



WATERFRONT — CAMP MENOTOMY, MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

NEWS

Conflict looms over future of NH camp with strong Arlington ties

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UPDATED, Oct. 7: A battle is raging over the future of a New Hampshire site that was a longtime sanctuary for Arlington Girl Scouts.

Camp Menotomy, along the banks of Lake Winnepesaukee, provided generations of Arlington girls a safe space to learn and grow. The camp closed in 2023, and the owner accepted an offer from a developer that planned to build luxury homes there and set aside some of the land for a loon conservation.

But those plans may conflict with stipulations of a deed requiring the 95-acre parcel to be used for camping. The states of both Massachusetts and New Hampshire are now reviewing the sale to determine whether it can proceed.

The Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, which operated the camp for almost 80 years but did not own the land, announced in 2023 that the camp was “economically unviable.” The landowner, Camp Menotomy Trust, put the 95-acre property up for sale in February 2024, at a listing price of \$20 million.

A day later, the trust accepted an offer of \$18 million, and the property was taken off the market. The buyer, developer Jeremy Martin, president of Lakes Region Design Group in partnership with Menotomy Development LLC, announced plans to build luxury homes and create a loon conservation on the property. Martin and Lakes Region Design Group did not return Your Arlington’s calls or emails.

Weeks later, the Laconia Daily Sun reported that the state of New Hampshire was reviewing the sale to determine whether it adhered to stipulations within the property’s 1962 deed. The sale is on hold until the review is completed.

The deed permits the sale of the property if the owners wish to “hire the campgrounds for camping purposes, and if no other organization can be found to utilize the site for camping purposes, then with unanimous consent may sell the property herein-above conveyed...for such a price, upon such terms and to such a person, persons or organization as may to them seem proper.”

The deed also states that, in the event of a sale, the trustees “shall invest the proceeds of such sale” into investments and use the proceeds for “camperships or scholarships for girls of Arlington.”

Bradford Cook, a lawyer representing Camp Menotomy Trust, told Your Arlington he was not authorized to comment on the case.

However, in an email to the Laconia Daily Sun last year, Cook said his clients believed the sale is the most reasonable strategy, “given the values of the property which was not contemplated by anyone at the time” the deed was written. According to the Sun, he asked New Hampshire authorities to pause their review of the sale while his clients try to broaden the deed in Massachusetts, where the trust is based.

Mary Ann Dempsey, director of charitable trusts for the New Hampshire Department of Justice, said while she could not comment on her department’s review, she noted that the Massachusetts Public Charities Division is also reviewing the matter to determine whether the trustees have followed the terms of the trust. Dempsey said she was unable to provide a timeline for her department’s review.

A spokesperson from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office said in a statement: "We can confirm that this matter is under review with our office, but we are not able to share anything further."

Meredith Neck and Islands Alliance, a local nonprofit that advocates for the area's preservation, has been outspoken about protecting Camp Menotomy and has chronicled the case on its website.

In addition to arguing that the development group's plans fail to meet the deed requirements, MerNIA reported that the one-day window between listing the property and accepting Martin's offer did not allow enough time to consider other offers.

The review of the sale could bring into consideration an offer made by Camp Quinebarge, a camp in Moultonborough. The owner of the camp, Eric Carlson, submitted a \$1.5 million offer soon after seeing news of the potential deal with Martin, according to the Laconia Daily Sun. While Carlson's offer was a fraction of the property's assessed value of \$15 million, his plans to use the land for camping fell within the guidelines of the deed. Carlson later revised his proposal, offering this July to lease the land for 30 years and operate a camp there. The terms of the offer would be worth more than \$15 million in total rent and camp scholarships.

Brenda Wheelock, marketing director for the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, said the organization could not provide any further information on the camp's ownership and provided a statement that read, in part: "We are grateful to the Camp Menotomy Trust for entrusting Girl Scouts to lease the property for all these years, and thank them for the memories our Girl Scouts will forever hold close to their hearts."

While over 100 miles away, Camp Menotomy's ties to Arlington started at its founding. The camp derived its name from Arlington's original name after the land was bought in 1939 by the Arlington Girl Scouts. While ownership has since changed, the connection between Arlington and the camp has remained strong.

"I thought that Girl Scouts was supposed to promote honorable, ethical, community-minded behavior, and this action does not meet those requirements," said Susan Cournoyer, who attended the camp as a teen. "I don't like the example it sets to girls, and I think it's just a genuine loss of a magical property to generations of future youth."

Samara Weinstein attended Camp Menotomy and became a counselor in her teens. She credits her time in Girl Scouts as crucial to her development.

“When I worked for the Girl Scouts, I took a bunch of girls from inner-city Boston camping,” Weinstein said. “One girl was looking up at the sky, and she was like, ‘What is that?’ ‘What are you talking about?’ It was stars. She had never seen stars.”

Cournoyer and Weinstein met at camp when they were teens. Now they live in different states but maintain their friendship. Cournoyer brought her daughter to the camp in hopes of providing her a similar experience and said the time her daughter spent at camp was unforgettable.

“My daughter just recently told me there was something magical about that camp,” Cournoyer said. “I remember this teacher mentioned to me, she said, somehow you’ve helped your daughter to hang on to a sense of wonder. And the camp really brought about a sense of safety, but especially a sense of wonder and community.”

Photos courtesy of Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts



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