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—Dateline..... Brattleboro
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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Beautifully written, Deena. Thank you. —All the best, Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Financial sustainability matters. But community
2 sustainability matters, too.

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 The proposed closure of the BMH birthing center isn't
4 just the loss of a hospital service. It's the removal of another brick
5 from the foundation of the community we're trying to build.

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 AS A SMALL BUSINESS owner, I've spent thousands of hours
8 talking with people in this community. Behind my salon chair,
9 I've had conversations with teachers, nurses, contractors, retirees,
10 young parents, business owners, and people with very different
11 opinions about almost everything.

12 Yet despite those differences, I believe most of us want
13 the same things for Brattleboro: thriving local businesses, safe
14 neighborhoods, good schools, well-maintained roads, more
15 housing, and young families choosing to build their futures here.

16 That's why the proposed closure of Brattleboro Memorial
17 Hospital's birthing center has made me think less about one
18 hospital department and more about the future of our community.

19 Building a community is a lot like building a house. A
20 strong house isn't held together by one brick. It's strong because
21 every brick supports the next. Communities work the same way.

22 The proposed closure of our birthing center isn't just the
23 loss of a hospital service. It's the removal of another brick from
24 the foundation of the community we're trying to build.

25 I understand the hospital's difficult financial reality.
26 Financial sustainability matters. But community sustainability
27 matters, too. The decisions we make today will shape Brattleboro
28 for decades, long after today's budget challenges have passed.

29 Remove one brick and a house still stands. Remove
30 another, and it still stands. But over time, enough bricks are gone
31 that the foundation begins to weaken. You may not notice it all at
32 once, but eventually the cracks begin to show.

33 I believe Brattleboro is already beginning to see those
34 cracks.

35 * * *

36 A BIRTHING CENTER is about much more than where
37 babies are born. It signals that Brattleboro is a community where
38 families can build a future, healthcare professionals can build a
39 career, and employers can confidently recruit the workforce they
40 need.

41 Communities with strong foundations attract people.
42 Communities that gradually lose those foundations struggle to do
43 the same.

44 When communities lose pieces of their foundation,
45 attracting families, businesses, investment, and skilled workers
46 becomes more difficult. Over time, that weakens the tax base,

47 leaving fewer resources to maintain our roads, support our
48 schools, strengthen public safety, and invest in the infrastructure
49 every community depends on.

50 We often talk about revitalizing downtown, creating
51 housing, strengthening our workforce, and growing our economy.
52 Those aren't separate conversations. They all depend on building
53 a community where people choose to live, work, raise a family,
54 and invest.

55 This discussion is about more than a birthing center. It's
56 about whether our decisions are strengthening Brattleboro's
57 foundation or gradually weakening it.

58 If we want Brattleboro to be a place where families
59 choose to stay, businesses choose to invest, and future
60 generations choose to build their lives, then we have to protect
61 the foundation that makes all of that possible.

62 After all, what we're building today is the Brattleboro
63 we'll leave behind tomorrow.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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

64 **DEENA CHADWICK** is a Brattleboro business owner and
65 resident.

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

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

67

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

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####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

69

####END LOGLINE####