

MINUTES
MADISON SELECT BOARD MEETING
OLD POINT AVENUE MEETING ROOM
108 OLD POINT AVENUE
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eNdN4ChFKw>

A. **Call to order-** meeting was called to order at 6:31PM and all saluted the flag. Chair Dwyer announced that the agenda would be changed up slightly with citizens' concerns being accepted at the beginning of the meeting after Item D.

B. **Roll Call-**Kathy Estes was absent. All other Board Members were present.

C. Consent Agenda

1. A/P Warrants:
#07 – 09-09-2025 - \$82,945.62
2. Payroll Registers:
#37 – 09-11-2025 - \$19,438.35 (*paid out benefits for CEO upon separation*)
#38 – 09-18-2025 - \$14,891.12

Motion by Mr. Pike to approve the A/P Warrants and Payroll Registers as presented.
Seconded by Mr. Bean. No further discussion. Motion carried 4-0.

3. Qualified Catering Permit (Special Event) application for Jeff's Catering and Bake Shop Inc. at Fairy Tale Gardens, 1619 East Madison Rd, Madison on 10/18/2025

Motion by Mr. Pike to approve the Qualified Catering Permit as presented. Seconded by Mr. Bean. No further discussion. Motion carried 4-0.

D. **Acceptance of the minutes** of the Select Board meeting on September 8, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Pike to approve the Minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Bean. No further discussion. Motion carried 4-0.

E. Citizen Concerns

2025 Tax Commitment – Presentation (Tim Curtis) and public response time

The Chair opened the discussion stating that there would be a presentation by Tim Curtis with public response time. The Chair stated that residents would have two to three minutes to ask questions to have them answered. It was asked that questions and comments be kept civil.

Town Manager Ducharme introduced County Administrator, Tim Curtis and Shirley Bartlett, Madison's Assessors Agent who joined over zoom.

Tim Curtis introduced himself and stated the reason for him doing the presentation was because of his involvement with the local budgets (8 years of being former Town Manager of Madison, school board member, and county administrator.)

Tim Curtis led into the presentation recognizing the frustration that residents and he has because all taxes are increasing. He then began presenting the following information:

- Maine has the highest property tax rate in the country.

- The two components that go into the property tax bills are the valuation (what the state and town value your property at) and the budgets that go into what needs to be raised for money.

- Tim Curtis stated he had never seen Madison's valuation so high and that is why he went to the board and town manager in January to relay that the valuation increase by the state had increased drastically. For comparison, when Madison Paper was at full bore the state valuation was 505 million at most. The state valuation for this year was 603 million and that is based on home values without incorporating a mill.

- When Madison Paper and other industries were in town, industry paid 70% of the tax bill. Now, there is a shift as property owners pay 75% of the tax bill. The reason for this shift is because the State Constitution states your home's value has to be determined by just value or market value and the Supreme Court states that just value is market value. Each year, the state looks at all the sales in the area for one calendar year and if the sales are higher than what property is valued for, the State automatically increases the valuation. That is why there was a large valuation jump (478 to 603 million).

- When valuations go up, the money from the state goes down. Revenue sharing decreases, state aid to offset the school budget decreases, and the municipality pays more of the county budget as it has a higher valuation in comparison to other towns. Even if the school, county, and local budget stay the same year to year more taxes have to be raised than the prior year because of the revenue sharing lost by the increase in town valuation.

- Tim Curtis referenced his handout provided at the meeting, and that this year the county portion went up and the school and local budget went up. In 2024 the total expenses was 10,293,000 and the 2025 expenses are 11,023,000. Revenue sharing went down from 964,000 to 705,000. The undesignated revenue (Other taxes like vehicle registrations the town collects) stated the same at 1,300,000. This created a million dollars over the amount needed last year that needed to be raised by taxation. Valuations on individuals' properties did raise a large concern and caught many individuals' attention but added to that is that there was an additional million that needed to be raised by taxation. Even though the mill rate can go down, if valuations increase, taxes will still increase as the amount needed to cover what needs to be raised by taxation increased by 1 million.

Tim Curtis opened the floor for questions, see below for the questions and answers. Questions were answered mainly by Tim Curtis and Denise Ducharme and a few responses were provided by Tax Assessors Agent (Shirley Bartlett) over zoom.

Question: How does the state determine the valuations? Does the state have a record of all of the parcels to determine the amount of the increase?

