

New York Coalition for Open Government Meeting Minutes May 13, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom called to order at 6:34 p.m. Present: Paul Wolf, Maria Tisby, Alberta Roman, Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Sonia Dusza, Joseph Kissell, Susan Kelly, Stephen Lyle, Gary Dickson, Brad Racino, Tom Speaker, Tina Carney, Jerry Fritz.

Brad Racino as a new member spoke about his work as an investigative journalist across the country. He has recently relocated to Syracuse and is very interested in becoming involved with our efforts.

Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes from April 15, 2021, were approved on a motion made by Maria Tisby and seconded by Larry Vito.

Treasurer's Report: Janet Vito provided a written report showing our account balance as of May 6, 2021 being \$2,129.92. We now have 39 paid members. Paul pointed out that we now have paid members from 13 counties. Joe Kissel made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report seconded by Sonia Dusza, motion approved.

Assemblymember Paulin Bills

A1108/S04704 – requires posting meeting minutes/transcripts, within two weeks of a meeting

A.1228/S04704 - requires meeting documents to be posted online at least 24 hours prior to the public body meeting.

Both bills passed the Assembly on May 4th. We sent out a memo opposing A1108 as we do not support how this bill has been amended. The bill has been amended to state that meeting minutes do not have to be kept and that in lieu of posting minutes a recording of a meeting can be posted.

The legislative session is scheduled to end June 10th. Hopefully, the amendment made to A1108 can be fixed. Hopefully A1228/S04704 will be passed by the Senate.

Planning Board Report: Our next project is to review Planning Boards across New York State. The report has been completed and will be released via a Zoom press conference to be scheduled next week.

Next Report on Counties: Our next report is to review counties across NY State. Paul suggested that we may want to focus on Board of Elections, which each county has.

Tom Speaker, Reinvent Albany: Tom spoke about the Database of Deals legislation that Reinvent Albany and others have been pushing for several years. NY State spends billions of dollars per year on economic development projects that are not tracked or reported in any transparent way.

Gov. Cuomo after years of advocacy agreed to doing a database to provide information to the public but only if the requirement to do so was not codified into law. Empire State Development

agreed to release a database, which was continually delayed until recently. A few weeks ago the long awaited database was released. While it is a start, what has been released is far short from what is desired and only a small amount of economic development grant information has been released.

Assembly Member Robin Schmminger introduced the database of deals legislation but he has since retired and no other member has step forward to sponsor it. There is a sponsor in the Senate. Several other states such as Texas and Florida have passed similar legislation.

Oishei Foundation Grant Request for New Website: Paul submitted a grant request to the O'Shei Foundation in Buffalo for \$2,700 for purposes of creating a new website. Unfortunately, our request was denied. Another grant request has been submitted to the Knight Foundation. Paul also will solicit local attorneys for donations.

New Business:

Tina Carney spoke about her involvement with advocating for her child's education and her experience attending school board meetings in the Rochester area. Tina suggested that we do some type of training that explains the basics of what happens at a typical local government/school board meeting. That people new to public meetings don't know the rules as far as how meetings are run, when to speak etc.

Jerry Fritz introduced himself as a Buffalo resident interested in our work.

Adjourn: Next meeting will be June 10th at 6:30 pm, via Zoom. Motion to adjourn by Maria Tisby, seconded by Alberta Roman. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.