

New York Coalition for Open Government

Thursday November 9, 2023, 6:30 PM

Via Zoom

Email paulwolf2@gmail.com for the meeting link

Public Comments Are Welcome At Any Time During Our Meetings. Don't Be Shy To Ask A Question Or To Make A Point!

AGENDA

- 1) Meeting Minutes from October 12, 2023 **PG 3-5**

 - 2) Treasurer's Report – 92 total paid members (from 31 counties) **PG 6**
Balance as of 10/31/23 \$5,408.56

 - 3) 2023 Calendar **PG 7-9**

 - 4) Open Meetings Law Committee **PG 10-11**
 - A) Recommend moving the report regarding advisory committees to 2024
 - B) Executive Session training held on 10/19
 - C) Working on a letter to contact the 177 towns identified in our recent report that do not allow public comments at their meetings
 - D) Working on a training regarding hybrid meetings for January

 - 5) Freedom of Information Law Committee **PG 12-13**
 - A) Finishing up FOIL project report
 - B) Planning on doing a training session in February regarding the need for an independent hearing officer system

 - 6) Public Relations/Education Committee **PG 14-17**
 - A) The Committee is working on a lobbying plan for getting our legislative bills passed in Albany.
 - B) Albany in person meeting Saturday November 18th, 1:00 pm to 6:30 pm,
-

Hampton Inn Hotel downtown Albany

- C) Looking into doing Coalition business cards with a QR code link to our website and Open Government Guide
- D) Recommendation to increase Coalition membership fee for 2024 to \$40 for members, with students whether high school or college being free.
- E) Working on our 2023 Naughty & Nice list, will do press conference in December
- F) Committee recommends that the board reconsider having the Coalition being a plaintiff in an Article 78 lawsuit against the City of Buffalo regarding various legal violations when enacting a pay raise for elected officials. See attached overview on page 17

7) Invitation to speak to the Amherst Women's Republican Club 11/28.

8) Cornell High Road Fellow Application

PG 18-21

9) Book by Coalition member Ron Fraser titled One Store Too Far, includes a foreward written by Coalition President, Paul Wolf.

PG 22-25

10) New Business

11) Next Meetings

Open Meetings Law Committee November 16, at 6:30 pm

In Person Albany Meeting November 18th, 1:00 – 6:30 pm

Freedom of Information Law Committee November 30, at 6:30 pm

Public Relations December 7, at 6:30 pm

Coalition Board Meeting December 14, 6:30 pm

10-12-23 NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING

PRESENT ON ZOOM; Linda Bond, Sue Kelly, Michelle Allen, Robert Godlewski, Janet Vito, K. Czarone, Marylou, Axel Ebermann, Annmarie Reeb, Lawrence Vito, Pat Irving, Ken Guarino, Maria Tisby, Christine, Stuart Allen, Alberta Roman, Paul Wolf.

NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENTBOARD MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AR 6:34 PM BY PRESIDENT PAUL WOLF.

MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPT. 14, 2023; Approval of meeting minutes of 9-14-23 on motion made by Axel Ebermann and seconded by Maria Tisby.

TREASURER'S REPORT; Janet Vito report 91 total paid members from 31 counties with balance of \$5,238.56 as of 9/30/23. Motion made to approve Treasurer's report made by Marylou and seconded by Alberta.

CALENDAR; For informational purposes only for 2023.

OPEN MEETING LAW COMMITTEE; Michelle Committee Chair report

- A. Discussed contacting towns we identified in our recent report that do not allow public comments at their meetings to encourage them to do so. Annmarie will create data base of Town Clerks, Town Supervisors, and Town Boards and send emails. More volunteers needed.
- B. Executive Session training on 10-19-23 at 5:30 pm led by Paul Wolf. Most requested information is on this subject. Paul sent email out to 300 reporters.
- C. Discussed doing a training regarding hybrid meetings in January. Per Michelle this clarification is needed after covid.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW COMMITTEE; Report by Maria Committee Chair along with Annmarie.

- A. From 70 FOIL requests made, 59 have responded, 6 denied and 5 pending , not appealed. We will move forward instead of waiting, with summary to be given after this weekend for final report.
- B. Held Article 78 training on September 21st at 12:, via zoom, with attorney Mike Higgins as the presenter (44 people registered). Marylou has an audio recording although no video available. A 14 page step guide is available for this process done independently instead of with Attorney.
- C. Discussion of possible FOIL training sessions for 2024 will follow.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/EDUCATION COMMITTEE; Axel Committee Chair report.

