

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government June 11, 2020

Meeting held via Zoom called to order at 6:36 p.m. Present: Paul Wolf, Sonia Dusza, Maria Tisby, Ed McKee, Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Richard Bertrand, Steve Lyle, Gary Dickson and Susan Kelly.

Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes from May 14, 2020, were unanimously approved on a motion made by Sonia and seconded by Maria.

Treasurer's Report: Janet Vito provided a written report to Paul Wolf showing our account balance as \$849.92. Larry made a motion to accept the report which was seconded by Richard and unanimously approved.

Niagara County Lawsuit: Paul Wolf stated that the Courts are currently closed and as such our lawsuit against Niagara County is on hold until things open back up. The attorney handling the lawsuit will be requesting a written response from Niagara County. As no response has been received yet.

Report: Local Governments Mute the Public During Remote Meetings: On May 12th we released our first statewide report. We reviewed 21 local governments from across the state. The key finding was that 67% eliminated hearing from the public during their April meetings. This is further proof of the need to amend the Open Meetings Law to mandate that the public be heard during meetings.

Paul Wolf followed up with Erie County and Broome County as they received the lowest scores in the report. Paul will keep everyone posted of any responses received.

Next Report Focusing on Smaller Local Governments: Our last report focused on 21 large local governments. For the next report the plan is to focus on smaller local governments as far as whether they are live streaming meetings, posting meeting documents etc.

Civil Rights Law 50-a: We sent out a press release in support of repealing this law which makes police disciplinary records secret. An email was sent to every state legislator encouraging them to vote in favor of repealing this law, which did occur.

Becoming a 501(c)(3): Paul completed the required forms, which have been submitted to the IRS, for the Coalition to become a federal tax exempt organization. It will probably take several months to be approved. Once we become a 501(c)(3), we will be able to apply for grant funding.

New Business: In light of the repeal of Civil Rights Law 50-a, Paul Wolf raised the idea of doing a FOIL report regarding this issue. Our original plan was to do a FOIL project regarding delinquent Industrial Development Agency loans. Given the current economic situation where every company is having financial issues, this is probably not a relevant report to do.

Adjourn: Maria made a motion to adjourn seconded by Larry, meeting adjourned at 7:09 pm. Next meeting will be July 9th at 6:30 pm, probably via Zoom.