



# 2025 Year in Review

January 17, 2026

Vermont Horse Council Annual Meeting



Promoting a thriving equine  
community in Vermont

# Agenda

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- Welcome
- Secretary Report
- Financials
- 2025 Goals/Accomplishments
- 2026 Proposed Goals (membership input)
- Officers/BOD Slate & Voting
- Lunch
- Educational Event – Dr. Wilkinson



# Secretary Report

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- Approval of minutes from 2025 annual meeting



# 2025 Financials

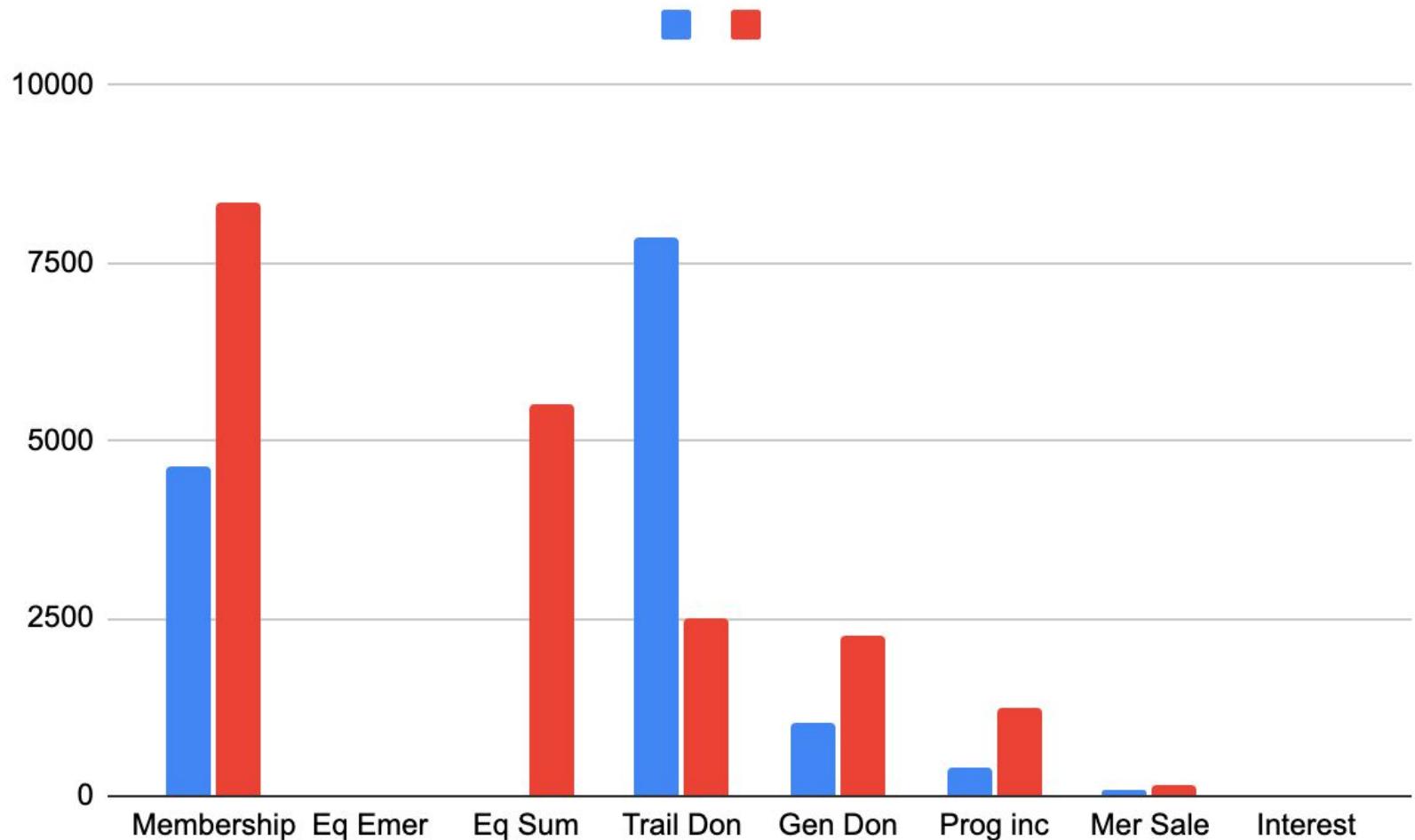
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- Year on Year (YoY) 2025 vs 2024
  - expenses remained relatively flat
  - net income substantially less due to
    - business membership -\$2450
    - individual membership - \$1270
    - no Equine Summit -\$2264
    - Silver Lake Trail work -\$4195.54
- Financial position year end = \$25,260.46



