

11-09-23 NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING

PRESENT ON ZOOM; Maria Tisby, Michelle AG, Amil Virani, Mark Klingens, Susan Siegel, Steve Lyle, Stuart Alan, Kyle Eichin, Paul Andreessen, Linda Bond, Cory Morris, Axel Ebermann, Robert Godlewski, Sue Kelly, Ken Guarino, Gary Dickson, Alberta Roman, Susan Kims, Paul Wolf.

NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:34 PM BY President Paul Wolf.

MEETING MINUTES FROM 10-12-23; Motion to accept meeting minutes 10-12-23 made by Sue and seconded by Axel. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT; As of 10-31-23, 92 paid members from 31 counties with balance of \$5,408.56 included in agenda...report by Paul Wolf. Motion to accept made by Alberta R. and seconded by Maria T. Motion carried.

CALENDAR; Included for informational purposes only.

OPEN MEETING LAW COMMITTEE; A. Report made by Chair Michelle AG to move report on advisory committees to 2024.

B. Executive session training held on 10-19-23 and well attended. We will be doing more. Copy of recording available under education on web page.

C. We are working on a letter from the Coalition to contact 177 towns identified in our report that do not allow public comment. We are also working with Assemblyperson Woerner to create a law to mandate public comments. Shocking that 177 towns across NYS do not guarantee right to speak at public meeting ...may or may not allow or deny. This is not the case in several other States in USA.

D. Working on a training session regarding livestreaming/hybrid meetings

FOIL COMMITTEE; Report by Chair Maria T.

A. that we are finishing up report with Annmarie and volunteers who have done a tremendous job with 70 FOIL requests , 59 responded to, 6 denied and 5 pending and none appealed. Report to be released in Jan., 2024. Information completed now on excel spread sheet.

B. Article 78 training done on sept., 21 at noon by Mike Higgins with 44 people registered. There is an audio recording available and a 14 page step by step guide. It is recommended to be done with an attorney and may be done independently with at least a probable 350 dollar filing fee. There are possible FOIL training sessions in 2024.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/EDUCATION COMMITTEE; Report made by Chair Axel E.

A. with the Committee working on legislative plan /strategy for getting our legislative bills passed in Albany. We are looking at mailchimp for emailing for about 17 dollars a month to make things easier and trackable.

B. Albany meeting Sat. Nov., 18th 1 to 6:30 pm at the Hampton INN in downtown. There will be a zoom connection with questions possible. 15 are registered now.

C. Cards for the Coalition will be handed out so members can identify themselves and qr code for downloading handbook. Motion made by Axel to order 1000 for about 60 dollars of these cards and seconded by Michelle. Motion carried.

D. Membership fees now at 20 dollars per anum. Suggestion has been made to raise dues to 40 dollars in 2024 and by laws require 10 day notice. Discussion held re pro and con for doing increase with look at tier privileges and survey. Students high school and college could be free membership.

E. We are working on our Naughty and Nice list to be released in Dec. press conference to highlight people who have done some good and bad transparency things. The suggestion is made to have repeat offenders on list with criteria.

F. Our Committee recommends reconsidering that the Board have the Coalition be 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 of agenda. In 2021, the Open Meetings Law was amended to change the definition of what constitutes a public body subject to the law. This lawsuit could result in new legal precedent as to what advisory bodies perform a necessary government function, subjecting them to the Open Meetings Law. Michelle made motion for our Coalition to support this new Article 78 lawsuit as plaintiff and seconded by Maria T. Discussion had about getting others to support this and other lawsuits through fundraising. Motion carried.

AMHERST WOMEN'S REPUBLICAN CLUB MEETING 11-28-23; We got an invitation to have someone speak and Annmarie and Maria will be speaking.

CORNELL HIGH ROAD FELLOW APPLICATION; We applied for this last year for student intern free of charge for video taping members the story of why open government is important to them.

THREE TOWNS IN ERIE COUNTY; Ron Fraser wrote a book about 3 towns considering planning boards considering Dollar General stores. Ralph Nader liked his last book...available on Amazon

NEW BUSINESS; We have several members who ran for election. Congrats to people willing to step into the public arena. New members Kyle E. and Susan S. recognized. Michelle suggest to verify and quantify that any litigation we take on including to our sub-committees will align with our mission, which we have per Paul. Axel relate Google application available to non-profits for 10,000 dollars in free advertising that is renewable.

MEETING ADJOURNED 7:47 PM ON MOTION FROM AMIL V. AND SECONDED BY MICHELLE AG.; MOTION CARRIED.

NEXT MEETING DATES IN AGENDA ARE UNCHANGED except for FOIL per Maria T. to November 30th 6:30 pm.