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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43092



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Brattleboro has outgrown RTM

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 Representative Town Meeting is like that worn-out old
5 coat you have in the closet: torn, full of holes, zipper's not quite
6 right, and it doesn't really fit anymore.

7 You know that there is a new model out there that will
8 perform better. But you just can't let the old one go, even though
9 you know it needs to.

10 Brattleboro held its first Representative Town Meeting
11 (RTM) in 1961 with 24 articles. It took approximately four hours.
12 In 2025, RTM had 18 articles and lasted approximately 11 hours.

13 In 1961, 177 candidates ran for the 105 RTM member
14 seats. Just one year later, in 1962, there were 35 candidates
15 running for the 62 open seats. Even by the second year of RTM, it
16 didn't seem to be a popular way of conducting town business for
17 Brattleboro.

18 We've had two public hearings, various Selectboard
19 meetings, information sessions, and Charter Review Commission
20 discussion on the pros and cons of Representative Town Meeting
21 (RTM), Australian (secret) ballot, and open Town Meeting (OTM).

22 In all of these meetings, information was presented,
23 different points of view were heard, debate took place, questions
24 were asked, and answers were provided. Participants were in the
25 room or present via Zoom. In fact, at one of the hearings,
26 someone stated that they had planned to attend in person, but
27 had started to feel ill and decided to use the Zoom option.

28 Because the meeting was on Zoom, they were still able
29 to provide input and have their voice heard — an option that is
30 not available to them in either RTM or OTM. All of these hearings
31 and meetings were done so that when you have your ballot in
32 front of you, you can make the best informed choice.

33 This is exactly what Town Meeting by Australian ballot is
34 all about and how it is proposed to work. You gather your
35 information from meetings, forums, and information sessions —
36 in-person or on Zoom — or from the paper, never mind all the
37 tech at your fingertips to do your research with.

38 You go through that information, you think and rethink,
39 you digest, you come up with more questions. You take the time
40 to make the best-informed decision that you can.

41 Then, you use all of that when you have your ballot in
42 front of you, be it at the kitchen table with an absentee ballot or
43 at the polls on the day of voting.

44 And the best part: Every registered voter gets to do that at
45 whatever level of involvement they need to come to their
46 conclusion. They are not rushed in a short time frame, for one
47 particular item, at a one-day meeting (where in the end the
48 question may not have been fully thought through in the time
49 frame given or where you may not have even been allowed to
50 give your input before the question was called).

51 All of the hearings and meetings that there have been for
52 this decision about Australian ballot were a beta test. By all
53 indicators, it is good, and it works.

54 Vote yes to end RTM. Vote yes for Australian ballot. Vote
55 no for open Town Meeting.

####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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