Answer: It is called a sales ratio. The state looks at what the town reports it is valued at and compares it to a years' worth of sales (Currently going off of sales of July 2022 to June of 2023 as they are a few years behind when sale prices were very high), the state looks at a median sales price from those sales and calculates the percentage to the median valuation. They then take the property values (that the town placed) divided by that percentage calculated and increase that amount to the town valuation and that is the town valuation that the state calculates.

Question: What is the break off point for state revenue sharing?

Answer: The state valuation has been at 5% for the past 6 years. Madison was doing well and

receiving about a million dollars in revenue sharing. But there are two revenue sharing charts and when you increase valuation and decrease the mill rate, you fall from one chart to the next. Valuation, population, and mill rate are what factor into revenue sharing. When the mill rate specifically goes down, revenue sharing goes down.

Question: If the raise in taxation is only about 14% to cover a million-dollar increase, why are properties seeing an increase of 30%?

Answer: *Land values increased about 15% uniformly; building values increased 50–55% per assessor's software-based statewide market adjustment.*

Assessor (Shirley) confirmed that there was no focused or spot-revaluation (lake, in-town, rural); changes were software-driven based on comparable sales and neighborhood factors. Tim Curtis also described the shift that towns are facing from industrial to residential in terms of residential homes bearing the weight of the tax bill instead of businesses because homes go off market value and there is not a large sale for certain industries so they only receive slight adjustments.

Question: My double-wide home is taxed at twice what I paid for it. Vehicles go down in value, so why is my dwelling up?

Answer: *Double-wide homes are classified by the state as dwellings (not vehicles), and are subject to market-based property tax, not depreciating vehicle value.*

Question: Are cannabis 'grow houses' taxed as commercial businesses?

Answer: *Cannabis grow houses are taxed as residential property; any additional state licensing or local ordinance is separate from property tax—no town business licensing applies to medical or personal cultivation.*

Question: If Backyard Farms does not decide to negotiate their credit enhancement agreement where they have currently been seeing 70% of their taxes returned, what does that do for the town's valuation?

Answer: *Valuation would still remain sheltered until 2036. Tim Curtis did note that if Backyard Farms did not come back to the table to renegotiate the credit enhancement agreement that would be the worst-case scenario as it would mean they are most likely not looking to remain in town and that would leave the town with an empty building. Currently, each year 120,000 has been assigned from the retain portion of Backyard Farms TIF to offset taxes and once the TIF agreement is over the full balance of the Backyard Farms tax bills will go into the regular budget.*

Question: 55 Weston Avenue got a tax abatement over 50%. Why didn't other homeowners get the same consideration?

Answer: *55 Weston got abatements after the owner proved (with appraisals, rent restriction docs, and the income method) that the original value was excessive. Single-family homeowners cannot use income approach or rent restriction arguments unless they have multi-unit investment properties.*

Question: If the town lets the school budget fail at vote, what happens?

Answer: *If the school budget is voted down, by law the district must continue with the previous year's budget until a new budget passes; this can cycle until a consensus is reached.*

Question: I don't get services (road, electric) but still pay the same taxes—why?

Answer: *Residential properties, regardless of location or lack of direct municipal services, are subject to the same municipal tax structure as all other properties in the town and residents have the opportunity to be involved with the budgeting process as the entire process is made public and approved by Madison Voters at the Annual Town Meeting in June for the town's portion of taxes that go into the tax bills. Residents are encouraged to attend meetings and be involved in the budget process and ask questions.*

Question: Can the town send out more notification and provide clearer information as to when there will be a tax increase?

*All budget meetings are open, recorded by the local access television (Channel 11 now Channel 17), and the process goes until June being referenced in select board meetings as well as budget advisory meetings. The town can try to send additional notices or clearer information to the public in the coming year. Currently residents have the option to join meetings in person, via zoom, or view the recorded meeting. Notices of public meetings are displayed at the town office, town website, and town sign. Residents have the option to have public notices sent to them via email if they provide their email to the town office. Residents can also opt by Texting **MadisonME** to **91896** to be added to the text distribution list. The link to join the chain is also on the town website.*

***Residents also commented during the time to ask questions regarding the question period of the 2025 Tax Commitment.**

Comments consisted of the difficulty residents have paying such a large bill without notice that there is going to be a drastic increase, the difficulty older residents on a fixed income have with how high property taxes are getting, frustration contacting the assessors agent or not getting a timely response, and frustration with town officials for perceived lack of communication regarding how tax bills will be affected by items voted on at town meeting.

Discussion was held about what the board could do to address residents having a hard time finding funds to cover such a large increase in the tax bill prior to the September 30th due date. The due date was passed as a warrant article at town meeting (30 days after commitment) so it could not be altered. The tax club enrollment date could be altered that would allow residents to break up their tax bill in 9 payments instead of 2.

