

**Danby Town Board  
Minutes of Regular Meeting  
March 16, 2015  
Draft**

**Present:**

Supervisor: Ric Dietrich  
Councilpersons: Rebecca Brenner, Leslie Connors, Jim Holahan, Jack Miller

**Others Present:**

Town Clerk Pamela Goddard  
Bookkeeper Laura Shawley  
Legislators Dan Klein  
Unity House Liz Smith, Amy Santobianco, Paul Joslyn, Kelly Buck  
Law Enforcement Kevin Cowen  
Public Raymond and Charlotte Mayo, Jack and Jeffrey Baker, Sarah Elbert, the Karandeyev family, Ted Crane, Ronda Roaring, Garry and Gay Huddle, William Doolittle, Mark and Cheryl Andrews, Valerie and John C. Shepardson, Elmer and Gerda Medgyaszay, Alton Ainslie, Karen Steward, Kim Capalongo, Heather Mount, Rosie Perry, Bill Sheffield, Michelle and Kevin Fullagar, Josh Bornstein, Erin Fitzgerald, Christina Mead, Julie and Marge Pescresi, Kelly Chase, Maggie New, Courtney Reinhart, Bridget and Eirik McChayne, David Hall, Pat Woodworth, Mike Napierski, Maria and Christina Salino, Melinda Oltz, Megan Hall, William Shoff, Vincent and Nancy Kotmel, John Strong, Angelique and Michelle Alex, DeAnna DeMark, Erick Palmer, Delorah Montgomery, Gail Mazourek, Rusdi Sumner, Moira Houssett, Denise McDermitt, Zelda Blaine, Mary Johnson, Gretchen Rymarchyk, Madeline Decker-Gutierrez, Scott and Rita Hoffay, Dale W Chase, Joyce Edens, Jody Scriber, David Root, Michael Biancon, H Katharine Hunter, and many more.

**The Danby Town Board Meeting was opened at 7:10pm**

The regular agenda for this meeting was dropped as a result of massive community response in opposition to a Unity House residence which will include two developmentally disabled adults with sexual offender status being established at 168 Nelson Road.

**Privilege of the Floor - Nelson Road Unity House**

There were extensive questions and comments from community members in the region of Nelson Road. The community response was overwhelmingly in strong opposition to residents with sexual offender status being housed in the Nelson Road residential neighborhood.

Questions included the number of residents to be housed in the facility and nature of the SO status of these residents, the number and training level of staff caring for the residents, and whether the Unity House facility is a business due to professional staff in residence. There were many questions as to the security of the facility and what measures will be taken to protect the neighborhood. There were additional questions regarding the method and level of community notification for such a residence. Community members wanted to know what, if anything, could be done to stop this residence from being established, particularly in this place. There were concerns that the Unity House will be located in a dense, close neighborhood and just up the road from the Waldorf School.

Town Board member Brenner and Supervisor Dietrich explained that the Town has no authority or jurisdiction over this matter. The building and number of residents is in compliance with the Town of Danby Zoning Ordinance. By New York State and Federal law, municipalities may not discriminate or determine where people with developmental disabilities or sex offender status may live.

Representatives from Unity House attempted to explain the program being put in place, including information about Unity House as an organization. They answered questions regarding who the residents will be and what level of supervision will be in place. They stated that, while there is no requirement for community information, they attempted to have conversations with all of the adjacent neighbors (five households in all). They admitted that they had not contacted any Town of Danby officials prior to purchasing the house and applying for a building permit for renovations.

Tompkins County Sheriff Investigator Kevin Cowen provided information regarding legal definitions of sexual offender status. He stated that level designation is determined by several factors including the seriousness of the crime, the offender's past history, and cognitive level. Cowen provided information regarding his experience with SO housed in residences of this sort, stating that in seven years he has not seen a SO in the care of a Unity House group home re-offend. Cowen gave the opinion that the high level of security and supervision through Unity House, even for a Level 3 SO, was preferable to SOs with Level 2 status who might reside anywhere in the community without registration or supervision. He encouraged community members to protect themselves by being vigilant.

**No actions were taken during this meeting.**

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05

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Pamela Goddard, Town Clerk