

—Slug:.....COMM-0853.opin.letter.a00_arroyo
—Contributor.....Alisa Arroyo
—Contributor email.....alisa.brattleboro@gmail.com
—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43102



Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Alisa — Thank you for a beautifully written letter. I would love to see your voice in these pages anytime. —Jeff



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Instead of staying angry, I got involved'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 As the debate over Representative Town Meeting (RTM),
5 open Town Meeting (OTM), and the Australian ballot (AB)
6 continues, I've heard it said that some RTM members show up
7 only for hot-ticket issues.

8 Full disclosure: The 2024 Acceptable Community
9 Conduct Ordinance debate is what brought me into RTM. After
10 witnessing what I believed to be a sharp decline in downtown
11 safety, I felt compelled to engage.

12 I moved to Brattleboro in 2014 from Springfield,
13 Massachusetts, grateful to leave behind a tenement riddled with
14 gang activity, drug trafficking, vandalism, and violence. Here, my
15 daughter and I could breathe.

16 But over time, I saw downtown drifting toward the
17 instability I once escaped. It was triggering and deeply
18 concerning. I asked myself: How can one person support safety
19 in this community?

20 At the Dec. 12, 2024 Special Representative Town
21 Meeting, I supported the ordinance.

22 What struck me wasn't just the organized opposition; it
23 was the claim that those of us wanting accountability for public
24 misconduct lack empathy or understanding. I will spare the gritty
25 details of my lived experiences, but I do not lack compassion.
26 Caring about safety and caring about people are not mutually
27 exclusive.

28 Instead of staying angry, I got involved. I ran for RTM.

29 As a newly elected member, I heard repeated
30 accusations that the Human Services Committee (HSC) lacked
31 transparency and operated with conflicts of interest. Rather than
32 accept that narrative, I sought to understand it firsthand and was
33 elected to the HSC.

34 What I found was not secrecy or malice, but intention.
35 Applications are evaluated using a rubric. Members affiliated
36 with organizations recuse themselves from scoring and
37 deliberation. Meetings are public, aside from deliberations. The
38 HSC makes recommendations for allocations, but RTM has the
39 final vote.

40 Serving on HSC has placed me on nuanced ground. I
41 understand tax concerns and the frustration some feel about
42 funding organizations they believe may contribute to public
43 disorder. But I have also seen how deeply human services
44 funding strengthens our community by providing food, child
45 care, education, domestic violence support, peer counseling, and
46 more.

47 I personally know individuals whose lives have been
48 stabilized, even saved, by organizations receiving HSC funding,
49 and yes, these people are giving back to this community.

50 Whether you support HSC or not, its mission is to help
51 people survive and thrive. My experience with this year's HSC
52 has revealed no hidden agendas, just neighbors trying to
53 responsibly steward funds voted on by RTM.

54 I've been accused of "drinking the Kool-Aid." I prefer to
55 call it getting involved and learning. Instead of perpetuating
56 assumptions, I stepped into the work.

57 I encourage you to do the same.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

58 The writer is a member of Brattleboro's Representative
59 Town Meeting, serving District 9, and is a member of the RTM
60 Human Services Committee.

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

62

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

63

###END VIDEO###

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

64

###END LOGLINE###