



## Opinion

Editorials Op-eds Columnists Letters to the Editor Cartoons Opinion

# Jessie Trowbridge: Don't trade Camp Menotomy for lakeside mansions

May 23, 2026

A recent story by Paula Tracy [details](#) an ongoing dispute over the future of Camp Menotomy, a 95-acre property on Lake Winnepesaukee where I first went to camp as an 11-year-old Girl Scout. When I brought my children there for Family Camp from 2016 to 2019, Menotomy remained as unspoiled and joyful as it had been in my youth. This beautiful place, with 4,500 feet of undeveloped frontage, was a crucial part of my childhood — where I made lifelong friends, learned leadership and self-reliance, and found my voice.

Those lessons have stayed with me through my work as an educator and children's librarian. As a longtime Girl Scout member, former troop leader and camp counselor, and mother of two Girl Scouts, I know how critical it is to preserve places like Menotomy so kids can unplug, get outside, and build real human connections. Not every family can afford summer camp, and losing Menotomy means one less opportunity for children who might otherwise never have the chance.

The dispute concerns the intent of the charitable trust created by the property's original donors. Litigation now pending in a Massachusetts court could open the door for a private developer to purchase the 95 acres and build high-end lakefront houses — if the original intent to keep the land as a camp is not honored.

Losing this last stretch of undeveloped shoreline on Lake Winnepesaukee would trade a community resource for a short-term cash grab.

The property's trust deed filed in Belknap County directs that it be maintained as a camp for Girl Scouts from the Arlington, Massachusetts, area. Section 10 of the trust deed is explicit: only "if no other organization can be found to utilize the site for camping purposes, then the trustees ... may sell the property."

At least two organizations have come forward with an interest in leasing the property for camping, in alignment with the trust. Lease revenue could support Arlington-area Girl Scouts through tuition, scholarships, and continued access to a camp experience — fulfilling the donors' intent to keep Menotomy a camp.

It is devastating for alumnae like me to watch the current slate of trustees pursue a sale to a developer — and the huge financial windfall that would come with it — rather than options that would honor the trust and the Girl Scouts it was created to benefit.

I do not believe the original donors intended this property to end up serving only a wealthy few. The trust's language is clear: Menotomy was meant to remain a camp and a haven for many. Prioritizing more lakeside mansions over camping opportunities for kids from all backgrounds doesn't strike me as the New Hampshire way.

Finally, if a charitable trust's mission can be abandoned even when other entities are ready to honor the original intent, what does that say about the reliability of charitable trusts and the oversight meant to protect them?

Those who care about protecting places like Menotomy should raise their voices with the Charitable Trust Divisions of the Attorney General's Offices in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts, as well as with the Camp Menotomy trustees. It is painfully shortsighted to sacrifice the chance for children to experience summer camp — and the benefits of time outdoors — when workable options exist to keep this property a camp.

Jessie Trowbridge now lives in Princeton, Mass.