A motion was made by Mr. Martins to extend the tax club enrollment due date to 6 weeks after the payment due date. After clarification that it would then make the payments 8 installments instead of 9, the motion was amended to October 15th. Motion seconded by Mr. Pike. Motion carried 4-0.

F. Old Business

1. TIF Budget discussion continued

Town Manager Ducharme, presented the project list for the TIF Budgets and explained the project list is what is allowable for the board to assign TIF funds to. Town Clerk, Cheyenne Stevens, further explained that the numbers next to the project list were there are a broad reference point when presenting the project list to DECD. The board is not restricted to allocate within the amount listed in

the right column as long as they are following what is allowable as described per item in the project list.

The Town Manager proposed the suggestion of approach Anson to see if they would be interested in splitting the cost of the fireworks to reduce the cost, but not eliminate them. The Town Manager also proposed the suggestion of looking at lease options for the new highway pickup.

Road Commissioner, Jeff Wright, stated he had already looked into lease options and there were none available at this time. Mr. Wright also relayed that he has a price for one from a dealership in Skowhegan for \$47,570. That is the cost without trading in.

Chris Roy questioned the transparency and whether TIF funds were being spent responsibly. Chris Roy asked for clarification regarding \$7,500 proposed to be budgeted for Trio Support. Town Manager Ducharme responded that the support was because of the software conversion that is taking place to move to Town Cloud. Temporarily support will need to be paid to Trio until the transition is complete, but in turn the transition will give the town cost savings of approximately \$20,000. Chris Roy also mentioned whether it would be a good time to discuss doing matching grants and Town Manager Ducharme explained that a portion of TIF spending is intended to go towards economic development.

There was discussion between the public and the board regarding the economic value of having the fireworks in the TIF budget as businesses as most businesses are closed during the evening hours of the fireworks.

After hearing feedback from the public, Mr. Martins made a motion to remove fireworks from the TIF budget. Second was made by, Mr. Pike. Randy Bliss asked for clarification as to whether Anson is currently paying half of the fireworks. Town Manager Ducharme responded that they have not. Motion carried 4-0.

Fire Chief, Donald French, asked for clarification for the amount that has been proposed to be set aside for the Christmas Celebration. Town Manager Ducharme shared that the \$1,900 is set aside for other costs to the Christmas Celebration that are not covered by donation like the events throughout town.

Tammy Carrier asked for additional information regarding the new software stating that 75% of the state uses what Madison currently has-Trio. She also asked questions regarding the merger and how many towns are currently using the Town Cloud software program as Trio does a web base now available. Town Manager Ducharme responded that there is roughly 3-5 towns that are using the financial piece of the Town Cloud software with other towns signed on as Madison is. She also stated that despite having a period of merging that costs more, in the long term there will be cost savings to transitioning.

Jeff Wright asked for clarification as to why \$5,000 had been removed from the proposed TIF budget. Chair Dwyer and Manager Ducharme responded that at the end of the last TIF discussion Jeff Wright had stated he was all set to remove \$5,000 as the board was trying to reduce the TIF budget overall to what they could budget to. Select Board Member John Martins, asked if Jeff Wright needed the \$5,000 in sidewalks as the board had cut the fireworks completely. Chair Dwyer confirmed with Chief French and Mr. Wright that they were all set with the numbers proposed as shown for their departments and did not need the additional \$5,000 that was given up at last TIF

discussion to reach where the budget needed to be.

Jeff Wright asked when the funds would be available for the TIF spending as striping has already been done in the past week. Town Manager Ducharme confirmed that the first revenue of funds available for TIF spending will come in before or on September 30th, the tax due date. Town Clerk/Treasurer, Cheyenne Stevens, added that TIF spending should be mindful as to what is a priority as the largest revenue for TIF spending is the Bette does not come in until about January.

G. Items of Communication

1. Living Well reports

Living Well Coordinator, Cheyenne Stevens, shared that the Living Well Committee will be working with the Planning Board to help with the demographic aspect of the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Town Manager's report on expenses, revenues, and monthly GA – currently at 23.0% (week 12 = 23.1%)

Town Manager Ducharme relayed that everything is currently on point and that she has gotten the GA file for August but no reimbursements at the time.

H. New Business

1. New GA Maximums and Revised Ordinance

The Town Manager presented to the board the new maximums proposed by the state for Somerset County adjusted the household maximum from \$897 to \$932.

