

## **New York Coalition for Open Government notes October 14, 2021 on zoom**

### **Meeting called to order by Paul Wolf at 6:35 pm recorded**

**Present;** Maria Tisby, Sue Kelley, Janet Vito, Lawrence Vito, Patricia Irving, Richard Bertrand, Joe Kissel, VMFichera, Casey Jones, Michelle Allen-Gregory, Robert Goodlowski, Paul Wolf, Alberta Roman(Recorder)

**Meeting Minutes;** The meeting minutes from September 9, 2021 submitted by Alberta Roman were approved on a motion made by Janet Vito and seconded by Maria Tisby.

**Treasurer's Report;** Janet Vito provided a written report showing \$3,363.12 with 57 members as of 9-30-21. Paul reported we have a new member from Warren Co.(Daily Gazette reporter), making # of Counties represented at 20 which is 1/3 of all NY Counties. Just started new Twitter account with 34 followers. Facebook followers up to 420. Motion was made by Larry Vito to accept Treasurer's Report and seconded by Alberta Roman. Approved.

**Albany Legislation;** Both A.1108/S04704 and A.1228/S01150 sponsored by Leg. Amy Paulin are still not signed by Governor, however bill requiring posting of documents 24 hours before meeting has made it to Gov. desk per twitter by Amy Paulin. 400 of 500 bills on Gov. desk have been signed. Hope to build on this accomplishment next session.

**County Board of Elections;** Paul has written draft of of report and sent to Janet Vito, Steve Lyle and Brad Racino for review. The

report demonstrates a terrible lack of compliance with Open Meetings Law and FOIL requests. Polished report will be sent to members.

**Let NY Vote Open Meeting Laws;** Coalition of several organizations working on election issues. Looking at possible partnership on these issues. Interested in our report mentioned above.

**Buffalo Bills Stadium Transparency;** Unanimous passage of Resolution by Erie Co Legislature to have stadium study released to public. Resistant to have any public input. Must ask Committee Chair for permission to speak. Last time-2013- this was done with no public input and little time for Legislative review. There is no space on agenda for public comment. Must be opportunity for public to be heard. Paul did press release on this subject. Got to speak despite much resistance and 3 public hearings to be held. Resolution tabled. Joe Kissel filed FOIL request on our behalf which was denied. We should appeal this. Our only position here is that public have informational transparency and input.

**NY State Committee on Open Government;** A lot of talk about reforming JCOPE-Joint Commission On Public Ethics. Sent out press release questioning Ex. Director selection during Cuomo Administration. She does not favor public speak at meetings. 11 appointments and 9 are controlled by Gov....seems like wrong people at the table...should be more citizen appointments.

**Skaneateles School Board Executive Session;** This issue came to light through Auburn Citizen Newspaper where reporter objected to Board going into executive session to fill empty, elected position where member resigned. Reporter spoke about law requiring open meeting for filling elected official position. Attorney stated the law is overturned and open meeting interpretation, only opinion.

Actually, only part of the law regarding attorney fees overturned. Letter sent by Paul to state this. Legislator Amy Paulin also interested in legislation to clarify this. This is not the same thing as other hiring.

**Open Meetings Law Hearing;** We did do a joint letter with 7-8 other groups (Reinvent Albany, Common Cause, NYPIRG, and others) there should be hearings held by Assembly to solicit ideas to improve open meeting laws. 3 Committee Chairs agreed to hold meetings and originally there was no opportunity for public to testify remotely. Through Paul's persistence, Assembly Chair changed his mind and public can now speak remotely on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am. Important issue. People to send emails so we can divide up topics on which to volunteer to speak for 5 minutes, soon, as we only have 10 days.

**National Freedom of information Coalition Summit;** Paul attend few sessions; Michelle attended a lot....about 300 signed up. Bill Track 50 is a good tool, informative and generally tracks legislation across US and anyone here can access. Is there an interested point person available? Fostering public engagement is a necessary goal.

**New Business;** Casey interested in public health and disaster preparedness and getting timely, helpful information to people, e.g. covid information and vaccination. Government entities seem to be failing here. Joe idea of committees to focus on different issues is good. Paul can send out email for members ideas to form committees. Michelle bought up National Committee idea unbridled for profit and 7 areas that should not be so--housing, music-art-culture, transportation, prison, education, healthcare, journalism.

**Meeting end 7:46 pm;** Motion by Maria and second by Joe.

**Next Meeting November 11, 2021 6:30 pm on zoom**