

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF MADISON
October 28, 2025
MINUTES**

Selectmen Present – Adam Price; Joy Gray; Jim Eldridge; Jake Boewe; Nicole Nordlund

Others Present – Town Administrator Linda Shackford; Administrative Assistant Kate Young; Police Chief Jim Hayford; Librarian Sloane Jarell; Videographers Aysia Wellinghurst and Lauren Woss

Where and When Posted – Town Hall upper & lower bulletin boards and Madison & Silver Lake Post Offices on December 16, 2024.

Meeting Called to Order – By Price at 4:30 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance - Price led those in attendance in reciting the Pledge.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Eldridge, seconded by Boewe to approve the minutes of October 14, 2025 as amended. The motion passed **5-0**.

APPROVAL OF MANIFESTS: Price read aloud the Manifest of October 27-31, 2025 in the amount of \$425,027.26. The manifest breakdown is as follows: \$35,369.98 for payroll; \$10,490.24 for payroll liabilities; \$53,732.29 for accounts payable; \$20,292.40 for NHRS; and \$325,000 for Madison School District.

Gray asked that a Request for Payment for \$450.00 to the Madison Fire Rescue LTD be held until the receipt to back it up has been received.

Motion by Gray, seconded by Nordlund to approve the manifest with the adjustment of \$450 subtracted from the accounts payable line. The motion passed **5-0**. Gray clarified with Shackford that this bill be brought back to the Board before payment is made. Young reprinted the manifest; the Board signed the updated version.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tia Gagnon - thanked the Board for setting up the meeting with NH DNCR and hearing her out. She expressed appreciation for everyone who attended to discuss the rec path and get updates from the State. Gagnon emphasized the importance of giving everyone the opportunity to speak their mind and provide feedback on the development of the rec path. She stressed the need for transparent and consistent updates from the State so that Town leadership boards could make informed decisions that represent the Town. She advocated for a rec path that reflects the values of the Madison community.

Hank Walther of 557 Plains Rd - introduced himself as the owner and operator of Silver Lake Rail Riders. He thanked the Board and the State for allowing his business to open this year. He reported that the business was doing well, with 100% positive feedback from both local residents and out-of-state visitors. He shared his Google reviews, all five stars, as well as positive Facebook posts from locals.

Walther mentioned that his business would only be open for three more days - Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. He offered all Madison residents a free ride during these final days of operation, directing them to use the code "free" when booking through the slrailriders.com website.

DISCUSSION ITEMS/NEW BUSINESS:

Johanna Lyons, State Park Planning and LU Administrator for DNCR: Rail Trail Discussion - presented information about the rail trail project. She provided a handout and explained the background of the project:

- In 2024, a House Bill established a study committee to determine the future of the rail line.
- The study committee recommended transferring the rail line from the Department of Transportation (DOT) to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR).
- The study determined the best use for the rail corridor would be for recreational purposes.
- Another recommendation was to negotiate with a private landowner who owned about 700 feet of the rail line, as this section was an important snowmobile corridor connecting towns throughout the valley.
- Administrative control was officially transferred from DOT to DNCR in April with Governor's Council approval.

Lyons explained that in June, they formed an advisory committee with representatives from all communities along the rail corridor, as well as various stakeholder groups representing equestrian, bicycle, non-motorized, and motorized interests. The committee consists of 15-18 people who will help with planning for the rail corridor.

In September, they entered into an exchange of use agreement with Mr. Underwood, who owns the section of trail in question at the Silver Lake Railroad Station. This agreement allows snowmobiles and future public use to cross his property while also allowing him to conduct commercial activity - specifically, to provide commercial bike tours. This is a non-exclusive, three-year agreement that is transferable. Mr. Underwood has entered into a secondary agreement with Silver Lake Rail Riders to operate the rail bike business.

For next steps, they are working on a request for qualifications to hire engineering services to assess the rail line, bridges, and road crossings. They will also conduct a management study to develop recommendations for the rail corridor, including whether to keep or remove the rails. They plan to analyze each segment of the corridor to determine its best use. They have a preferred consultant and are waiting for a proposal. Lyons hopes to begin work on the management plan in January and complete it within a year.

Lyons emphasized that they plan robust public outreach throughout the planning process and that all committee meetings are open to the public.

During the Q&A, several points were clarified:

- The agreement is with Mr. Underwood, who then sub-contracted with Hank Walther of Silver Lake Rail Riders.
- The rail line is currently only open for snowmobiling, not general public use.
- The rail corridor runs from Route 28 in Ossipee to the Albany/Conway town line, crossing Route 16, spanning approximately 21 miles.
- The planning process will consider environmental impacts and the best uses for each section of the corridor.

Public comments included concerns about wetlands protection if the corridor is widened, and encouragement to focus on the long-term community benefits of the project.

2026 Budgets: Library and Rec Department - were presented to the Board.

Library Budget: Sloan Jarell, the Library Director, was present.

- Overall 2.2% increase over the total budget.
- Majority of increase was for library director and library assistant salaries.
- Small increase in ILS support, 2% increase, \$33
- Some line items showed cuts of 4.55% and 6.67%

Recreation Department Budget:

- 10% overall increase, of just over \$7,000.
- The largest increase was in the transportation line in the amount of \$3,000, which had been significantly overspent in the current year for summer camp transportation.
- The department has increased the \$3 fee per student for field trips to \$5 to offset transportation costs.
- Technology line increased from \$200 to \$2,950 to purchase "Rec Desk" or similar software that would make the department more efficient and potentially delay the need for a full-time director.
- Several decreases were noted: \$1,000 reduction in equipment, \$1,000 reduction in supplies, \$750 reduction in swim instructor, and \$450 reduction in fees and dues.

Price explained that the department brought in just under \$35,000 in fees this year:

- Summer camp 8-week fees: \$15,250
- Summer camp weekly fees: \$9,600
- Field trip fees: \$6,592
- Resident sports: \$2,435
- Non-resident sports: \$720
- Swim lesson fees: \$395

The department also maintains the Rec Revolving Fund of approximately \$6,000 for items like coach sweatshirts and events like the Halloween Dance and pumpkin carving.

The Board discussed the possibility of having the beach be a drop-off location to reduce transportation costs, as well as potentially purchasing a bus, though this would require a certified driver. The camp counselor increase was explained as being due to more consistent use of the 40-hour per week counselors throughout the summer who are paid at a higher rate.

ABC Regarding Selectmen's Health Care Vote - Sharon Shilling, Chairman of the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC), requested that the Selectmen temporarily vacate their decision to increase employee healthcare premium contributions from 7% to 8.5%. She explained that the ABC was not in possession of this year's rates or information regarding the new numbers and was not able to advise the Board.

She noted that the original ABC recommendation last year had been to increase to 10%, but the Selectmen had chosen to go from 5% to 7%. The ABC would like to update their analysis from last year using the current year's numbers to properly advise on whether 8.5%, 9%, or 10% would be appropriate.

Price saw no reason to vacate the vote at this time as the percentage change to the employee's contribution would not take place until the first of the year, allowing for time should a change be made.

Gray said she had abstained from the previous vote by stating she wanted more information about what the 7% contribution was for 2025, what the premium increases would be, and what the impact on employees would be at different contribution levels.

Motion by Nordlund, seconded by Gray to vacate the previous vote on increasing employee healthcare contributions to 8.5% until more information is available. The motion failed **2-3**.

During discussion, it was clarified that there had not been a formal vote on the 8.5% increase made; no changes will be made to the minutes.

2026 Health and Dental Rates - Shackford presented the 2026 health and dental rates:

- Health insurance premiums are increasing by 14.7%
- Dental insurance premiums are increasing by 4.4%

Last year's health insurance increase was 16%. Shackford explained that Health Trust is trying to rebuild their reserves after they were depleted during COVID. They currently have \$43 million in reserves but are aiming for \$115 million. They are increasing rates gradually to avoid forcing members to leave the pool.

The Board discussed signing the agreement for the new rates but decided to review the information further and consider signing it at their November 10 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: There was none.

SELECTMEN LISTS:

Selectman Nordlund – brought up the following:

- Nordlund confirmed that the Board had nothing to bring to the Conservation Commission at their meeting next week.
- She asked about the Town's policy for disposal or sale of old equipment, noting that she'd prefer all equipment be listed online rather than just in newspaper ads to reach more potential buyers.
- She expressed support for the cost analysis form developed by the CI Committee for major purchases, noting that the state uses a similar document for purchases over \$1,000. She suggested making this a requirement for all departments for large purchases, as it ensures all homework has been done before making purchases and explores options like grants.

Selectman Gray - discussed several items:

- She requested that the Capital Improvement Committee have a page on the Town website under the Boards and Committees section, with the cost analysis form uploaded there. The Board was in favor of this request; Shackford will make the addition.

- Gray asked if there is a binder containing policies related to purchases and sales of Town property. Shackford explained there is not one binder containing them all; Gray requested one to be assembled to assist the CI Committee.
- Gray was approached with a question about a policy for Town property on private property with Price explaining that there is a section in the Personnel Policy regarding use of Town property. Gray was of the understanding that the roll-off truck dropped a container off an employee's property; Gray wants to be sure policies are being followed.
- Gray asked for the Veterans Monument page on the website be updated with instructions on how to have a name engraved on the monument.
- She requested information about procedures for conducting personnel performance reviews, as November is the timeframe for reviews. Shackford will pull together the evaluation form and job descriptions. Gray will send Shackford information on an organizational chart.
- She provided an update on the Food Pantry, noting that after the last meeting's discussion, the pantry created a Facebook page, set up a PayPal charitable account, and had received about \$6,500 in donations. She provided the Facebook page information and mentioned a website would be launched soon.

Selectman Eldridge – had no items.

Selectman Price - reported to the Board:

- The ball field has had the bases removed and we're working toward peeling the field. He mentioned potentially putting grass in the infield next spring.
- Price reported on the Halloween event, which went well despite a minor incident with teenagers in the boys' bathroom. He mentioned that 35 pumpkins were carved and everyone had a good time.
- He noted that basketball registration is open for girls and boys in grades 4 through 6, with information available on the Recreation Department's Facebook page.
- Price brought up the offer by the Kennett Company, the parcel on East Shore Drive, stating that after reviewing the deed and tax map, he believed the Town should accept the donation of the land.

Motion by Price, seconded by Eldridge to formally accept the offer to donate the Kennett parcel on East Shore Drive to the Town of Madison. The motion passed **5-0**.

Selectman Boewe – summarized the meeting at 3:00pm today at the ball field regarding lighting for the field. The Board met with a lighting company representative who would use Google Earth to scale the field and provide an itemized list of needed equipment, including poles and lights. This would allow them to determine total costs and identify which components might be donated or funded through grants. He mentioned that the representative would connect them with a State liaison who handles grants and pricing for municipalities, similar to the state contract process for police cars. Boewe noted that it would likely be well after the first of the year before they had solid numbers on the project.

ADMINISTRATOR LIST - Shackford reported that the Town was granted \$255,044 from the Granite State Clean Fleet Grant for replacement of the Town's 2005 Peterbilt truck.

DEPARTMENT HEAD'S LISTS

Chief Hayford - reported on several items:

- Drug Take Back Day on Saturday collected over 20 pounds of drugs, half of which came from the permanent drug box in the hallway that accepts drugs year-round.
- He had investigated radar signs as requested by the board and found that through a grant from the Office of Highway Safety, they could get a pole-mounted radar sign for about \$862 which is the Town's cost after grant reimbursement, instead of the full \$3,447 price.
- He informed the board about a major upcoming expense for new dispatch software. The current county dispatch center software is expected to crash within the next year, and the replacement from Central Square would cost the town approximately \$18,808, with annual costs increasing from about \$5,000 to \$9,000. Chief Hayford explained that the software is essential for electronic submissions to courts, crash reports to the state, and citations to motorists. The upgrade would provide significant improvements in functionality but comes with a cost. The County plans to begin implementation around April 1, with a one-year build time.

SIGNATURE ITEMS:

Manifest

Payroll & Accounts Payable Checks

Camden National Bank General Fund Signature Card

Intent to Cut: Allegro Pines Association 129-017&031, 130-003, 256-011, 133-004

Request for Payment: Rec Revolving Fund Mike Anthony \$50.00

Conway Embroidery \$1,201.50

Adam Price \$293.26

HealthTrust 2026 Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Rates Agreement

Motion by Eldridge, seconded by Gray to adjourn. The motion passed **5-0**.

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 pm.

NEXT SELECTMEN'S MEETING – The next Selectmen's meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 10, 2025 commencing at 4:30 pm at Town Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator