

2-9-23 NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT Meeting Minutes

PRESENT; Paul Wolf, President, Ken Guarino, Marylou Kling, Sonia Dusza, Gary Dickson, Andreas Psahos, Axel Ebermann, Maria Tisby, Michelle Allen, Jane Bowman Brady, Caitlin Curtin, Ed Schneider, Annemarie Reeb, Robert Godlewski, Linda Bond-Clark, Manahil Jafri, Suzanne Kelly, Alberta Roman.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER; Board meeting called to order by Paul Wolf @ 6:34 with recording started. Anyone can speak; only Board members make motions.

MEETING MINUTES FROM 1-12-2023; Minutes included in agenda pages 3-5. Motion to approve made by Michelle Allen and seconded by Marylou Kling. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT; There are 86 total paid members from 28 counties with 65 being current with their dues. Report included in agenda pages 6-7 with \$4,616.15 balance as of 1-31-23. Financial summary 1-1-22 to 12-31-22 also included in agenda pg 7 by Treasurer Janet Vito. Motion to approve Treasurer's report made by Sonia Dusza and seconded by Alberta Roman. Motion carried.

MEMBERSHIP DUES; Dues are moved to calendar year 2024 with \$20 annual dues. 2023 dues are due in March as previously. Motion made by Maria Dusza and seconded by Maria Tisby to make dues payable on calendar year. Motion carried.

2023CALENDNDAR; Calendar is included in pages 8-10 for informational purposes.

TUG HILL COMMISSION CONFERENCE; Date is April 6, in Verona NY (near Syracuse). Michelle is interested in attending with registration fee of \$85. Motion made by Maria for Coalition For Open Government (COG) to pay for members wanting to attend and seconded by Axel Ebermann. Motion carried. In the agenda packet pages 11-15 are all the classes and sessions. Some subjects are open meeting laws and video-conferencing.

Our most recently released report was regarding secret caucus meetings held at local level. This exemption makes the Open Meetings Law a sham as issues can be decided behind closed doors in advance of public meeting. COG is also working on report regarding live streaming of meetings. The purpose is to determine how many local governments are doing live streaming and to assist others in doing so. During SUNSHINE WEEK in March 12-18 we will hold a FORUM

on these issues as well. We strongly support live streaming as during Covid many more people attended meeting on zoom. Both can be done. We want to partner with local governments to help them do this.

Gov Hochul signed a new law sponsored by Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly member Michelle Solanges (S8419-B/A9622-C) requiring Community Advisory Committees formed for Empire State Development projects to meet in public and provide public notice of meetings, and publish all meeting materials on website. This legislation opens the door to expanding this to local advisory committees which are not subject to Open Meetings Law.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW COMMITTEE; Chair Maria Tisby report an Attorney General mediation law was drafted by Paul and sent to AG staff, with no response yet. Mandatory Attorney fees legislation was also drafted by Paul and sent to Senator Skoufis and Assemblymember Steck. No response received as yet. The Committee reviewed legislation by Senator Skoufis(S8926), which makes many amendments to the OML and FOIL. After reviewing the pros and cons(on page17), the committee passed a motion recommending that the Board not support this legislation. Discussion followed with Marylou Kling making a motion to not support this proposed legislation and seconded by Axel Ebermann. Motion carried.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/EDUCATION GROUP MINUTES; Co Chair Michelle Allen with Axel Ebermann reports a Capital Region zoom training session occurred on 1/26 with 20 people attending which brought in 3 new members and additional interest in forming a local chapter to address issues in the Capital Region. Our goal is to repeat this statewide, incrementally and slowly. OUR ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD BY ZOOM ON MAY 17 AT 7 PM FEATURING MARK MAHONEY EDITOR OF DAILY GAZETTE in Schenectady who is a long time champion for open government. In continuing to research the idea of fundraising to litigate open government matters, crowdjustice.com was mentioned as resource.

NEW BUSINESS; Ken Guarino and Michelle Allen both mentioned a problem experience with their local government complying with the Open Meetings Law. Annmarie mentioned lack of posting information re 501c3 for COGNY and it is on our website. Caitlin Curtin offered to assist with fundraising if someone reaches out via email.

ADJORN MEETING; Many thanks to new attendees from Cornel and Albany area for their interest and for participating in our meeting/mission of open government. Paul will send out emails re our next meetings below. Motion to adjourn made at 7:50 pm by Michelle Allen and second by Marylou Kling. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETINGS; COALITION BOARD MEETING MARCH 9TH 6:30 PM ON ZOOM

OPEN MEETINGS LAW COMMITTEE - FEBRUARY 16 AT 4:PM

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW COMMITTEE - FEBRUARY 23 AT 1 PM

PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION GROUP – MARCH 2ND 3 PM