# Income Year on Year

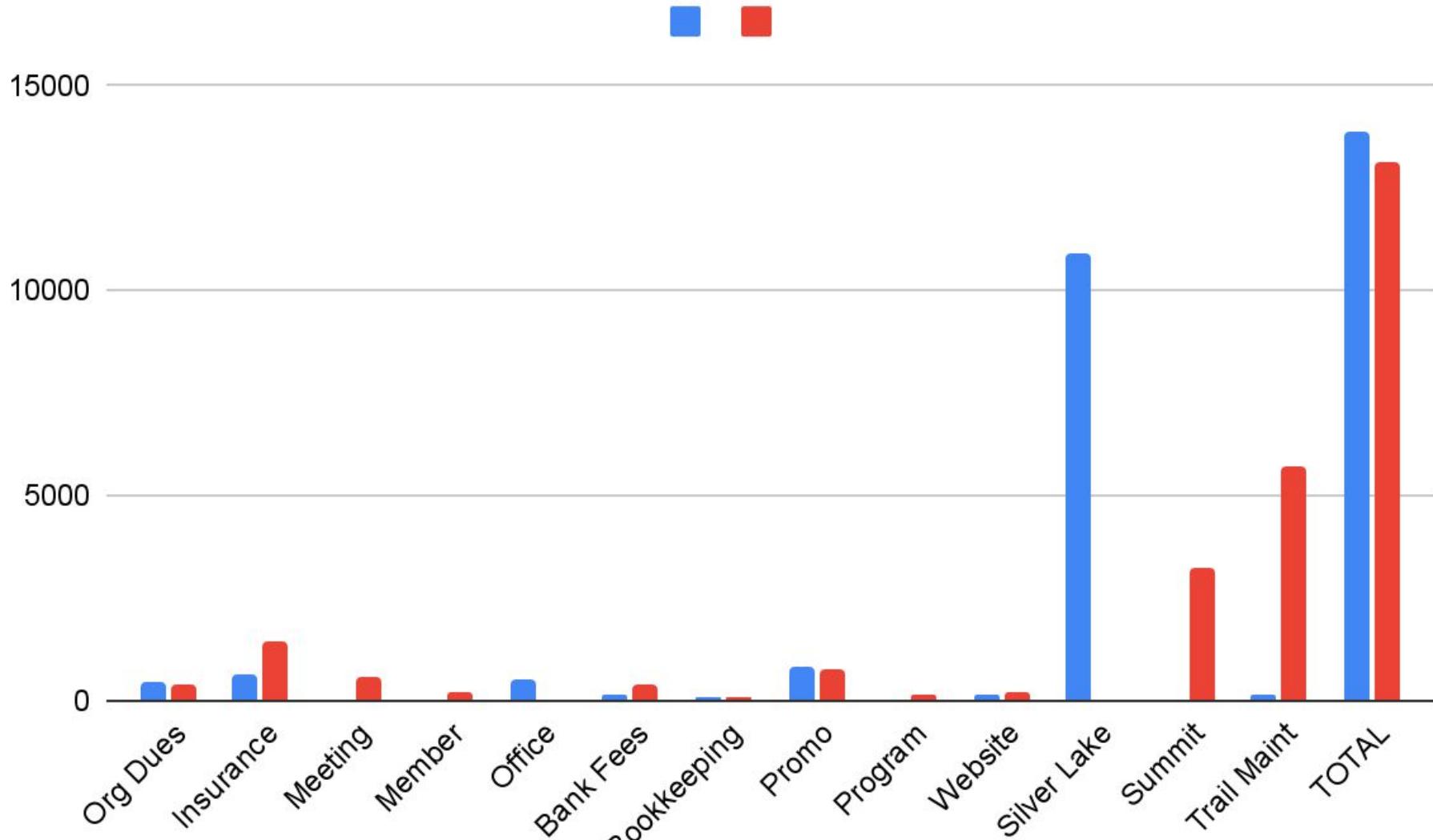
## 2025 (blue) vs 2024 (red)



