October 2023 FREE TO RESIDENTS

Danby News

Harvest & Election Edition

9th Annual Harvest Festival

The grass is mowed and the furniture is in place. Dotson Park is ready for the 9th Annual Harvest Festival on Sunday, October 15, 1-5pm. It's a family event!

Dotson Park, the centerpiece of downtown Danby features a Natural Playground, a Pavilion sheltered by a hyperbolic paraboloid roof, a Disc Golf course, and miles of trails. Find it at **[dotsonpark.org]** and 1825 Danby Road.

The Harvest Festival centerpiece is its pumpkin-throwing trebuchet (and its diminutive sidekick, the potato launcher). Bring a pumpkin (6-8" diameter, maximum)!

The Raptors are returning! These fascinating avians are accompanied by Cornell's bird-workers, who can talk about anything and everything Raptor.

The Cayuga Nature Center will be bringing its animal farm for close-up encounters of the (mostly) four-legged kind.

We're expecting produce and craft vendors and live acoustic music. The TC Whole Health crew is bringing its traveling information booth, including its popular "Find The Tick" game.

It's a perfect moment to enjoy the glories of an Fall day, chat with your neighbors, and have relaxed community-based fun.

The cost? Nada, none, ничего, ningun, ʻaʻohe mea, nothing, it's free. There might be a donation basket if you're inclined to look for it, and nobody will ask for tips. (dcc)

This Month Inside the Danby News:

Proposition: Abolish the Clerk? . ③
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Coffee and Donuts . . . . . ⑦
Calendar . . . . . ⑧

Election Coverage and Candidate Forum

Danby's Community Council **[danbycc.org]** is proud to be able to provide Danby's residents with information about the upcoming November 7 General Election.

Candidate Forum Coming Up!
On Friday, October 13, 7pm, DCC is hosting a Candidate Forum in the Fellowship Hall of Danby's Community Church, 1859 Danby Road **[danbychurch.org]**. The forum will be moderated by the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County **[lwvtompkins.org]**.

In-between opening and closing statements, candidates will answer questions from voters. You can submit questions to the moderator, who will present them (anonymously) to the candidates.

The event will be recorded and available on YouTube.

Candidate Interviews
The "silver lining" of being an independent publication—with funding from reader contributions, hint, hint—is that, for the first time, the *Danby News* can provide information about elections.

Six candidates vying for office in contested races were asked to provide answers to six questions, with a 350-word limit.

① Biographical info; why you came to Danby and how long ago; community involvement.

② Most Danby residents do not attend Town Board meetings or follow Town affairs. How would you improve resident engagement?

③ Preserving rural character is part of Danby's Comprehensive Plan. Anecdotal evidence suggests many residents of Danby are here because of its rural character. Does the new Zoning Law protect that rural character?

④ Downtown Dryden, Trumansburg, and the Ithaca Commons were all models used as examples during the formulation of the new Zoning Law. Are you in favor of developing Central Danby and the West Danby hamlet along those lines?

⑤ Do you think the Town should abolish the office of elected Town Clerk, and why?

⑥ What new, Danby-related issue do you anticipate will become important during the next two years?

We hope this info helps choose the best candidates! (dcc)

October 2023

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Ted

To contribute items:
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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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Heritage Apples In Season

Danby was once home to dozens of thriving homesteads and apple were a staple of farm life.

2022 and 2023 have been difficult years for apple trees. Yet, one ancient, broken apple tree still brings forth its colorful and tasty striped apples.

Can anyone identify the apple variety?

—photo by Ted Crane

Danby News Notes

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@danbycc.org] 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. (tc)

You May Not Know That...

Providing information that's not always available

Ag District Review

The once-in-8-years review of properties in Agricultural District 2 is currently underway. Ag District 2 includes much of western Danby.

As the sage Gould Colman said, "Danby's biggest agricultural product...is building lots." Ag Districts are good things but there can be unfortunate consequences when an Ag neighborhood becomes residential.

Within an Ag District, NYS Ag and Markets law supersedes the usual rules. Ag Districts used to protect activities that happened to be, well, dusty, smelly, or noisy. Today, they also protect activities (i.e. retail, food service, processing) that are incompatible with residential life.

A&M law even protects activities that Danby's Right-To-Farm law does not, such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs, factory farming). Properties can be converted between uses, like from a hayfield to a CAFO.

In 2019, according to the Tompkins County Planning Department, Danby had fewer than 1,400 acres in actual agriculture, but more than 14,000 acres within Ag Districts. Some farmed land was not even in an in a District!

When State Forests are removed from Danby's total acreage, the existing Ag Districts occupy somewhat more than 50% of the rest of Danby. Many residential properties fall within the area where A&M law applies.

Ag Districts are only distantly related to Agricultural Assessment. Ag Assessment simply provides tax benefits. A property doesn't have to be in an Ag District to get tax relief; being within an Ag District provides no benefits.

Having your property in an Ag District has little effect on you. If, however, your next-door property becomes a pig farm or an event venue, you'll certainly feel the effect.

The neighborly thing to do is...if you're not farming, ask for your property to be removed from the Ag District.. *and ask your neighbor to do the same*. This is the only opportunity for the next eight (8) years. For District #2, the time is now. The deadline is October 10. Contact Crystal Buck, 607.272.2292 or **[cb258@cornell.edu]**.

Of course, if you want to start a farm and want Ag District benefits, entry is easy. Perhaps quicker than growing your first crop! (tc)

[The review was announced by Danby's web site on September 8. It appears that neither the Supervisor or Planner was aware of it. In 2019, the Town successfully requested that many residential properties be removed from District 1.]

Ballot Proposition: Abolish the Elected Clerk

The General Election on November 7 brings focus to the issue of the quality of elected officials in Danby. There hasn't been a contested race in Danby for a long time; in effect, our officials are elected during the Democratic Primary. This year, voters have a choice.

Some say that the contested races are a response to a need for respect and engagement.

In an ironic turn, Danby's Town Board chose to pass a law—one that requires voter approval at the ballot box—that sharpens the focus on respect. It is entitled, in part, *A Local Law providing for the Abolition of the Elected Position of Town Clerk*....

A former, well-respected Danby Town Clerk, Pamela Goddard, was asked about the Clerk's role and her experiences. "There were ways that I enjoyed the work, and there were ways that it was frustrating. Ric [the Supervisor] and I didn't always agree and we sometimes had heated discussions before coming to an understanding. The important thing was the feeling of agreement and mutually respectful communication."

NYS Law establishes the Clerk as a Town's record keeper. Goddard observed, "The minutes are the responsibility of the Town Clerk. The Town Board should not have control over the contents of legal, historical record of Board actions. This is frequently a tug of war. A Town Board can see the Clerk as their secretary, and feel that the clerk should do as told."

She continued, "The Clerk is not merely a secretary, but an important, independent keeper of records. The Clerk should have autonomy and not feel that their job depends on keeping the Town Board happy. An elected Clerk is responsible to the residents of the town and to those who will read town records in years to come."

"I see the move to abolish an elected position and create an appointed one as an attempt for control of the Clerk's office. Appointing a Clerk would not fix the real problem—the need for control—that has developed out of a lack of mutual respect."

Danby's Town Board acknowledged that, *One of the motivations for bringing this up in the first place was...our inability to have her do things the way we would like them done.* (06-Jun-2023, 1:59:30 in the recording).

The Town Board appointed this Clerk. Now it wants more control...leaving Danby's voters with less. (tc)

Russ Nitchman—Councilperson

I am 60 years old and happily married to Kim for 37 years. We have 5 adult children with families of their own. Our family has owned 104 acres of Danby farmland for more than two decades. We operate a B&B on our scenic property. In the springtime, we tap trees to produce maple syrup.

I am dual-licensed Agricultural Educator and Biology/Earth Science Teacher. Before retiring, I taught for almost three decades in Queens and Brooklyn.

I'm active with our church, I'm there when neighbors need me, and I helped produce Danby Fun Day for many years. With my wife, I've "adopted" 2 miles of Danby's Rt.96B. I participated in more than 100 hours of meetings, adding my input to the new Zoning Law. Sadly, I don't feel my input was acted on.

Improving community engagement with Town governance is very important to me. I'd continue town-wide mailings to inform residents, but add individual letters to specific residents when they are affected and Facebook.

"Rural Character" is the opposite of "Suburban Sprawl". The new Zoning law can work against open space and rural character. It's cheaper to develop along the road. The so-called "cluster option" allows additional houses along roads. Most land is sold because owners cannot afford taxes. Reducing taxes will help.