A motion to adopt the state updated appendices was made by Mr. Pike. Second by Mr. Bean.

Select Board Member, John Martins, asked if this was just a recommendation by the state to adopt. Town Manager Ducharme and Town Clerk, Cheyenne Stevens stated that it was less of a recommendation because it is required by state statute and the town could lose the 70% match funding if they do not get in compliance to the state guidelines.

Chris Roy asked the town manager how much was budgeted this year, how much was spent over budget last year, and how they could go over budget. Manager Ducharme responded that \$31,000 was budgeted this year, last year it was about \$20,000 over budget and that it was allowable to go over budget because the town cannot deny residents who are eligible for emergency assistance per state ordinance.

Mr. Roy questioned further about the eligibility requirements of those receiving general assistance. Manager Ducharme responded that there is set requirements per the application like exercising all other options of assistance prior to applying. Select Board Member, Shawn Bean, clarified that town general assistance is to be used as last resort. Town Clerk, Cheyenne Stevens, stated that when processing a general assistance application, you must match income to spending and see if there is an ineligible spending per the state guidelines to see if it is actually an emergency situation.

2. Appointment of Temporary Code Enforcement Officer etc.

Town Manager Ducharme reminded the board that previous full time code enforcement officer Jeff Drew has taken a position with KVCOG. In the meantime, the town still needs to have an appointed code enforcement officer and the other titles Jeff Drew previously held. The Select Board needs to appoint to fill the vacancy. Through the position with KVCOG Jeff Drew moved to, he can be

appointed and act as a temporary part-time code enforcement officer.

Mr. Bean made a motion to appoint Jeff Drew as a temporary to his previously held titles. Mr. Pike seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Chris Roy asked about the cost of paying Jeff through KVCOG. Town Manager Ducharme stated that it would be covered by the cost already approved in June and would not amount over what the budgeted cost was. Mr. Roy additionally asked the specific cost to appoint Jeff as temporary and if full time is needed and Manager Ducharme shared that it has not been negotiated at this time. Fire Chief, Donald French asked for clarification as to whether Jeff is paid by the town or whether it is through KVCOG and whether the appointment is apart of annual dues. Manager Ducharme responded that KVCOG's annual dues will be separate from the contract that is being negotiated for Jeff Drew to cover at a part time-temporary basis. The contract has not been negotiated for an amount to pay KVCOG for his services. Jeff Drew's salary and benefits that were budgeted (\$77,000) will not be what the town is paying KVCOG. The intention is to get a full time code enforcement officer for next year.

Robin Turek shared the importance of having a full-time code enforcement officer as a planning board member and stated other planning board members feel similarly.

3. Policy on Artificial Intelligence Use – Initial Concept Draft - The board received a copy of a draft artificial intelligence policy as it is something the board will need to review at a later date.

4. Quit Claim Deed for Account #1198 – resolved all past due taxes

Motion was made by Mr. Bean to approve quit claim deed for Account #1198. Motion was seconded by Mr. Pike. Motion carried 4-0.

I. Additional Citizen Concerns

Donald French, asked if there was any way to get grant funding to add additional parking to the recreation fields on Preble Avenue. Vice Chair, Shawn Bean, responded that the recreation director had put together a nice diagram for away teams and that while there is tight parking, there is parking inside. Jeff Wright confirmed that there have been no parking signs placed along the side of the road in previous years.

Lisa Wright asked if the time for the next select board meeting on the agenda was correct. It was confirmed correct by Town Manager Ducharme who stated that there is a holiday on Monday and a planning board meeting scheduled already for a later time. The next Select Board meeting scheduled on October 14th, 2025 at 4:30PM is correct.

Robin Turek asked if the town has a full-time animal control officer and how to reach them. Town Manager Ducharme responded that we have an animal control officer and they can be reached by filing an initial report with the Madison Division SO at 696-5373.

J. Select Board Concerns

No Select Board Concerns.

K. Executive Session - personnel

Discuss personnel matter pursuant to 1 MRSA § 405-6(A)

Motion was made by Mr. Bean to move to executive session. Motion was seconded by Mr. Pike. Motion carried 4-0.

Exited executive session at 8:45PM. Motion by Mr. Bean to add the title of “Deputy Town Manager” to the Cheyenne Stevens Town Clerk’s existing title. Seconded by Mr. Pike. No further discussion. Motion passed 4-0.

L. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Bean. Seconded by Mr. Pike. Motion Passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:46PM.

NEXT REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
108 OLD POINT AVENUE
TUESDAY October 14, 2025
4:30 pm