

## **NY Coalition for Open Government 12-9-21 Meeting Minutes**

**Present;** Janet Vito, Lawrence Vito, Maria Tisby, Patricia Irving, Sonia Dusza, Caitlin Curtin, Michelle Allen-Gregory, Axel Ebermann-new member from Westchester, Mike Franklin, Virginia MF, Paul Wolf, Alberta Roman-Recorder

**Meeting called to order on zoom;** at 6:31pm by President Paul Wolf with one more Board Member needed for a quorum. The meeting will continue with postponing the first two agenda items, 11-11-21 meeting notes and Treasurer 's Report, until a quorum is present. Just now noticing # 3 omitted on agenda.

**Next Report on County Board of Election;** Our plan is to wait until Jan.,22 to release to press as earlier release might get little attention in holiday.

**Posting Coalition Meeting Videos Online;** Paul did email search of groups around US re posting of meeting videos. Only 3 got back- Delaware, Virginia, New Jersey stating they do not post online and the issue never came up. Other groups -Common Cause and Re-invent Albany- also do not post meeting videos. Board Members have discussed and chosen for now to continue recording and not to post meeting videos with revisiting of the issue in future. One thought is to send the issue to Open Meetings Law Committee to be formed. Mike stated his opinion that it is hypocritical to ask others to do what we will not do re posting meeting video. Paul stated others agree with you Mike, while others are of the opinion that since we are not a government entity we are not required and should not make video publicly available. Maria stated she has not heard a good reason why we should and asks what is the benefit to our organization(of making meeting video publicly available). Caitlin mentioned the chat is available for quick input.

**Meeting Minutes from 11-11-21;** Sonia present now for quorum. The meeting minutes for 11-11-21 submitted by Alberta Roman are available on pages 3-5 in meeting packet. Motion to accept made by Janet Vito and seconded by Maria Tisby with approval by members. Motion to accept minutes carried.

**Treasurer's Report;** Janet Vito submitted a written report in meeting packet page 6 showing balance of \$3,503.12 as of 11-30-21. We now have a

64...members from 22 counties. Motion to accept made by Alberta Roman and seconded by Sonia Dusza with approval by members. Motion to accept Treasurer's report carried.

**Feedback on Recent Open Meetings Law Forum;** Paul organized a Forum with representatives from California and Florida Open government organizations. 32 people participated with Paul also speaking about NYS law. Joe has posted video on website. Some surprises showed up with CA not requiring meeting minutes nor posting. Michelle spoke about the importance of transcript being available. For \$20.00 per month, the zoom can be upgraded to make transcript available and reimbursement is requested from Coalition. New member Axel spoke about the benefit our report made to his MT. Vernon Homeowner's Association when they pressed their local government for transparency and correction of illegal ways of doing government business.

**2022 Projects-Proposed Calendar;** We started with 12 possibilities which the Board pared down to 6 and members selected 3 of that 6 which are ... Email Policy & Use of Private Email Accounts (County Legislatures) and Political Caucus Meetings(City Councils) and Posting of Meeting Documents & Minutes (Town Boards). This last item is a way to evaluate the compliance with the two new laws we were instrumental in passing last year. There was interest in speaker ID policy and maybe room for inclusion. Pages 8 and 9 have some internal goals and projects like Sunshine week possibility of how other states like Conn. and Mass do enforcement of open meetings law. Also we have never done an annual meeting and we could in April with the possibility of inviting Governor Candidates to get their commitments on record. And we could start another report. Caitlin spoke about developing a questionnaire re areas of our interest to submit to Candidates. This could provide focus for speaking on issues.

**2022 Board Elections Occurring in January-1 Vacancy to fill;** Motion to have the Executive Committee of the Board to accept, review and present to the Board nominations for Board of Directors made by Sonia Dusza and seconded by Lawrence Vito. Motion voted on and accepted. One vacancy -by not seeking reelection-to be filled on Board with all incumbents expressing interest in returning. With expansion to entire NYS, we need members in other Counties than our original Erie/Niagara. Requirements are that you have an

interest/passion for open government, history of attending member meetings, and time to meet on zoom for monthly regular meetings, committee and project participation. Those interested should email President Paul Wolf.

### **Forming Board Committees-Open Meetings Committee.....**

Caucus Meetings Report, Posting of Meeting Documents & Minutes, Annual Meeting Planning

**&Freedom of Information Committee.....** Email Policy Report, Sunshine Week Event Planning, Oversee Development of New Website

The plan is to keep to Thurs 6:30 pm meeting nights 2<sup>nd</sup>(general), 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays(other two committees) for approximately one hour each.

Interestingly, of the approximately 86 inquiries logged by Paul for the Coalition, half each were for open meeting law and freedom of information law. Motion to form 2 committees was made by Maria Tisby and seconded by Alberta Roman. Voted on and accepted. The tool used to survey membership re preferences of Committee service, Paul will send out by email.

**New Business;** Maria spoke about meetings re stadium meeting for public where about approx. 200 people attended on zoom. Coalition called for public input which initially was denied. Investigative Post sued thru UB Law School about release of stadium study by owners. Caitlin spoke about Columbia County implementing new laws re OML and FOIL beginning with summary provided by Paul. Michelle spoke about difficulty/ inability of rural county citizens access to broadband and implementation re law changes. Axel spoke about use of Coalition press release to pitch to government officials how this was a good way of warehousing information easily available. Caitlin spoke about Columbia County being a collection of tiny towns where local press coverage convinced government officials to go along with hybrid meetings and posting meeting minutes and documents. Sonia asked about lawyers being paid for work in Niagara County, which is unknown at this time.

**Next Meeting;** January 13, 2022 6:30 pm on zoom. Motion made by Janet Vito to adjourn and seconded by Sonia Dusza. Motion voted on and approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:44pm.