- A. Our open government guide booklet has been posted on our website.
- B. New Coalition website (need Board photos, bios, calendar management). Discussion of working with and coloring map for posting on website and developing more resources for people on our website.
- C. The Committee is working on a lobbying plan (lobbying day during Sunshine week) for getting our legislative bills passed in Albany. A tour of the Capitol should be scheduled for our members.
- D. Albany in person meeting Saturday Nov. 18, 1 pm to 6:30 pm at Hampton Inn Hotel.
- E. Committee discussed whether the Coalition should file an Article 78 lawsuit against the City of Buffalo regarding their violation of the City Charter in how they went about passing pay raises for city elected officials. Ten members were present when a motion to recommend that the Board support such a lawsuit was made. The motion failed with 5 votes in favor, 1 against and 4 abstained. It is focused on City Charter, and not in line with our mission. Paul sent a draft letter to Board. Motion by Michelle that we not

pursue this action with second by Alberta. This is a really important issue to support and not be the main bringer of lawsuit. There are 10 Board Members present. Motion to not do law suit passed 7 to 3.

LETTER TO NY COMMITTEE ON OPEN GOVERNMENT; This letter sent as an update to our legislative proposals, which we are encouraging the Committee to include in their annual report.

LETTER TO GOV.HOCHUL REGARDING LLC TRANSPARENCY LEGISLATION; We signed on to this letter at the request of reinvent Albany along with other agencies.

NATIONAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COALITION CONFERENCE REPORT; Paul did not attend, and Michelle did attend and related the importance of content where we can get from posted a link in chat.

NEW BUSINESS; Sue mentioned Paul's interview in Investigative Post.

Motion to adjourn made by Maria and seconded by Larry . Motion carried.

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Zoom Meeting November 9, 2023

NEW YORK COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

Treasurer's Report October 31, 2023

Paid Members = 92 as of 10/31/2023

Bank Balance - as of September 30, 2023	\$5,238.56
Deposit 10/24/2023 – Direct Online Deposit - \$150.00 (Donation)	150.00
Deposit 10/24/2023 – Direct Online Deposit - \$20.00 (Dues)	<u>20.00</u>
Check Book/Bank Balance 10/31/2023	\$5,408.56

Janet Vito
Treasurer

New York Coalition for Open Government 2023 Goals

Internal Goals

- Increase membership (81 as of 12/31/22)
- Start Sharing Our Stories Through Videos
- Increase Facebook followers (579 as of 12/31/22)
- Increase Twitter followers (242 as of 12/31/22)

Project Goals

- Report On The Need For An Enforcement Entity, Which Will Include Reforming The Committee on Open Government, The Need For Mandated Training and The Need For Mandatory Attorney Fees
- Report Highlighting How Local Governments Are Doing Live Streaming
- Report On Mandating Public Comments
- FOIL report regarding state agency tracking of FOIL requests
- Lawsuit Regarding Posting of Meeting Documents & Minutes
- Sunshine Week Event
- Annual Meeting
- Regional Meetings/Events

January

Op-Ed regarding open government resolutions for New Year
January 1, 1977, anniversary of Open Meetings Law
Plan Sunshine Week Event for March
Start gathering info Report on the need for an enforcement entity
Press conference regarding caucus meetings report

February

Plan Sunshine Week Event for March
Draft Op-ed for Sunshine Week
Press Conference regarding need for an enforcement entity
Plan May Annual Meeting
Start gathering info for report regarding live streaming of meetings

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March

Sunshine Week Op-ed
Sunshine Week Event (March 12 to 18 Sunshine Week)
Membership Renewals
Plan May Annual Meeting
Continue gathering info for report regarding live streaming of meetings
Plan regional meeting in Albany

April

Planning for Annual Meeting
Press Conference regarding Live streaming report
Start gathering info regarding public comments
Regional meeting Albany

May

Annual Meeting
Continue gathering info for report regarding public comments

June

Press conference regarding public comments report
Start gathering info for FOIL report

July

Op-ed regarding anniversary of Freedom of Information Act
Continue gathering info for FOIL report

August

Continue gathering info for FOIL report

September

FOIL report press conference
Sept 1, 1974, anniversary of FOIL
Sept 15th, Democracy Day
Sept 17th Constitution Day, 17-23 Constitution Week

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Sept. 28th universal access to information day

October

October 17th, School Board Recognition Week
Plan upstate regional meeting

November

Regional Meeting Upstate

December

End of year review, 2024 goals
Plan Board and Officer elections for 2025

NY Coalition for Open Government
Open Meeting Law Committee
October 19, 2023, at 6:30 pm, via Zoom

Meeting called to order by the Co-Chair, Robyn.

