

## Buffalo Niagara Coalition



for Open Government, Inc.

*Advocating for timely access to information & meaningful citizen participation*

[www.nyopengov.org](http://www.nyopengov.org)

October 10, 2019

Lockport City School District  
130 Beattie Ave  
Lockport, New York 14094  
Attn: School Board Members

*Via email only*

Re: Utilizing An Open and Transparent Process to Fill a Vacant Board Position

Dear School Board Members:

As an organization devoted to open and transparent government, we strongly support a process whereby individuals interested in being appointed to a vacant Lockport School Board position are interviewed in public and the discussion of whom to appoint occurs in public as well.

According to the New York State Committee on Open Government, court decisions have held that applicants for an elected position should be reviewed in public and not in an executive session.

The first sentence of New York's Open Meetings Law states:

“It is essential to the maintenance of a democratic society that the public business be performed in an open and public manner and that the citizens of this state be fully aware of and able to observe the performance of public officials and attend and listen to the deliberations and decisions that go into the making of public policy.”

There should be nothing secretive about seeking an elected office. Individuals seeking to serve on the Lockport School Board should have no qualms about discussing their interest, qualifications and goals in a public forum. As elected School Board members, you likewise should have no concern about questioning, discussing and voting on interested applicants in public.

In 2017, the Buffalo School Board interviewed in public sixteen applicants interested in a vacant school board seat. In 2019, the Buffalo City Council conducted public interviews for candidates interested in the vacant City Comptroller position.

The bottom line is that filling an elected position should be a process that is done in an open, transparent and public way. Conducting interviews in a closed door executive session which excludes the public is the wrong way to conduct business. As indicated above, public interviews to fill a vacant elected office have occurred locally and the Lockport School Board should follow the same course.

Sincerely,

Paul W. Wolf, Esq.

President

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