

**NEW YORK COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT minutes
from November 11, 2021 on zoom**

**Meeting called to order by Paul Wolf, President, at 6:35 pm-
partially recorded.**

Present; Casey Jones, Janet Vito, Lawrence Vito, Maria Tisby, Gary Dickson, Patricia Irving, Michelle Allen-Gregory, Joe Kissel, VMFichera, Sonia Dusza, Richard Bertrand, John Fisher, Mary Lou Cebula, Mike Franklin, “Brian” (off screen)no speaking when asked to identify self, Paul Wolf, Alberta Roman(recorder)

Meeting Minutes; The meeting minutes from October 14, 2021 submitted by Alberta Roman were unanimously approved on a motion made by Mary Lou Cebula and seconded by Maria Tisby.

Treasurer Report; Janet Vito provided a written report showing \$3, 423.12 as of October 31, 2021 with 61 members from 21 counties across NYS. Motion made by Alberta Roman and seconded by Larry Vito to accept treasurer report.

Albany Legislation; A1228/S01150 signed into law 11-18-21 requiring agenda be posted 24 hours prior to meeting of government body. Hats off to Legislator Amy Paulin and Senator Kaplan for sponsorship. A 1108A/S04704 was sent to Governor 10-27-21 and signed into law 11-8-21 requiring minutes or video to be posted within 2 weeks of government body meeting. That makes two of our bills passed into law, which is good for our first venture. Hopefully we can build on this.

Next Report on County Board of Elections; Completed draft sent to Common Cause and an election law attorney for comment. An early January release is anticipated.

Buffalo Bills Stadium Transparency; The stadium study is still not released. There is Legislative support for release and public hearing by December. There should be public hearings to comment on the agreement, not before. No remote access is available even though NY State taxpayer funds being

used. Maria Tisby bought up the question if old agreement is available. Gary posted link to Hochul stadium study in chat.

NYS Committee on Open Government; Meeting held two weeks ago with debate about whether comments from public should be taken. Discussion was complicated but it could be simple with 3 minute speakers. Two people spoke and hopefully this practice will continue. Gary Dickson spoke about possibility of best practices in technology for taking public comments.

Open Meeting Law Hearing; This law applies to elected and planning and zoning boards. Maria, Joe, Michelle and Paul spoke at meeting. The temporary law that all meeting can be done remotely expires in January. Current law outdated and needs changes. One possibility is 1 member in person and others remotely at meeting. California and Florida do meetings differently and possibly we can do forum to bring useful information to this issue.

Town of New Haven; At public meeting of Town Board in New Haven, one our members was treated very disrespectfully by a public official in full sight and hearing of others when the request was made for budget documents that were unavailable prior to meeting. Paul sent letter objecting to this treatment. Our member has filed a c/o with Town and County Attorney and stated the issue is not just about her. There was much discussion of similar mistreatment of public by elected officials now and in the past, although seems worse now. Also noted was the fact that there are laws about how public is to treat elected officials and nothing about how elected officials are to treat public. The question exists, "Do local elected officials have had ethics or harassment training?" Maria Tisby bought the point that NY taxpayers should be able to speak in other areas than where they live.

Notice to Niagara County Local Governments; At the beginning of our Coalition work, the City of Lockport, the Town of Lockport and the Town of Lewiston were sent several notices about lack of posting on line meeting documents. Paul sent a letter notifying of law change and how their lack of posting meeting documents was incentive to do this. Hopefully they will now do the right thing. As best as practicable is no longer determined by local government. A judge may have a say in matter.

New Business; Mike Franklin voiced concern with functioning of Committee for Open Government, especially the detrimental effect the retirement of Franklin Stone would have on open government. The current Executive Director seems to be against open government and a hold over from last administration. This person in former job as FOIL appeals officer ruled against Albany Times 10 out of 10 times on foil requests. The hope is that the position will be filled by more qualified person. Maria Tisby expressed agreement with above.

Casey Jones brought up idea of forming committees. Paul stated this to be addressed December meeting. Casey also brought up the issues of publicity and training being important. He was present at County budget and was not well received when asking questions He objected to process for forming budget.

Sonia Dusza brought up issue of North Tonawanda Council deleting secretary budget line of 38,000 dollars unknown to Mayor elect until after election. This action was not in compliance with Open Meeting Law. WGRZ is doing a program this weekend where Paul gave above open meeting law non-compliance opinion. Maria Tisby gave opinion that perhaps new law is indicated about how to treat public. It was suggested members send local reporter contact to Paul so press releases go out wider and that we have volunteers for new committees and goals for next year. All to be discussed at December meeting.

Meeting ended 8:02pm on motion by Mary Lou Cebula and seconded by Maria Tisby which was carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Thursday December 9, 2002 16:30 pm on zoom.