

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF MADISON
November 10, 2025
MINUTES**

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

Others Present – Town Administrator Linda Shackford; Town Clerk/Tax Collector/Fire Chief Michael Brooks; DPW Director Josh Shackford; Planning Board Members Marc Ohlson and Tia Gagnon; Videographers Evan Woss 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 28, 2025 3:00pm meeting as written. The motion passed **4-1**.

Motion by Gray, seconded by Eldridge to approve the minutes of October 28, 2025 4:00pm meeting as written. The motion passed **5-0**.

APPROVAL OF MANIFESTS: Price read aloud the Manifest of November 10-17, 2025 in the amount of \$198,124.57. The manifest breakdown is as follows: \$37,246.77 for payroll; \$10,881.62 for payroll liabilities; \$49,996.18 for accounts payable; and \$100,000 for Madison School District.

Motion by Eldridge, seconded by Boewe to approve the manifest. The motion passed **5-0**.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were none

David Smolen at Gibson Center PILOT:

David Smolen, Executive Director of the Gibson Center in North Conway and Silver Lake Senior Housing Corporation, presented two items for the Board's consideration.

First, he wanted to gauge the Board's interest in exploring a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Silver Lake Landing. He explained that a vacant unit is a 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom space on two floors that could potentially be redeveloped into two units of affordable housing.

Second, he requested renegotiation of the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreement between the Town and Silver Lake. He explained that Silver Lake has experienced financial challenges with lost revenue, and they are looking to reduce expenses. The current PILOT agreement pays 10% of gross rent, and they would like to reduce it to around 5%, which would save about \$9,000 annually.

Mr. Smolen noted that if they could develop two new units, the increased revenue could help offset the reduction in the PILOT payment. He emphasized that Silver Lake Landing is run very efficiently and provides important affordable housing for seniors in the area. He also mentioned that they prioritize Madison residents when appropriate, as part of their agreement.

The Board agreed to consider both requests and placed the item on the agenda for the November 25th meeting. Price indicated that there is general support for the block grant proposal, the Board would like time to review the PILOT agreement details before making a decision.

Preliminary Department Budget Reviews:

The **DPW budget** was presented by Director Shackford showing a 5.97% increase equating to \$60,800 over last year, with key factors being:

- Salary increases across the board excluding the director position.
- Significant increase in salt costs.
- Higher vehicle repair expenses.
- Addition of a part-time transfer station position at \$26,000 equating to 20 hours/week at \$25/hour.

The Board discussed the reinstatement of the part-time Transfer Station position that was removed last year, with J. Shackford explaining that it proved difficult to operate without this position. Regarding the salt budget, it was noted that the Town uses less salt than neighboring communities like Freedom, Tamworth, and Conway. The salt price has increased by nearly \$6 per ton, though there are still 30 tons left over from last year.

The discussion then shifted to the Capital Improvement Plan and the Highway Heavy Equipment Expendable Trust Fund. J. Shackford shared concerns about planning long-term for equipment replacement when Town Meeting attendees sometimes cut these allocations.

The **Elections budget**, presented by Town Clerk/Tax Collector Brooks, showed a 122.39% increase equating to \$8,200 over last year due to 2026 being an election year with three scheduled elections:

- Increased pay for supervisors.
- Higher expenses for vote tally setup.
- Increased salary for checkers.
- Additional postage costs.

Brooks explained that Supervisor of the Checklist pay is now based on the number of checklist sessions, which increases in years with multiple elections. He also mentioned that there would be expenses related to the new voting machine being implemented in March, plus costs for the accessible voting system that must be available for all elections.

The **Emergency Management budget**, presented by Fire Chief Brooks, showed a 17.52% increase equating to \$1,700 over last year. Cuts in some areas but an increase in the maintenance line to cover deferred generator maintenance. The total increase was due to a \$2,300 maintenance service that needed to be deferred from this year, in addition to the annual maintenance costs of approximately \$6,200. This covers generators at the school, lower garage, upper garage, Town Hall building, and fire station.

The **Financial Administration budget**, presented by Town Clerk/Tax Collector Brooks, showed a 3.81% increase equating to \$5,648. over last year, which included:

- 3.5% wage increases
- 3.5% increase for computer support
- 16.6% increase for memberships (a \$100 change)
- Increase in postage costs due to higher postal rates and more residents moving to town with multiple vehicles.

