

1 July 2015

During the past week, I have lost a lot of sleep. That is, in part, due to the arrival of Gus, a puppy who may someday be a service dog to help a person with a disability. But, more than tending to the needs of Gus, I have been losing sleep because of the escalating strife in my chosen hometown of Halifax, Vermont.

It saddens me when we cannot treat each person with the respect that he or she deserves. It saddens me when, in a public forum, I hear slander directed at a neighbor. It saddens me when fellow residents voice that, because I was born elsewhere, my opinions, hopes, and concerns about our community do not have equal value to other tax-paying citizens of Halifax. It saddens me to learn that, at a public hearing in late May, one among us called a Selectboard member by a most derogatory term. It saddens me when someone infers that another person can "afford" to have a different opinion because he or she is living off of trust funds. Frankly, that is not relevant. But, for the record, I worked diligently for more than 40 years, paying my own way, living frugally, and saving mightily. I'm sure that most of us have a similar story.

We all live in Halifax. Each of us does our part to help our community. We do this in varied ways; by volunteering, by helping neighbors, by participating in public meetings, by supporting fund raisers, by showing kindness and respect to others.

This is a dynamic time for Halifax. With our limited population and tax base, our town struggles to pay its bills, maintain our roads, and provide basic services. We are facing a decision about a major land use proposal. And we now have the privilege to observe the process whereby our Selectboard appoints an interim member from among three candidates who graciously are willing to serve our town.

Despite differences among us, I do believe that we have something important in common. We care about the community of Halifax. I hope that during tonight's selection process and during future public discussions in Halifax, we will each strive to carefully listen to the concerns of others and to express our own opinions with integrity, kindness, fairness, sensitivity, and respect.

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