Members present: Robyn, Michelle, Sue, Ken, Pat, Stuart, Sonia and Annmarie.

New Business

1. Motion by Annmarie to approve the September 21, 2023 w/correction per Pat and approve minutes for June 15, 2023 and August 17, 2023. Seconded by Pat. All in Favor, none opposed, the minutes are approved.

Per Michelle, anyone can vote on motions in the committees as long as we have a quorum of board members.

2. Report regarding public comments at meetings – Annmarie informed that the Public Comment Report: Silence is Not Golden was already released. We are looking to put a letter together on the 177 towns that did not allow public comment per their minutes/agendas on their websites. Annmarie provided an overview of this project and that Ken and MaryLou assisted Annmarie in pulling emails and addresses for this project. Robyn created a draft letter for review and changes.
 - a. Robyn – Draft letter is a starting point – the letter was attached to the email invite for this meeting. A discussion occurred on the editing of this letter. Three people were going to edit, but this was later changed to Robyn only as the discussion proceeded.
 - b. Pat suggested that all drafts be marked as a “draft”.
 - c. Ken addressed what could happen with multiple people editing. Suggested a deadline date for submitting changes and how the first paragraph should read.
 - d. Robyn provided her email.
 - e. Michelle addressed the meaning of public comment report and documents on the website, along with transparency.
3. Public Comment Legislation – Assembly member Carrie Woerner has expressed interest in introducing a bill to mandate public comments at meetings. We are hoping to see a draft of her bill soon.
 - a. Michelle explained this bill and how other states do this and including a Senate sponsor. She explained the importance of this.
 - b. Sonia asked about others interest in our Coalition. Michelle enlightened the committee. A discussion ensued.

4. Report on Advisory Committees and the Open Meetings Law - Do we start this now or next year?
5. Training Regarding Hybrid Meetings – Michelle provided an overview of Hybrid, Livestreaming and Videoconferencing.
 - a. What do we want to stress at this meeting? Michelle asked. Several committee members provided information and insight on this training.
 - b. Robyn addressed how meetings were handled during Covid. What are the options of Livestreaming then?
 - c. Annmarie addressed the importance of our Livestream Report and how it pertains to training. Suggested that the Cornell student might want to help with this training.
 - d. Stuart asked, who do we intend to train? Annmarie informed that this will be open to the public. Will the content of the training be advocacy and explanation of existing laws? Michelle explained further.
 - e. Michelle asked if we assessed the cost for Livestreaming?
 - f. Annmarie asked a question on the State Law vs Local Law and Live broadcasting of which a discussion occurred.
 - g. Stuart explained his work on expanding this in his area for the last 3 years and has come up with 23 reasons or benefits to add this. Stuart provided a lot of detail on this subject. Until it is a law that will out live me, this is my goal.
 - h. Sonia had some questions for Stuart. Discussions and questions continued.

Motion to hold the training on January 18, 2024 at 5:30 pm made by Michelle and seconded by Annmarie – Michelle and Annmarie pulled their motion and second. There was agreement to table this to the next meeting – review livestream report for next meeting. Other items mentioned by Sue and Annmarie regarding availability of money.

Adjourn meeting at 7:42 pm - Motion by Annmarie and seconded by Sue. All were in favor. Next OML meeting is November 16, 2023, at 6:30 pm, via Zoom.

New York Coalition for Open Government
Freedom of Information Law Committee Meeting - Minutes
Thursday October 26, 2023, 6:30 PM, via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by the Chair, Maria, at 6:35 pm.

ATTENDED BY: Maria, Annmarie, Michelle, Mike, Sue, Ken, and Stuart. Axel arrived later.

Minutes from the September 28, 2023 meeting: Motion to approve by Michelle and Seconded by Annmarie. All in favor. Motion carried.

