

Minutes for Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government September 20, 2018

Meeting called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Paul Wolf. Present: Richard Bertrand, Ed McKee, Sonia Dusza, Jim Tricoli, Karen Lyle, Steve Lyle, Gary Dickson, Brian Hellner, Joseph Kissel

Meeting Minutes: Ed McKee made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 19, 2018 meeting, seconded by Brian Hellner. Minutes unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report: Ed McKee reported our account balance as \$1,113.75. Jim Tricoli made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report seconded by Brian Hellner. Treasurer's Report unanimously approved.

Website/Logo: Paul discussed how we have a new website thanks to Tom Fish, who graciously donated his time to helping us. Mr. Fish forwarded a bill for \$200. Jim Tricoli made a motion to pay the bill, seconded by Richard Bertrand, motion was unanimously approved.

Paul passed around the logo design that got the most votes at our last meeting. Paul will move forward with purchasing the logo at a cost of \$40.

Becoming a 501(c)(3) Organization

Included in the agenda items is an amended certificate of incorporation prepared by Ken Foit and Paul Wolf. This amended certificate contains language that the IRS requires for becoming a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. The document requires the signature of Paul Wolf, Jim Tricoli and Brian Hellner as officers of the corporation. Brian stated that he needed to get approval from his employer as they are very particular about involvement with other organizations. This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Niagara County Legislature Financial Disclosure

Paul Wolf discussed our continuing effort to have the Niagara County Legislature amend their local law which makes their financial disclosure forms confidential and secret from the public. In response to our effort the Niagara County Legislature has formed a committee to address the issue of disclosure forms. The Lockport Sun had a front page article after the Legislature meeting about our effort.

Sweet Home School District FOIL

On July 16th, Paul Wolf forwarded a FOIL request to the Sweet Home School District seeking to obtain a copy of a teacher resignation that was approved by the Board. The resignation generated media coverage due to parents being upset and wanting to find out what happened. Many governmental bodies assume that resignations must be kept confidential which is not true.

The Sweet Home School District did provide the teacher's resignation letter, which is included in the agenda documents.

Executive Sessions Report/FOIL Log Report

Rating sheets have been turned into Paul who is in the process of typing our report. It looks like the results are much improved from last year. Last year we learned that 97% of executive session motions were done incorrectly. This year it looks like that number has improved greatly.

Paul will send out a follow-up email with possible dates for doing a press conference in October.

Paul has sent out requests for FOIL logs for a report to be released in November.

September Speaker Event

The event will be held Wednesday September 26th, 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm at the Theodore Roosevelt Museum, 641 Delaware Ave. in Buffalo. Susan Lerner from Common Cause and John Kaheny from Reinvent Albany have agreed to speak about open government issues at the state level. A meeting agenda for the event was reviewed and discussed. 30 people have pre-registered to attend. Bringing water, coffee, food trays was discussed.

As an addition to the individuals we are recognizing with certificates, Paul suggested that we add Steve Lyle for his work in video-taping and posting online Lewiston Town Board meetings. Steve suggested that the award should go to the Lewiston Alliance and not him personally. Steve also stated the important role Paulette Glasgow played.

New Business:

Joe Kissel raised the issue of government officials communicating by text and how problematic that can be for open government. Paul suggested that maybe our FOIL project could be to FOIL text messages from elected officials, as a way to address and educate people about this issue.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm. Next meeting will be November 1, 2018, 5:30 pm at the Williamsville Library.