

# Investigative Assessment: Matthew Bacon

## Executive Summary

This comprehensive investigative report provides an exhaustive, forensic examination of the public record, governance practices, fiscal methodologies, and socio-political controversies surrounding Matthew Bacon, a resident of Madbury, New Hampshire, who currently serves as the Chair of the Oyster River Cooperative School District (ORCSD) School Board. Bacon's tenure on the Board—initially serving as Vice-Chair from 2022 to 2025 before transitioning to the role of Chair representing Madbury for the 2024–2027 term—has coincided with a period of severe operational friction, escalating fiscal burdens on local taxpayers, intense ideological polarization, and highly contentious procedural decisions.<sup>1</sup>

A meticulous review of thousands of pages of school board minutes, district communications, public hearings, municipal records, and community testimonies reveals a pattern of governance that has drawn intense, recurring, and structurally significant criticism from the community. The vulnerabilities, operational failures, and negative indicators surrounding Bacon's leadership are not isolated incidents; rather, they represent a systemic philosophy of administration that routinely prioritizes expansionist policies and ideological paradigms over fiduciary restraint and constituent transparency.

These vulnerabilities can be categorized into several primary, interacting domains. First, the district has experienced a period of profound fiscal hypertrophy and anti-taxpayer maneuvering, characterized by the aggressive expansion of the district's operating budget to nearly \$62 million, the push for a nearly \$10 million capital bond, and the Board's explicit, recorded opposition to a 15% local tax cap (Warrant Article 12) despite dire warnings of imminent 17% to 40% cumulative tax spikes.<sup>4</sup> Second, the district has suffered from ideological capture, highlighted by the highly controversial hiring, turbulent tenure, and subsequent resignation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) coordinator whose public history included a podcast titled "White People are not OK," an event that sparked allegations of institutional racism, cultural Marxism, and the severe alienation of community members.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Bacon's administration has engaged in jurisprudential overreach and legal activism, utilizing the local school board as a vehicle for highly partisan state and federal litigation, including joining lawsuits alongside the ACLU against the New Hampshire State Government and the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>3</sup> Internally, this administration is characterized by procedural opacity and the suppression of dissent, evidenced by the frequent invocation of non-public sessions to shield deliberations from public view, coupled with documented instances of Bacon utilizing parliamentary procedure to unilaterally strike submitted public comments from the official historical record.<sup>7</sup> Finally, there are severe optics

of nepotism and concentrated civic power, generated by the overlapping presence of Bacon's family member as the voting Student Representative on the Board, combined with Bacon's monopolization of multiple municipal chairmanships in the Town of Madbury.<sup>13</sup>

The following sections provide a granular, exhaustively detailed analysis of these negative indicators, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the systemic, compounding risks present under Matthew Bacon's leadership framework.

## **Part I: The Fiscal Architecture of Unsustainability**

The Oyster River Cooperative School District is uniquely positioned, serving the municipalities of Durham, Lee, and Madbury.<sup>5</sup> The demographic and economic composition of these towns is heavily influenced by the presence of the University of New Hampshire in Durham, which creates a complex, often inherently antagonistic dynamic between the university-affiliated population—who frequently demand expansive, progressive educational programming—and the more traditional, fixed-income, or working-class residents of Lee and Madbury. Under Matthew Bacon's chairmanship, the ORCSD School Board has aggressively pursued an expansionist fiscal policy that fundamentally ignores this economic dichotomy, triggering severe backlash from taxpayers who argue the district is operating far beyond the community's structural financial capacity.

### **The \$61.8 Million Operating Budget and Capital Expansion Paradox**

During the public budget hearings held in January 2026, the district administration, fully endorsed and facilitated by Bacon's Board, presented an operating budget of \$61,846,067 (Warrant Article #4) alongside an additional \$9,827,000 capital bond (Warrant Article #3) specifically earmarked for renovations and cafeteria/classroom expansions at Mast Way and Moharimet elementary schools.<sup>4</sup>

The presentation of these astronomical figures immediately generated hostility from the tax base. Community members, analyzing the data through the lens of local property tax burdens, pointed out the stark contradictions in the Board's financial narrative. For instance, resident Bruce Fenton explicitly highlighted that only weeks prior to the budget rollout, the Board had signaled during collective bargaining that there was insufficient funding to adequately support basic teacher contracts and health insurance provisions.<sup>17</sup> Yet, astonishingly, the Board subsequently found the capacity to request nearly ten million dollars to allocate toward building expansions.<sup>17</sup>