1. Discuss status of our FOIL Project Report – Annmarie informed that the project was wrapped up and that all the data had been vetted. She made a point to thank those volunteers who provided so much of their time and effort. Such as Ken, Sue and Pat, to name a few. The dedication of our volunteers is why our reports are so good. Currently Paul, Michelle and Maria are reviewing the graphs and additional information. Paul will use all of this to create the final report before it goes out to others for another review.
2. Update regarding the Article 78 Lawsuit that Mike Franklin recently filed Pro Se – Mike provided an overview of his recently filed Article 78 lawsuit. He provided a lot of detail and would keep us updated on its progress. Mike also addressed an issue regarding being called Uncouth. He provided the definition of this and his upset with it. Maria, the Chair, asked that he take this up with Paul.
3. Planning of FOIL trainings for February 2024 and Selecting one of the four suggestions that would line up with our upcoming bills.
 - a. Annmarie would like to see FOIL training that has two parts. Part 1 could address just the FOIL Request and how to File as well as time limits. Part 2 could address FOIL Appeals and how to File as well as time limits. Just because someone has a template doesn't mean they know how to fill it in or what documents to obtain.

In regards to the following:

- a. Bill on Tracking of FOIL/Highlights of the FOIL report (Annmarie) – overview given.
- b. Bill on Independent Hearing Officer (Mike and Assembly member Rosenthal) – Mike provided an overview.
- c. Bill on Attorney Fee Reform (Cory and Senator Liu) – no overview.
- d. Bill on Constitutional Amendment (Paul and Assembly member Steck) – no overview.

A discussion took place on the above bills and which one we should focus on next February 2024. A straw poll was taken and the members each had a moment to address their choice and the majority favored the independent hearing officer. One member did not respond as he did not have the information on the bills. Stuart explained that he attends our zoom meetings by using the link in the private Facebook. Because of this, he doesn't receive documents for the meeting. Axel, would send him the bill information and Annmarie added him to the email list. She also sent him the information provided for this meeting. No formal vote occurred.

New Business

Stuart informed the committee of his work to bring hybrid/livestream to the residents in his county. He explained how this is only available to Public Officials and Public employees of the County. This is not provided to the public. A discussion occurred.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:08 pm was made by Annmarie and Seconded by Axel. All were in favor.

Next meeting on November 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Due to technical issues the meeting was not recorded.

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New York Coalition For Open Government
Public Relations and Education Group Committee Minutes
Thursday, November 2, 2023 via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm by the Co-Chair: Ken

Members in attendance: Ken, Paul, Michelle, Maria, Sue, Linda, Paul A. and Annmarie

1. Approval of Minutes October 5, 2023 – Motion by Annmarie, seconded by Paul. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.
2. Revisiting Article 78 lawsuit against the City of Buffalo based on OML and the addition of suing the Citizens Salary Review Commission – Paul provided an overview of key points that the lawsuit will address and a change to the law in 2021 regarding advisory bodies and their requirements. Several people provided their comments based on the revisions.

Motion made by Maria to have the board reconsider this lawsuit (City of Buffalo) based on the new revisions; Seconded by Ken. Voting Roll Call:

Ken – Yes	Annmarie – Yes	Sue – Yes	Michelle – Yes
Paul – Yes	Maria – Yes	Linda – Yes	Paul A. – No vote (was muted)

No nays. Motion Carried.

3. Albany meeting – Saturday, November 18th from 1 pm – 6:30 pm at the Hampton Inn & Suites in downtown Albany. So far 19 people have confirmed.
 - a. Logistics: Robyn is handling the Food, Room Setup with the Hampton. Ken will bring the easel, paper and colored markers. Paul will bring the agenda and materials. Annmarie will bring the projector and cordless microphones. Axel will handle the technical setup and livestream. Paul will send out reminders to see who is coming and regarding livestream.
4. Coalition Membership Fee – currently \$20 a year and due by January. Should we increase the annual fee? What amount? Should students (college/high school) be free?
 - a. Annmarie suggested a tier system for Board members/regular members/seniors and students.
 - b. Michelle agrees with all students being free with showing student ID. Liked the tiered system but also suggested Gold members based on donations.
 - c. Maria suggested amounts based on the tier system and charge a minimum fee for students.
 - d. Paul would like to keep it simple with one membership fee and students free.
 - e. Paul A. suggested a membership fee and associate member fee which he explained with more detail. He agrees with one fee.
 - f. Ken supported having just one fee.

