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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers  
—Format.....LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor  
—Dateline.....Brattleboro  
—Article Number:.....43597



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Thank you for the thoughtful letter, Rev. Dame. —All the best, Jeff



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Free speech remains free; gathering costs money'

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 There has been some conversation recently, public and  
5 private, about the costs of organizing public events in  
6 Brattleboro.

7 As a member of Brattleboro Area Action, which, along  
8 with Indivisible Brattleboro has organized No Kings as well as  
9 other demonstrations this past year, I want to give people some  
10 facts on holding public gatherings here. We have had 3,500  
11 people or more at some of these events.

12           There have been questions raised about costs and  
13 whether groups are treated differently. To start, the town charges  
14 \$25 for a parade permit, as called for by town ordinance. Then  
15 there are rental fees for using town parks or parking lots. For  
16 larger events with higher impacts to the town budget, the town  
17 has asked for a donation.

18           Those funds cover extra staffing by the Department of  
19 Public Works and Fire/EMS as well as the police. The world goes  
20 on for folks in town who are not at these events and, thankfully,  
21 the town considers their potential needs as well. Keeping people  
22 safe requires staffing and money.

23           Activist groups, including Indivisible, that have marched  
24 and closed streets for any length of time this past year raise funds  
25 and make good-sized contributions to the town for these  
26 additional costs. Groups sponsoring other events such as the  
27 Fourth of July and Gallery Walk raise money for the same reason.  
28 Some celebrations such as the Horribles Parade at Halloween are  
29 budgeted by the town. I don't see No Kings getting a line item in  
30 the town budget.

31           There have been claims that the town's requirements in  
32 some way threaten our First Amendment right to free speech. I  
33 can't see it. Free speech remains free; gathering costs money.

34           As one of the planners of and participants in events that  
35 have allowed thousands of people to gather and exercise their  
36 right to speak their minds and resist the political nightmare we  
37 find ourselves in, I am grateful that the town of Brattleboro has  
38 been supportive and hospitable.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

40      #####BEGIN MAXISSUE#####  
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LINKS:

41      #####BEGIN LINKS#####  
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VIDEO:

42      #####BEGIN VIDEO#####  
#####END VIDEO#####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

43      #####BEGIN LOGLINE#####  
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