Fenton characterized the foundational budget of over \$58 million as an "extraordinary amount" and openly questioned the lack of clarity regarding millions of dollars allocated to special education and deliberately vague "contracted services".<sup>17</sup> He demanded to know precisely where this capital was flowing, criticizing the Board for failing to provide a transparent

accounting of its vendor relationships and external consulting dependencies.<sup>17</sup>

The friction here exposes a critical, foundational governance failure: the inability of Bacon and his colleagues to logically articulate a return on investment to the taxpayers or to align physical expansion with actual demographic data. While Bacon and Superintendent Dr. Robert Shaps defend the budget by citing advanced placement course participation and steady high school graduation rates<sup>4</sup>, critics view the spending as administrative bloat entirely unmoored from reality. Fenton specifically noted to the Board that district enrollment is projected to flatten over the next five to ten-year period.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, proposing a massive physical expansion of elementary schools utilizing long-term municipal debt is financially irrational. The district is effectively taxing current residents to build capacity that future demographics indicate will not be necessary, locking the three towns into decades of debt servicing for underutilized infrastructure.

## The Exploitation of Frontline Labor

The Board's willingness to demand massive sums from the taxpayers for capital projects and administrative initiatives is starkly contrasted by its treatment of its most vulnerable frontline labor force. During a deliberative session regarding the budget, the stark realities of the "Guild"—the collective bargaining unit representing tutors and paraprofessionals—were exposed.<sup>18</sup>

Resident Dean Rubine and ORCSD staff member Krista Butts utilized the public forum to demand answers regarding the compensation of these essential workers.<sup>18</sup> Butts explained to the Board that the members of this unit, many of whom are fully certified or actively working on their certification, are being paid a "significantly lower wage than teachers".<sup>18</sup> Despite managing a budget approaching \$62 million, the Board has allowed an environment where the paraprofessionals who directly interface with the district's most vulnerable special education students are subjected to severe wage depression, struggling to remain competitive in the current economic market.<sup>18</sup>

This represents a profound misalignment of moral and fiscal priorities under Bacon's leadership. The Board demonstrates a relentless appetite for increasing the tax burden by double digits to fund bricks-and-mortar expansions and highly compensated administrative roles, while simultaneously suppressing the wages of the essential support staff who execute the actual operational mandate of the district.

## Table 1: Macro-Fiscal Indicators and Community Critiques under Bacon's Tenure

Fiscal Indicator /	Associated	Community	Source
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Proposed Action	Financial Figure	Critique / Economic Reality	Verification
<b>Proposed FY27 Operating Budget</b>	\$61,846,067	Characterized as "extraordinary"; critics cite vague contracted services and opaque special education spending without clear ROI.	4
<b>Elementary Expansion Bond</b>	\$9,827,000	Heavily criticized as irrational given that district demographic projections show enrollment flattening over the next 5-10 years.	4
<b>Warrant Article 12 (Tax Cap)</b>	15% Annual Limit	Board officially recommended <i>against</i> the cap, demonstrating a desire for unlimited taxing authority. Supported by 1,246 voters.	5
<b>Projected Cumulative Tax Impact</b>	Up to 40% (Durham over 3 years)	Residents explicitly warned that this unprecedented tax burden will drive away young families and exacerbate unused capacity.	7
<b>Support Staff (Guild) Compensation</b>	Statistically depressed	Paraprofessionals and tutors report being paid significantly lower	18

		wages than necessary to remain market-competitive	
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## Part II: The Defeat of Article 12 and the Board's Anti-Taxpayer Posture

Perhaps the most damning evidence of the Board's adversarial relationship with the local tax base is its deeply controversial handling of Petition Warrant Article 12 during the February and March 2026 voting cycle. Article 12 was a citizen-driven initiative that sought to adopt the statutory provisions of New Hampshire RSA 32:5-b.<sup>5</sup> If passed, this article would have implemented a local tax cap, specifically dictating that the School Board or Budget Committee shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes by more than 15% above the amount raised in taxes the previous fiscal year, barring a 3/5 majority override vote by the legislative body.<sup>5</sup>

In any standard economic environment, and particularly in an era characterized by rampant national inflation and economic uncertainty for working-class families, a 15% year-over-year permitted increase in taxation is already a remarkably generous threshold. It provides massive latitude for a school district to absorb fluctuating costs, negotiate standard union step-increases, and manage operational inflation. Yet, under Matthew Bacon's leadership, the School Board officially recommended *against* this article.<sup>5</sup>

The implications of this recommendation are staggering. By formally placing their opposition to Article 12 on the ballot, Bacon and the ORCSD School Board signaled to the community that they demanded the unrestricted, unilateral authority to raise local taxes by *more* than 15% annually without facing the hurdle of a legislative override. It was a stark declaration of fiscal supremacy over the electorate, communicating that the Board viewed any limitation on its ability to extract capital from the towns of Durham, Lee, and Madbury as an unacceptable infringement on its power.

