

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government May 14, 2020

Meeting held via Zoom called to order at 6:35 p.m. Present: Paul Wolf, Sonia Dusza, Maria Tisby, Ed McKee, Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Richard Bertrand, Steve Lyle and Susan Kelly.

Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes from April 9, 2020, were unanimously approved on a motion made by Sonia and seconded by Maria.

Treasurer's Report: Janet Vito provided a written report to Paul Wolf showing our account balance as \$1,164.92. Larry made a motion to accept the report which was seconded by Richard and unanimously approved.

Niagara County Lawsuit: Paul Wolf stated that the Courts are currently closed and as such our lawsuit against Niagara County is on hold until things open back up. The attorney handling the lawsuit will be requesting a written response from Niagara County. As no response has been received yet.

Understanding the Open Meetings Law & the Need For Reform: Due to the COVID-19 crisis our Sunshine Week event for March had to be cancelled. On April 28th we did the event on Zoom. 50 fifty registered and 38 actually attended. There were a lot of questions from the participants which consisted of elected officials, reporters and members of the public.

Report: Local Governments Mute the Public During Remote Meetings: On May 12th we released our first statewide report. We reviewed 21 local governments from across the state. The key finding was that 67% eliminated hearing from the public during their April meetings. This is further proof of the need to amend the Open Meetings Law to mandate that the public be heard during meetings. 13 states have a law mandating that the public be heard at their meetings. A copy of the report was emailed to every state legislator and to most of the elected officials of the governments that were reviewed. The report was covered by Newsday, Watertown Daily Times, Utica Observer, Malone Telegram, Hudson News, Lockport Union Sun.

New Business: Steve Lyle talked about Lewiston doing remote meetings, which has negated the need for him to video record meetings as he has done for some time now. Steve is working on a letter to the editor.

Paul Wolf suggested that our next report focus on smaller local governments as our last report focused on bigger communities.

Adjourn: Ed made motion to adjourn seconded by Maria, meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm

Next meeting will be June 11th, 6:30 pm probably via Zoom