

# New York Coalition for Open Government

Thursday July 11, 2024, 6:30 pm

Via Zoom

Email [paulwolf2@gmail.com](mailto: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 June 13, 2024 PG 3-4
  
- 2) Treasurer's Report – 61 total paid members 5  
Balance as of 6/30/24 \$5,474.86
  
- 3) Draft calendar for 2024 6-8
  
- 4) Equal Justice Fellowship Opportunity Update
  
- 5) Public Relations/Education Committee
  - A) Press Award event occurred on 6/27
  - B) Coalition Newsletter
  - C) Discussed doing an event for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of FOIL, which occurs in Sept.
  - D) New Member Recruitment
  
- 6) Open Meetings Law Committee 9
  - A) Michelle & Robyn are working on a general Open Meetings Law training
  - B) Legislation mandating local governments to have a website passed Assembly & Senate

7) Freedom of Information Law Committee

10

- A) FOIL project regarding City Council public comment policies is continuing
- B) Working on a FOIL training session that we can have members present in their communities

8) New Business

9) Next Meetings

Open Meetings Law Committee July 18, at 6:30 pm

Freedom of Information Law Committee July 25, at 6:30 pm

Public Relations August 1, at 6:30 pm

Board Meeting August 8, at 6:30 pm

## **6-13-24 NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING ON ZOOM**

**PRESENT;** Quorum present, Maria Tisby, Janet Vito, Annmarie Reeb, Sue Kelley, Michelle Allen, Pat Irving, Axel Ebermann, Sonia Dusza, Ken Guarino, Stuart Allen, Paul Wolf.

**NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING;** Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm by President Paul Wolf. Paul explained that we have no roll call for approval of motions (as that would slow down meeting) and that voice vote is taken as approval unless someone voices otherwise.

**MEETING MINUTES FROM 5-9-24;** Meeting minutes from 5-09-24 on a motion to approve by Annmarie and second by Axel. Motion carried.

**TREASURER'S REPORT;** Janet Vito treasurer report 59 members and available funds \$5,114.86 and \$5,4774.86 with reserved funds (Larry Vito memorial). Motion to accept Treasurer's report by Maria and second by Sue. Motion carries.

**DRAFT CALENDAR 2024;** This is for informational purposes only.

**EQUAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY;** Discussion led by Paul with new information that meeting had with Heather Abraham of UB Law School Clinic was very encouraging about the possibility of collaboration, on the securing of attorney services at \$65,500.00 salary per year. It may be too soon for application to be in by 9/2024 and will consider for the following year. There would be the issue of our responsibility to pay insurances for the services of this lawyer (\$15-20,00 split with UB) that we would have to fund raise to provide the necessary \$7500.00 times 2 years.

**LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESULT;** Per Paul we did not get any of our sponsored bills passed this session (some approved by Senate and some by Assembly). However we did learn a lot, made good connections, and laid groundwork for moving ahead. The bill to mandate website (unfunded) be had by every municipality needs to be signed by Gov. Hochul after being sent back to Senate(?).

**PUBLIC RELATION/EDUCATION COMMITTEE;** Axel report that press awards 6/27/24 at 10:30 am via zoom to have 10 organizations in total...8 media news organizations and 2 student.

Coalition newsletter...second...sent and contributions welcome.

Stewart Allen hosted our Fantastic Coalition Social on May 30.

Discussion of doing an event for the 50th anniv. FOIL in Sept. had and to continue.

New member recruitment discussion with much more possible in this area by reaching out to other org. Education sessions to be tracked. Business cards are useful.

**OPEN MEETING LAW COMMITTEE;** Michelle reporting that planning a training session on how to make public comments at meetings in process. Michelle and Robyn are working on a general OML training.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW COMMITTEE;** Maria reporting, with Annmarie, that FOIL project regarding City Council Public comment policies with 61 Cities(not currently do NYC)is almost done and may ask for more volunteers. Material will come to the Board for review before going out to press. We are working on a FOIL training session that we can have members present in their communities.

