

—Slug:.....COMM-0850.opin.view.evans-frantz
—Contributor.....Isaac Evans-Frantz
—Contributor email.....ievans-frantz@brattleboro.gov
—For section.....Voices/Viewpoint
—Format.....Opinions
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....42983

[REDACTED]

Notes from editor (not for publication):

[REDACTED]

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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

1 Curbing our costs in Brattleboro

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

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

2 We can move to better financial health and more

3 affordable taxes

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

4 TEXT BODY:

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

5 OVER THE LAST two weeks, the Brattleboro Selectboard
6 has taken important steps for financial health and stability in
7 voting to:
8 • Restore funding for critical infrastructure for our
9 bridges, retaining walls and bicycles.
10 • Unanimously pass my motion to restore the finance
11 director position.

12 • Budget honestly in several areas, predicting revenue

13 and expenses based on past experience rather than wishful
14 thinking.

15 These were important actions, but I joined Amanda

16 Thurber in voting against the final proposed \$27 million budget,
17 which corresponds with a tax increase of more than 6%.

18 At Selectboard meetings, at our listening session last fall,

19 and on the street, I have heard residents say their incomes are not
20 keeping up with increases in property taxes.

21 Brattleboro municipal taxes have far outpaced wage

22 growth, and the Selectboard has missed an opportunity to help
23 keep our community affordable.

24 * * *

25 *Financial responsibility:* At the Selectboard's April 15,

26 2025 meeting, I made a handful of motions to restore long-term
27 financial planning and rebuild the town's financial reserves. The
28 town had drawn down on these reserves to fund the Downtown
29 Safety Action Plan, which included the new police substation on
30 Flat Street and several newly created positions in the Police
31 Department.

32 At that April 15th board meeting, we voted unanimously

33 in support of directing town staff to develop five-year financial
34 projections and a 25-year capital equipment replacement plan.

35 While the capital plans have been developed, we still

36 need to see a five-year financial plan, which could be useful for
37 the public leading up to Town Meeting. Multi-year budget
38 forecasts can help us see the effect of our spending decisions on
39 future years — and make more informed decisions in the present.

40 *Curbing property tax increases:* When I have knocked on

41 doors over the last few years, the primary concern I hear from
42 residents is economic: People work hard but find it hard to make
43 ends meet, or they just barely have enough and can't afford to
44 save for the future or take a vacation.

45 I want us to make life a little easier for people here.

46 During recent Selectboard meetings, my motion passed
47 to refrain from adding multiple new positions to the budget.
48 When we need to make cuts, that's a logical place to start.

49 My efforts to eliminate additional vacant positions in
50 departments that have seen recent personnel growth gained some
51 traction, but my proposal to further reduce staffing in large
52 departments — without eliminating an entire program or service
53 — did not.

54 *Trash pickup: In an opinion poll conducted by the Town
55 of Brattleboro in 2024, 76% of the 399 people who responded
56 to this question said they were satisfied, or extremely satisfied,
57 with the current curbside solid waste collection system.*

58 I voted to continue curbside compost and recycling pick-
59 up. Although this is a significant expense to the town, when
60 individuals account for the time and money they would have to
61 spend figuring out waste removal on their own, it's often more
62 expensive to do individually than collectively.

63 *Human services: Last week the Selectboard voted to
64 completely eliminate funding for human services organizations,
65 with Oscar Heller and me dissenting. Eliminating this funding
66 would be drastic, especially in a year when the federal
67 government has already pulled the rug out from beneath so many
68 Vermonters.*

69 Our neighbors are managing with less food, less housing,
70 and less heating assistance. The Town Human Services
71 Committee has worked hard and followed a rigorous process to
72 make funding determinations.

73 The question of how much to allocate for human
74 services organizations in total was on the ballot for all Brattleboro
75 voters last March. A majority voted for more than 1% of the
76 municipal budget to go to human services funding, and plurality
77 voted for more than 2%.

78 At Representative Town Meeting, the representatives
79 voted to advise the Selectboard to allocate up to 2% of the
80 budget for these human services organizations.

81 Two percent of the current proposed \$27 million budget
82 would be more than \$500,000. There is something a bit strange
83 about saying no to funds to keep the library open as much as it is
84 while funding dozens of nonprofit organizations.

85 The Charter Commission has been considering the
86 decision-making process around human services funding, and I
87 look forward to following their work.

88 * * *

89 TOWN MEETING this spring — whether it is a
90 Representative Town Meeting or open Town Meeting — will get
91 to further review and approve, reject, or modify the Selectboard's
92 work.

93 I have appreciated everyone who has participated in the
94 budget process so far. The input at Selectboard meetings and
95 listening sessions, and at the half dozen community meetings I've
96 hosted around town, have all informed my perspectives,
97 priorities, and votes.

98 In the face of demoralizing federal politics, local
99 participation in decision-making gives me hope for the future. We
100 are all in this together and all want a better Brattleboro.

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

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

101 **ISAAC EVANS-FRANTZ** is the clerk of the Brattleboro
102 Selectboard. He writes in his capacity as an individual member
103 of the board. He invites readers to reach out to him directly at
104 ievans-frantz@brattleboro.gov with opinions and questions.

#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

#####BEGIN MAXISSUE#####

105 0

#####END MAXISSUE#####

LINKS:

#####BEGIN LINKS#####

106

#####END LINKS#####

VIDEO:

#####BEGIN VIDEO#####

107

#####END VIDEO#####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

#####BEGIN LOGLINE#####

108

#####END LOGLINE#####