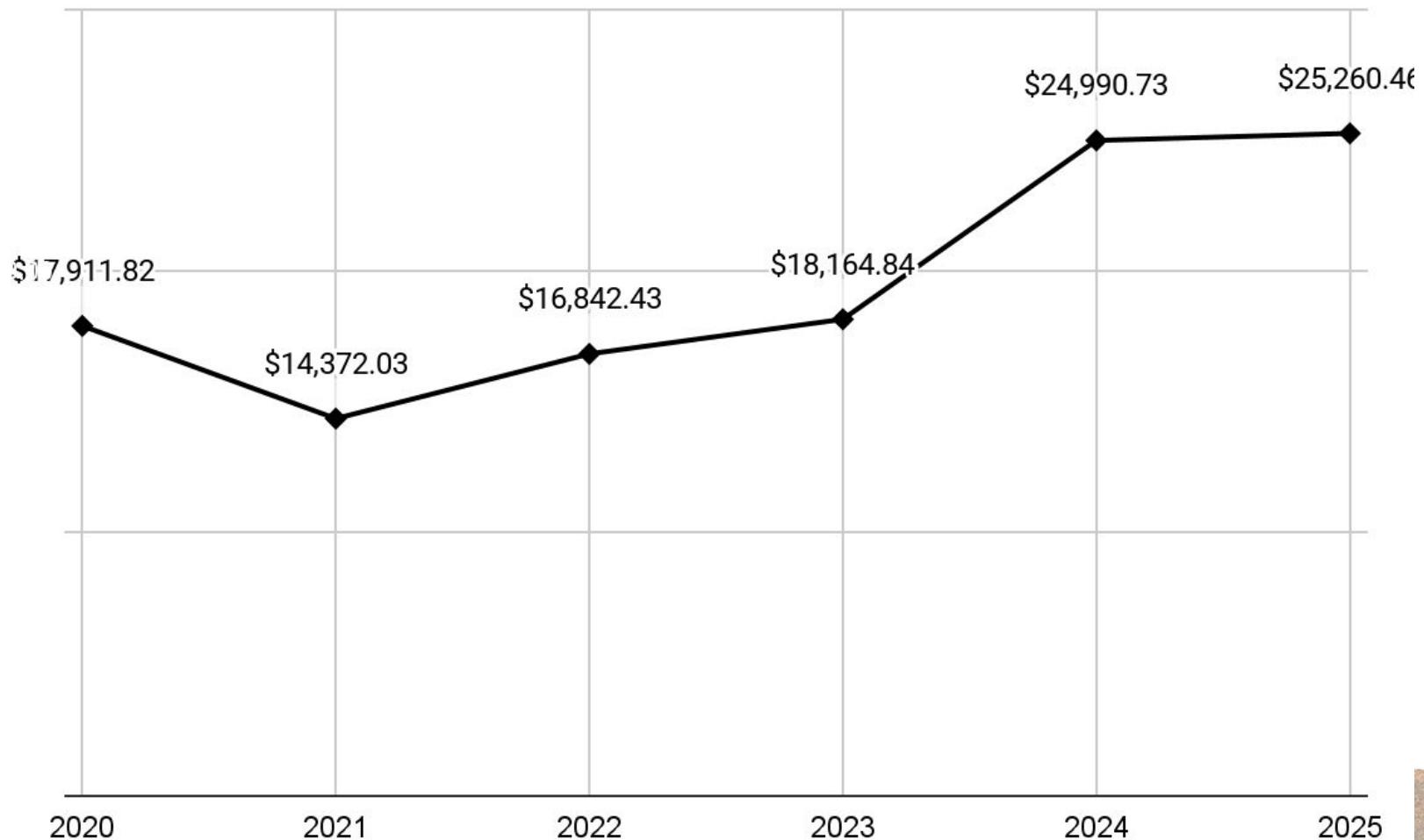
# Expenses YOY

## 2025 (blue) vs 2024 (red)

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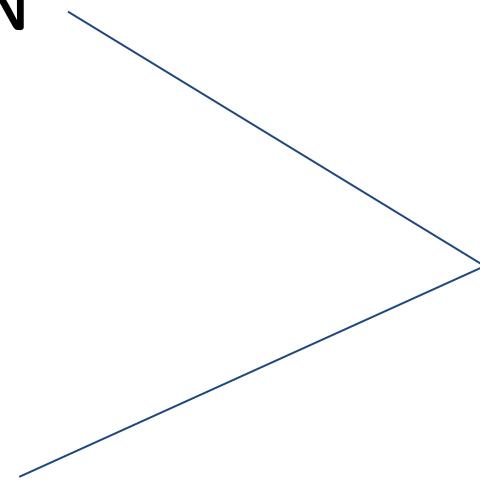
# Financial Position 2020 - 2025



# 2025 Goals and Scorecard

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- COMMUNICATION
- TRAILS
- EDUCATION
- LEGISLATION
- ADMINISTRATIVE



See Handout



# 2025 Accomplishments

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- Good Social Media response
  - investment in 2024 website improvements showing returns
  - newsletters engagement rate is high
  - FB member and non member pages are viewed
- Awesome Trail expansion/improvements in GMNF, Willoughby and Victory
- Exciting progress on Legislation Bill 243
- Continue involvement with Coalition of Horse Councils and American Horse Council





**Search Engine traffic dominates as a traffic source, but it's impossible to tell if users are converting.**

Organic search drives 48% of traffic (1,924 sessions) with a strong 66.5% engagement rate and 51-second average engagement time—the highest of all channels.

**The Issue:** Despite being our best traffic source, no key events or conversions are tracked, making it impossible to measure whether or not they're becoming members.

