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Former Girl Scout camp in New Hampshire mired in multistate legal battle

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Jessie Trowbridge attends family camp in 2019 at Camp Menotomy in Lake Winnepesaukee in Meredith, NH.

Jessie Trowbridge



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Growing up in Massachusetts, Jessie Trowbridge participated in every aspect of the Girl Scouts — singing songs, earning badges and attending a “magical” lakeside camp in New Hampshire.

Now, the Princeton, Massachusetts resident would like the same benefits for other children, including her own two children, who experienced the rustic charms of Camp Menotomy until it closed in 2020.

Instead the camp, located on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, is scheduled to be sold to a developer for \$18 million to build luxury housing.

Trowbridge is joining an increasingly heated debate about the future of the 95-acre property, which has now involved the Massachusetts Attorney General and the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts.

“Seeing places like Menotomy disappearing, it’s really heartbreaking,” Trowbridge told GBH News recently. “I really think that every kid should have an experience like that if they can.”

At issue is a **65-year-old trust** created by the Arlington Girl Scouts, later succeeded by the greater Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts. The trust allows the sale of the property if there is no other organization interested in running a camp. Money from the sale would go back to the Girls Scouts, “any successor organization,” or girls living in Arlington, according to the document signed in late 1961.

But opponents like Trowbridge say not enough effort was made to find a suitable new owner. Eric Carlson of New York, who already operates a New Hampshire camp and is offering \$1.5 million to take over the camp, also opposes the sale.

“It was listed for sale, and I made an offer. I was very clear that we would use the camp,” Carlson told GBH News. “Every section of this deed talks about the property being utilized as a summer camp for children, if at all humanly possible.”

The camp property is situated along a one mile stretch of pristine shoreline at Lake Winnepesaukee. The land is worth millions of dollars, and if the property were to be sold for luxury homes, it could bring in beneficial tax dollars.

But the dispute is over much more than that. It has raised crucial questions surrounding the significance of a land trust or a legal arrangement that holds property title for real estate on behalf of a beneficiary.

How the dispute over Camp Menotomy started

The dispute began in October 2025, when camp trustees filed a motion with the Middlesex Probate and Family Court asking for permission to sell the property.

The Girls Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts told GBH News on Monday that the camp is owned by the trust, and that it is not party to any legal dispute. “As patterns of camp usage changed in recent years, we made the difficult decision not to renew the lease and notified the Camp Menotomy Trust accordingly,” a spokesperson said. “Consistently with our obligations under the deed, we continue to pay property taxes.”

While the trustees did not respond to GBH News requests for comment, **in court records**, they have said the Girl Scouts no longer wanted to run the camp because of “its overly rustic condition and lack of appeal to modern Girl Scouts.”

The Girl Scout spokeswoman told GBH News that “decisions about the property’s future, including the pending purchase and sale agreement, are the responsibility of the trustees.”

Carlson and Trowbridge joined several others to oppose the sale in court. Opponents also have been taking to social media and local website to argue their points.

Lawyers for the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office **filed a motion in January** opposing Carlson and Trowbridge’s legal efforts, saying the two have no standing in case. Instead, the AG’s office argued that it has “exclusive standing” to intervene in court because of its role in overseeing public charities.

A representative from the office of Attorney General Andrea Campbell told GBH News that it is participating in the litigation to ensure that camp assets are used in accordance with the terms of the trust and in conformity with state law.

Arlington, New Hampshire residents react

The conflict has prompted concern from locals from Arlington to New Hampshire.

Bette Higley, a lifelong Lake Winnepesaukee resident who lives across the lake, also has been fighting the sale.

“I really feel like the courts would do an incredible misjustice in allowing this,” she said. “We’re too smart in 2026 to let a property with a mile of shorefront on Winnepesaukee get developed into more houses.”

Another local former Girl Scout recently wrote a letter to the editor in the Lexington Observer **calling on the state attorney general to protect the camp’s original mission.**

Trowbridge and Carlson lost their first effort to intervene in the case and now are appealing. But Trowbridge says she is not standing down.

In May, she **posted a commentary on the website, Your Arlington:** “Choose camping for kids over lakeside development.”

She said she spent many summers during the 80s and 90s enjoying the outdoors, sleeping in tents and learning survival and life skills.



Jessie Trowbridge with her two children in 2019, while attending Camp Menotomy on Lake Winnepesaukee, NH

Jessie Trowbridge

She also served as a Girl Scout leader, accompanying her two children who spent summer weeks at Camp Menotomy.



Children of Jessie Trowbridge attend Camp Menotomy in 2019 before it closed. She has gone to court to stop the sale of the camp by the trustees.

“They loved it,” Trowbridge said. “It was just as magical of an experience as it had been when I was a kid. Which was a real treat for me.”

A hearing is scheduled for next week in Middlesex court.



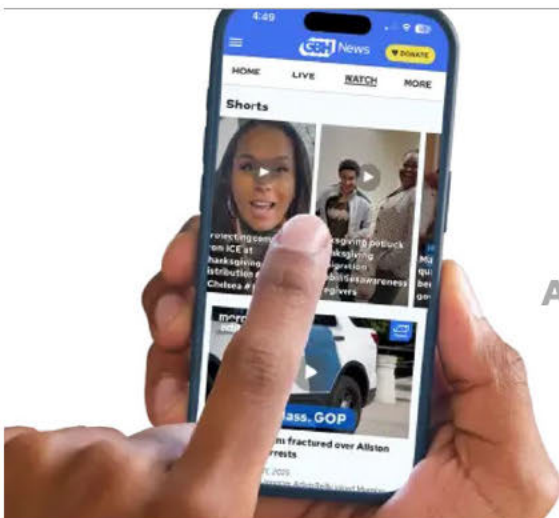
Jessie Trowbridge in 2019 with her Camp Menotomy alumni friends in front of the gate on the property at Lake Winnepesaukee.

Jessie Trowbridge



Marilyn Schairer ✕

Marilyn Schairer is a reporter and producer for GBH News. Feedback? Questions? Story ideas? Reach out to Marilyn at marilyn.schairer@gbh.org.



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