Motion by Michelle bring to the board - to increase the membership fee to \$40.00 and free to all students (high school and college) with current student ID; seconded by Maria. All were in favor. Motion carried.

5. Coalition Booklet printing, QR Code – Ken provided an overview and suggested a business card with a QR code on it or do we print the booklets.
 - a. Annmarie loved the idea of the business card. She suggested the additional information could go into extra pages in the booklet. Reminded that we may not have the funds this year or next year and doing the QR code would be cost efficient that we could do now.
 - b. Maria supported printing the booklet.
 - c. Ken said we could do both.
 - d. Michelle likes the idea of a business card and have the QR code on the back. This would be a cost savings and members could pay an additional amount to get more cards.
 - e. Paul, who can look into the cost of the business cards? Ken will do this and sent to Axel. Would like to have these for the March meeting.
 - f. Michelle talked about one big printing. Allowing members to pay to get more cards.
 - g. Annmarie stated that the more cards printed would reduce the cost of the cards.
 - h. Michelle shared the benefits of the QR code.

6. Update regarding new website – Ken addressed this. Inform Axel of any changes.
 - a. Annmarie sent some suggestions to Axel. Executive Board members should be listed. Asked Paul what zoom meetings are online.
 - b. Ken suggested that you look at the website on your cell phone.

7. Grant Application for Google Ads - \$10,000 – Ken and Paul addressed this.
 - a. Michelle provided some additional information and the benefit.
 - b. Annmarie asked some questions on the grant and when the grant runs out as it applies to cost. Ken will find out from Axel.
 - c. Michelle said we should standardize questions because of other grants.

8. Legislative Action Plan – What platform will be used for discussion? Axel is looking into this and has a 14-day trial to review Nationbuilder.

9. Job description – Project Coordinator – status: Annmarie has not had the time because of the FOIL project. Will hopefully have this by the next PR meeting.

10. Naughty & Nice List – Paul provided an overview of what we did previously. Some are repeat offenders. Let Paul know if you have someone who should go on this list.
 - a. Michelle thought we should add more to the nice list and highlight the repeat offenders.
 - b. Maria asked for clarification and high distinction for more egregious. Ken informed how we could note the offenders. Others discussed.

- c. Annmarie addressed a group that has the dirty dozen. Suggested we might do the 12 days of Naughty/Nice and release one Naughty and one Nice each day. Highlight offenders by giving them a lump of coal. Michelle supports the 12 days.

New Business – None.

Our next meeting is Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 6:30 pm, via Zoom.

Motion by Paul, seconded by Maria to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting ended at 7:42 pm.

Revisiting Article 78 lawsuit against the City of Buffalo. After additional research and thought, suing the Citizens Salary Review Commission has been added, which may make this a worthwhile lawsuit for the Coalition to be a part of.

The parties now being sued and the reasons why are:

- Buffalo Common Council – For violating City Charter and their own rules
- Board of Review – For violating the City Charter and the Open Meetings Law, whether the Board of Review is a public body under OML is an interesting question. This lawsuit can help further address what is a public body under the law. The City of Buffalo may argue that the Board of Review is not a public body subject to OML.
- Citizens Salary Review Commission – For violating the Open Meetings Law by holding an illegal executive session. No reason was provided for the executive session and it was improper to discuss elected official salaries in private in any event. The Commission is clearly an advisory body not subject to OML, however in 2021 the legislature amended the definition of a public body to include bodies that perform a necessary function as part of the decision making process. There are no cases yet that interpret what performs a necessary function means. This lawsuit will be an important first impression on this issue. While the Commission is an advisory body, the City Charter makes it clear that every two years a commission must be formed to review elected official salaries and the Council must act upon the Commission's recommendations by approving, modifying or rejecting them. The Commission's involvement is a mandatory necessary function of the salary process, which makes it subject to OML.

Should the Coalition be a Plaintiff in this revised lawsuit?

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Paul Wolf <paulwolf2@gmail.com>

High Road Fellow Supervisor Application 2024

1 message

Google Forms <forms-receipts-noreply@google.com>

Fri, Oct 20, 2023 at 7:18 PM

To: paulwolf2@gmail.com

Google Forms

Thanks for filling out High Road Fellow Supervisor Application 2024

Here's what was received.

