

New York Coalition for Open Government
Thursday February 8, 2024, 6:00 PM(early start)
Via Zoom

Email paulwolf2@gmail.com for the meeting link

Public Comments Are Welcome At Any Time During Our Meetings. Don't Be Shy To Ask A Question Or To Make A Point!

AGENDA

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1) Meeting Minutes from January 11, 2024 | PG 3-4 |
| 2) Treasurer's Report – 41 total paid members
Balance as of 1/31/24 \$5,577.81 | 5 |
| 3) Draft calendar for 2024 | 6-8 |
| 4) Buffalo Open Meetings Lawsuit Update | |
| 5) Public Relations/Education Committee | 9-10 |
| A) Committee recommends that the Board review using AI summaries | |
| B) Committee recommends that the Board approve the attached Social Media Comment Policy | |
| C) Albany Lobbying Day March 11/12 | |
| D) Friday Facebook Live | |
| E) Fundraising Work Group held their first meeting | |
| 6) Open Meetings Law Committee | 11 |
| A) Letter to the 177 towns identified in our recent report that do not allow public comments at their meetings was sent out | |
| B) Planning a training session on how to make public comments at regular meetings and public hearings | |

- A) Final FOIL project report regarding state agencies close to being completed
- B) Planning on doing a training session on March 28 at 5:30 pm regarding the need for an independent hearing officer system
- C) Committee recommends doing a FOIL project where we request public comment policies from City Councils of which there are 62
- D) The National Freedom of Information Coalition has a grant opportunity where Coalitions can obtain an award for FOIL research work. The Committee Recommends that the Board refer this grant opportunity to the Fundraising Work Group for review

8) New Business

9) Next Meetings

Open Meetings Law Committee February 15, at 6:30 pm

Freedom of Information Law Committee February 22, at 6:30 pm

Coalition Social February 29, 6:30 pm **Who is Hosting this?**

Public Relations March 7, at 6:30 pm

Board Meeting March 14, at 6:30

NY Coalition for Open Government
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 11, 2024, 6:30 PM
Via Zoom

Meeting called to order by the President, Paul Wolf at 6:30 PM

Members present: Paul W., Michelle A., Janet V., Axel E., Maria T., Patricia I., Suzanne K., Sonia D., Robyn G., Timothy P., Ken G., Stuart, Darlene B. and Annmarie R.

Motion by MaryLou to **approve the minutes of December 14, 2023**, seconded by Axel, No questions. All in favor.

Motion carries.

Motion by Michelle to **accept the Treasurer's Report of December 31, 2023**, with a balance of \$4,048.98; the balance of the Memorial Fund for Larry Vito is at \$360.00 as of December 31, 2023. Our grand total is \$4,408.98 and \$360.00 is restricted, seconded by Axel – No questions. All in favor. **Motion carries.**

Draft Calendar for 2024: This is given for informational purposes and future discussion with some filling in at next Board Meeting.

Motion by Michelle to **Expand the Current Board from 13 seats to 14 seats**, seconded by Axel, questions were asked. All in favor. None Opposed. Maria abstained. **Motion carries.**

Motion by MaryLou to vote on all 8 candidates as a slate, seconded by Axel, comments were provided. Roll call vote taken – In Favor – Paul, Axel, Michelle and MaryLou. Opposed – Janet, Maria, Pat, Sonia and Suzanne. **Motion failed.**

Motion by Axel to approve **Michelle Allen** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Paul, comments and questions were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – No; Axel – Yes; Patricia – No; Suzanne – No; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – No; Paul – Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Janet to approve **Sonia Dusza** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by MaryLou, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Michelle to approve **Robyn Gray** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Axel, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Robyn to approve **Ken Guarino** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Axel, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes; Robyn - Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Janet to approve **Patricia Irving** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Maria, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes; Robyn-Yes; Ken-Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Sonia to approve **Annmarie Reeb** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Maria, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes; Robyn – Yes; Ken - Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Annmarie to approve **Maria Tisby** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by MaryLou, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes; Robyn – Yes; Ken – Yes; Annmarie – Yes. **Motion carries.**

Motion by Annmarie to approve **Janet Vito** for a two-year term on the board, seconded by Robyn, comments were made. Roll call vote taken – Michelle – Yes; Sonia – Yes; Axel – Yes; Patricia – Yes; Suzanne – Yes; MaryLou – Yes; Maria – Yes; Janet – Yes; Paul – Yes; Robyn – Yes; Ken – Yes; Annmarie – Yes. **Motion carries.**

Axel requested that board members provide their pictures for the website.

