The Annual Meeting was held in the gymnasium of Rivendell Academy in Orford, NH. Voters of Orford, NH, Fairlee, West Fairlee and Vershire, VT met for the purpose of holding the Annual District Meeting of the Rivendell Interstate School District pursuant to Article IV.G of the New Hampshire-Vermont Interstate School Compact. Approximately 122 voters were in attendance.

David Hooke, Moderator of the Rivendell Interstate School District, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Hooke asked that those present stand to say the Pledge of Allegiance to be led by three members of the Rivendell Athletic Leadership Council. Mr. Hooke read the Warrant, reviewed the procedures to follow during the meeting, and stated that the polls were opened at 6:00 p.m. and would remain open for one-half hour following the completion of business under the other articles. Mr. Hooke recognized State Senator Mark MacDonald (Orange County-VT) and asked any members of the press to please stand to be recognized. Lillian Gaughan, Journal Opinion, and Nora Doyle-Burr, Valley News, were recognized.

**Article 3:** To hear reports from the School Board and others relating to the construction/renovation, educational, and financial issues facing the District.

The article was moved and seconded. Marc DeBois, Chair, thanked the staff and administration for their work in the school during the past school year. He also thanked Cicely Richardson as a retiring Board member who has served for six years.

Sarah Rinehimer shared some highlights of the three schools, using a slide presentation. She spoke about Westshire’s early childhood program now with 28 students; last spring the students built 5 raised bed gardens; started a composting program and received a $2,000 grant to partnership with Rural Vermont; and the ROCKS program. Then spoke about Samuel Morey’s pre-school (early childhood program) also growing; starting their composting program; will be building raised bed gardens with a $2,500 VRP grant; 6th grade went into the communities for an oral history lesson on the Fairlee town hall and worked on a visual media program; second year that students participated in the Inspiring Kids program which promotes youth leadership and community building. Rinehimer stated the VISIONS program is still going strong and the Rivendell Rec program is up and running again. In regards to the Rivendell Academy, she spoke of Early College program which allows students to earn college credits while in high school; one student who completed an on-line program and completed her project of “Mars Mission” that resulted in her being selected to spend some time working and studying at the Stennis Space Center; the Rivendell Robotics program attended several competitions and won the VT/NH state championship; continuing to get strong NECAP scores in reading, writing and math and ranked 11th out of 66 schools in NH and 5th of NECAP scores.

Anne Duncan Cooley, Chair of the Orford Academy Building Task Force, spoke about the future of the Orford Academy building being possibly used for mixed income senior housing. The District has entered into a two-year memorandum of understanding with AHEAD out of Littleton, NH, giving the District time to formulate a plan to present to the town.

David Ricker addressed the Strategic Plan for the District. The existing plan ended in 2013 and this plan will build on it, but with a more simplistic approach. Statistics were compiled from surveys completed by the members of the Rivendell District which allows the Board to focus on important issues to District community members. Additional surveys are still available to anyone to complete. Using a slide presentation, Ricker reviewed the three main goals currently being worked on.

Mark Avery spoke on the finances and budget. While spending is up approximately $190K, $150K of that increase is salary and benefits. The increase is just over 2%, where the state of Vermont is averaging just over 3%. Over the past 7 years, the District’s budget has increased 1% on average per year. The revenue is up 180,000, primarily due to out-of-district tuition, plus the surplus from last year’s budget. This is the third consecutive year of revenue increases. The Vermont towns’ tax rates will stay close to what they currently are, however, NH will increase primarily due to a higher average student enrollment.

**Article 4:** Shall the voters of the District raise and appropriate the sum of $9,961,522 for the operating budget for the District for the 2015-2016 fiscal year?
The article was moved and seconded. Jim McGoff (Orford) spoke on the budget being too high; Town of Orford is paying almost $4M, but have fewer students; the highest tuition rate of neighboring districts; and he asked for an explanation as to why tuition rate is over $16,000 and the student to teacher ratio is so low. Chair DeBois responded that the Board needs to balance the quality of education against the cost; Board feels the budget is a tight, sound budget to support the programs being offered; need to treat our teachers fairly; and to be offering a quality education. McGoff stated that Warren won’t be sending students to Rivendell because they now have a choice. DeBois stated he understands that Woodsville is offering Warren a discount, but believes that rate is still higher than what Rivendell offers. McGoff said the District needs a larger number of tuition students to support the budget, not just one or two per year; feels the tax rate is unacceptable for Orford taxpayers, and while students deserve a good education, it has to be better balanced against the budget; he asked why the tuition rate isn’t closer to $14,000. DeBois responded that the Board sets the tuition rate each year based on a state formula and it is a competitive rate.

Paul Dalton (Orford) asked for clarification on the source for the cost per pupil of $16,445, but read an article stating that tuition students of 23 brought in tuition of $213,190 making the tuition rate of $9,269; asked what is the actual cost per student – using the bottom line divided by the # of students makes the cost per student actually $19,500. Keri Gelenian, Head of Schools/RA Principal, stated that the some students are part time and the numbers can fluctuate; he has made an effort to reach out to Waits River students and they visit the school yearly; his understanding is that Rivendell’s tuition rate is the lowest offered to Warren students from other schools, and has kept the communication lines open with the Warren School. Superintendent Brenda Needham spoke to the cost per student rate; explaining that the data the Valley News uses is received from the VT Agency of Education but their data is actually a year old; the student to teacher ratio is low and the District is aware of it; and this is one of many challenges when wanting to deliver a quality education with declining enrollment. Dick Paulson, Chief Financial Officer, discussed the formula that the State uses to determine the cost per student; $16,746 is after local revenues are applied to the total budget, but the rate is over $20,000 if you use the total expenses.

