

—Slug:.....COMM-0854.opin.letter.a00_bailey
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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43132



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 RTM is asking a lot. It's worth the effort.

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 I am concerned that the discussion about Brattleboro's
5 Representative Town Meeting (RTM) is getting stuck in
6 considerations of efficiency as a measure of good democracy.

7 I agree that asking voters to read lengthy documents
8 before the meeting, talk to their neighbors and discuss options,
9 and then figure out a way to make time for a day-long meeting is
10 asking a lot of people these days. But that does not mean it is not

11 worth doing. Especially when the alternative is checking off a
12 binary option on a piece of paper.

13 Yes, that would be easier, but it would not guarantee that
14 more people would actually come to vote, and it would turn
15 even more power over creating the budget to the five people on
16 the Selectboard.

17 By going to an all-paper-ballot system, with no Town
18 Meeting component (whether open or representative), Brattleboro
19 would be losing a valuable mechanism of participatory
20 democracy that once it is gone would not likely ever come back.

21 Most things worth doing take effort.

22 This call for an end to RTM is coming at the same time
23 that people are expressing great concern about our steadily
24 increasing budget. Ending RTM will not make our budget issues
25 go away and will not make it any easier to figure out the best way
26 forward; in fact, it could make doing so significantly harder. With
27 no Town Meeting, voters can only respond with yes or no to
28 whatever the Selectboard proposes. That is not more voice; that is
29 less.

30 With all of the local and national issues that are affecting
31 us now, we should be engaging more people in the discussion
32 about the budget and town priorities. Town Meeting provides
33 discussion of both in the informational sessions beforehand and
34 the meeting itself. Going with Australian ballot voting for
35 everything eliminates the requirement for that discussion before
36 voting, and leads us further down the path of binary thinking and
37 polarization.

38 I support keeping Representative Town Meeting because
39 those elected members are committing to do doing the work to
40 be part of the discussion and the gathering of information.

41 I do not think that RTM is perfect, but with
42 modifications, it can serve us well. I can also be supportive of
43 open Town Meeting, if Brattleboro residents choose that option
44 over RTM.

45 But I will be very sad if Brattleboro changes to Australian
46 ballot, giving up this mechanism we still have to come together
47 and create our own unique path forward.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

48 The writer represents District 9 as a member of
49 Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting.

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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