

[Enrollment formula change back before Heath voters](#)

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Published: 06-14-2024 2:43 PM

HEATH — Having been two voters short of a quorum when the articles came up at Annual Town Meeting in May, residents will reconvene Monday to vote on regional agreement revisions that would change the school enrollment formula that is used to calculate town assessments.

Monday’s meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at the Jacobs Road Municipal Center.

Currently, town assessments in the Mohawk Trail Regional School District are determined by counting the number of students enrolled on a five-year rolling average. Depending on the ratio of students enrolled over those five years, each town pays its portion of the school budget. This number does not include School Choice students, charter students and students who enrolled in different districts due to special needs services that are not offered by Mohawk Trail. The revised agreement, if approved, would include these students in the enrollment formula.

Originally, the matter was to be voted on during Heath’s Annual Town Meeting in May. When the series of regional agreement articles came up, residents requested a quorum, but only 54 residents were still present — two short of the 56 voters needed.

During a meeting held on Wednesday, Mohawk Trail Regional School District School Committee members discussed the amendments, with some members speaking in support of the change and others who are against it.

Hawley committee member Scott Purinton said when students choice into a school, the sending town doesn’t need to pay capital expenses.

“The problem in Heath is, yes, there is this imbalance because foundation enrollment would include all those students, including those who enroll elsewhere,” he said. “We, the Mohawk district, are obligated to provide a place for all the students to go.”

Budge Litchfield, School Committee member from Heath, said he “can’t vote in favor” of the amendment and he plans to abstain.

“General citizens in Heath, their experience regarding school is very different than the experience in all our other towns,” Litchfield said. “I think Heath families and therefore Heath citizens are really conflicted over how to relate to the school district. ... The town has never gotten over [the closure of Heath Elementary School].”

School Committee member Jason Cusimano from Shelburne chimed in by saying he doesn’t “fully agree with the reason for not supporting the amendment,” since only nine out of 45 children in Heath go to their assigned school, which means that Heath is not paying capital assessments.

“They send a lot of kids to different schools,” Cusimano said about Heath. “I don’t necessarily agree the money should follow the kids ... the fact is you’re not paying capital anywhere. ... I sympathize with the differences in Heath. I get a lot of your arguments, Budge; I understand why you want to abstain, but I don’t fully agree with the reasoning.”

Litchfield noted Heath is paying for capital expenses at Colrain Central School.

Like Litchfield, School Committee Chair Martha Thurber said during Wednesday’s meeting that Heath and the school board have been at odds since the closure of Heath’s elementary school.

“You can argue the numbers either way,” she said about the enrollment formula amendment. “It’s probably not going to pass [during Monday’s meeting]. I don’t even know where to begin to try and repair the relationship.”

To view the text of the articles to be voted on, visit [tinyurl.com/HeathAgreementChanges](https://tinyurl.com/HeathAgreementChanges).

*Source: <https://www.recorder.com/Enrollment-formula-change-back-before-Heath-voters-55600342>*