High Road Fellow Supervisor Application 2024

Thank you so much for your interest in hosting a High Road Fellow this summer. Once you complete this form (OR the Microsoft Word version), by Wednesday, November 3, 2023, we will be in touch by November 9, 2023 with any clarifying questions and will notify you of final decisions by November 18, 2023.

Reach out to Kricky Ksiazek, High Road Fellowship Coordinator, with any questions:
ks844@cornell.edu

What supervisors can expect:

- One meeting with High Road staff in February to revise any project details (in person or over Zoom)
- One meeting with High Road Staff + High Road Fellow in March (over Zoom)
- High Road Supervisor Orientation in May (~2.5 hours, in person or over Zoom)
- To purchase a bus pass (if the student needs it or offset \$150 of transportation) for June and July for Fellow
- High Road Student Orientation, July 26 (3 hr, in person)
- High Road Fellow Graduation Showcase, June 3 (1.5 hr, in person)
- *Compile relevant information about your organization and/or project for Fellow
- To complete, for the fellow, a project work plan by June 7th (& share with High Road Fellow and Staff)
- Check-in with students weekly on progress toward their project goals
- Complete a mid-summer evaluation
- Complete and end of summer evaluation

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You will receive:

- Bi-monthly emails from High Road staff leading up to the fellowship
- Weekly email from High Road staff during the fellowship
- Resources and examples from previous supervisors
- Opportunities to meet with other supervisors
- A High Road student, paid by Cornell University

Email *

paulwolf2@gmail.com

Name of Your Organization *

New York Coalition For Open Government

Organization Address *

392 Evans Street, Williamsville, NY 14221

Your Organization's Mission/Goals *

A non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to addressing government transparency issues. Our work is focused on the NY State Open Meetings Law and Freedom of Information Law.

Project Title *

Engaging Others Through Story Telling

Please answer the following questions about the project: a. Describe the work and goals for the project. b. Is the work part of larger campaign or coalition? If yes, please describe. c. What specifically will be the fellow's individual final work

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product? What form will it take? d. How do you foresee this work contributing to a more equitable Buffalo? *

The best way to spread the importance of the work being done by the New York Coalition For Open Government is for our active members to share their stories of why open government matters to them and to tell their story of open government issues they have experienced. Sharing stories will touch and reach others who are interested in open government. We are looking for a fellow interested in video recording our members telling their stories. A fellow with social media marketing skills who will assist us with distributing short video clips on Facebook, Twitter, Instragram, Tik Tok etc. This experience will be great for a fellow studying to be a journalist, marketing, visual arts, or documentary film making.

Proposed Fellowship Supervisor's Name *

Paul Wolf, Esq.

Supervisor Title *

President

Supervisor Contact Info (phone and email) *

(716) 435-4976, paulwolf2@gmail.com

Will the supervisor be available for the 8 week duration of the Fellowship? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Who would be an alternative supervisor or point of contact from your organization? Please provide their email address. *

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Michelle Allen, publicjanie@gmail.com

Please answer the following questions about your work environment: a. How do you plan to supervise the project? b. Who will the fellows co-workers be? Other mentors? c. Please describe the work culture of your organization or any expectations you might have for fellows. d. Will the fellow have their own dedicated workspace? Is this in your main office? e. Will the student need to travel or work at different sites or locations? *

The project will be supervised through regular communication via phone, email and Zoom conversations. We are an all volunteer organization with members across NY State who are passionate about open government. Our work is done remotely through Zoom as we do not have a physical office. We value the ability to work independently without excessive micro managing.

Please list (or describe) any tech or software requirements (video, images, etc.): *

Fellow should have their own computer.

Are there any specific skills, interests, experiences, or language requirements for your project? Other cultural preferences? *

Friendly personality, curious, willing to learn and try new things, using Zoom, ability to post items on Facebook, Twitter etc.