Open Meetings Law Committee, Co-Chair, Robyn, provided an update on the letter to the 177 towns that did not provide public comment. We are putting off training for now on livestreaming. Robyn addressed training for public officials. Others made comments.

Freedom of Information Law Committee, Chair, Maria, provided an update on the FOIL (State Agency) project that will be released in January 2024. February 22nd for training on a hearing officer system. The committee recommends a FOIL project on cities and/or counties. The committee recommends that the board supports the Public Radio Act. Comments were made.

Motion by Annmarie for the board to support the Public Radio Act, seconded by Sonia. All in favor. None Opposed.

Motion carries.

PR/Education Committee, Chair, Axel, spoke on zoom procedures and a future discussion on empowering committees to make some decisions.

Motion by Suzanne to **approve the zoom procedures**, seconded by Robyn, All in Favor. None Opposed. **Motion carries.**

Paul and Axel provided an overview of the City of Buffalo lawsuit and our outreach on this. An explanation was given on the popularity of the outreach. There has been some media attention. February 6, 2024, is the court date at 10 AM. No response from the City of Buffalo yet. Axel addressed the amount of media exposure we are getting. A fundraising group needs to be created with a chair that reports to the PR/Education Committee. Axel explained about a stipend for travel \$40/hotel \$80 for the legislation week.

Motion by Annmarie to have **the board approve a stipend of \$40.00 total for travel / \$80.00 total for hotel for legislative week – receipts required for reimbursement**, seconded by Axel. All in Favor. None Opposed. **Motion carries.**

Axel and Paul informed on Paul doing a Facebook Live starting January 19, 2024 for a half hour, weekly. Close to 700 Facebook followers. This would be nice for other members to do as well.

New Business

Paul suggested that board members send out a letter to their local press about being an expert on local government.

Paul was invited to re-speak at the West Seneca Board meeting on January 29, 2024 at 6 pm on OML.

Annmarie suggested we look at Policies and Procedures. Also, can we put information about our group on our personal Facebook and LinkedIn Pages.

Janet is reviewing the Bylaws and says that Policies/Procedures should be done.

Paul changed the **next board meeting** time to **6 pm on February 8, 2024**.

Mailchimp was addressed by Axel. We have five people signed up for that.

Motion by Maria to adjourn the meeting and seconded by Annmarie. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Next New York Coalition for Open Government Board meeting is **February 8, 2024, at 6:00 pm**, via Zoom.

Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb.

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Zoom Meeting February 8, 2024

NEW YORK COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

Treasurer's Report January 31, 2024

Paid Members = 41 as of 1/31/2024

Bank Balance - as of December 31, 2023		\$4,408.98
Deposits - Bank - Mail-In - \$410.00 (1/19/24 @\$190; 1/26/24 @\$110; 1/29/24 @\$110) (Dues @ \$270 - Donations @ \$140)		410.00
Deposits - Direct Online Deposits - \$1,118.83 (1/11/24 @\$858.83; 1/22/24 @\$170; 1/29/24 @\$90) (Dues @ \$828.83 - Donations @ \$290)		<u>1,118.83</u>
	Total	\$5,937.81
	(Restricted Donations)	-360.00
	<u>NYCOG Available Funds 1/31/2024</u>	<u>\$5,577.81</u>

Larry Vito Memorial Fund (Givebutter)

(2023 Restricted Donations)	\$360.00	<u>360.00</u>
Check Book/Bank Balance 1/31/2024		\$5,937.81

Janet Vito
Treasurer



New York Coalition for Open Government 2024 Goals

Internal Goals

- Increase membership (93 as of 12/10/23)
- Start Sharing Our Stories Through Videos
- Increase Facebook followers (684 as of 12/10/23)
- Increase Twitter followers (421 as of 12/10/23)

Project Goals

- Increase training sessions on OML & FOIL
- FOIL report regarding public comment policies
- Sunshine Week Event Albany Day
- Annual Meeting
- In person Meetings/Events

