 including any specific details regarding certification and absentee ballots, and any other pertinent guidelines needed for the appropriate adherence to these Articles and Appendices.