**NEW BUSINESS;** Maria spoke the information of available resources for people with limited English proficiency in NYS budget with consideration of FOIL and OML that she is working on. Topic of School Boards and Economic Development Agencies transparency bought up. What we're speaking of is Democracy at local Level.

**Motion to adjourn meeting made by Axel and second by Michelle  
Motion carried at 7:36 pm. Alberta Roman author of minutes.**

**NEXT MEETING;** Next Board meeting will be July 11, 6:30 pm.

4

Zoom Meeting July 11, 2024

NEW YORK COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

**Treasurer's Report June 30, 2024**

Paid Members = 61 as of 6/30/2024

Bank Balance - as of May 31, 2024 \$5,474.86

(Restricted Donations) -360.00

**NYCOG Available Funds 6/30/2024** **\$5,114.86**

Larry Vito Memorial Fund (Givebutter)

(2023 Restricted Donations) \$360.00 360.00

Check Book/Bank Balance 6/30/2024 \$5,474.86

No activity this statement recorded.

Janet Vito  
Treasurer





# New York Coalition for Open Government 2024 Goals

## Internal Goals

- Increase membership (93 as of 12/10/23)
- Start Sharing Our Stories Through Videos
- Increase Facebook followers (684 as of 12/10/23)
- Increase Twitter followers (421 as of 12/10/23)

## Project Goals

- Increase training sessions on OML & FOIL
- FOIL report regarding public comment policies
- Sunshine Week Event Albany Day
- Annual Meeting
- In person Meetings/Events

### January

Board Appointments

Membership Renewals

Op-Ed regarding open government resolutions for New Year

January 1, 1977, anniversary of Open Meetings Law

Plan Sunshine Week Event for March (Albany Day)

Contacting State Legislators

### February

Plan Sunshine Week Event for March

Draft Op-ed for Sunshine Week

Plan May Annual Meeting

Contacting State Legislators

2/23 Student Press Freedom Day

### March

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in March, National Town Meeting Day

Sunshine Week Op-ed

Sunshine Week Event (March 11 to 15 Sunshine Week)

Forum Re Hearing Officer bill 3/28, 5:30 pm

Plan May Annual Meeting  
OML Forum

### April

Planning for Annual Meeting  
Start gathering info for new FOIL report

### May

Annual Meeting

### June

### July

Op-ed regarding anniversary of Freedom of Information Act  
Continue gathering info for FOIL report  
July 19-20, 1848 Anniversary of Seneca Falls Women's convention

### August

Continue gathering info for FOIL report

### September

FOIL report press conference  
Sept 1, 1974, anniversary of FOIL  
Sept 15<sup>th</sup>, Democracy Day  
Sept 17<sup>th</sup> Constitution Day, 17-23 Constitution Week  
Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> universal access to information day  
Plan member in person meeting for November  
Live Streaming Meeting Forum

### October

October 17<sup>th</sup>, School Board Recognition Week  
Plan Member in person meeting for November

87

**November**

In person member meeting in Albany

**December**

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



**NY Coalition for Open Government**  
**Open Meetings Law Committee**  
**Thursday, June 20, 2024, at 6:30 pm via Zoom**

Meeting called to order by the Chair, **Michelle** at 6:32 pm

Members present: Michelle, Robyn, Axel, Stuart, Janet, Laurie S., Julie and Annmarie

**Motion** by Axel to approve the minutes of May 16, 2024 and seconded by Robyn – All in favor; None Opposed.  
Motion carried.

