May 2023 FREE TO RESIDENTS

Danby News

May Flower Walk w/ Robert Wesley

One of the joys of spring is watching the emergence of new life, as green plants and colorful wild flowers make their appearance again!

Danby's Community Council invites the curious to come out and see what's growing around Jennings Pond on Sunday afternoon, May 7, 1pm. The walk will be led by local expert, Robert Wesley.

Dutchman's Breeches

We'll meet in the parking area of Jennings Pond. Together, we'll walk, look at, and talk about the wild plants we see. Be prepared for to be outdoors for up to two hours. The event will take place rain or shine, so dress for the weather.

We're delighted to have Robert Wesley guide us on this little journey. Robert is a Danby resident and botanist with the Cornell Botanic Gardens. "My work responsibilities include looking after and monitoring the quality of vegetation in our natural areas," he says, "especially where there are rare and scarce species occurrences and damage from excessive deer and beaver populations. I also do conservation seed banking.

"In my job...I am a resource for knowledge on the distribution and abundance of wild plant species in the region. I assist the horticulturist for the Mundy Wildflower Garden with identifying and using native plants there, as well as in other natural areas."

During the pandemic, Robert gave a several *virtual wildflower walks* featuring his many fine photographs of rare and interesting plants. Now, we can explore—in person—what's growing in this merry month of May. The program is free and open to everyone. The Community Council will have light snacks available at the end of the walk.

(pg)

This Month Inside the Danby News:

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Hot Topics in Town Hall

There's more happening during Town Board and Planning Board meetings than 30-minute discussions about how to use the Town's software to suggest corrections to the meeting minutes (Monday, 24-Apr, among others). Here's a quick summary of several topics under discussion.

Cannabis

Late in 2022, the Town decided not to take the one-time opportunity (offered by NYS) to opt out of cannabis sales in Danby. Subsequently, the Town revised its Zoning Law to specify where dispensaries may be located, to establish requirements for prevention of odors, for signage, to prohibit drive-thru and curbside services (Tuesday, 04-Apr). Little comment was heard from the public, although one person wondered where cannabis consumers would be able to find munchies and snacks.

Noise Law

After taking no action on a proposal, drafted by a committee it created, for a noise law, the Town Board asked one resident to prepare a different law. This proposal became public during March. The Town held a Public Information Forum on Wednesday, 19-Apr. Many residents spoke during the 3-hour, sometimes contentious event. Afterward, on Monday, 24-Apr, the Town decided to gather more information—from lawyers and law enforcement—before proceeding with any next steps. This issue has prompted some fairly intense online opinion.

Short-Term Rentals

A recent Planning Board case (that also involved the Board of Zoning Appeals) prompted the Supervisor to observe that Danby does not regulate long-term rentals

—continued on page 3 ➲

May 2023

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Text submissions:
Send text in the body of an unencoded, plain-text Email message (**not** as an attachment); or mail typewritten copy, double-spaced on white paper. Short handwritten submissions accepted; please write legibly.

Graphics: JPEG preferred for photos, GIF for line graphics. PNG also works. Check with editor before sending hardcopy graphics.

Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Materials may be accepted later if time allows. Submissions should generally not exceed 250-350 words (one column). We cannot print political material or letters of opinion.

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Wood Anemone — photo by Robert Wesley

Danby News Notes

Submitted by Ted Crane

Submission Guidelines: Before submitting an item for the Danby News, please have a look at the *Submission Guidelines*. You can request them by Email from the editor at [danbynews@tedcrane.com] or find them at [danbyny.org/DanbyNews]. If you're thinking of sending something for publication in the Danby News, there's two documents to read: the *Guidelines* and the *Submission Guidelines* at the same web location.
You'll learn what is, and isn't acceptable material for publication. If it's acceptable, we'll make an effort to include it; generally, we print everything we receive! You'll find hints about how to prepare a submission. Following these guidelines makes the editing and layout easier.
A terse version of these guidelines is in the left-hand column of this page.

➲ *Hot Topics, con't from front page*

and its recently revised Zoning Law contains specific, and possibly outdated, language about Short-Term rentals. The Town has discussed the issue over a period of several months, sometimes stating that (unnamed) residents are concerned. It's not clear whether the aim is de-regulate or to create new regulation for either or both of short- and long-term rentals. The Town has distributed a survey to residents. This issue has prompted some fairly intense online opinion.

