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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers  
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special  
—Dateline.....Brattleboro  
—Article Number:.....43086



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Social connection and shared decision-making builds  
2 community'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3

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4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Please vote to save in-person Town Meeting in  
6 Brattleboro. We have the rare privilege of coming together as a  
7 community to discuss and address the major challenges and  
8 opportunities facing our town. Voluntarily surrendering that  
9 privilege would be a shame.

10 To ensure we can continue to meet in-person — whether  
11 in Representative Town Meeting or in open Town Meeting — we

12 need to vote: no on Article 2, no on Article 3, and yes on Article  
13 4 on our town ballot this year.

14 At in-person Town Meeting we listen to one another,  
15 learn from one another, change one another's minds. Ideally, we  
16 find common ground and win-win solutions. When that doesn't  
17 happen, at least we have the opportunity to better understand the  
18 varying concerns and desires of our neighbors. This social  
19 connection and shared decision-making builds community.

20 In-person Town Meeting also acts as a check-and-  
21 balance on the Selectboard. The Selectboard has to explain and  
22 defend its recommendations. The voters then decide whether to  
23 approve, reject, or amend the proposed action. Most often, the  
24 Selectboard's proposals are approved. But when there are  
25 concerns, the opportunity to discuss and amend is essential.

26 By contrast, if we switch to Australian ballot, the voters  
27 will be limited to choosing "yes" or "no" on what is  
28 predetermined by the Selectboard. No discussion. No working  
29 together to find common ground. Too much power concentrated  
30 in the five members of the Selectboard. Too little power for the  
31 people of the town.

32 The proponents of Australian ballot have co-opted the  
33 term "one person, one vote." But open Town Meeting also is "one  
34 person, one vote." It is open to exactly the same group of people  
35 — all of Brattleboro's registered voters — who have access to the  
36 election booth.

37 If people object to Representative Town Meeting as too  
38 limited in its participation, then let's switch to open Town  
39 Meeting. Doing so would allow the broader participation of any  
40 interested voter while preserving the essential opportunity to  
41 speak up, to listen, to learn, to compromise, and to take action  
42 together.

43 Let's continue to decide important matters by our  
44 collaboration, not by the mere sum of our isolated individual  
45 preferences.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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