While "hamlet" feel would be nice, it's unrealistic in both hamlets. Highways, wetlands, streams and dilapidated homes don't lend to making hamlets.

I believe supporting businesses and welcoming them would improve our hamlets. The Board has been unwelcoming for over 20 years. I'm glad for South Hill Cidery!

Both Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent are elected positions and should remain as such to balance partisan reporting by elected officials. Do NOT take away the power of people to vote. An independent newsletter is the best way to inform voters about candidates.

Future issues will be continued roadside development, and welcoming of businesses and places to enjoy life.

My goal is that we can be a diversified community, yet respect and care for one another, and use the huge talents we have in our community.

Paul Hansen—Councilperson

I live on Comfort Road and have lived on the property since 2004. My wife and I lived in the old farmhouse, and in 2007/2008 we subdivided the property and built a home on 3.5 acres behind the old farmhouse. In 2018 our son and his family moved half a mile up the road. Our life revolves around our son, his partner, and our 2 grandsons. My connection to Danby goes back to the late 70s, when the company I worked for built 4 houses on Steam Mill Road. We would often go to the old Benjamin's to get lunch.

I came to Ithaca in 1971 and spend 4 years at Cornell. I met my boss, who I built those houses with, building sets for the theatre department as part of a work-study program. He taught me well. After leaving his employment, I ran my own construction company for more than thirty years. I cared about the craft, devoted myself to making sure we maintained high standards, and sweated the details. At 62 I came back to Danby to work as its code enforcement officer. I learned a lot about the people in Danby and how its government worked.

I spent 2 years with Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service, first as a volunteer, and then as a paid counselor in the schools. It taught me the importance of listening.

Living and working in Danby for much of my life, I have come to love the rural quality of Danby and the wonderful mix of people who live here. Family is and has always been at the center of my decisions. I believe families, those who have lived here the longest and those who will move here in the future, must be at the center of how we plan for the future. I believe we must protect the natural environment and the rural beauty that is Danby, but also make sure it remains accessible to the young families who want to move here in the future. We must remember to respect the wishes of our local farm families, who have historically been the shapers of the very rural quality we cherish.

Leslie Connors—Councilperson

I am Leslie Connors and I live on Durfee Hill Rd. I have lived in the Ithaca area since1964 and on Durfee Hill Road in Danby for 20 years. My husband and I wanted to live closer to his job in Candor. I retired in 2018 after years of working in the social service and mental health fields. Besides my work as a Town Council Member, I am currently involved with the Friends of the Library Book Sale and Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve. When I have the time, I can be found in the garden.

I have been a Danby Town Council member since 2009. In addition to the town board meetings, I attend Planning Board and BZA meetings. I try to stay involved in local activities as much as possible: the monthly summer Danby Market, Danby Fun Days when they occurred, ice cream at the church during the summer.

Resident engagement in town meetings and affairs might be improved by having special speakers or events that are of interest to residents. It takes time to become involved and many people are just too busy. People may be more inclined to get involved when specific topics are being dealt with that are of interest to them. There was pretty good participation when re-zoning was being worked on.

I believe the most recent zoning revision is a "first attempt" to protect the rural character of Danby. I view it as a work in progress and there are parts that need to be revised.

The Danby Hamlets do not have the infrastructure, nor resident interest, in being developed much more than they currently are.

While I do believe that the clerk position should not be "political," I have not decided whether elected or appointed clerk position is the best direction for Danby. I see validity in both approaches. I will be interested to see what voters think when they voice their opinion in November.

There has been mention of a couple of business endeavors slated for the 96B corridor which the town will need to address if they become realities.

Mauricio Medina—Councilperson

I was two years old when my family moved from Colombia and settled in New York City. As a young adult, I lived and worked with Chief Billy Redwing Tayac helping native communities address human rights and land rights issues.

With my wife of 34 years and our children, I've lived in Danby since 2018, when we moved from Caroline. Our son is a first year Cornellian; our daughter is in her third year at Bard College. Our family is developing a small farm and woodlot to provide fresh food.

I am the Energy Management Coordinator at TST BOCES, working closely with regional school administrators to increase energy efficiency. As a contractor, I've installed dozens of solar electric and hot water systems.

