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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Human services are not an extraneous line item

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 Last year, Groundworks helped 3,609 residents of
3 Brattleboro meet basic needs like food, shelter, and support. This
4 is not a distant crisis. This is our community.

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 RIGHT NOW, Brattleboro faces a defining moment.
7 As the town considers its FY27 budget at open Town
8 Meeting on April 11, we are being asked to make difficult
9 choices. But let's be clear: including human services funding in
10 our municipal budget is not just a monetary decision. It is a

11 resolution about who we are as a community and our
12 commitment to our future.

13 Every day, our neighbors are feeling the impact of
14 housing instability and food insecurity. These challenges are not
15 hypothetical. They are the daily impacts of policy choices, like
16 the one currently before us, playing out for our neighbors and for
17 the quality of life of all Brattleboro residents.

18 Groundworks’ commitment to Brattleboro is clear and
19 unwavering: We envision a community where everyone has
20 enough — sufficient food and a place to call home. Last year,
21 Groundworks served 3,609 residents — that’s roughly one in
22 every three of our town’s population who turned to us for help
23 meeting basic needs like food, shelter, and support.

24 This is not a distant crisis. This is our community.

25 * * *

26 WE ARE HELPING the town meet myriad mutual priorities
27 with our daily work, and supporting that work should be a core
28 investment in the town’s budget.

29 Groundworks employs nearly 50 staff — more than half
30 of whom live in Brattleboro — who deliver eight programs,
31 including Foodworks, our Drop-In Center and Overnight Shelter,
32 outreach services to people living unsheltered, and housing
33 support that helps people exit homelessness and retain housing.

34 Not one of these programs is fully funded by state or
35 federal sources, yet all are essential to keeping people safe and
36 supported — indeed, surviving — in Brattleboro.

37 Rising housing costs, limited availability, and stagnant
38 wages are pushing more residents to the brink. Over the past five
39 years, we have seen a 133% increase in adults aged 55 and older
40 accessing our shelter and drop-in services. In 2025, our Outreach
41 Team worked with 75 people aged 55 or older who were living
42 unsheltered in Brattleboro.

43 At the same time, the foundational resources that make
44 this work possible are becoming less stable, with 64% of our’
45 budget coming from government grants. Much of our work is at

46 risk due to shifting state and federal priorities. Local funding from
47 the town of Brattleboro plays a critical role in stabilizing these
48 services and filling the gaps left behind.

49 * * *

50 REDUCING OR ELIMINATING human services funding will
51 not reduce need — doing so will push our community further
52 into crisis response rather than allowing us to build toward long-
53 term sustainability. It will make it harder, not easier, to build the
54 stable, healthy Brattleboro we all want.

55 Human services are not an extraneous line item. They are
56 essential infrastructure that comprise less than 2% of the town's
57 overall \$27 million budget to be shared among 33 organizations.

58 Were the town to attempt to provide these services on its
59 own, the cost would far exceed the proposed 1.75% allocation
60 recommended by the Human Services Committee — a body that
61 had taken its mandate from elected Town Meeting representatives
62 and allocated funds to propose the greatest impact for the town.

63 * * *

64 THE CALL TO ACTION is simple: Support the Human
65 Services Committee's funding recommendations at Town
66 Meeting, and vote to approve the FY27 town budget accordingly.

67 Because, ultimately, this budget is not just about dollars
68 and cents.

69 It's about our neighbors — and our shared responsibility
70 to one another.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

71 **LIBBY BENNETT** is executive director of Groundworks
72 Collaborative.

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

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