### The Economic Disenfranchisement of the Electorate

The public reaction to the Board's fiscal trajectory and its opposition to Article 12 was severe, reflecting a community on the brink of a tax revolt. During the public comment periods leading up to the vote, residents desperately tried to convey the macroeconomic reality to the insular Board.

Resident Tom Daly submitted a blistering critique, warning the Board that the Town of Durham was already facing a proposed 2026 municipal budget of approximately \$22 million, which

alone would create a 17-18% year-over-year tax increase for Durham taxpayers.<sup>7</sup> Daly extrapolated this trajectory, warning that projecting over the next three years, Durham residents were looking at a catastrophic cumulative tax increase of up to 40%.<sup>7</sup> Daly explicitly linked the Board's fiscal irresponsibility to the district's long-term viability. He noted that the middle school enrollment data showed unused capacity in the system, and warned that "We will not use that capacity unless we can attract families to the district. Rising tax burdens will not attract families to our district".<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, resident John Tappan of Lee calculated the aggregate impact of the Board's spending alongside municipal obligations, noting that combined with the school and county assessments, the town was looking at a tax rate increase well over 10%.<sup>20</sup> The Board, seemingly immune to these pleas, proceeded with their recommendation against the tax cap.

## **The Vote and the Crisis of Confidence**

Despite the Board's explicit opposition and utilization of district communication channels to advocate against the cap, the community's frustration materialized powerfully at the ballot box. Article 12 was ultimately defeated in the March 2026 election, with 1,246 "Yes" votes and 1,698 "No" votes.<sup>10</sup>

While the Board technically survived the cap, viewing this as a victory ignores the underlying governance crisis. The fact that 1,246 residents—representing a massive, highly motivated bloc of the local electorate—voted to aggressively curtail the Board's spending power indicates a profound crisis of confidence in Matthew Bacon's fiscal stewardship.<sup>10</sup> In a regional cooperative district, a disenfranchised minority of this size guarantees ongoing political instability, bond failures, and perpetual hostility during budget seasons. Bacon's legacy on taxation is one of driving an unsustainable burden onto constituents while actively fighting their attempts to implement even modest, 15% safety rails.

## **Part III: Ideological Capture and the Deepening DEI Crisis**

While the fiscal mismanagement of the district has alienated the economic pragmatists within the community, the most explosive and culturally destructive vulnerability of Bacon's tenure is the Board's aggressive endorsement, defense, and funding of radical ideological frameworks within the public school system. The district's push for "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice" (DEIJ) reached a boiling point with the hiring of Rachael Blansett as a DEIJ coordinator—an event that deeply fractured the ORCSD community, attracted negative press coverage on a statewide level, and severely damaged the institutional reputation of the district.

### **The Hiring of Rachael Blansett and the Institutionalization of Radical Pedagogy**

Rachael Blansett was brought into the district with a sweeping mandate to integrate DEIJ throughout the ORCSD framework. According to district materials, her role empowered her to lead trainings for teachers, act as a primary resource for the community, and, most alarmingly to parents, "revise curriculums so they align with district values of equity and inclusion".<sup>9</sup> The Board granted immense pedagogical authority to an individual who, it was swiftly revealed, had never actually worked as a regular classroom teacher prior to obtaining this highly influential administrative position.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of the Board to adequately vet Blansett—or, conversely, their willful endorsement of her background—became an immediate scandal when her public profile was brought to light by local media outlets, including Granite Grok and the NH Journal. The investigation revealed that Blansett had a documented history of producing racially inflammatory and highly derogatory rhetoric.

