



Lawsuit Alleges Village of Airmont, NY Continuing its Long History of Discrimination Against Orthodox Jewish Community
First Liberty Institute lawsuit alleges Village unlawfully denied local Jewish school use of its own property for religious purposes

Airmont, NY—Late yesterday, First Liberty Institute and Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP filed a federal [lawsuit](#) on behalf of an Orthodox Jewish day school, Central UTA of Monsey, alleging that government officials in the Village of Airmont, New York and the Suffern Central School District engaged in a deliberate effort to dissuade Orthodox Jewish residents from staying in or moving to the Village of Airmont.

Read the lawsuit [here](#).

“Our clients just want to be treated fairly,” Hiram Sasser, General Counsel of First Liberty Institute said. “As Airmont officials should know by now, federal law prevents government officials from using discriminatory zoning schemes to drive people of faith away from, or underground in, the community.”

Central UTA owns 21 acres of property within the Village of Airmont that for nearly 20 years served as both a children’s school and day camp. The Village granted multiple approvals for the private, non-Orthodox school to operate. However, since Central UTA purchased the property in 2016 and advised the Village of its plans to build new buildings, Village officials have repeatedly used discriminatory zoning tactics to prevent Central UTA from operating.

In a similar effort, the local school district, Suffern Central, denied Central UTA children transportation and special education services even though it provided these same services to the previous school.

John Henry, Partner at Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP and co-counsel in the case, said, “All our clients are seeking is equal application of zoning laws and an equal chance to educate all of the students who wish to attend their religious school, just like any other school in the community. Religious animus should not be allowed to stand in the way of providing Central UTA’s students an equal opportunity to receive an education in accordance with the dictates of their faith.”

The Village of Airmont incorporated in 1991, and its discriminatory zoning policies have been the subject of multiple civil rights lawsuits. The same year of its incorporation, the United States filed suit against the Village alleging that the town had been incorporated for the purpose of excluding Orthodox Jewish citizens through zoning restrictions on their places of worship. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit [agreed](#). Then in 2008, the United States and different private plaintiffs sued the Village again. The dispute between the United States and the Village ended with a [Consent Decree](#) in which the Village promised the federal government that it would not use zoning laws to disrupt the religious exercise of the Orthodox Jewish community. That Consent Decree expired in 2011, and since then, the Village has returned to its old habits.

“The Village of Airmont has a history of discrimination against the Orthodox Jewish community,” said Keisha Russell, Associate Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Now children are being denied the education their faith requires within their own community because of their religion.”

Ongoing investigations by First Liberty reveal a number of potentially illegal practices by government officials in the Village of Airmont. First Liberty is in the process of planning further litigation on behalf of several other clients.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNeil at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.