

—Slug:.....COMM-0845.opin.view.franks  
—Contributor.....Tom Franks  
—Contributor email.....snwbkr@gmail.com  
—For section.....Voices/Viewpoint  
—Format.....Opinions  
—Dateline.....Brattleboro  
—Article Number:.....42784

**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Nicely argued, Tom. Thanks for sending this and stimulating discussion here. —All the best, Jeff

**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 Brattleboro should discontinue municipal trash pickup

#####END HED#####

#####BEGIN SUBHED#####

2 Delaying the decision to cut this program until a budget  
3 crisis would be more costly than making it now. As a town and as  
4 individuals, we have options. Let's explore them.

#####END SUBHED#####

5 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

6 AS A VOLUNTEER, I have been supporting Brattleboro town  
7 staff with research and analysis about curbside collection of  
8 waste since April. They have worked diligently and creatively to  
9 achieve the objectives set by two consecutive Selectboards for a  
10 municipally funded program.

11           Based on new information and a review of the  
12   information I'd previously gathered, I believe that Brattleboro  
13   should discontinue municipally funded curbside collection and  
14   disposal of trash and recycling.

15           One piece of new information was the announcement of  
16   an estimated 12% increase in education taxes and the  
17   preliminary estimate of Brattleboro's municipal tax increase in the  
18   range of 4.4%. Combined, it seems we can expect that the total  
19   property tax increase will approach double digits.

20           Considering the challenge we had passing a budget this  
21   year, it is unlikely that the town budget will pass with an increase  
22   that big. In the search for substantial cuts, trash and recycling  
23   may be the only line item where private arrangements can readily  
24   fill the gap and where staff cuts would not be required.

25           The other recent information came from research into the  
26   likely decrease in sales from higher prices for pay-as-you-throw  
27   (PAYT) bags, from \$2 to \$4.60 for yellow bag and from \$3 to 6.90  
28   for purple. This research shows that modest increases in price  
29   make sales go down by 0.1% to 0.6% for each 1% of increased  
30   cost.

31           Brattleboro's prices are going up by over 225%, which is  
32   nowhere near modest. A conservative estimate of the decline in  
33   bag sales is 22.5%. It could easily be higher.

34           Delaying the decision to cut this program until a budget  
35   crisis would be more costly than making it now. Over the next  
36   few months, the town will invest lots of staff time in preparing to  
37   roll out a program that may not survive the budget process.

38           If a decision to change course is not made before the  
39   budget vote is warned, the town will also have ordered and  
40   probably taken delivery of \$150,000 to \$350,000 of recycling  
41   bins. These investments will be completely wasted if the trash and  
42   recycling program are cut from the budget.

43           Thus, I decided to speak out before we pass the point of  
44   no return.

45           \* \* \*

46           HERE ARE SOME OF the other reasons I suggest giving up  
47   on municipally funded curbside collection of trash and recycling:

48           • *Most towns in Vermont do not provide curbside*  
49   *collection of any sort.* None of the other towns that provide  
50   municipal fire and police services do. (Let's call them "high  
51   service towns.")

52           Despite not providing municipal trash collection, these  
53   other towns are not noticeably more awash in trash than  
54   Brattleboro. And all but a few of the other towns in Vermont have  
55   lower tax rates, including all of the other high-service towns;

56           • *It is a bad deal for the town.* I have compared  
57   Brattleboro's proposed contract cost to that of the five other  
58   communities which provide curbside collection of trash and  
59   recycling. The metric is cost per stop: one stop each for trash and  
60   recycling.

61           The average cost per stop for the five communities is  
62   \$2.64. Brattleboro's anticipated cost per stop, assuming  
63   maximum participation under the latest proposal, would be  
64   \$4.80, not including the municipal expenditure on recycling  
65   bins.

66           • *It is a bad deal for many taxpayers.* The tax burden of  
67   the curbside program is currently spread across all properties in  
68   town. This includes taxpaying properties that would be excluded  
69   from the program, like residential buildings with five or more  
70   units and all non-residential properties.

71           These excluded properties comprise approximately 41%  
72   of the Grand List. This means that they pay 41% of the taxes for  
73   everything, including the recycling program. This would amount  
74   to \$284,723 collected in FY27 for properties that would be  
75   excluded from the program, and this money would support the  
76   recycling for other properties.

77           • *It is not a good deal for some eligible households.*  
78   Those households that use more than 1.6 bags per week and that  
79   have a property assessed at higher than the residential (R1 & R2  
80   property codes) average of \$221,150 would be better off making

81 private arrangements with a hauler. Those properties that use two  
82 bags or more per week, regardless of assessed value, would be in  
83 the same boat.

84 • *Finally, all of the cost estimates of the trash and*  
85 *recycling program above are based on meeting bag sales*  
86 *projections.* If bag sales are short of projections by 25% or more,  
87 the trash program will need support from other sources. The  
88 estimates also assume that the recycling carts will be funded by  
89 sources other than FY27 tax receipts.

90 \* \* \*

91 THE TOWN OF Hartford provided curbside recycling until  
92 the end of the FY25. In contract renegotiation, its hauler more  
93 than doubled the price. Hartford said no. A Hartford citizen I  
94 spoke with had been paying \$65 per month for trash and \$5 per  
95 month for recycling pickup under the town contract. After  
96 Hartford no longer had a contract, this individual began paying  
97 the same hauler \$50 per month for both.

98 I shared similar thoughts with the Brattleboro  
99 Selectboard and town manager on Dec. 7. I thought I should  
100 share them with the voters and taxpayers of Brattleboro. As a  
101 town and as individuals, we have options other than what we've  
102 been doing. Let's explore them.

103 If you want more information, please contact me at  
104 [tomfranks.opinion@gmail.com](mailto:tomfranks.opinion@gmail.com).

#####END TEXT#####

BIO/COATTAIL:

#####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL#####

105 **TOM FRANKS** has experience in private, nonprofit, and  
106 governmental organizations. He has a master of science in  
107 environmental management and policy from Rensselaer  
108 Polytechnic Institute. He is aÂ Brattleboro Representative Town  
109 Meeting member representing District 9.

110 Â  
111 Â

112  
113       <br><a title="Find"></a><br><a  
114       title="Find/Replace"></a><br><br><a title="Bold  
115       (Ctrl+B)"></a><br><a title="Italic (Ctrl+I)"></a><br><a  
116       title="Strikethrough"></a><br><br><a title="Unordered  
117       list"></a><br><a title="Ordered list"></a><br><a  
118       title="Blockquote"></a><br><br><a title="Align  
119       left"></a><br><a title="Align center"></a><br><a title="Align  
120       right"></a><br><br><a title="Insert/edit link"></a><br><a  
121       title="Unlink"></a><br><br><a title="Toggle spellchecker"></a>  
122       Â  
123       #####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

*LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:*

123       #####BEGIN MAXISSUE#####  
0  
124       #####END MAXISSUE#####

LINKS:

124       #####BEGIN LINKS#####  
125       #####END LINKS#####

VIDEO:

125       #####BEGIN VIDEO#####  
126       #####END VIDEO#####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

126       #####BEGIN LOGLINE#####  
127       #####END LOGLINE#####