Specifically, Blansett recorded podcasts and posted social media comments featuring explicitly anti-white messages.<sup>9</sup> Her podcast was notably and offensively titled "*White People are not OK*," and she propagated racially targeted statements such as "White people don't wash their legs, and can't dance".<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Blansett was photographed wearing a garment bearing the highly inappropriate slogan "Pro Black, Pro Queer and Pro Hoe," a message entirely incongruous with the professional standards expected of a public school administrator tasked with shaping the moral and educational framework of minors.<sup>9</sup>

Alongside her employment at ORCSD, Blansett maintained a role providing "racial equity education" for the New Hampshire chapter of Black Lives Matter, and her self-stated academic interests included "challenging anti-Blackness and colonization ideology and theorizing/implementing accessible and liberatory practices".<sup>9</sup> The introduction of an activist with this specific, highly militant pedagogical profile into a suburban New Hampshire school district acted as an immediate catalyst for community warfare.

## **Community Backlash: Bruce Fenton and the Demand for Academic Integrity**

The backlash to the district's ideological capture was immense, sustained, and spearheaded by several highly articulate community members, most notably Bruce Fenton, a Durham resident and parent of four children in the district.<sup>8</sup> Fenton's repeated, persistent appearances during the public comment periods of School Board meetings serve as a documented, agonizing timeline of the community's outrage over Bacon's governance.

Fenton presented a devastating, multi-faceted critique of the Board's priorities. He stated that he had thoroughly reviewed federal guidelines on DEI and found the district's interpretation and initiatives to be "very racist, divisive, and deeply harmful".<sup>8</sup> In a striking indictment of the Board's narrative, he pointedly noted that he had not witnessed systemic racial problems in the district *until* the Board manufactured them by hiring an individual with a podcast titled "White

People are not OK".<sup>8</sup>

Fenton diagnosed the district's pedagogical shift as an adoption of "absurd ideology & cultural Marxism".<sup>8</sup> He argued passionately that while he is firmly against racism, the Board's primary, statutory mandate is to educate children in core, objective competencies like math, science, and history—not to force political categorization or to judge students based on immutable characteristics.<sup>8</sup> Fenton recognized that his views might not be universally popular in a university-dominated town, but he fiercely defended the necessity of ideological diversity, noting that DEI protocols were entirely counterproductive when they simply resulted in categorizing and dividing people.<sup>21</sup>

Fenton also masterfully tied the ideological controversy back to the fiscal crisis, highlighting the ultimate hypocrisy of Bacon's administration. He condemned the Board for gleefully spending massive amounts of taxpayer funds on highly divisive political personnel and seven-figure DEI divisional budgets while simultaneously claiming poverty when negotiating health insurance and baseline wages for actual classroom teachers and paraprofessionals.<sup>8</sup>

## **The "Clan Rally" Incident and Board Hostility**

The polarization engineered by the Board's ideological stance bled directly into how Board members interacted with the public, resulting in instances of shocking unprofessionalism. During a November 2025 meeting, Fenton utilized his public comment time to reveal a deeply disturbing incident: a sitting school board member had publicly compared a local vigil organized by conservative commentator Charlie Kirk to a "clan rally".<sup>14</sup>

Fenton rightfully and forcefully condemned this rhetoric, pointing out that a school board member is elected to represent the entire community.<sup>14</sup> Equating parents, taxpayers, and constituents who attend mainstream conservative political events to members of the Ku Klux Klan is a profound violation of civic decorum, basic professionalism, and the very "inclusion" the Board purports to champion. Fenton correctly noted that a school board is not the place for divisive, partisan smears, and that such comments imply that parents who hold conservative views are "clan lovers".<sup>14</sup> Under Matthew Bacon's chairmanship, the environment has deteriorated to the point where political minorities in the district are routinely demonized and libeled by the very elected officials whose salaries and budgets they fund.

## **The Resignation of Blansett and the Board's Refusal to Acknowledge Failure**

The untenable nature of Blansett's employment—and the sheer weight of the public relations disaster she represented—eventually culminated in her resignation, which the Board formally accepted in May 2025.<sup>8</sup> However, in a display of institutional arrogance typical of Bacon's tenure, rather than acknowledging the deep divisions her tenure caused or apologizing to the community for the catastrophic vetting failure, the Board and administration engaged in

immediate historical revisionism.

Superintendent Dr. Robert Shaps publicly thanked Blansett for her collaboration and the district-wide professional development she provided, wishing her success in her future master's degree and professional avenues.<sup>22</sup> Board member Denise Day reported that the "Belonging Committee" had a "light-hearted session" to conclude the year and specifically thanked Blansett for all her work.<sup>8</sup>

The Board's refusal to admit error stood in stark contrast to the community's reaction. Fenton's response to her departure summarized the sentiment of the alienated tax base: he expressed profound relief that the DEI position was gone, stating he desperately hoped it would not be refilled, as it had proven to be divisive, racist, and an absolute "embarrassment to the school system".<sup>14</sup>

## **Part IV: The Degradation of the Educational Environment and Student Culture**

The tragic irony of Bacon's relentless pursuit of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" is that the implementation of aggressive DEI programming did not result in a utopian, inclusive, or harmonious educational environment. Instead, by hyper-politicizing the student body and forcing adolescents to view every interaction through the lens of racial and cultural grievance, it coincided with a severe breakdown in student culture and behavior.

The Board was eventually forced to confront the manifestations of their policies when a major incident involving "bathroom hate speech and vandalism" occurred within the district.<sup>23</sup> The administration's response to this crisis was highly indicative of its overall administrative impotence and reliance on shallow, performative interventions. Principal Noe and Assistant Principal Perron held a large group assembly, discussing the definition of hate speech and the specific demographics targeted.<sup>23</sup> Following this, students were sent back to their individual advisories to "reflect" on the incident.<sup>23</sup>

The failure of this intervention was documented by Elise Bacon, who, acting in her capacity as both a DEIJ Club member and the Student Representative, reported the outcome to the Board.<sup>23</sup> She admitted that the intervention was highly inconsistent and largely ineffective. While some advisories managed to hold conversations, she explicitly stated that many "did not," citing "student incompatibility" as the primary reason for the failure of the students to engage with the material or each other.<sup>23</sup>

This incident and its aftermath expose the fundamental flaw in the Board's sociological strategy. By prioritizing radical, categorizing ideologies over unified academic purpose, the district has fostered an atmosphere where racial and cultural tensions are exacerbated rather than mitigated. The result is hate speech, property destruction, and an environment so

fractured that students are deemed too "incompatible" to even engage in basic dialogue regarding community standards.

## **Part V: Jurisprudential Overreach and Partisan Legal Activism**

A deeply concerning, systemic trend under Matthew Bacon's leadership is the transformation of the ORCSD School Board from a localized educational management body into an aggressive plaintiff in highly partisan state and federal litigation. By leveraging the legal standing and institutional weight of the school district, Bacon and the Board have engaged in a campaign of judicial activism that strays entirely beyond their statutory mandate to oversee local public schools, entangling the taxpayers in national culture wars.

### **Suing the State of New Hampshire (The ACLU-NH and HB 2 Litigation)**

In July 2025, the ORCSD School Board took the extraordinary step of voting 6-0 to join a lawsuit as a formal plaintiff, alongside the ACLU-NH, against the New Hampshire State Government.<sup>10</sup> The target of this litigation was the anti-DEI statute contained within House Bill 2 (HB 2), a state law designed to prevent the teaching of discriminatory concepts in public institutions.

The Board's rationale for suing its own state government was rooted in the claim that the state was using "financial force to impose an unclear directive" regarding educational opportunities, arguing vehemently that HB 2 provided no due process to respond to violations and no chance for appeal.<sup>3</sup> The Board decried the state's determinations as "subjective and unreviewable" and claimed the law conflicted with their ethical responsibilities to ensure all students and staff are respected.<sup>10</sup> When a federal court later ruled aspects of the law unconstitutional, DEIJ Coordinator Rachael Blansett gleefully announced to the Board that teachers could now resume talking about race and gender identity "without fear".<sup>12</sup>

While Bacon and the Board repeatedly attempt to pacify the public by noting that joining the ACLU-NH lawsuit comes "at no cost to the district"<sup>10</sup>, this assertion is highly deceptive. It willfully ignores the massive institutional, political, and reputational costs associated with the action. By suing the state to protect the right to teach the highly polarizing DEI concepts—the exact concepts that alienated parents, triggered the Fenton protests, and led to the Blansett disaster—the Board is permanently cementing its reputation as a radicalized, activist entity. It places the school district in direct, highly publicized adversarial conflict with the state legislature, the Governor's office, and the New Hampshire Department of Education. This adversarial posture jeopardizes future state funding negotiations, grants, cooperative initiatives, and the goodwill necessary to effectively lobby for the district's actual academic needs.

