

7-9-2024 NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING

PRESENT ON ZOOM: Alberta Roman, Ken Guarino, Annmarie Reeb, Janet Vito, Patricia Irving, Axel Ebermann, Stuart Allen, and Paul Wolf.

NY COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT BOARD MEETING: Called to order on zoom at 6:33 pm by President, Paul Wolf.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES FROM LAST MONTH:

Motion by Axel Ebermann to approve minutes from last month, June 13, 2024; second by Patricia Irving; no questions and none opposed; Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Janet V. provided an update – 61 Total Paid Members. Available funds are \$5,114.86 with no activity in the month of June.

Motion by Alberta Roman to approve the Treasurer's report: Seconded by Axel Ebermann; None opposed; Motion carried.

CALENDAR 2024: This calendar is for information purposes.

EQUAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY UPDATE: Paul W. provided an overview that this organization provides an attorney for two years. They would pay the salary but we would have to cover the fringe benefits. The University at Buffalo Law School was contacted to see if they would partner with us on this application. Paul W. spoke to Heather Abraham, head of the law clinic, they are discussing this but no update just yet about them partnering with us. The deadline to apply is September.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING: Report by Axel E. re Press Award Event on 6-27-2024 – we handed out 8 awards to the press; 1 to a high school student and 1 to a college student. There was a lot of positive feedback and it was fun. They were all appreciative and we got press coverage from five. FOIL 50th Anniversary – events and history of FOIL were discussed. The best approach is that events can be all year instead of just September, including speaking and educational events depend on the number of volunteers. New Member Recruitment – Axel addressed some challenges with a recent OML training renewing the need to set certain guidelines for how we are treated. Axel is creating some common-sense guidelines to be sent to those organizations that we are training. Axel provided some of his suggestions which he will put in writing for a discussion later. Mock Training – Robyn (who did the heavy lifting on the OML presentation), Michelle who presented and others who contributed; they did a great job. Will do other rehearsals during the committee meetings. Stuart Allan met with his local assemblymember to address our legislative agenda. We should do this more when our officials are not in session.

Stuart A. informed that our local elected officials are easy to speak with. He encourages others to explore this possibility.

OPEN MEETING LAW COMMITTEE MEETING: Report by Michelle A. Chair re Open Meetings Law presentation that Robyn Grey created which was great. Legislation Mandating Local Governments have a Website - We need to focus on the mandated website of which Michelle provided an overview of this law.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW COMMITTEE: Report provided by Paul W. re City FOIL Project regarding Public Comment Policies – all responses are in and we will be working on writing up that report. We have also finished the update to the Public Comment report re: 177 Towns that had no public comments. This will be released first. FOIL Training Session – Annmarie R. and Patricia I. have been working on this and will present at the next FOIL Committee meeting as a mock training for feedback.

Annmarie R. informed that they are going to be verifying the City FOIL data and thanked Ken G. for his work on the Amended Public Comment report.

Paul addressed all those who have been pitching in, such as Ken G., Stuart A., Annmarie R., and Patricia I. Explained the increased in emails with questions to the Coalition. Axel has been forwarding the emails and is tracking all the media responses, which we are up to 69 media reports this year.

NEW BUSINESS:

Axel E. brought up our current use of MailChimp, which he has covered the cost on. If we would like to keep this, Axel E. is requesting that the Coalition pays the cost of \$20 which includes a non-profit discount. Paul W. thinks this is great but need to train others as Axel is currently doing the work using Mailchimp. Per Axel E. it is not that hard to master. We use this for zoom meetings and it saves time. Axel E. pays by credit card and maybe the organization should look at getting a credit card. Paul W. explained the benefits of Mailchimp, that our mail gets opened at a rate of 62-64% when the normal is 50%. Axel E. provided other benefits of MailChimp. Janet V. discussed the payment monthly vs. annual issue and asked Axel E. to check this out.

Motion by Michelle A. that the Coalition will pay for the cost of MailChimp and seconded by Annmarie R.; All in favor; None opposed; Motion carried.

Annmarie R. addressed the recent zoom OML training provided by Michelle A. and how the organization trained got a lot out of her presentation and how they were going to address difficult members going forward. Paul provided more details on this person, how it is occurring everywhere and why we need a code of conduct for future trainings.

Patricia I. addressed the change in our membership from 93 to 61 and lack of recruitment. Paul W. suggested how he could address the recruitment.

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Axel E. informed about the evaluation survey he created for the trainings to get feedback that includes a link and QR code. Axel E. explained how this information will help us with getting grants.

Annmarie will provide a letter to Michelle A. regarding her recent OML training to send to the organization. Annmarie also informed that there may be interest in another FOIL training to a larger organization. She will keep the Coalition informed.

Paul W. is starting to think about some legislation ideas. He is asking the members to start thinking about legislation we should pursue. Our bills didn't pass last year so do we want to go with those, add new ones to the mix. Last year we focused more on FOIL because of the groups we worked with. Please send your ideas to Paul W. Janet V. addressed enforcement of the laws.

Annmarie R. and Stuart A. suggested a small project to look into whether the NYS Committee on Open Government are receiving FOIL Appeals as required by FOIL. Paul W. said he is interested in FOIL Appeals received by the NYSCOOG and explained further and this can be discussed later.

Axel E. felt that we may have overloaded the legislation and lost the officials attention span. May be just 4 or 5 (bills) that are bullet proof. Paul thinks this is a good idea.

Next Board meeting on Zoom, August 8, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

ADJOURN 7:18 PM on motion by Annmarie Reeb and seconded by Axel Ebermann;
All in favor; None opposed; Motion carried.

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