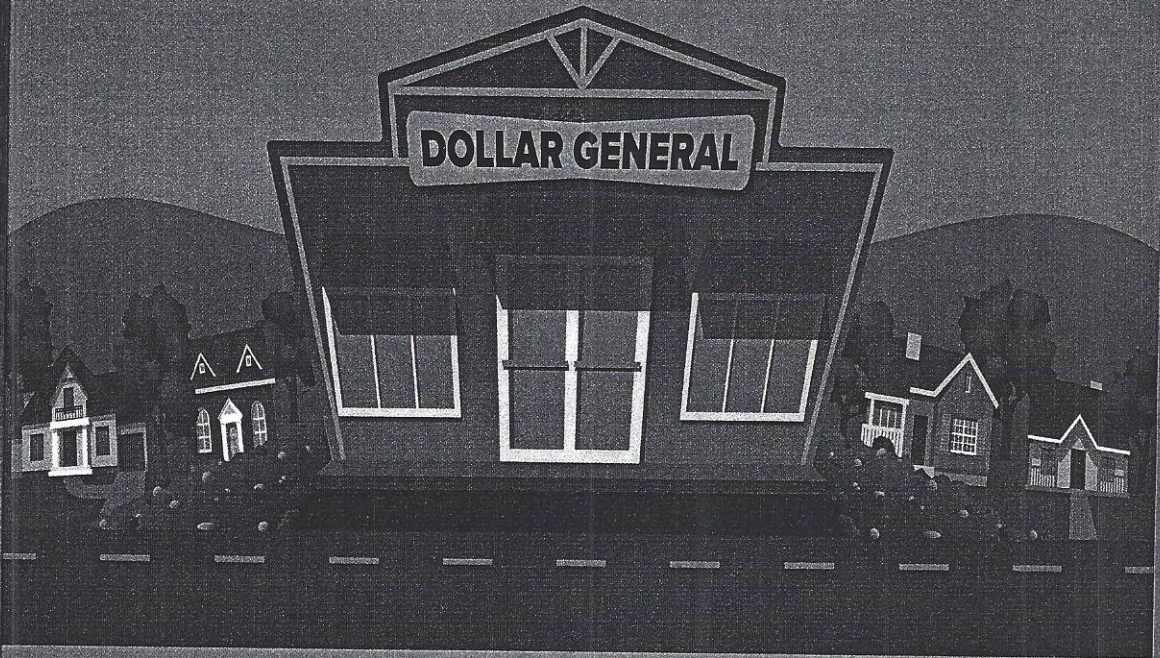
What trainings or knowledge preparation provided by the High Road Staff for students prior to placement would be MOST useful to you? *

None

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ONE STORE TOO FAR

Saving Residential Neighborhoods
from
Dollar General Bulldozers

Why Some Towns Win
&
Others Lose

Ronald Fraser, Ph.D.

Foreword by Paul Wolf, Esq., President,
New York Coalition for Open Government, Inc.

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FOREWORD

I first became aware of Ronald Fraser when I heard Ralph Nader interview him regarding his book, *American Democracy and You, Where Have All the Citizens Gone?* Nader described the book as “very engaging” and “a great discussion book.”

We both share a passion for the citizen’s role in democracy at the local level. His book highlight’s the important role citizens can play in a town’s decision to welcome or reject a Dollar General outlet.

I founded the New York Coalition for Open Government to promote government transparency and the right to have our voices heard at town hall, where elected and appointed representatives make decisions that greatly impact the town’s quality of life.

Town meetings have long been an important part of our democratic history. The famous French historian Alexis de Tocqueville was fascinated by town meetings. In his 1835 report, *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville stated, “...local assemblies of citizens constitute the strength of free nations. Town-meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people’s

One Dollar General Too Far

reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.”

For Tocqueville, participating in town meetings teach Americans how to become citizens in a democracy.

Once you exclude New York City, the average city, town and village in New York State has a population of 7,400. In fact, more than half of New York's 932 town governments are small and rural with a population under 3,000.

Towns, small and large, consist of neighborhoods with their own identities, characteristics and physical spaces. In the early 1900s, zoning laws came about as a way for communities to preserve and promote land use in a desirable and agreed upon way.

In New York State, town planning boards first came into existence in 1927, and today they play an important role in shaping community development by seeking to balance the interests of chain store developers and the public.

One Dollar General Too Far

While zoning issues are hot topics, not enough attention has been given to how small town governments make planning and development decisions.

This book is unique. It takes a close look at how citizens and officials in three neighboring towns, operating under almost identical state and local laws, arrived at very different conclusions when addressing Dollar General's building applications. Here you will find valuable insights into how differently these town planning boards made their decisions.

Whether you are a citizen serving on a planning board, a citizen concerned about land use development in your community, or you are currently fighting for, or against, a development project in your community, this book will give you an inside view of democracy at the local level.

PAUL WOLF, Esq., President

New York Coalition for Open Government, Inc.