

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government June 7, 2018 meeting

Meeting called to order at 5:33 p.m. by Paul Wolf. Present: Janet Vito, Lawrence Vito, Joe Kissel, Richard Bertrand, Gary Dickson, Ed McKee, Sonia Dusza, Brian Hellner

Meeting Minutes: Ed McKee made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 3, 2018 meeting, seconded by Richard Bertrand. Minutes unanimously approved.

By-laws: A proposed copy of the by-laws prepared by Paul Wolf, was distributed prior to the meeting. Brian Hellner made a motion to approve the by-laws as drafted, seconded by Richard Bertrand, motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ed McKee reported our account balance as \$1,129.57. Larry Vito made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report seconded by Rich Bertrand. Treasurer's Report unanimously approved. A letter was provided to the members from Paul Wolf to the law firm of Lipsitz & Ponterio, thanking them for becoming a corporate sponsor of our organization.

Follow-Up to Our Recent Reports: Paul Wolf spoke to the Lockport Housing Authority Board, the North Tonawanda City Council and the Niagara Falls City Council regarding our recent website report.

The Lockport Housing Authority has recently changed how they do their motions for executive sessions, which is an improvement from the past. Richard Bertrand has been appointed by the Mayor of Lockport to serve on the Lockport Housing Authority Board of Directors.

At the Niagara Falls City Council meeting, Mayor Dyster publicly committed to posting his financial disclosure forms online. The City Council was very receptive to making changes to their website.

The North Tonawanda City Council was receptive to our suggestions regarding their website.

Financial Disclosure Form Report

At a June 5th, press conference our latest report was released. Ed McKee, Janet Vito, Larry Vito, Joe Kissel and Richard Bertrand attended the press conference, which was held at the Partnership for the Public Good office. Channel 4 News showed up but we did not make it on the air. The Buffalo News did an article and editorial as did the Niagara Gazette, Lockport Sun and the Hamburg Sun. WBFO radio aired an interview of Paul Wolf as well.

A copy of the report was emailed to every elected official from the ten local governments we studied, encouraging them to make changes to their disclosure forms.

Website/Logo: Paul handed out some sample logos that he created on a website for feedback. A volunteer is working on getting our website back up.

September Speaker: Susan Lerner, the Executive Director of Common Cause has agreed to be a guest speaker at a September event as has John Kaheny the Executive Director of Reinvent Albany. Tentative date is September 26th, 5:30 pm until 7:00 pm. Richard, Ed and Paul visited the Theodore Roosevelt Museum located on Delaware Ave. in Buffalo, which has a meeting room available for rent. Richard, Ed and Paul thought the room was a good set-up and location for the event. It was agreed to move forward with securing the location for the event.

New Business: Attached to the agenda was a proposed letter drafted by Paul Wolf regarding the Clarence Town Board recently changing their meeting agendas to not provide the public an opportunity to be heard at their meetings any longer. The Clarence Senior Center, also recently eliminated having the public address their Board at meetings. Comments regarding Clarence Senior Center Board meetings can only be sent in writing. Janet Vito wrote a letter to the Buffalo News regarding the Senior Center issue. Janet Vito made a motion to send Paul's letter to the Town Board and Senior Center, the motion was seconded by Sonia Dusza and passed unanimously.

Paul Wolf stated that he planned to speak at the next scheduled Niagara County Legislature meeting, regarding their local law which makes their financial disclosure forms confidential and not viewable by the public. A motion was made by Sonia Dusza to send a letter drafted by Paul Wolf to the Niagara County Legislature regarding their local law, the motion was seconded by Ed McKee and passed unanimously.

An idea was brought up that it would be helpful if we as an organization conducted training sessions to educate the public about their FOIL and Open Meetings Law rights.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm. Next meeting will be July 19th, 2018, 5:30 pm at the Williamsville Library.