

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government October 3, 2019

Meeting called to order at 6:37 p.m. by Paul Wolf. Present: Paul Wolf, Janet Vito, Joe Kissel, Larry Vito, Mike Kless, Sonia Dusza, Steve Lyle, Maria Tisby.

Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes from September 5, 2019, were approved on a motion made by Larry Vito, seconded by Mike Kless.

Treasurer's Report: Janet Vito reported our account balance as \$1,061.78, as of 9/30/19. Twenty-three paid memberships have been received. \$69.77 was spent on reimbursement for food for our September event. Larry Vito made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report which was seconded by Mike Kless. Motion was unanimously approved.

Niagara County Financial Disclosure Forms & Speaking at Their Meetings: Richard Bertrand as Vice President of our organization filed a FOIL request seeking copies of the disclosure forms filed by legislators the past five years. Richard received copies of disclosure forms but they were not the forms we requested. It appears that the secretary of the Ethics Board misunderstood our request. A follow-up letter has been sent. We will keep you posted.

FOIL Project Regarding Emails & Texts: Paul Wolf has been tracking the responses received to our FOIL request. Plan is to hold a press conference on October 15th, to release our report.

Review of September Speaker Event: Mark Scheer from the Niagara Gazette & Lockport Geoff Kelly from Investigative Post and Steven Brown, WGRZ Channel 2 News, participated in our forum on September 25th, titled "Your Right to Know: The News Media and the Freedom of Information Law. The event will be held at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site, 641 Delaware Ave. Buffalo from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

About 40 people attended the event, including a class of journalism students from Buff State. Joe Kissel recorded the event.

The event went well and we will plan something for next September. Joe Kissel suggested doing more of these type of events.

Public Identification of Companies That Are Delinquent In Paying Their Industrial Development Agency Loans (IDA): A recent Buffalo News article highlighted the fact that County Executive Mark Poloncarz believes that companies who are delinquent in paying back their tax dollar loans should be identified and discussed in public and not in an executive session behind closed doors. Mike Kless made a motion seconded by Sonia Dusza that we should send a letter to the Erie County IDA in support of public discussion and identification of companies that are delinquent in their loan payments. Motion passed unanimously.

Off Track Betting (OTB) Transparency: The effort to obtain the identification of individuals who have received free tickets to events from OTB has received a lot of media attention. A recent Buffalo News article highlighted that Erie County Legislators were pushing to obtain the

information. Mike Kless made a motion seconded by Larry Vito that we send a letter in support of releasing information to the public. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business: Joe Kissel mentioned getting a large backdrop with our name and logo for press conferences and events. Paul Wolf stated he will ask Ed McKee to look into this.

Paul mentioned that he will be speaking at a forum sponsored by the New York State Bar Association at Syracuse Law School regarding FOIL and Open Meeting Law issues on October 16th.

Next Meeting: A motion to adjourn was made by Mike Kless, seconded by Joe Kissel and unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm. The next meeting will be November 7th, 6:30 pm at the Williamsville Library.