Local Law To Change Town Clerk Position From Elected To Appointed

This item first appeared on the 04-Apr meeting agenda and was discussed briefly during several meetings. On Monday, 24-Apr, the Town agreed to ask the Town's attorney to draft the law.

This law, if passed by the Town Board, would take a right to vote away from residents, so a mandatory referendum would be required as part of the General Election in November. A similar law, directed at the Highway Superintendent, was rejected by voters three times; twice at the ballot box and once after a contentious Public Hearing. This issue has begun to collect fairly intense online opinion.

Cyber Security

After the Town's current computer support provider (apparently' details of this interaction are fuzzy) refused to continue its contract with the Town, the Town Board initiated a several-months-long search for a new vendor. During its meeting on Monday, 24-Apr, the Town voted to enter into a $34,000 per year contract, with only a small part of the cost covered by the 2023 budget.

See: Plan Your Eclipse, Page 5

Response Protocol for Emails Directed To Town Board

This item, intended to add guidelines for handling citizen comments and other communications to the ever-growing library of policies, was on the agenda—but not discussed—several times. It will come up at a future meeting.

Replacing Highway Culvert

Major Highway repair expenses must be authorized by the Town Board. On Monday, 24-Apr, the Town agreed to replace a culvert on Peter Road. There was some discussion about how this would be paid for and how it would affect funding for other Highway maintenance.

Local Law To Provide Tax Relief For Conservation Easement Properties

Several years ago, a citizen committee was created by the Town Board to address a concern expressed by owners of larger properties: they have felt the sharp bite of taxes based on what they *might do* with the land. The owners didn't want to pay out-of-pocket for what they *are doing* with the land: implementing the Town's stated desire to preserve open space.

The committee recommended that the Town ask the State Legislature to pass a Danby-specific law providing tax exemptions for properties with Conservation Easements. The committee's proposal was based on the experience of other NY Towns with that exemption. The Town chose to revise the proposal's terms and, for more than a year after the Legislature passed the law, had taken no concrete action . On Monday, 24-Apr, the Town agreed to ask its attorney to draft a law...including additional changes to the text approved by the Legislature.

Burn Ban Still In Effect

The annual statewide ban prohibiting residential brush burning runs from March 16 through May 14. The NYS DEC enforces the ban to prevent wildfires and reduce air pollution.

The risk of wildfires is greatest during the Spring, and this winter was warmer and drier than most. Think about safety first, before starting a potentially dangerous fire.

The DEC has a Fire Danger Map online at `[dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html]`.

Backyard fire pits and campfires less than three feet in height and four feet in length, width, or diameter are permitted.

What The Town Didn't Tell You

Providing information that's not available elsewhere

A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore.
—Yogi Berra

Members of the public who attend Danby's Town Board meetings could be forgiven for thinking that hardly a meeting goes by without a vote to spend more money. More money, of course, means more property tax.

Take, for example, the recent "Short Term Rental" survey mailed to every taxpayer in Danby. We must commend the Town Board for soliciting public opinion before embarking on a decision-making path. Yet, a careful reading of the Agenda for the April 19 Town Board meeting reveals that a TB member was reimbursed $809.37 for "Survey Printing & Mailing." The cash cost does not include the cost of staff preparing the survey, numerous revisions to the survey after several TB meetings, and the cost of staff paid to receive the survey and do data entry.

An efficiency expert might have suggested that distributing the survey as an insert in the monthly Town [Board] News would have saved a bit more than $400 in postage. Considering the months spent preparing the 2-page, 6-question survey, advancing (or delaying) it by two weeks to include it with another mailing would have made little difference to its effectiveness. The Town could have saved even more by unbending and asking for it to be included in an issue of this publication, the Danby News.

A taxpayer might feel, in this case, that $800 is a reasonable expense for having their input considered. Would that same feeling apply to the $5000+ spent on the problematic audio-visual hardware—and consulting—that is used to allow Town meeting attendees to see and hear what's going on? The Town's legacy PA system was initially judged inadequate, but now forms a critical part of the cobbled-together, yet expensive system. The Town is about to spend even more, perhaps $1000s more, to make it work "better."

Any concerned citizen with ordinary tech experience would have known that a $75 webcam provides a reliable, more useful image—with no operator expertise required—than the [as much as] $2000 remote-controlled camera; that a $100-200, used iMac could have done the same job as the PC controller and the $1000+ video monitor; that another $100 could add a second monitor for the rear of the room; and that some $15 cables to and from the legacy PA could provide clean, feedback-free sound, without the purchase of a cheap (quality; $500 is not inexpensive) wireless mic system that seems to befuddle its users.

