

—Slug:.....COMM-0854.opin.letter.a00_houle
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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....Opinions - Letters to the Editor - Special
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43118



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'All voters were not being represented fairly'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 I was excited to be elected as a new member of
5 Representative Town Meeting in 2025. I had no prior experience
6 in town government but was disenchanted with, in my opinion,
7 recent costly bad decisions, lack of planning, and unnecessary
8 spending, culminating in excessive increases in property taxes.
9 I am a retired caregiver for my 92-year-old mother and
10 78-year-old husband, a homeowner who is solely responsible for
11 the work it takes to maintain, a mother, a grandmother, and a dog

12 mom. I have a full plate, as many do, but I committed myself to
13 taking on the role of representing my neighbors at RTM and what
14 I was hearing from them was: *We can't afford inordinately rising*
15 *property taxes.*

16 Off to Representative Town Meeting I went!

17 I walked in. The sign to the right read "masks" and the
18 one to the left, "no masks." I went right (my husband is
19 immunocompromised), sat down, got comfortable, looked
20 around, and didn't see anyone I knew.

21 Over the course of the next few hours I learned I was
22 sitting smack dab in the middle of a large contingent of people
23 from the Human Services Committee who are also RTM
24 members.

25 This group had a single agenda, and it was not
26 representing their town, or their district's constituents. It was
27 representing the Human Services Committee. When the subject
28 at hand pertained to human services, they collaborated, they
29 planned their response, and they ran to the microphone. When
30 the topic was not human services, they were chatting, eating
31 lunch (prior to the break) opening 20 to 30 brown paper bags
32 quite noisily, and checking cell phones.

33 At one point I asked them to be quiet because I wanted
34 to hear all topics of discussion. I was fully engaged. They were
35 not.

36 No one spoke to me or introduced themselves. I wasn't
37 welcomed into the community they speak of, or collaborated
38 with in the manner they claim. There were zero meaningful
39 discussions that included me.

40 At some point — I'm assuming from my vocal Facebook
41 posts and anti-spending sentiment — they realized who I was. I
42 asked a fellow RTM member to nominate me, the person no one
43 spoke to, for the Human Services Committee. When she did, I
44 heard a collective "Ugh!" from the people sitting around me.
45 They didn't want an outsider in their clique and certainly not

46 someone who wouldn't support a nearly half-million-dollar
47 human services budget.

48 Later on in the day, when people were selected for the
49 Human Services Committee, the committee that decides how to
50 spend our money, and the committee who asked as many
51 nonprofits they could find (per the committee chair at the behest
52 of then-Selectboard Chair Daniel Quipp) to send them their
53 requests for money from Brattleboro taxpayers, the chair jumped
54 up and nominated the first group of people, all of whom had
55 been on the committee.

56 The moderator stood silent as all the committee members
57 were immediately chosen. Was it fair to to have a committee
58 selected so undemocratically?

59 I left the meeting believing that all voters were not being
60 represented fairly.

61 Vote yes to discontinue Representative Town Meeting.
62 Vote yes to adopt the Australian ballot. Vote no to adopt open
63 Town Meeting.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

64 The writer represents District 7 as a member of
65 Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting.

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

66 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

67

###END LINKS###

VIDEO:

###BEGIN VIDEO###

68

###END VIDEO###

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

###BEGIN LOGLINE###

69

###END LOGLINE###