January

Board Appointments

Membership Renewals

Op-Ed regarding open government resolutions for New Year

January 1, 1977, anniversary of Open Meetings Law

Plan Sunshine Week Event for March (Albany Day)

Contacting State Legislators

February

Plan Sunshine Week Event for March

Draft Op-ed for Sunshine Week

Plan May Annual Meeting

Contacting State Legislators

2/23 Student Press Freedom Day

March

1st Tuesday in March, National Town Meeting Day

Sunshine Week Op-ed

Sunshine Week Event (March 11 to 15 Sunshine Week)

Forum Re Hearing Officer bill 3/28, 5:30 pm

Plan May Annual Meeting
OML Forum

April

Planning for Annual Meeting
Start gathering info for new FOIL report

May

Annual Meeting
OML Forum

June

July

Op-ed regarding anniversary of Freedom of Information Act
Continue gathering info for FOIL report
July 19-20, 1848 Anniversary of Seneca Falls Women's convention

August

Continue gathering info for FOIL report

September

FOIL report press conference
Sept 1, 1974, anniversary of FOIL
Sept 15th, Democracy Day
Sept 17th Constitution Day, 17-23 Constitution Week
Sept. 28th universal access to information day
Plan member in person meeting for November
Live Streaming Meeting Forum

October

October 17th, School Board Recognition Week
Plan Member in person meeting for November

7

November

In person member meeting

December

End of year review, 2025 goals
Plan Board and Officer elections for 2025

New York Coalition For Open Government
Public Relations and Education Group Committee Minutes
Thursday, February 1, 2024 via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm by the Chair: Axel

Members in attendance: Axel, Ken, Robyn, Pat, Janet, Susan S., Michelle, Stuart, Maria and Annmarie.

1. Approval of Minutes January 4, 2023 – Motion by Michelle, seconded by Robyn. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.
2. Discussion on backup for Annmarie for minutes and the AI Summary feature on Zoom. Axel provided an overview on the details of the minutes and AI Summaries. A vigorous discussion ensued regarding AI Summaries.

Motion by Axel to recommend to the board a review of using the AI Summary and seconded by Robyn. All in favor- 7. Janet and Stuart abstain and Maria voted No. **Motion carried.**

3. Axel provided an overview of the Article 78 lawsuit against the City of Buffalo and newspaper interest as well as press exposure. Some people expressed their support on this lawsuit.
4. Albany Lobbying Trip – Axel provided an overview of what we are doing.
5. Paul is currently doing a Facebook Live at Noon on Fridays. Axel provided more information.
6. Coalition Zoom Social is scheduled for February 29, 2024 at 6:30 pm. Patricia Irving agreed to host. The Social will be where everyone can share their expertise that can help other members.
7. The 2024 Outreach and Membership Drive Brainstorm is tabled by the Chair until the next meeting.
8. Annmarie and Axel provided an overview of the first meeting of the Fundraising Group and what they are researching. The main areas are PR/Education/Litigation.
9. Social Media Comment Policy – Axel provided an overview and a draft policy on what is okay and not okay to post, aka a disclaimer. Maria and Ken stated comments.

Motion by Axel to recommend to the board approving the Social Media Comment Policy, seconded by Annmarie. All in favor. None opposed. **Motion carried.**

10. Feedback – Axel informed on how to provide constructive feedback.
11. New Business – Annmarie requested the purchase of more business cards. Annmarie will mail them to members who want them.
Annmarie also informed about the West Seneca town board meeting that Paul spoke at regarding the Coalition, OML, etc. Paul also spoke to residents after the meeting.
Ken addressed putting another QR code for legislation on the business cards. Axel informed that we are doing a packet for Legislators. There was a discussion.
Motion by Maria, seconded by Annmarie to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Our next meeting is Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 6:30 pm, via zoom.

Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb. AI summary was not used.

I think we should add text to the page's ABOUT section. A suggestion:

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This page was created, and is administered, by the New York Coalition for Open Government (NyOpenGov.org) to inform the public of issues related to FOIL requests and the Open Meeting Law. We are a non-partisan group and welcome comments regardless of party affiliation.

Open dialogue is healthy; however we insist that comments and posts are respectful and fall within the purpose of the page.