The Town Board is now talking about an extra expense—echo-deadening curtains—to "improve" the acoustic quality of the meeting room. It has forgotten that, around 2015, it rejected that idea...because of the $10,000+ cost of fire-retardant fabric. It'd be much cheaper to simply use the PA system properly.

Now, if $10,000 is still reasonable, consider the $34,000 *per year* that was recently approved to provide computer security in Town Hall. A viable alternative, with a cost as low as $0, would be to remove critical computers and data from the Internet. This alternative is not unreasonable, given that the Town is also considering abandoning its recent investment in an Internet-based office system.

Surely, there would be some hassle involved with blocking work activity from the internet...but $34,000 *per year* worth of hassle? And the Town Board has been talking about hiring additional staff to provide technical support. Oh, yes, there's also the multi-$1000 cost of cyber insurance that, the Supervisor noted, could only be used once.

The 2023 budget included only about $6,000 for this sort of expense.

However you look at it, Danby's Town Board has changed its fiscal habits during the past few years. Used to be, if an item wasn't specifically included in the annual budget, it would take an exceptional need to approve new funds. Now, the public who attends Danby's Town Board meetings could be forgiven for thinking that every meeting includes another vote to spend more money.

There's so much else the public needs to know, and there is no other source of this information. (tc)

Ithaca American Legion Post 221 Upcoming Events
1231 Danby Road, Ithaca, New York 14850

Wing Night	Tuesdays	4-6pm	10 for $8
Pizza & Wings	Thursdays	4-6pm	Pizza+Wings: $20 Per Slice: $2
Taco Night	Friday, May 5	4-6pm	$3 or 3/$8
Baked Potato Night	Friday, May 12	4-6pm	
The Drive Band	Saturday, May 13	4-7pm	
Chicken BBQ Benefit	Saturday, May 20	Noon-gone	$13
Hot Dogs & Burgers	Friday, May 26	4-6pm	Hot Dog: $2 Burger: $4 Mac Salad: $1

Open To The Public - Thank you for your support!
We also rent our outdoor pavilion and interior rooms.

Reminiscing #9

I started my May 10, 2007 column writing about my Great-Aunt Josephine Little and my new niece Ella Miller-White, pointing out that there was 99 years and 6 months difference in their ages at that time. Aunt Jo was always my column's #1 fan and, years later, I dedicated the very last column I wrote to her memory.

I also gave mention to our then neighbors Lorreen and John Galt, who were heading to North Carolina to spend their retirement years. Both of these folks have passed, as well as the recent passing of two other Gunderman Road friends and neighbors, George Lust and Frank Paluzzi. Garry and I have lots of good memories of all these Danby folks.

The Danby Community Church, then known as the Danby Federated Church, was planning for its 200th anniversary, and for the the dedication of 2,500 square feet of the much-needed, newly-completed extra space.

I ended that 2007 column with thoughts on Mother's Day. My feeling then, and still now, is that becoming a Mother means your heartstrings are totally controlled by these tiny people who have come into your life. You may not have realized the warmth, joy, love, and absolute wonder that you find yourself feeling as a Mom. Mother's Day 2023 is Sunday, May 14. Please don't be fooled by the lure of fancy, expensive gifts, for the best gift is always love. (gh)

Plan Your Eclipse Adventure

A once-in-a-lifetime experience is rapidly approaching! Mid-afternoon on Monday, April 8, 2024, the Moon will be directly overhead, eclipsing the Sun. Danby will be in the penumbra (partial eclipse) but, only a few miles northwest, the umbra begins.

The umbra will cover Buffalo, Rochester, and Geneva. The sky will become very dark. You'll be able to see the *ring around the Sun*, the Sun's colorful chromosphere. Thin wavy lines called *Shadow Bands* will appear on the ground. *Baily's Beads*—tiny specks of light shining through the Moon's valleys—will wink for a few seconds.

Seriously, unless you're a frequent world traveler, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I've already made reservations—to avoid traffic—for an overnight in Batavia, NY, where the total eclipse will last more than three minutes.

You should never, ever look directly at the Sun. It can damage your eyes. But, between now and next April, you're sure to hear about all the safe ways to view the eclipse. (tc)

Danby News Is *Your* News!

Local news coverage is very hard to find. You can read snippets about everything, everywhere in the world—even Albany and Washington—but you can't read about Danby.