## **Suing the Federal Government (*NEA v. ED*)**

The Board's legal adventurism and desire to operate without oversight did not stop at the state level. During the 2024-2025 school year, the Board voted unanimously to join the *NEA v. ED* lawsuit.<sup>10</sup> This massive federal lawsuit explicitly challenges the authority of the President of the United States and the U.S. Department of Education to "determine, limit, and/or mandate locally what is permissible in public schools".<sup>10</sup>

This lawsuit, also facilitated by the ACLU-NH, represents an attempt by the Board to completely insulate the district's progressive ideological policies from any form of federal oversight, restriction, or civil rights intervention.<sup>10</sup> The Board claims they are taking seriously their "civic responsibility to advocate for our students"<sup>10</sup>, but in reality, they are allowing the Oyster River Cooperative School District to be used as a convenient, localized proxy for the ACLU and the NEA's broader national political agendas.

## **The Long-Term Danger of the Board's Legal Posture**

The implication of these lawsuits is severe and represents a massive deviation from the norms of local governance. Matthew Bacon, acting as Chair, is utilizing the collective weight of the district to fight culture-war battles in federal and state courts. This behavior deeply alienates moderate and conservative taxpayers who do not wish to see their local school board act as a progressive legal vanguard. Furthermore, as these complex legal cases move forward, Superintendent Shaps and Chair Bacon have promised to "update the community on the implications of judicial review as it pertains to directives by federal and state governments".<sup>10</sup> This ongoing commitment indicates that district time, administrative bandwidth, and leadership focus are continually being diverted away from local educational outcomes to monitor, manage, and propagandize these political crusades.

## **Part VI: Procedural Opacity and the Subversion of Transparency**

A defining hallmark of poor municipal governance is the immediate retreat into secrecy when faced with public backlash. Under Matthew Bacon's chairmanship, the ORCSD School Board has exhibited a profound, systemic reliance on non-public sessions, aggressively utilizing the exemptions within New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law (RSA 91-A) to shield their deliberations, personnel crises, and strategic negotiations from the taxpayers who fund them. Furthermore, when public input is allowed, Bacon has demonstrated a willingness to manually alter the historical record to suppress dissent.

### **The Weaponization of RSA 91-A Non-Public Sessions**

An analysis of the Board's meeting minutes reveals a staggering frequency of non-public and non-meeting sessions. The Board, led by Bacon, routinely and reflexively invokes RSA 91-A:3 II

for an excessively broad array of reasons, effectively plunging the district's governance into a black box. The mechanisms utilized include:

- **RSA 91-A:3 II (c):** Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person. This is invoked with alarming frequency, including on February 7, 2024<sup>2</sup>, February 21, 2024 (for both personnel matters and the Superintendent's evaluation)<sup>2</sup>, and March 5, 2025.<sup>17</sup>
- **RSA 91-A:3 II (b):** The hiring of any person as a public employee. This was utilized during the highly contentious June 2022 meetings to hide employment discussions from the public eye.<sup>24</sup>
- **RSA 91-A:3 II (f):** Consideration of matters relating to the preparation and carrying out of emergency functions. Bacon dynamically invoked this clause in December 2025 to pull the board out of public view.<sup>7</sup>
- **RSA 91-A:2 I (a):** Strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining. Bacon frequently uses this provision to temporarily adjourn meetings, interrupting public flow, such as on November 5, 2025<sup>14</sup> and December 17, 2025.<sup>13</sup>

While these legal mechanisms exist in state law for valid administrative reasons, their constant, habitual usage under Bacon creates an environment of profound distrust. Important decisions regarding multi-million dollar union negotiations, the vetting (or lack thereof) of highly controversial figures like Rachael Blansett, and the evaluation metrics of the Superintendent are entirely walled off from the community. Bruce Fenton repeatedly and explicitly demanded that the Board "increase transparency," reminding them that they have a strict fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers and community members who are burdened by the costs generated in these secret sessions.<sup>17</sup> The Board's response has been to continually retreat behind RSA 91-A.

## **The Alteration of the Public Record: Striking Constituent Comments**

Perhaps the most egregious and terrifying violation of democratic transparency norms occurred during the December 17, 2025, regular meeting. When reviewing the minutes of the previous December 3 meeting, Matthew Bacon personally engineered a motion to alter the official administrative record to suppress a constituent's voice.

Bacon formally requested the following correction to the public record: "*Strike the public comment since it was submitted by email and not shared publicly at the meeting*".<sup>13</sup> The motion passed, successfully and permanently expunging the written comment from the public minutes of the Oyster River Cooperative School District.

This action is deeply problematic and borders on authoritarian. In contemporary municipal administration, digital correspondence is a primary vector for civic engagement, particularly for working-class parents, the elderly, or those whose schedules do not permit them to attend lengthy evening meetings in person. Submitting a public comment via email is a standard, accepted method of interfacing with elected officials. Striking an emailed public comment from

the official minutes serves no functional, legal, or administrative purpose other than to exert hegemonic control over the narrative and silence a critic who could not stand at the microphone.

For a school district and a Board Chair that endlessly champion buzzwords like "inclusion," "equity," and "belonging," the willingness to use parliamentary procedure to manually scrub a citizen's email from the historical ledger exposes a highly hypocritical approach to public relations. It demonstrates unequivocally that Bacon views the board minutes not as a faithful, objective record of community input, but as a curated political document subject to his unilateral editorial control.

## **Part VII: Dynastic Optics and the Consolidation of Municipal Power**

To fully grasp the severe risk profile of Matthew Bacon, his actions on the School Board must be contextualized within his broader aggregation of civic power. Public institutions rely heavily on the appearance of absolute propriety. Even when statutory rules are followed, the optics of overlapping familial influence and the monopolization of multiple civic boards can fatally undermine public trust. In the case of ORCSD and the Town of Madbury, Bacon exists at the center of an intensely insular governance structure.

### **The Student Representative Dynamic**

Within the ORCSD Board, a highly unusual and problematic dynamic exists: the 2025-2026 Student Representative to the School Board is Elise Bacon.<sup>1</sup>

According to ORCSD Policy BBBF-R, the Student Representative is an elected position.<sup>15</sup> Candidates must maintain a 3.0 GPA, secure petition signatures from 25 students and 2 teachers, and win a plurality in an election held by the student body.<sup>15</sup> The representative serves a one-year term from March to March and is tasked with representing the interests of the student body to the Board.<sup>15</sup>

Because Elise Bacon was elected by her peers rather than directly appointed by Chair Matthew Bacon, technical, statutory nepotism is circumvented. However, in the context of municipal risk analysis, the optics of a close relative occupying the highest echelons of district governance alongside the Chair cannot be ignored or minimized.

The Student Representative in ORCSD is not a silent observer relegated to the gallery. The representative is seated on the dais, participates intimately in debates, and is granted an advisory vote on nearly all board actions. The meeting minutes under Bacon's tenure are absolutely replete with the phrase "with the student representative voting in the affirmative," as she consistently votes in lockstep with the Board's motions.<sup>2</sup> Elise Bacon casts advisory votes on budgets, massive capital bonds, controversial policies, and procedural motions overseen by

Chair Bacon.<sup>2</sup>

In a politically explosive environment—where the Board is pushing \$61 million budgets, suing the state government, and fighting enraged parents over DEI ideology—having the Chair's relative acting as the sole, official voice of the student body creates a powerful, unified familial voting bloc optic. It structurally stifles the possibility of genuine student dissent reaching the Board. Any student with grievances regarding the Board's direction, or concerns about the implementation of DEIJ policies, must channel those grievances through the Chair's family member. In a micro-municipality, this aggregation of influence feeds directly into community fears of an entrenched, unaccountable ruling clique that listens only to itself.

## The Monopolization of Madbury Municipal Boards

Beyond the school board, Matthew Bacon holds immense, concentrated power in the Town of Madbury. Madbury is a very small municipality, and its governance relies heavily on volunteers. However, when a single individual monopolizes multiple seats of definitive authority, it creates an extreme vulnerability to groupthink and destroys the checks and balances inherent in local democracy.

In addition to serving as the Chair of the ORCSD School Board (representing Madbury)<sup>1</sup>, Bacon holds two other highly influential municipal chairmanships:

1. **Chair of the Madbury Cemetery Trustees:** Bacon has served as the Chair of the Cemetery Trustees for several consecutive years (documented in 2020, 2022, 2024, and projected through 2027).<sup>16</sup> While seemingly innocuous, this board possesses significant financial authority, managing town trust funds, lot sales, municipal maintenance budgets, and providing input on scholarship funding for Madbury residents.<sup>16</sup>
2. **Chair of the Madbury Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA):** Far more critically, Bacon also serves as the Chair of the Madbury ZBA.<sup>16</sup> The ZBA possesses immense, quasi-judicial power over property rights, structural variances, land use, and the economic development of the town. As Chair, Bacon presides over hearings regarding minimum lot size requirements, property line adjustments, and the fundamental ability of residents to utilize their own land.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2: The Concentration of Civic Power by Matthew Bacon**

Municipal Entity	Role Held by Matthew Bacon	Scope of Authority / Mechanism of Influence	Source Verification
ORCSD School Board	Chair (Madbury Rep.)	Controls \$61.8M budget, initiates	<sup>1</sup>

		state/federal lawsuits, sets district educational/DEI policy, controls meeting minutes.	
<b>ORCSD Student Rep.</b>	Relative (Elise Bacon)	Casts advisory votes; acts as the sole official conduit for student grievances/opinions to the Board.	1
<b>Madbury ZBA</b>	Chair	Quasi-judicial authority over land use, property line adjustments, minimum lot sizes, and municipal development.	16
<b>Madbury Cemetery Trustees</b>	Chair	Financial oversight of municipal trust funds, maintenance budgets, and resident scholarship input.	16

The consolidation of the School Board Chairmanship, the Cemetery Trust Chairmanship, and the Zoning Board Chairmanship into the hands of a single individual represents a severe bottleneck in local democracy. Bacon simultaneously controls the educational budget and policy for Madbury's children, the zoning and land-use destiny of Madbury's property owners, and the management of municipal trusts.

This level of entrenchment allows for a dangerous cross-pollination of influence that is highly detrimental to objective governance. A citizen seeking a critical zoning variance from Bacon's ZBA might feel implicitly pressured not to publicly criticize Bacon's bloated school board budgets, his defense of Rachael Blansett, or his lawsuits against the state, fearing that political opposition could result in retribution during land-use decisions. While there is no direct evidence of such explicit extortion, the structural reality of this power consolidation creates a profound, undeniable chilling effect on free civic discourse. It perfectly explains the psychology

of a leader who feels comfortable recommending against a taxpayer protection cap<sup>5</sup> or unilaterally striking public comments from the historical record<sup>13</sup>—he operates from a position of near-absolute, unchecked local authority, insulated from the standard mechanisms of civic accountability.

## Conclusion and Strategic Risk Assessment

The tenure of Matthew Bacon as Chair of the Oyster River Cooperative School District Board presents a compounding, highly volatile series of negative indicators, fiscal liabilities, and socio-political risks. Through an exhaustive review of the available evidence, the following inescapable conclusions emerge regarding his governance:

First, Bacon is presiding over a period of profound fiscal unsustainability. His administration is driving a financial trajectory that is mathematically incompatible with the economic reality of the district's taxpayers. By championing a nearly \$62 million operating budget and \$9.8 million in expansion bonds while district enrollment is projected to flatten, and by explicitly opposing a 15% tax cap limit, the Board is driving a tax spike (projected up to 40% over three years) that will inevitably depress property values, drive out fixed-income residents, and deter young families from settling in the district. This is occurring while frontline support staff remain undercompensated.

Second, the ideological radicalization of the district under Bacon's watch is a profound liability. The hiring of Rachael Blansett—an individual with a documented public history of anti-white podcasting and radical political activism—represents a catastrophic failure of institutional judgment. Rather than focusing on academic excellence, Bacon's Board has alienated a massive segment of the community, prompting legitimate accusations of cultural Marxism and institutional racism, culminating in the complete breakdown of student culture as evidenced by the bathroom vandalism incidents.

Third, the Board has engaged in reckless partisan legal weaponization. By voluntarily dragging the school district into federal and state lawsuits—suing the NH State Government over HB2 and joining *NEA v. ED*—Bacon has transformed a local administrative body into a progressive legal action group. This wastes administrative resources, permanently fractures the district's relationship with state legislative bodies, and ensures the district is viewed through a highly partisan lens.

Finally, Bacon's governance is characterized by authoritarian procedural tactics and entrenched power consolidation. The excessive use of RSA 91-A non-public sessions to hide board machinations, combined with Bacon's documented willingness to strike written public comments from the official minutes, points to a governance style that is actively hostile to transparency. When combined with the optics of his family member holding the voting position of Student Representative, and his monopoly over the Madbury Zoning Board of Adjustment and Cemetery Trustees, Bacon operates an unaccountable local dynasty that controls zoning,

taxation, and education simultaneously.

In summation, Matthew Bacon's leadership represents a textbook case of municipal overreach. The combination of rampant spending, radical pedagogy, suppression of public dissent, and engagement in national culture-war litigation ensures that his ongoing tenure remains a high-severity risk to the civic stability, economic health, and educational integrity of the Oyster River community.

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