**Recommendation:** Implement goal tracking. Set up key events for: membership signups links, event registrations, and business directory clicks.

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## Direct Traffic is underperforming

Direct traffic (people typing your website into their browser) accounts for 35.6% of sessions (1,427), but these visitors spend only 17 seconds on average and have a 34.3% engagement rate—way below organic search visitors who spend 51 seconds.

**The Problem:** People are coming directly to your site but leaving quickly. They're not finding what they need or a reason to stay.

**Recommendation:** Give returning visitors something to engage with immediately. Add a "What's New" section on the homepage, feature the next big event, or highlight fresh trail content. Make it obvious what they should do next when they land on the site.





## Trail Resources may be a goldmine for converting members

The “find-a-trail” page has 595 views with 50-second engagement as a landing page and 39-second engagement time per user. The “trail-resources” page has 68.6-second average engagement—our highest engagement page. Trail-related pages (Silver Lake, Willoughby State Forest) all show 35-45 second engagement times.

**The Opportunity:** Trail content is clearly what people come for and stay engaged with.

**Recommendation:** Double down on trail content. Create more trail guides, add photos/maps, build out individual trail pages, and consider seasonal trail condition updates. This is a differentiator for VHC. And it may be a place where we can add more calls to action to join.





## Geographic Concentration Reveals Expansion Opportunity

The top cities where users are visiting the website from are Boston (298 users), NYC (207), Burlington (71), and Essex (41). We're drawing significant interest from Massachusetts and New York—areas outside Vermont.

**The Strategic Insight:** We have a broader regional appeal than just Vermont horse owners. Out-of-state visitors are likely planning Vermont trips or relocations.

**Recommendation:** Create content specifically for out-of-state visitors: “Planning Your Vermont Horse Trail Trip,” “Horse-Friendly Accommodations Near Trails,” or “Bringing Your Horse to Vermont: What You Need to Know.” This could drive membership growth and event attendance from regional horse enthusiasts. Also consider if out-of-state may benefit from becoming members—especially to access member-only trails.





## Social media has untapped potential

Organic social traffic drives 354 sessions (8.8%) with a 49.2% engagement rate—nearly as good as organic search. Facebook is the primary social platform referring traffic.

**The Opportunity:** Social traffic engages well but represents less than 9% of total traffic.

**Recommendation:** Increase your social media content frequency, especially for Facebook. Share trail photos, member stories, and upcoming events.





## Events Drive Strong Interest but Need More Visibility

The /events page gets 545 views with good engagement (26.8 seconds), and individual event pages like Spring Fling drew 189 sessions. People who find your events are clearly interested.

**The Gap:** Our events page only gets 545 views out of 4,007 total sessions—that's just 13.6% of all traffic. Most visitors never see our events at all.

**Recommendation:** Make events impossible to miss. Feature the next big event prominently on the homepage with eye-catching visuals. Consider creating dedicated landing pages for each major event (like the business summit) with registration forms that we can track as key events.



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# 2025 Accomplishments - Trails

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- Willoughby State Forest - received final approval for equestrian use of an expanded trail network
- Moosalamoo (GMNF) - grant- & donation-funded trail repairs, expanded trail network with new connector
- Victory State Forest - VAST club granted permission to use their parking area for horse trailers, trail repairs
- Jericho Research Forest - obtained grant for trail repairs
- Little River State Park - obtained permission for additional trailer parking



# GMNF

# Victory

Every dollar of funding is precious – thank you to our membership for supporting our efforts!



# 2025 Accomplishments Legislation

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- Active and effective VHC Equine Industry Committee (EIC)
- Solid relationship building with Vermont State Agriculture committee at the State House
- Bill was written but needs further refinement
- Professional lobbyist has been identified to assist in bringing Bill to the floor
  - working to determine financial logistics



# 2025 Concerns

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- Membership for financial sustainability
  - Business value add
- Liability Insurance
- Attendance at events
- Board Burnout
  - Sweat equity from membership



# 2026 Goals

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- COMMUNICATION
- TRAILS
- EDUCATION
- LEGISLATION
  - Continued legislative advocacy
  - passage of updated language including equine farm businesses as agricultural
- ADMINISTRATION
  - Fundraising
  - Membership
- See draft goals handout



# Membership Input

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# Voting

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President (2 year term) = Michelle Brewster

VP (1 year term) = Jeannette Cole

Secretary (1 year term) = Emma O'Neill

Director #1 (3 year term) = Ryne Kessler

Director #2 (3 year term) = Robin Severy

## Returning

Treasurer (Mikayla Pick)

BOD = Linsey Williams, Laurie Baird, Lisa LaFont,  
Monica Raymond, Kerrie Garvey



# Adjourn

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It's about showing up for your equines.