The **Fire Department budget**, presented by Fire Chief Michael Brooks, showed no overall increase. A shuffle of \$1,000 from the fire warden line was made to cover an increase in mutual aid dues. Brooks explained that the mutual aid dues increase was necessary to fund equipment, site leases, electricity, and communications for the mutual aid association. He noted that the mutual aid association funded two consoles in the dispatch center, and the technology costs have been increasing.

In response to a question about taking EMS in-house, the Chief expressed interest in restoring ambulance capability to supplement the current contract service. He explained that Action Ambulance will no longer have a contract with the Town of Conway as of January 1, 2027, which could potentially impact Madison. He was concerned about response times during bad weather and the fact that some residents refuse ambulance transport due to cost concerns.

Master Plan NCC Contract – Marc Ohlson and Tia Gagnon:

Ohlson presented information on the North Country Council (NCC) contract for completing the Town's master plan. The steering committee decided to work with a consultant to help complete all sections of the Master Plan and gather community feedback.

They've negotiated with NCC to phase the project:

- Phase 1 would cost \$22,495 and complete the first two legally required sections which are Vision and Land.
- Phase 2 would require a warrant article at town meeting for approximately \$14,000 to complete the remaining sections. Price noted that these prices are based upon an annual membership to NCC in the amount of \$4,285.

The total cost for the complete Master Plan would be about \$37,000, significantly less than the original estimate of \$100,000. The committee is also exploring grants that might cover some costs for the next phase.

The Board discussed the importance of updating the master plan, which hasn't been fully updated since 2002.

Motion by Eldridge, seconded by Gray to sign the professional services agreement with NCC. The motion passed **5-0**.

Employee Review Schedule:

The Board discussed the schedule for employee reviews, clarifying that they would only review department heads. Department heads would complete reviews of their staff members by December 23rd for the Board to review at a January meeting.

The Board scheduled non-public sessions to conduct department head reviews, with two reviews on November 25th starting at 3:15 PM and additional reviews to follow. The goal is to have all reviews completed by the end of December, with discussion of any department head reviews on January 7th.

2026-2030 Assessing Contract

The Board reviewed the proposed 2026-2030 assessment contract, which showed a 65% increase over the current contract. The annual assessment cost would be \$35,856 through 2030, with a cost of \$168,660 to the complete revaluation in 2030.

The Board expressed concern about the significant increase and asked Shackford to investigate other assessment companies to compare prices. The Board agreed to put the contract out to bid before making a decision, with the understanding that a contract needs to be signed by December 31st.

Letter of Intent related to GSCF Grant:

The Board reviewed a letter of intent to purchase a truck using a GSCF grant. The truck would cost approximately \$360,000, with \$255,000 coming from the grant. The letter of intent is necessary to hold and build the vehicle in time to meet the grant deadline by the end of 2026.

Motion by Eldridge, seconded by Boewe to sign the letter of intent for the truck, subject to approval at Town Meeting. The motion passed **5-0**.

Requests to Trustees of Trust Funds:

The Board approved the following requests to the Trustees of Trust Funds:

Motion by Price, seconded by Boewe to request the withdrawal by the Trustee of the Trust Funds for \$26,000 from the Historical Society Building Improvement Expendable Trust Fund to reimburse the general fund for the expenses incurred for the painting of the Historical Society building, seconded by Jake. The motion passed **5-0**.

Motion by Adam, seconded by Boewe to request the withdrawal by the Trustee of the Trust Funds for \$250 from the Veterans Monument Fund to reimburse the general fund for the expenses related to the engraving of names on the Veterans Monument. The motion passed **5-0**.

Motion by Adam, seconded by Boewe to request the withdrawal by the Trustee of the Trust Funds for \$16,297.43 from the Highway Heavy Equipment Expendable Trust Fund to reimburse the general fund for expenses incurred for HP Fairfield and Allied Equipment invoices. The motion passed **4-1**.

Gray agreed to meet with Shackford on Wednesday morning to rectify the expenditures regarding PFAS by determining what can be paid from the grant, Groundwater ETF or operating budget.

2025 Tax Rate Setting:

The Board discussed setting the 2025 tax rate. Using \$300,000 from the \$1,333,858 in unreserved fund balance would result in a municipal tax rate of \$2.39 and an overall tax rate of \$8.98, which is significantly lower than last year's rate of \$15.77.