If you're looking for more than sanitized announcements from official sources, the *Danby News* is the place to go. Of course, this comes at a price. We have to pay the bills and we have to keep asking for your help.

Enjoy community news and cheers and share it with your neighbors by paying for your—and maybe their—subscription ($10-15 or more per household). If you can, offer larger contributions to support our community-building efforts. Join the **Danby 100**!

Please make checks payable to *Danby Community Council*, note *Danby News* in the memo, and mail to P.O.Box 6886, Ithaca, NY 14851-6886. (dcc)

It's like NPR: the Danby News is offered free, but people who are able to contribute do so for their own satisfaction and for the benefit of their neighbors…who otherwise might not be able to access it.

Alien Abduction Insurance

There haven't been any reports of Danby-ites floating up a beam of light into flying saucers lately, but you can't be too sure.

Among the usual forms of insurance—auto, homeowners, renters, health, travel, liability, cyber, public officials, and the like—there are some companies that offer specialty coverage. You've heard of some of the more common specialties: entertainers protecting body parts they consider assets and wedding planners insuring against things that go wrong with weddings.

Alien abduction insurance anyone? This "protects" you against what some consider delusions—and others consider all too real. You might buy this product as a gag gift for a friend or you might want to protect yourself against the unexpected. But, beware, it's hard to cash in on this insurance.

The big hurdle is that you must return home from your abduction experience. Once that's behind you, you are often required to present proof of your adventure. A signed statement from your abductor will do the job. When the proof is accepted, you may qualify for double indemnity if, say, an alien has referred to you as a, "food source."

Some policies include sarcasm coverage; that is, verbal abuse after your traumatic event. Coverage is usually limited to immediate family but that's not a problem--most sarcasm comes from your family, anyway.

Your big payday will typically be delivered via an installment plan, a bit like those offered by various government-authorized lotteries: $1 per year for as many years as it takes. Your benefit will ensure that your semi-alien children and descendants will be provided for...for millions of years to come.

Sadly, massive alien invasions are excluded from coverage under the same "war, terrorism, and insurrection" loophole that's present in many home and auto policies.

More information is available online. Google "alien abduction insurance." (tc)

Choosing Your Officials

On Tuesday, June 27, New York State voters will head to the polls to choose their party's nominees for public office. In Danby, according to the Tompkins County Board of Elections, there will be only one contested race: the Democratic nominee for Town Clerk. Primary voting is limited to voters affiliated with the Democratic Party.

Unless "Independent" candidates (that is, not affiliated with a major political party) file paperwork before the end of May, the winner of the Clerk primary—along with the uncontested Democratic candidates for Supervisor, Councilperson, Highway Superintendent, and Justice—will be the only choice on the November ballot. Without opposition, November's winners will be known by June 28.

With only one race to decide, voters *should* find it easy to learn everything there is to know about the candidates. But where to find this information?

The few voters who participate in Town meetings are aware of friction between the Town Board and the incumbent Clerk. Those voters might find both sides at fault. If past history holds, even fewer voters will know much about the other candidate.

In its June issue, the Danby News will feature both candidates, summarize issues dividing the legislative and administrative branches of Danby's government, and bring some light to the Town's effort to change the traditional balance between those branches. Stay tuned. (tc)

Swimming in Danby? Need Lifeguards!

Our beautiful Jennings Pond Recreational Area offers fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking trails and scenic views.

The Jennings Pond Swim Program needs lifeguards during July and August! Now is the time for any good swimmer over 16 to enroll in the YMCA lifeguard training program. The Jennings Pond Swim Program will reimburse prospective lifeguards for expenses incurred during lifeguard training. Contact me at 607.342.7969. (mak)

This Issue's Writers

- cp.... Cindy Parlett
- dcc.. Comm. Council
- gh ... Gay Huddle
- mak Mary Ann Kozak
- mv .. Margie VanDeMark
- pg ... Pamela Goddard
- tc .... Ted Crane

Community Library

If you are familiar with JK Rowling's famous *Harry Potter* series, you may be interested in her other series about *Cormoran Strike, Private Detective*, written under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. The Community Library has all six books in that series, starting with *The Cuckoo's Calling*.

A new selection of Large Type books has arrived from TCPL. (cp)

Seniors Update

The Danby Seniors will meet on May 4, Noon, in the Danby Community Church for a dish-to-share lunch. Gay Huddle has arranged a guest speaker for us, Rick Rogers, a storyteller and author! Rick will share a brief history of his woodland adventures and offer an original story or two and some song!

