

NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT 6-9-22 Meeting Minutes on zoom

Present; Michelle A, Maria Tisby, Sonia Dusza, Ed Schneider, Janet Vito, Lawrence Vito, Casey Jones, Pat Irving, Mike Franklin, Cory Morris, Paul Wolf, Caitlin Curtin, Axel Eberman.

Meeting called to order; Paul Wolf President called meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Meeting Minutes from 5-5-22; Motion to approve minutes made by Larry Vito and seconded by Maria Tisby Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report; Janet Vito reported \$4,323.12 as of 5-31-22, only expense was \$250 dues for the National Freedom of Information Coalition. We have 72 members from 24 counties. Motion to accept this Treasurer's report made by Maria Tisby and seconded by Patricia Irving. Motion carried.

Calendar 2022; Paul reviewed where we are on our calendar of projects. We are behind on getting the use of private email report out but a draft will be sent to FOIL Committee members. We are starting to gather information for our next report regarding private party caucus meetings. July 4th is the anniversary of the federal Freedom of Information Act, Paul will send out an op-ed for newspapers across the state.

Review of Niagara Falls Protest

On May 25th, our organization assisted with a protest outside of Niagara Falls City Hall in regard to the Mayor not allowing the public to speak at special meetings called by the Mayor.

A news report stated 100 people attended, many with signs. A diverse crowd of all ages and races showed up which was great to see. Several of our members attended. The event was covered by channel 2 News and the Niagara Gazette.

Michelle stated the importance of tying this into a statewide concern as there are other places with this same issue.

Casey expressed concern about the organization appearing too political as one of the event organizers was a former City Council candidate. That we have to be careful about being non-partisan.

A good discussion was had about the issues Michelle and Casey raised.

Open Meetings Committee:

Joe Kissel as Committee Chair was not present so Paul Wolf gave report.

- Discussed annual meeting
- Continued discussion on legislative priorities
- Gathering information on next report regarding private caucus meetings held by governmental bodies at the local level

FOIL Committee;

Maria Tisby as Committee Chair spoke about:

- Report regarding use of private emails by county legislators being finished
- The Committee recommended that the Board approve the legislative FOIL reforms drafted by Casey Jones.
- Discussed the need for litigation but important to find the right case

Janet Vito pointed out that a few of the reforms which Casey proposed seem to be missing from the list attached to the meeting agenda. Paul explained that he copied and pasted the FOIL reforms, when attaching them to the meeting agenda and must have cut some out in error. Michelle made a motion to adopt the FOIL reforms with the addition of the missing items, seconded by Janet, motion was unanimously approved.

Public Relations/Education Discussion Group

This group has not meet yet. A question was raised as to whether the name of the group was Public Education, Public Relations or Public/Education. Paul suggested that when the members meet they can figure out what name they want to go by.

Michelle as Chair of the group proposed that the first meeting be held Thursday July 7th at 6:30 pm. Michelle, will send an email out to see if that date works for everyone.

New Business;

Sonia asked about the status of the UB Law School's request to have Niagara County pay our attorney fees for the FOIL lawsuit we filed and won last year. Paul informed everyone that Mike Higgins the attorney who handled the lawsuit for us has left the law school. Paul will find out the status.

Axel pointed out that thanks to the assistance of the Coalition transparency is improving in the City of Mount Vernon.

Next Meetings

OML meeting 6-16-22 4pm.

Foil meeting 6-23-22 1pm

Board Meeting 7-14-22 at 6:30 pm

Meeting ended 7:44 pm on motion to adjourn by Sonia and seconded by Michelle.