The Board also discussed using approximately \$360,000 from the unreserved fund balance to purchase the truck at Town Meeting related to the GSCF grant outright rather than through a lease agreement. This would allow the Town to avoid interest payments, and the grant would eventually replenish \$255,000 back into the general fund.

Motion by Adam, seconded by Eldridge to set the overlay at \$80,000 and use \$300,000 to buy down the tax rate, setting the municipal rate at \$2.39 and the overall rate at \$8.98. The motion passed **4-0-1** with Gray abstaining, as she wanted more time to consider all factors.

The 2025 Tax Rate breakdown landed as follows:

Town	\$2.39
School	\$4.89
County	\$0.72
State School	<u>\$0.98</u>
	\$8.98

The Board also authorized signing the tax warrant out of session once DRA approval is received, with a **motion** by Price, seconded by Eldridge. The motion passed **5-0**.

Albert Road Update:

Shackford provided an update on Albert Road, reporting that she had heard from three residents and the DPW about improvements made to the road. The DPW had cleaned out culverts at the bottom of the hill. The residents indicated they were still working on improvements though they hadn't completed ditching work yet. Work would continue in the spring.

The Board noted that while progress had been made, more work was needed, particularly ditching and possibly using different road material. There was some concern about whether the road would withstand a wet winter, but it was acknowledged that if the ground freezes soon, that would help stabilize the road until spring. Shackford will place this on an agenda in the spring.

Ballfield Lighting Results:

Boewe reported that they received a quote of \$205,644.06 for lighting the ball fields. This price does not include the 75-foot poles needed for field lighting as the vendor doesn't source these. The quote includes both fields and general area lighting.

The project could potentially be broken down into separate components:

- General lighting at approximately \$55,000.
- Per field lighting at approximately \$75,000 each, not including poles and labor.

The Board discussed next steps, including having Brooks reach out to Public Service, seeking grants, volunteers and getting labor estimates from electricians. It was noted that there is approximately \$40,000 in the Ballfield Expendable Trust Fund, though some of this is needed for annual maintenance. Gray asked if there were private funds available with Eldridge stating there are funds.

Health Insurance 2026:

Shackford presented information on health insurance options for 2026, including a plan with higher deductibles and co-pays. Shackford offered to reach out to ABC Member Joe Dame asking him to review the options and prepare spreadsheets comparing different scenarios for the ABC meeting, after which they would review his analysis. Dame has graciously done this in the past.

Selectmen Lists:

Selectman Nordlund - provided updates on two Conservation Commission items:

- The Chain of Ponds closing was expected to be finalized on Wednesday, with only a minor issue regarding equipment on the land needing to be moved. A small celebration was had at the Commissions last meeting.
- She inquired about following up with DES regarding the fish in Silver Lake situation, offering to make contact DES which was accepted by the Board.

Selectman Gray - asked about policies for:

- Disposal and sale of equipment - confirming there is currently no policy, and the Board agreed one should be developed. Gray will see if the CIC will be interested in tackling that.
- Personal use of town property or equipment - there was discussion about the current policy requiring written authorization from the department head and notification to the Board of Selectmen. Shackford will double check on the wording in the policy. Concern of liability to the Town will be addressed with a call to the Town Attorney and Primex.
- The CIC met for 2½ hours addressing some big items and how they fit with the Master Plan.

Selectman Eldridge – asked how Trick-or-Treating went and was answered by Price. The event went off flawlessly, a great time was had by all, including at the Halloween Dance.

Selectman Price - noted that the Town needs to find storage for the new soccer goals, which are 21 feet long and 7.5 feet tall. Nordlund will reach out to residents to see if someone has room in their barn to store them for us.

Selectman Boewe - mentioned his participation in an ABC meeting where a company called Alpha was discussed. This company does building evaluations and is currently working with the school system. He suggested the Town might want to consider having them evaluate town buildings to help with future maintenance planning.

Administrator Shackford List - asked for direction on criteria for adding names to the Veterans Monument. The Board discussed developing specific criteria, possibly including residency requirements. Shackford will research previous town reports to find the original survey and criteria that were used when the monument was established and bring back the item for future discussion.

SIGNATURE ITEMS:

Manifest

Payroll & Accounts Payable Checks

PSNH Pole License #45-0873

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:21pm.

NEXT SELECTMEN’S MEETING – The next Selectmen’s meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 25, 2025 commencing at 4:30 pm at Town Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator