

St. Albans Messenger – Letters to the Editor

Why I am not voting for Sarah Kittell

10/17/2008

As many of you know, I have spent most of the past few months putting out our ads and organizing the rally in favor of Walmart. I meant to write this letter a month ago, but time just got away from me. But I think this is a story that the people need to hear.

On August 20, I went to the Franklin County Senate Candidate Forum at the Abbey Restaurant. I had one simple question for the four candidates. I asked them to give me a yes or no answer to this question: Do you support the building of the Walmart store in St. Albans? Not a smaller store, not a store in the city, but the store that has received its permits, located across from the drive-in. Yes or No.

I purchased the DVD recorded by channel 16, so I can tell you exactly what their answers were.

Bill Rowell said, "Well, this is free enterprise. If you go through the legal process and you get all the permits, how do you say no? So, Yes. Do I necessarily think we need it? No, I personally don't think we need it, I don't mind driving to Burlington, But there's lots of folks around town who want it. If there's that many people and the company went through the process and met all the criteria, where's your leg to stand on?" So Mr. Rowell's answer was YES.

Don Collins said "If Walmart or Target or Super-K or whoever want to come in and they follow the rules and they follow the regulations and at the end of the day if they meet that criteria, then yeah." So Mr. Collins answer was YES too. He then handed the microphone to Sarah Kittell.

Sarah Kittell said "I believe we need a retail store like a Walmart in Franklin County, but I think we need it the size Franklin County wants it to be. They came here five years ago. The Governor cut the ribbon on the store to be the biggest in Vermont, bigger than the one down in Williston. And five years later, I think they have purchased the land, the developer Mr. Davis, he hadn't even purchased the land, he hadn't put in for the permits until just recently. So I think Walmart, or a store we need, for us to buy things at needs to be on Franklin County terms and not on some out of state money folks who, you know, employ people at minimum wage and the profits go out of state. So I think on our terms." Then she shrugged and started to hand the microphone to Mr. Brock.

That didn't sound like a YES, but I wasn't sure it was a NO, so I asked, "Is that a yes or a no?"

She took the microphone back. "I support a store that is of the right size for Franklin County. And when all of the questions can be answered, and that's what was going on, that people had questions and I think the questions are still being answered to make sure we're following all the different rules, and so when that comes back, I certainly support a retail store." That still wasn't yes or no, but the moderator moved on to Mr. Brock.

Randy Brock stood up, said "YES." And sat back down.

That is what you saw if you were there, or if you watched it on TV. But when the cameras went off, something else happened that I want to tell you about.

Immediately after the debate was over, Mrs. Kittell came right up to me and said "That was a good question, but my answer to you is NO. I do not like these big box stores. I don't want my grandchildren and their children to grow up with these big box stores." So, I guess she could have simply said NO during the debate, but she probably didn't want to go on record as being opposed to the wishes of so many in the county.

Then a man came up to me and stuck his finger right in my face and he started yelling at me. He screamed "How dare you ask them a yes or no question?" He said "Those 12,000 names don't mean a thing! There will NEVER be a Walmart in Franklin County!" Boy, was he mad! I said "you seem to know who I am, who are you?" He said "My name is Bill Kittell!" Sarah Kittell's husband.

It seems that they are among the small group of people who feel that their opinions are more important than the rest of us. That is the wrong attitude for someone who wants to be our senator and represent us in Montpelier. The opinions of 12,469 people don't mean a thing? How dare he say such a thing! I can't believe he said that. It makes me angry every time I think about it. Mrs. Kittell only received votes from 8,598 people to become senator. I looked it up. There are a lot more people who want Walmart in St. Albans than there are who want Sarah Kittell in the Senate.

Randy Brock is the only candidate who simply said yes, as I asked, so he will get my vote. But I would urge anyone who feels as I do and especially anyone who wants Walmart in St. Albans to not vote for Sarah Kittell. She does not represent the people.

Ray Gadue, Highgate