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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Brattleboro Chamber’s new leader looks to regional
2 outreach

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3 Rachel Shields Ebersole lists her priorities as learning
4 what members need and strengthening regional identity

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

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6 The Brattleboro Regional Chamber of Commerce (BRCC)
7 has chosen Rachel Shields Ebersole as its new executive director.

8 “There’s a lot to take in — a lot of history, a lot going
9 on,” says Shields Ebersole, who started work earlier this month
10 and brings more than a decade of experience in community

11 building, communications, program management, and regional
12 economic development to the role.

13 Priorities for her, once she has a handle on the big
14 picture, will be “leaning into the regional identity and doing
15 outreach” and “learning about what the members really need; I’m
16 excited about that.”

17 One need she already sees is helping the BRCC to stake
18 a claim to serving the region.

19 “The organization is still perceived as just Brattleboro,”
20 says the new director.

21 There is currently no county Chamber here, but two
22 others exist in the region — Great Falls Regional Chamber of
23 Commerce in Bellows Falls and Southern Vermont Deerfield
24 Valley Chamber of Commerce in Wilmington.

25 The BRCC online directory lists 226 members. Of them,
26 a search by location in Brattleboro yields 173. The balance of
27 members are distributed among 24 other towns in Vermont as
28 well as in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

29 “Geography and boundaries are all a little fluid,” she
30 says. “I think we’ll all work really well together, and we’re all sort
31 of happy that everybody is doing the work together.”

32 As far as how to emphasize the regional nature of the
33 work, Shields Ebersole cites “messaging and outreach — to really
34 specifically talk to businesses that are outside the town limits.”

35 **A decade of community**

36 **building**

37 Shields Ebersole, who now lives in Greenfield,
38 Massachusetts, has lived in many places, including Vermont,
39 previously to the 3½ years she has most recently resided in the
40 area.

41 Her last position was as GROW SoVermont program
42 manager and community projects specialist at Brattleboro
43 Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), where she developed

44 and led initiatives focused on newcomer engagement, regional
45 connection, events, and communications across southern
46 Vermont.

47 Her background includes work for membership
48 organizations, coworking, publishing, art nonprofits, and
49 community engagement initiatives across several states.

50 Earlier in her career Shields Ebersole managed an
51 organic farm's CSA membership program in western Colorado,
52 helped operate a large coworking space in Oregon, supported an
53 arts and culture coalition in Wisconsin, and worked in book
54 publishing and editorial project management in central Vermont.

55 Why did she want this job?

56 "I really love doing the regional work [at BDCC],
57 regional network building with a newcomers program, and
58 nonprofit and municipal capacity building," she says, adding that
59 funding constraints caused her position at BDCC to be cut.

60 Both Shields Ebersole and the BRCC board of directors
61 credit Kate O'Connor for stepping in for the interim between the
62 2025 death of longtime Executive Director Greg Lesch and
63 Shields Ebersole's recent hiring.

64 "We're incredibly grateful to Kate for stepping in to
65 provide steady leadership and continuity during an important
66 moment for the Chamber," says board Chair Jonas Murray. "Her
67 commitment to this organization and this region has been
68 invaluable."

69 "She did a lot of work to get things organized and able to
70 pass on," adds Shields Ebersole.

71 **Excited for the energy**

72 "Rachel brings exactly the combination of relationship
73 building, organizational leadership, and regional knowledge that
74 the Chamber needs in this moment," Murray says. "She
75 understands the importance of supporting local businesses while
76 also helping people feel connected to the broader community."

77 Murray adds that the board is “excited for the energy,
78 thoughtfulness, and collaboration she brings to this role.”

79 Her hiring comes at a time when the organization “is
80 entering an important new chapter as we continue strengthening
81 our role as a trusted regional guide and connector for
82 southeastern Vermont,” Murray says, noting the organization’s
83 focus on “supporting member visibility, strengthening business
84 and community connections, sharing useful information, and
85 helping people better navigate the opportunities and resources
86 across our region.”

87 As executive director, Shields Ebersole will lead the
88 Chamber’s ongoing work to strengthen member visibility, expand
89 regional partnerships, support local businesses, and continue
90 developing the organization’s role as a trusted source of
91 information, advocacy, and connection for the region.

92 “The common thread throughout my career has always
93 been building community — helping people connect,
94 collaborate, and feel invested in the places where they live and
95 work,” she says.

96 Shields Ebersole says that mission “is at the heart of what
97 a Chamber can do at its best.”

98 “I’m excited to continue strengthening relationships,
99 supporting businesses, and helping connect people with the
100 opportunities and resources that make southern Vermont vibrant
101 and resilient,” she adds.

102 While living in the Upper Valley earlier in her career,
103 Shields Ebersole organized community-building initiatives for
104 young professionals and remote workers focused on
105 strengthening connection and local engagement.

106 “I’m looking forward to learning from and with the
107 businesses, organizations, and communities that make this region
108 special,” she said. “There’s real momentum here, and I’m excited
109 to help build on it.”

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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110 For more information about the Brattleboro Regional
111 Chamber of Commerce, visit brattleborochamber.org.

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