

Brattleboro Reformer
Resolution on Bush not on warrant
By BOB AUDETTE, Reformer Staff

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BRATTLEBORO -- The Selectboard handed a defeat to Kurt Daims on Tuesday when it shot down his petition to indict and try in court former President George W. Bush. Daims, who was behind previous resolutions to impeach and indict Bush and former Vice President Dick Cheney, asked the board to place on the town warrant a resolution calling for a trial of Bush for war crimes and for violating the U.S. Constitution.

If convicted, Bush would be pardoned, according to Daims' resolution.

"The trial would get some truth out and the reconciliation comes from the compromise of asking President Obama to pardon Mr. Bush," said Daims, shortly after the vote.

Even though Daims had enough signatures on the resolution petition -- 5 percent or 480 registered voters -- the Selectboard voted 4-1 to keep it off the town warrant, which Town Meeting representatives will vote on at Town Meeting on March 21.

"I encourage the board to vote this motion down," said Selectboard Vice Chairman Jesse Corum.

Both he and Selectboard Chairman Dick DeGray said they found the language in the resolution offensive and uncivil.

In the resolution, Bush is called a "witless pawn" and accuses Congress of being weak and complicit.

But Corum saved most of his disdain for a statement in the resolution that reads "treason, graft and genocide by powerful special interests who profit from these crimes."

There is absolutely no proof that those things happened in the past eight years, he said. Corum also thought the use of the word genocide was inappropriate. But more particularly, he said, the resolution diverts the town's attention away from real issues it needs to confront.

"This has nothing to do with the town of Brattleboro and the business we have as a town," said Corum.

"I would agree with Jesse that the language here is very offensive," said DeGray, who reminded his fellow board members that he voted in opposition to include the impeachment and indictment resolutions submitted by Daims last year and the year before.

Those resolutions were forwarded to Town Meeting representatives by a 3-2 vote.

DeGray said he also felt, with a new president, it's time to move on.

"Ex-President Bush is no longer with us. It's time to turn the page."

DeGray said most of the people he has talked with around town also opposed putting the resolution up for a vote.

Board member John Allen agreed.

"Over the weekend, I showed (the resolution) to a bunch of random people," he said. "People were concerned about the language and just how harsh it was."

Because of the feedback, said Allen, he could not support putting the resolution on the town warrant. He said if it had been worded differently, he might have voted to put it on the warrant.

But board member Rich Garant said the Selectboard had a duty to put the resolution on the town warrant.

"Four hundred and eighty people signed this petition (who) feel this issue is important enough to get it on the town warning," said Garant, the only board member who voted in favor of the resolution. "Let the people vote for it. It doesn't take any resources of the town to deal with this."

The resolution could send "a powerful message" to those in power, he said.

"I think it should be on the ballot," said Bob Bady, one of only three town residents to attend the Tuesday afternoon meeting.

Bady told the board that even if the resolution made it to the town warrant, he wouldn't be voting for it. Just the same, he said, "If somebody collects the signatures there's no actual offense to it being on the ballot."

But, said Corum, the resolution is full of allegations and innuendo.

"One of the primary objections to this is some of the language used. It's not civil discourse."

"I agree with many of the criticisms leveled against this," said Garant. "But you're missing the point."

As with Bady, Garant felt if enough town residents sign a resolution, it's the board's duty to allow town meeting reps to vote on it.

"Does this board feel it wants to be a gatekeeper for public sentiment?" he asked.

"We are the gatekeeper, whether we want to be or not," said board member Martha O'Connor, adding she found the resolution to be "totally offensive."

"I don't want to dilute the ballot with something like this," said O'Connor.

She added that the board has much more pressing issues to deal with. "I don't see how this is going to be helpful to the town of Brattleboro."

"The board doesn't understand that this is a community project," responded Daims, who worked on the resolution with several other town residents.

If the board didn't like the wording, it had a whole month to work with him and recraft the resolution, said Daims.

"I don't like parts of the wording either," he said. "But instead of choosing to suppress the free speech of the town as a whole, we could work out a compromise wording and take those parts out we don't like."

A resolution is a form of free speech, he added.

"They are editing the opinions of the town. They hung back until the very end and said you can't express your opinions."

As far as putting the past behind us, said Daims, "All crimes are in the past. Our strength in the future depends on what we do with our truth, our facts and our past. We've got to move on by facing the truth and not by hiding from it."

Daims admitted there is no proof that genocide, graft and treason have occurred, but there is enough probable cause for a trial, he said.

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