The Rules section of this page lists the posting parameters. Posts that violate the page rules will be removed. If a third violation occurs, the poster will be banned from making additional posts.

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Here are some rules to consider. I think #1 is a no-brainer. #2 is needed to keep out advertisements. A page local to my town is overloaded with duct-cleaning service adverts. It also helps prevent a random rogue post, i.e. "Go Bills!"

1. BE RESPECTFUL

Rudeness, profanity, "name calling" of any kind and personal attacks are not allowed

2. NO POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP

Keep comments and posts non-partisan

3. NO ADVERTISING OR SPAM

This page is NOT for the purpose of advertisements or random postings.

Note, the page can be set up so that anyone new to the page will be presented with the rules as "group questions" to be agreed to. If a posting is removed the admin can notify the poster of the infraction that was violated.

NY Coalition for Open Government
Open Meeting Law Committee
January 18, 2024, at 6:30 pm, via Zoom

Meeting called to order by the Co-Chair, Robyn at 6:35 pm

Members present: Robyn, Axel, Janet, Maria, Pat, Susan, Caitlin, Stuart and Annmarie.

Motion by Annmarie to approve the minutes of October 19, 2023, seconded by Robyn – No questions. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

Motion by Annmarie to approve the minutes of December 21, 2023, seconded by Axel – No questions. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

1. Need volunteer for backup to Annmarie on meeting minutes. Caitlin offered to backup as needed.
2. Letter regarding public comment at town board meetings – Robyn gave an update on the completed letter and emails for 177 towns. This will be going on soon.
3. Robyn provided a brief overview on our City of Buffalo lawsuit.
4. What other type of Open Meeting Law Forums Can We Plan? Robyn gave an overview and a discussion occurred.
5. Feedback – Robyn explained the importance of constructive feedback and encouraged members to provide it.
6. New Business – None

Motion by Annmarie to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 pm and seconded by Maria. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Next OML meeting is February 15, 2024, at 6:30 pm, via Zoom.

Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb. AI Summary was not used.

New York Coalition for Open Government
Freedom of Information Law Committee Meeting - Minutes

Thursday January 25, 2023, 6:30 PM, via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by the Chair, Maria Tisby, at 6:37 pm.

ATTENDED BY: Maria T., Suzanne K., Michelle A., Michael F., Sonia D., Susan S., Tim P., Christine C., Jacqueline B., Axel E., Janet V. and Darlene B.

Motion by Michael to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2023 meeting and Seconded by Axel. All in favor. None opposed, Motion carried.

1. Agency FOIL Report Project will be released soon. Paul and Annmarie working on it. Michelle provide an overview of this project. Additional information was provided.
2. Independent Hearing Officer System Forum on 3/28/24 (NEW DATE) at 5:30 pm (via zoom) – Maria provided an overview of what will occur and that Paul W., Michael F. and Assembly member Rosenthal will be part of this forum. Michael informed on his background and provided more detailed information on the upcoming forum.
3. Ideas for a 2024 FOIL Project – Maria provided an overview of a FOIL Project for Cities or Counties and asked for input. Several people discussed this.

Motion by Michelle to recommend that the FOIL project be on the 62 counties, seconded by Axel, a discussion and questions took place. Michelle-Yes, Axel-No, Maria-No, Sonia-No, Darlene-No, Janet-No, Susan S.-No, Michael-Abstained. **Motion failed.**

Motion by Darlene to recommend that the FOIL project be on the 62 cities, seconded by Janet. All in Favor via roll call. Mike-abstain. **Motion carried.**

Mike suggested a project where we FOIL the judiciary.

4. Grant Opportunity – NFOIC – Maria and Michelle provided an overview of submitting a proposal.

Motion by Maria that we recommend to the board that we submit a proposal. **Motion failed** because there was not a second.

Motion by Axel that we refer this grant to the fundraising group for review, seconded by Michael. All in Favor by roll call. **Motion carried.**

New Business – Mike provided an overview of a FOIL in the Town of New Haven. Maria informed about constructive feedback.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:14 pm was made by Axel and Seconded by Sonia. All were in favor, none opposed, **Motion carried.**

Next meeting on February 22, 2024 at 6:30 pm, via zoom.

Minutes prepared by Annmarie Reeb without AI Summary.