

—Slug:.....COMM-0853.opin.counte.mclooughlin
—Contributor..... Elizabeth McLoughlin
—Contributor email.....mcloughlin.elizabeth.s@gmail.com
—For section.....Voices/Response
—Format.....Opinions
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43133



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 I won't be silenced. Brattleboro's future is on the line.

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 'I want to help people, but I also have a responsibility as
3 a Selectboard member to Brattleboro's stability, safety, and fiscal
4 health'

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 THE PEOPLE OF Brattleboro deserve clarity about why
7 former Town Manager Peter Elwell has chosen to publicly attack
8 my character. His recent statements accuse me of bullying and
9 demeaning others, even as he claims to champion "civility,"
10 "respect for facts," and "thoughtful listening."

11 These accusations are false. They are designed to
12 intimidate me and to discredit my work on the Selectboard. I
13 reject them completely.

14 As a woman serving in elected office, I will not be
15 pushed aside, talked down to, or silenced by anyone —
16 especially not by a former official who now seeks to influence
17 town politics from the sidelines.

18 This year's Selectboard election is not routine. It is a
19 defining moment for Brattleboro. Voters must decide whether we
20 remain a town with a modest, focused municipal government or
21 whether we transform into an activist municipality with
22 expanding departments, rising taxes, and untested programs.

23 We can continue supporting our police department —
24 which has restored safety downtown and in our neighborhoods
25 — or we can strip resources from law enforcement and redirect
26 them to a brand-new municipal Community Safety Department
27 with no proven track record.

28 The choice is stark, and the consequences are real.

29 * * *

30 WHEN I JOINED the Selectboard seven years ago, Mr.
31 Elwell told me plainly that Brattleboro was not an activist
32 government. He emphasized that the town should support social
33 service agencies only in modest, appropriate ways. He was clear
34 that municipal government should stay focused on core services.

35 Today, he has reversed himself. He now champions
36 defunding the police and expanding municipal social-service
37 functions. His priorities have shifted dramatically.

38 I believe in responsible budgeting, public safety, and a
39 government that stays within its proper scope.

40 The defund-the-police agenda has been pushed
41 repeatedly in recent years. We have seen proposals to cut
42 \$300,000 from the police budget. We have seen a push to create
43 a new town Department of Community Safety with a \$350,000,
44 three-year director position. We have seen demands for a

45 municipally run homeless encampment and advocacy for a safe-
46 injection site.

47 These proposals would fundamentally reshape
48 Brattleboro’s government and finances. They would increase
49 taxes, expand bureaucracy, and weaken public safety.

50 I do not believe this is what the people of Brattleboro
51 want, and I will not support it.

52 * * *

53 OUR TOWN HAS already been carrying a disproportionate
54 burden. The state’s Covid motel program placed 10% of
55 Vermont’s homeless population in Brattleboro — a town that
56 makes up only 2% of the state. This strained our services,
57 increased crime, and destabilized our downtown.

58 Meanwhile, under Mr. Elwell’s leadership, the police
59 department was allowed to shrink to just 13 officers — far below
60 what a town our size requires. That combination created a crisis
61 that Brattleboro was left to manage alone, without adequate
62 resources and without acknowledgment from those who helped
63 create the problem.

64 After several tragic incidents in 2023, including the
65 killing of a shelter manager, the state of Vermont intervened.
66 Working with Jim Baker, Town Manager John Potter, social service
67 leaders, and first responders, the Selectboard — me included —
68 helped built a collaborative framework now known as One
69 Brattleboro.

70 This partnership has strengthened public health and
71 safety and shown what real cooperation looks like — not slogans,
72 not ideology, but actual results.

73 At the same time, downtown merchants and residents
74 demanded action. They were right to do so.

75 The Selectboard responded by directing Chief Norma
76 Hardy to create the Downtown Safety Action Plan and the
77 Brattleboro Response Action Team (BRAT), which deploys
78 unarmed officers to assist the public, support vulnerable
79 individuals, and address illegal activity.

80 The Selectboard approved this plan, and it has delivered
81 results. People feel safer. Businesses feel supported. The
82 collaboration between police and social services is working. This
83 is what effective governance looks like.

84 Yet defund advocates continue to ask when we can cut
85 the police budget. They refuse to acknowledge the success of
86 these efforts. They opposed the Acceptable Community Conduct
87 Ordinance. They resisted the BRAT program. They continue
88 pushing to shift police funds to new municipal social-service
89 initiatives.

90 Their agenda is not fiscally responsible, and it puts both
91 social workers and the public at risk. It is not grounded in the
92 realities Brattleboro faces every day.

93 * * *

94 I WANT TO HELP people, but I also have a responsibility as
95 a Selectboard member to Brattleboro's stability, safety, and fiscal
96 health.

97 I want a town where social services and law enforcement
98 work together, not in opposition. I want a town where taxpayers
99 are respected, not treated as an endless funding source for
100 experimental programs. And I want a town where public safety is
101 understood as the foundation of everything else — economic
102 development, community life, and basic quality of life.

103 I will not be intimidated by political pressure or personal
104 attacks. I will not be shamed into supporting policies that I know
105 are harmful. I will not allow Brattleboro to be pushed into
106 becoming a "little Burlington," with higher taxes, weakened
107 public safety, and an activist municipal government that grows
108 larger every year.

109 I will continue to make hard, reality-based decisions to
110 ensure that Brattleboro remains safe, vibrant, and welcoming.

111 Yes, I want our town to have nice things. I want a clean,
112 secure town where residents and businesses can thrive.

113 I am running for re-election to the Selectboard to defend
114 that vision and to continue fighting for the community I love.

115 Brattleboro deserves leadership grounded in facts, not ideology;
116 in responsibility, not intimidation; in courage, not political
117 gamesmanship.

118 If you share my vision, then vote for me on Tuesday,
119 March 3.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

120 **ELIZABETH MCLOUGHLIN** is chair of the Brattleboro
121 Selectboard. She is a candidate for re-election for a three-year
122 seat.

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

This piece is in response to “Mayo, Evans-Frantz, and
Thurber: profiles in civility” [Letters, Feb. 18].

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

123 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

124

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

125

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

126

###END LOGLINE###