Tom Thomson (Orford) asked why the number of students in the Annual Report is different from what the Valley News reported. Kathy Hooke stated the average daily attendance is what is reflected on page 45 of the Annual Report. Thomson clarified is question as to why the Valley News listed 439 students and the Rivendell Annual Report shows 493. Needham said that the Valley News numbers do not include the pre-school student count. Thomson stated that the budget keeps going up and the student enrollment keeps going down, but nothing seems to change as far as the spending goes; and he also stated his dismay at the lack of voters attending the annual meeting.

Ann Green (Orford) asked for clarification on the loss of grants to fund the pre-school program and pre-school tuition. Needham answered that the pre-school budget has been incorporated into the budget for several years and that grants dollars are also used to support the program; one position is now fully funded by the budget, but because of changes in Vermont District is hoping to recover this cost. Green asked if District pays for transportation for pre-school tuition students and Needham replied no.

Terry Harwood (Orford) commented on the enrollment numbers; 7-12 is declining but the teacher count remains the same; enrollment increases seem to be in the elementary schools; and that taxes are too high. Candy Malinoski (West Fairlee) asked about percentages to salary and why some departments are higher than others. Paulson responded that benefits are offered to all employees that work 30 hours or more; employees typically pay 15% of health insurance, whether it’s single, 2-person or family coverage, therefore, a 30-hour employee that has family coverage will reflect a higher percentage than a 40-hour employee with single coverage. Malinoski also asked why co-curricular employees received benefits. Paulson said it is only the Athletic Director who has a portion of his salary applied to this line item.

Bonnie McAdams (Fairlee) called the question, seconded, and passed by a voice vote.

McGoff asked for a paper ballot for the budget vote. This was moved and seconded by more than seven voters.

Total votes cast were 122, 78 voted yes and 44 voted no. Article passed.

**Article 5:** Shall the voters of the District authorize the School Board to add the sum of $50,000 for future capital needs reserve fund?
The article was moved and seconded. With no discussion, the moderator asked if the voters were ready for the question. Article passed by voice vote

**Article 6:** Shall the voters of the District authorize the School Board to apply for, accept, and expend, without further action by the voters of the District, all money from any governmental or private source which becomes available during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

The article was moved and seconded. With no discussion, the moderator asked if the voters were ready for the question. Article passed by voice vote

**Article 7:** To transact any other business which may lawfully properly come before the meeting.

There was no other business to discuss.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh
District Clerk, RISD
March 22, 2015

**Annual Meeting, March 17, 2015**

Ballots were officially counted and tallied as below:

**Fairlee Board Member (3 year):**
- **Mark Avery** - 26
- Write in candidates received the following: David Ricker (1)
- Blank (3)
- Total Ballots – 30

**Orford Board Member (3 year):**
- **Michael Smyth** - 38
- Write in candidates received the following: Ted Cooley (2), C Richardson (1), Rob Thompson (1)
- Blank (6)
- Total Ballots – 48

**Vershire Board Member (3 year):**
- **Jean Mac Donald (21)**
- Total Ballots – 21

**West Fairlee Board Member (3 year):**
- Write in candidates received the following: Erin Cilley (3), Kevin Petrone (1), Delsie Hoyt (1), Becky Dexter (1), Rebecca Wurdak (1), Jen Shatney (1)
- Blank (4)
- Total Ballots – 120

Registered voters in West Fairlee 464
Write in candidate needs 1% to win election – no write in received the percentage required – no one was elected.

**For At-Large Board Member, 1 year term:**
- **Kathy Blanchard** – 95
- Write in candidates received the following: David Green (1), David Ricker (1), Carl Schmidt (1), Kathy Hooke (1)
- Blank (11)
- Spoiled (1)
- Total Ballots - 111

**For Moderator, 1 Year Term:**
- **David Hooke** - 105
- Write in candidates received the following: Paul Dalton (1)
- Blank (5)
- Total Ballots - 111
For District Clerk, 1 Year Term:
    Esther Dobbins-Marsh - 104
    Blank Ballots 73)
    Total Ballots - 111

For Treasurer, 1 Year Term:
    Esther Dobbins-Marsh - 105
    Blank Ballots (6)
    Total Ballots - 111

For Auditor, 3 Year Term:
    Write in candidates received the following: Peter Berger (3), Jon Molesworth (2), Terry Martin (2), Mark Blanchard (2), Kathy Hooke (2), Rick Walker (1), Lauren Senn (1), Ryan Peebles (1), Lance Colby (1), Doug Tifft (1), Joe Arcolio (1), Paul Dalton (1)
    Blank (93)
    Total Ballots – 111

Registered voters in the District – 2,459
Write in candidate needs 1% to win election – no write in received the percentage required – no one was elected.

For Auditor, 2 Year Term:
    Write in candidates received the following: Mark Blanchard (2), Peter Lange (1), Debrah Kingsbury (1), Paul Sargent (1), Terry Harwood (1), Joe Arcolio (1), Ruth Hooke (1)
    Blank (103)
    Total Ballots – 111

Registered voters in the District – 2,459
Write in candidate needs 1% to win election – no write in received the percentage required – no one was elected.

All ballots and exit checklists are sealed and on file per request of the District Clerk at her office in Hanover, NH.

All write in votes are listed above as spelled by the voters on their actual ballots, regardless of whether spelling is correct or not.