

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government March 7, 2019

Meeting called to order at 6:36 p.m. by Paul Wolf. Present: Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Nancy Correa, Steve Lyle, Karen Lyle, Joseph Kissel, Mike Kless, Ed McKee, Sonia Dusza, Tom Frank, Jonathen Manes, Paulette Glasgow, Jeffrey Zepowitz.

Meeting Minutes: Mike Kless made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 14, 2019 meeting, seconded by Jonathen Manes. Minutes unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report: Janet Vito reported our account balance as \$934.17. Ed McKee made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report seconded by Jonathen Manes. Treasurer's Report unanimously approved.

FOIL Log Report: We are still waiting to hear back from the National Freedom of Information Coalition regarding our submission. The top three selected papers win a financial award.

Report Regarding Colleges & Universities: The report is finished a draft copy was emailed to Board members for their review. None of the schools reviewed received a passing score. The report will be released at a press conference being held at UB on March 11th as part of Sunshine Week.

Best Practices Sunshine Week Event: Five hundred emails were sent to government officials in Erie and Niagara County. 90% ignored and did not respond in any way. The town of Lancaster passed a resolution committing to our best practices. Debbi Bucki in Amherst introduced a resolution with the disclosure form item deleted but she has personally posted her disclosure forms online. Joe Golombek introduced a resolution in the Buffalo Common Council, where they changed the language to state that disclosure forms can be voluntarily posted online. Grand Island passed a resolution, which Paul Wolf has not seen yet. West Seneca and Niagara Falls may be passing resolutions next week.

We will hold a press conference on March 14th or 15th at Williamsville Village Hall to recognize the elected officials willing to support our best practices.

Erie County Legislature/Water Authority: The Coalition issued a press release calling on the Erie County Legislature to delay filling an appointment to the Water Authority Board until an effort was made to get more than two applicants. Paul Wolf emailed the Chair of the Legislature's Committee requesting the opportunity to speak at the Committee meeting. The Committee Chair John Brusco never responded to Paul's email. At the meeting Paul asked Mr. Brusco if he could speak and Mr. Brusco's response was "no". This is a good opportunity to highlight how the Erie County Legislature does not let the public speak at their meetings and that the Open Meetings Law does not mandate public participation at public meetings.

Niagara County Financial Disclosure Forms: Joe Kissel attended and recorded a committee meeting of the Legislature where disclosure forms were discussed. The Committee Chair publicly stated that the Legislature will make their forms subject to foil. They recently met with Robert Freeman regarding this issue. It appears that progress is being made on this issue.

School District Report: Our next report to be done is regarding school districts. As school board elections are in May, we need to get this report out in April. Paul will contact Board members about completing rating sheets.

New Business: Paul has submitted a column to the Buffalo News for Sunshine week regarding the need to amend the Open Meetings Law. Others encouraged sending a similar article to the NY times and Albany Newspaper.

The most recently held UB Council meeting was discussed, where it appears that the Council improperly moved to go into executive session due to a disruption at the meeting. Mike Kless made a motion to send a letter to the UB Council regarding our concerns, motion seconded by Sonia Dusza and unanimously approved.

The recent Community Action Organization meeting held in Buffalo was discussed. At the meeting armed guards prevented the news media and the public from entering the meeting. Mike Kless made a motion that we send a letter expressing our concern regarding this meeting, seconded by Joseph Kissel and unanimously approved.

Members from Lewiston expressed concerns regarding the posting of meeting agendas and documents by the Lewiston Town Board. Paul Wolf will take a look at the Lewiston website and will contact reporter Benjamin Joe regarding this issue.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm., on a motion by Mike Kless, seconded by Ed McKee. Next meeting will be April 4, 2019, 6:30 pm at the Williamsville Library.