

## **Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government May 2, 2019**

Meeting called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Paul Wolf. Present: Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Ed McKee, Sonia Dusza, Thomas Frank.

**Meeting Minutes:** As a quorum of Board members were not present, a motion approving the April meeting minutes was not made. The April meeting minutes will be addressed at the June meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Janet Vito reported our account balance as \$1214.17. Sixteen paid memberships have been received.

**Report Regarding School Districts:** Paul Wolf discussed changing how we do future reports. A better practice may be to obtain feedback from the entity we are rating before the final results are released.

**Niagara County Financial Disclosure Forms:** A copy of the proposed amendment to the Niagara County Code of Ethics regarding Disclosure Forms was provided and discussed. Paul Wolf pointed out that the proposed change is a big victory for the Coalition as starting in 2019 Disclosure Forms will be made available to the public through FOIL requests. The Legislature however is not making past disclosure forms still on file available to the public, which is a problem. For 22 years the Disclosure Forms have illegally been kept from the public, continuing the practice of keeping past forms from the public is something we have to object to.

The Legislature is holding a public hearing on May 7<sup>th</sup>, which Paul plans to attend and speak. Other concerns are the Legislature is narrowing what needs to be reported by requiring information regarding "minor" children only and not for adult children. If an adult child of a county official has a business that information which was reported in the past will no longer be reported. The Disclosure Forms of Niagara County Legislator's should be posted online for the public to see instead of requiring a FOIL.

**Erie County Water Authority:** A resolution recently passed by the Erie County Water Authority was provided. The Water Authority has gone on record in support of our six best practices. The Water Authority has responded to our criticism of them in a very positive way. The Water Authority is now posting meeting agendas with documents one week prior to their meeting. No other governmental body is posting meeting information a week in advance.

**September Speaker Event:** Three ideas were presented for discussion regarding our annual September Forum. Continuing the discussion from the April meeting, it was agreed to hold a forum of local media panelists to discuss open government issues from their perspective. Paul will contact local media members to determine who is interested in participating. Paul will also look into a place to hold the forum with support expressed to return to the Theodore Roosevelt Museum.

**Ethics Board Project:** Paul will contact Board members to assist with seeing what information is posted for local Ethics Boards. As Ethics Boards are managed by volunteers, Paul suggested

simplifying our rating sheet and sending a draft of our rating to an appropriate person for feedback.

**Orchard Park Confidential Agreement:** A Buffalo News article was provided, which discussed that a severance agreement was made by the Orchard Park Town Board with their Police Chief, the details of which were being kept from the public. It was agreed that we should send a letter expressing our concern about this issue.

**New Business:** No new business was discussed.

**Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm. Next meeting will be June 6, 2019, 6:30 pm at the Williamsville Library.