Our June meeting will be on June 1.

Margie VanDeMark has arranged our Annual Chicken BBQ for July 6, Noon, under the pavilion at the American Legion. $8 per person. To reserve your tasty barnyard fowl, contact Margie, **[margievan@live.com]** or 607.273.8046.

Theresa Klinger is coordinating travel, luncheon, and entertainment for a July 11 visit to Silver Birches, PA and the *Rock and Roll Show*. Sign ups required, $65 fee. (mv)

Blood Drive In Danby

The American Red Cross is holding its next regularly scheduled Danby blood drive on Friday, May 19, Noon-5pm, in the Danby Fire Station, 1780 Danby Road.

Free Coffee and Donuts

Danby's Community Church is offering Free Coffee And Donuts Mondays, once a month, 8-10am, on May 15, June 19, July 17, and August 21. Open to the public! 1859 Danby Road, 607.272.1687, **[danbychurch.org]**.

They're in need of prep and cleanup volunteers.

Citizen Preparedness

The Citizen Preparedness Corps gives residents the tools and resources to prepare for any type of disaster or emergency, respond accordingly, and recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions.

The next training session in Tompkins County is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, 10am, in the Enfield Community Center, 162 Enfield Main Road.

Citizen Preparedness Corps trainings are led by New York National Guard members, experts from NYS Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), and local emergency management personnel.

According to Geoff Dunn, Community Preparedness Coordinator, "It's a great opportunity to learn how to properly develop family emergency plans and stock up on supplies."

A key component of the training is the distribution of NYS Disaster Preparedness Kits to attendees (one per family). The training is free of charge but all participants must register in advance at **[prepare.ny.gov]**.

Reality is a complex of related hypotheses.
—Steeleye Span

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May 2023

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Danby News
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Danby News: Event Calendar

May 1 • Mon • May Day
May 2 • Tue
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Public Hearing: Drainage District at Beardsley Lane
May 3 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
May 4 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
May 6 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
May 7 • Sun
1pm Jennings Pond
Community Council: Wildflower Walk w/ R.Wesley
May 8 • Mon
7pm DVFC Station • **Fire Dep't Meeting**
7pm West Danby Fire Station • **WD Fire Dep't Mtg**
May 9 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Conservation Advisory Council**
May 11 • Thu
7pm Zoom • **Danby Youth Commission**
May 15 • Mon
8am Community Church • **Coffee and Donuts**
May 16 • Tue
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Planning Board Meeting**
May 17 • Wed
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
PublicHearing: Bruce Hill Road Conservation Easement

Meeting	Date	Zoom MtgID	Passcode
Town Board	May 2	962 1625 1190	071939
CAC	May 9	972 1566 0090	423584
Youth Commission	May 11	See Town web site	
Planning Board	May 16	958 0817 5336	245871
Town Board	May 17	990 7294 9108	569826
Zoning Appeals	May 23	953 8273 3938	None?
To join a meeting by telephone, call 646.876.9923			

Warning: Zoom meeting info and agendas change frequently!

May 18 • Thu
4pm Community Church • **Danby Food Pantry**
May 19 • Fri
Noon-5pm DVFC Station • **Red Cross Blood Drive**
May 23 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Board of Zoning Appeals**
May 29 • Mon
2:15pm Town Hall Monument • **Memorial Service**
Jun 1 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
Jun 3 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
Jun 6 • Tue
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Jun 7 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
Jun 8 • Thu
7pm Zoom • **Danby Youth Commission**
Jun 17 • Sun
3pm Community Church
Community Council Concert: Deb Cowan

Ongoing Events

Seniors Strength Class via Zoom
Mondays and Thursdays, 9–10am
Contact [jmchurch@twcny.rr.com] for Zoom link
Danby Community Library Town Hall
Tuesday, 1–3pm; Thursday & Saturday, 10am–Noon
Books can be returned via the outdoor drop box.
Food Scrap Recycling Town Hall
Saturdays, 9am-Noon
AA Meeting via Zoom: [zoom.us/j/8209358263]
Wednesdays, 7pm

Where Things Happen

Danby Town Hall • 1830 Danby Road
DVFC Station • 1780 Danby Road
WDFD Station • 47 Sylvan Drive, off Rt.34/96
Danby Community Church • 1859 Danby Road
American Legion Post 221 • 1231 Danby Road