I maintain a connection to the traditions and teachings I received while living and working with communities throughout the Americas. I appreciate how important it is to build and maintain a strong community and to respect all voices within that community. True leaders amplify the needs of their community.

My 'aha' moment came when I attended a town meeting. Many concerned Danby residents voiced disapproval of a proposed Board action. I saw the Board dismiss those concerns and treat the residents as a fringe group that didn't represent our community. The Town Board, instead of engaging with its constituents, marginalized them. The Town's newsletter didn't even mention the significant community presence.

We need to regain an open and respectful dialogue that encourages residents to take time from their busy lives to attend meetings.

Danby needs to support and nurture small and local businesses into our community. Dryden, Trumansburg, and Ithaca are each unique. Danby is a special place and doesn't need to look like any other town. It can blossom on its own.

I am suspicious of any government that wants to take away any choice, whether it is voting for a Town Clerk or any other issue, away from the people for any reason.

The Town Board should become receptive to and considerate of new proposals. I will encourage consideration of opportunities that come to Danby.

Kevin Feeney—Supervisor

I was born on Long Island in 1954, grew up in Webster, went to college in Potsdam, moved to Ithaca in 1982, and have been in Danby since 1993. I'd fallen in love with the rural environment, the natural beauty of the area, and the farming history.

I've been involved with several communities: Cornell (where I was employed), folk music, ham radio (the board of the Tompkins County Amateur Radio Association), and flying (the board of the East Hill Flying club). I was the chief pilot of the local skydiving club. TCARA supports local events like the AIDS ride, Skunk Cabbage Run, and Cayuga Triathlon, and provides backup for the Tompkins 911 DOER.

I think that residents don't take part in local government because they are not allowed to participate. Watching Boards rush to decisions while limiting citizen input gets boring fast. I would open the process. Attending should mean contributing to an honest consensus.

Many residents are in Danby because of its standout rural nature. The recent zoning changes do not help preserve that nature and arguably make it worse, while making landowners fearful that their options and equity are threatened.

The Commons is not an appropriate model for Danby and, while Dryden and Trumansburg are nice towns, they aren't a fit for Danby and its narrow development area around a major road. Development that preserves rural character is best.

It is never a good idea to make an elected official into an appointed one. Elected officials have an allegiance to the people who elect them. Appointed officials are beholden to the people who hire them. Why is our Town Board so determined to eliminate other elected officials? The Clerk needs to be independent.

Internet access is an increasingly important issue. Fostering businesses and gathering spots in the town is critical to keeping it alive as a community. Developing some form of arbitration and/or mediation to settle problems within the town is better than passing ill-thought-out, knee-jerk-reaction laws.

Danby's Town Board needs leaders who can bring people together instead of claiming credit for staff work while discouraging citizen input.

Joel Gagnon—Supervisor

BS in Biology, MS in Nutrition
Came to Tompkins County to attend Cornell, married and stayed; Danby resident since 1979

I have homesteaded since moving here—it was the land that attracted me, and the 1862 Gothic Revival farm house. Historic preservation is important to me and a driver behind restoring my own house the steeple of the West Danby Methodist Church in 1991. Co-founder of West Danby Community Association, I also served on the Danby Community Council and on many government committees and boards, including county-level ones.

Community engagement is already much higher than it was when I first became Town Supervisor. Videoconferencing has made attending and participating in meetings much easier. Surveys have expanded information-gathering and a completely new website makes it easy to ask questions and get concerns addressed. Our town newsletter alerts residents to important issues being dealt with and how to weigh in on them. Many have. We need to improve the audio quality of our meetings for both in-person and remote attendees to make this hybrid meeting style even better.

Our new Zoning Law is now consistent with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. It has some of the strongest measures to protect open space in the county and when combined with our conservation easement program of voluntary protection is a major commitment to preserving rural character, no matter how you define it. Still room for improvement—it is a living document.

Resource constraints—topography, wetlands, and for central Danby a limited capacity aquifer—make it unlikely that Danby will ever resemble Trumansburg or Ithaca. What those places have that we do not is a walkable downtown with places to go and things to do.

Yes. The Clerk is not a policy-making position. Running for the office is a deterrent to some with the skills to handle the job well, and coordinating clerk functions with the other needs for staff support would be a lot easier if all staff answered to the town board.

Envisioning downtowns that residents would welcome with enthusiasm is central to creating a pathway to revitalized core areas.

Seniors Update

The next meeting of the Danby Seniors will be on October 5, at Noon in the Danby Community Church for a dish to share luncheon. All Danby seniors are welcomed! Then in November it's on the 2nd.

On Thursday, December 7 at Noon, we will be at La-Tourelle for our Holiday Luncheon complete with John Simon Music. Sign up with Theresa Klinger, 607.275.6171 or [tklinger617@gmail.com]. The cost is $25 per person and there will be a cash bar.

The Mystery Trip on September 26 happened thanks to the planning of Pat Sawyer and Pat Phelps. (mv)

Reminiscing #14

At the recent Danby Volunteer Fire Department Banquet, the Firefighter of the Year for 2012 award went to First Assistant Chief, Roger Grant, who has 18 years of service in the department. Rookie of the Year is Firefighter Tyler Dorn who became a member in 2012. The awards were handed out by John Gaden, who has put in 27 years of service, the past 17 as Fire Chief.

The entire fire department serves this community with dedicated professionalism.

I particularly like this memory from October 17, 2013 because it gives a shout out to the dedicated men and women who do so much for our community as first responders.

I daresay that October is my favorite month of the year. It is not too hot and usually not too chilly yet, and the glorious colors that surround us are beautiful to see. And of course, there is always Halloween and Jeff Huddle's birthday! (gh)

Danby Youth Survey

The Danby Youth Survey is open **now** for ages 11–19. It is easy, short and anonymous. You can access the survey by scanning this QR code or [surveymonkey.com/r/ZM83Z3C].

This Issue's Writers

- cp.... Cindy Parlett
- dcc.. Comm. Council
- gh ... Gay Huddle
- mb.. MaryAnn Barr
- mv .. Margie VanDeMark
- pg ... Pamela Goddard
- rr..... Ronda Roaring
- tc .... Ted Crane

Community Library

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

Does anyone remember Heffalumps and Woozles? What are your favorite scary Halloween memories?

The fall books are on display including Back to School and Halloween. Juvenile and Mystery books on loan from TCPL have arrived.

The Friends of the Library Fall sale is scheduled and we are planning to add to our collection of books. (cp)

Free Coffee and Donuts

Danby's Community Church is offering Free Coffee And Donuts on Mondays, once a month, 8-10am, on October 16 (and Nov.20, and Dec.18). Open to the public!

The Church is at 1859 Danby Road. Call 607.272.1687 or visit [danbychurch.org] for more information.

PS: They're in need of prep and cleanup volunteers.

If garments hang in your closet
and eye-catching clothing is garb,
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Oct 2023

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Danby News
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Danby News: Event Calendar

Oct 3 • Tue
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Oct 4 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
Oct 5 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Youth Commission**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
Oct 7 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
Oct 9 • Mon
7pm DVFC Station • **Fire Dep't Meeting**
7pm West Danby Fire Station • **WD Fire Dep't Mtg**
Oct 10 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Conservation Advisory Council**
Oct 13 • Fri
7pm Community Church
2023 Candidate Forum
Oct 15 • Sun
1-5pm Dotson Park
9th Annual Harvest Festival
Oct 16 • Mon
8am Community Church • **Coffee and Donuts**
Oct 17 • Tue
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Planning Board Meeting**
Oct 18 • Wed
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**

Meeting	Date	Zoom MtgID	Passcode
Town Board	Oct 3	962 1625 1190	071939
CAC	Oct 10	972 1566 0090	423584
Youth Commission	Oct 5	See Town web site	
Planning Board	Oct 17	958 0817 5336	245871
Town Board	Oct 18	990 7294 9108	569826
Zoning Appeals	Oct 25	953 8273 3938	None?
To join a meeting by telephone, call 646.876.9923			

Warning: Zoom meeting info and agendas change frequently!

Oct 19 • Thu
4pm Community Church • **Danby Food Pantry**
Oct 24 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Board of Zoning Appeals**

Nov 1 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
Nov 2 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
Nov 4 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
Nov 7 • Tue
6am-9pm Fire Stations • 2023 General Election
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Nov 9 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Youth Commission**
Nov 13 • Mon
7pm DVFC Station • **Fire Dep't Meeting**
7pm West Danby Fire Station • **WD Fire Dep't Mtg**

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