1. Public Comment Training/Open Meetings Law Training – Michelle provided an overview on how this was put together and the gathering of the information. Robyn has worked on the OML presentation and is finishing it up.
  - a. Robyn addressed Public Comment for both Public meetings and Public Hearings. She believes that there is not enough to make an entire training program on public comment and it should be part of the OML training. She provided further insight on how this could be accomplished with all our trainings including FOIL.
  - b. Annmarie had some questions on the OML training presentation and supported combining the public comment suggestions with the OML training. Robyn explained where this could be included.
  - c. Axel asked about details in the OML presentation and clarification. Robyn provided additional information. Michelle agreed in spelling this information out.
  - d. Michelle reiterated the combination of the two trainings. Robyn suggested putting information on the website. Annmarie suggested putting this information on tips in our Resource tab on our website and tying it in to a future training. A further discussion occurred with Michelle providing clarification. Michelle stated that they could use some IT help and will send the OML presentation out to a larger group for vetting. Axel provided additional comments on the bones of the presentation.
2. A Bill (Passed the NYS Assembly A2852A/NYS Senate S3353A) Requiring Local Governments to Maintain a Website – Michelle provided a brief overview that each municipality will have a .gov website.
  - a. Robyn provided some insight into the software used by municipalities.
  - b. Axel addressed the mandate and the problems associated with this.
  - c. Stuart explained the domains. A discussion ensued.
  - d. Annmarie addressed missing websites as per the data from the public comment project and 42 cities that are not a .gov website. This could affect a lot of municipalities but not thousands. Several others provided information in agreement.
  - e. Julie addressed tech and web development and partnering with college students. Michelle also addressed student partnerships.
3. New Business
  - a. Annmarie provided an update on the Amended Public Comment Report and the inclusion of a news article in our report. She is also looking for a title for this report and you can email her.
  - b. Julie introduced herself and why she joined.

**Motion** by Annmarie to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 pm and seconded by Julie. All in favor. Motion Carried.  
Meeting adjourned.

Next OML meeting is **July 18, 2024, at 6:30 pm, via Zoom**. Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb.

New York Coalition for Open Government  
Freedom of Information Law Committee Meeting - Minutes  
Thursday, June 27, 2024 6:30 PM via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by the Chair, Maria at 6:36 pm.

Attended by: Maria, Axel, Mike, Sue, Michelle, Pat and Stuart.

**Motion** by Michelle to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2024 meeting and Seconded by Axel. All in favor. None opposed, Motion carried.

1. Update on City FOIL Project re: Public Comment Policy – Maria provided an overview with highlights and the final procedures to create the report.
  - a. Pat informed that the Appealed FOIL was filled.
  - b. Axel addressed the reports released by the Coalition and how others are using the data from our reports.
  - c. Maria brought up that Stuart sent a letter with questions to the Chair regarding the raw data. Axel said we are transparent.
  - d. Michelle provided more clarity on additional procedures and the vetting of the data. A discussion occurred.
  - e. Stuart provided clarity on releasing all the data to the public and data transparency. Errors will be made. A discussion began with Michelle addressing why we are amending the Public Comment report and that more vetting will occur.
  - f. Maria addressed questions on a project. This is not about one person but the whole organization.
  - g. Axel and others agreed to release all data.
2. FOIL Issues – What FOILs are you doing on your own and what issues are you having? – Maria provided an overview.
  - a. Axel addressed the problems with FOIL in the City of Mt. Vernon and the public Library. Lack of answering FOIL Requests. An appeal was done but not responded to. Very frustrating.
  - b. Mike addressed FOIL Requests of assessment documents and how they delay, leave reports out and what he has to go through to get the documents. He has to do a pro se Article 78 (sue them). The Committee on Open Government is getting sick of him. He can do a report just on Foiling counties for the assessment data. Additional discussion occurred. You can watch these hearings online.
  - c. Pat brought up her frustration with Foiling abstract reports because they are not on the website for the meeting. She received other documents not associated with her FOIL request. She is hoping the police issue has stopped regarding her FOIL requests. She addressed this with the newspaper. She is working towards a State Audit. A discussion occurred.
  - d. Stuart has learned that different tactics are used to slow or delay FOILs. We can use a database for more than one report. He informed of other tactics.
  - e. Michelle addressed the new Bill mandating a .gov website.
  - f. Several other discussions occurred on many topics including the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of FOIL including regional events.
3. New Business

The next meeting is July 25, 2024 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

**Motion** to adjourn meeting at 7:51 pm was made by Mike and seconded by Pat. All were in favor, none opposed, Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb