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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format..... LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43326



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Ballot confusion contributed to illogic of Brattleboro's
2 Town Meeting vote

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

RE: "Brattleboro vote to abolish RTM causes new wrinkles " [News, March 11]:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Some wrinkles in the Brattleboro vote to abolish
6 Representative Town Meeting (RTM) might have begun with the
7 confusing nature of the ballot.
8 Articles II, III, IV greatly contribute to difficulties in
9 planning subsequent steps to implement the result of the town
10 vote. The purpose of these articles was to select the system to be

11 used by which budget approval and other public questions were
12 determined.

13 There were three choices: Representative Town Meeting,
14 Australian ballot, and open Town Meeting. Usually, such a
15 question — say, voting among three candidates for one open seat
16 — consists of one article with the added instruction to “vote for
17 one.” Not this time. If the voter’s choice was the RTM, one had to
18 vote no on Article II — that is, to not discontinue the existing
19 RTM, a double negative to indicate a positive response.

20 Article III and IV respectively needed a yes vote if one’s
21 choice was the Australian or the open Town Meeting. They were
22 each tied in with the results of the overall vote on Article II! The
23 opening to each, “In the event that [...] ” presented the voter with
24 a logical condition — in fact, two logical conditions. Following
25 the first part, along came an *if* statement (also a logical condition)
26 as to what would be added to the Town Charter.

27 To add to the confusion, Article III refers to the first
28 article as Article 2, using the Arabic numeral rather than the
29 Roman numeral. Article IV refers to the first article, not by
30 number but by stating its result: “In the event that Representative
31 Town Meeting is discontinued . . .”

32 Article III refers to itself as: “this Article 3” and, likewise,
33 Article IV refers to itself as: “this Article 4.” Both articles in a
34 statement of what would be added to the Town Charter include
35 the location of that addition as: “Article II, Section 3F.” This
36 Article II does not refer to the Article II on the ballot but in the
37 Town Charter.

38 We then had an Article II, Article III, Article IV, Article 2,
39 Article 3, Article 4, and a second, different Article II.

40 Article III (Australian) received 1,362 yes votes; Article IV
41 (open Town Meeting) received 1,457 yes votes. The total number
42 of these two is 2,819 votes, more than the total number of voters,
43 2,442, indicating that some voters voted yes on both articles.
44 There had to be at least 377 such voters and possibly more — up
45 to all 1,362 voters.

46 My understanding of the ballot was that if one voted yes
47 to discontinue RTM then one would vote yes on either Article III
48 or IV and no on the other one. But apparently some voters
49 understood things differently. I have no understanding of why one
50 would have voted yes on both III and IV.

51 Therefore, I do think that great care must be taken in
52 further conclusions regarding what the whole town voted for. I do
53 not see that a compromise Charter change can be justified on the
54 basis of the voting.

55 The first peculiarity that struck me when first seeing the
56 ballot (as published in *The Commons* prior to voting day) was
57 that if the voting was yes to discontinue RTM and *no* votes
58 dominated articles III and IV we would have voted to have no
59 system at all.

60 But I thought that would be very illogical and unlikely.
61 How surprised I was to find out that exactly that is what
62 happened.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

63

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

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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