

**Delaware Coalition for Open Government
Virtual Board Meeting by Zoom
Tuesday, April 2, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER: John Kowalko III called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Pre-board reports:

1. Minutes of March 5, 2024
2. Bank Statements of March 31, 2024,
3. Treasurer's Report of March 29, 2024
4. DelCOG Agenda March 5, 31, 2024
5. Inspector General Bill list of organizations that signed on to legislation (SB 21).
6. DelCOG OP-ED Urges Passage of Inspector General Bill This Legislative Session (SB 21)

PRESENT: Letty Diswood, John Flaherty, Al Jackson, John Kowalko III, Sharon Kwiatkowski, Coralie Pryde, Cynthia Smith, Nick Wasileski.

Absent: David Breen, Anita Rush.

DelCOG Members: Connie Merlet, John Kowalko, Sr. Katherine Ward.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. **Introduction:** John Kowalko III welcomed board members, DelCOG members and guests.
2. **Board Meeting Minutes:** The board meeting minutes draft #2 of March 5, 2024, were accepted as drafted.
3. **Treasurer Report:** In the absence of Anita Rush, the board reviewed the reports.
The current balances in the checking and savings accounts:
 WSFS checking account balance as of March 31, 2024, was \$2,793.99.
 WSFS savings account balance as of March 31, 2024, was \$7,791.65.
 Total account balance as of March 31, 2024, was \$10,585.64.
Cynthia Smith was reimbursed \$500 for her scholarship to DANA's Executive Fellowship.

The Treasurer's report was accepted and filed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. **Inspector General Committee:** Nick Waseleski reported on the progress of securing support for their cause from various organizations, and additional responses pending from several others. Connie Merlet and Katherine planned to reach out to potential supporters, including Mayor Vellas. The team currently had thirteen sign-ups, with a goal of fifteen, and Katherine indicated that organizations had agreed to sign a petition and a letter to legislators. Please send names and contact information to Ward of any other organization that can be approached to sign on.

John Flaherty and Nick Wasileski discussed the progress of SB 21, and various bills and sponsorships. John reported that they now have four sponsors out of seven for their bill, which is in

a promising position to move to the Appropriations Committee. Letty mentioned a detailed discussion about the bill on WDEL and highlighted positive interviews with Senator Sturgeon. Sharon Kwiatkowski noted that Rep. Ramon had expressed interest in the Inspector General Bill. Nick revealed that Representative Ramone would be a cosponsor of Laura Sturgeon's bill, which was previously not on the General Assembly website.

2. **The Inspector General Book Chapter.** Katherine Ward provided an update on the Inspector General book chapter, stating it was near completion and expected to be reviewed by the editor soon.
3. **FOIA Committee:** No additional Information reported.
4. **LLC Committee Updates:** Nick informed the team that the US Justice Department had appealed a ruling against the Corporate Transparency Act, which requires beneficial ownership information from businesses. There was also a discussion about issues surrounding ownership and the potential for transferring property to avoid taxes or maintain secrecy. The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN) is addressing these issues. In addition, the team discussed various organizational updates, including changes in subsidiary LLCs.
5. **Bylaws and Procedures Committee:** The Bylaws and Procedures Committee did not have any updates and is waiting for members to become available.
6. **Website Committee:** Katherine Ward reported that there now is a donation button on the website.
7. **The Sunshine Week Committee:** Cynthia Smith reported that the Sunshine Week Committee has been meeting and is still working to confirm potential speakers. Katherine Ward proposed inviting reporters Esteban Para or **Xerxes?** Wilson to speak at Sunshine Week forum which is planned to be only on Zoom. Sharon Kwiatkowski offered to share an article related to employee rights. The team also discussed moving the event to July. The committee will meet again shortly as it has not confirmed a date. Possibly May 20 or 21. Topics to consider included employee protection, whistleblower protection, and other topics.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. **Lead Free Delaware Update:** No Report about water problems in schools.
2. **Police Radio Encryption:** Alan Henney absent: Katherine confirmed receiving a document from Alan and Walt Palmer regarding the encryption issue and proposed sending it around for review and voting. Technical issues with sharing an article, a whistleblower-related issue, and a problem with criminal convictions and college admissions were discussed. John Flaherty noted that Alan Heansey and John F. will testify at the Legislative bond Bill hearing at JFC.
3. **Organizational Development:** No Update.
4. **SB 13 (151st GA):** John Flaherty discussed SB 13 and three bills aimed at increasing transparency and preventing nepotism in political campaigns and government. HB 291, reporting financial contributions and reporting periods on the Election Departments Website, HB 292 Campaign finance reports, and HB 319 addressing nepotism in state government. All bare supported by bipartisan consensus in the legislature, included requirements for contributors

to disclose their primary employers and job titles, for the Department of Elections to review campaign finance reports, and for the Department of Human Resources, legislature, and judiciary to develop policies to restrict nepotism. After a discussion, **DelCOG formally motioned to support all three bills, which passed unanimously**. The coalition also planned to inform the sponsors of their decision and explore ways to show support for the bills, while anticipating potential opposition and enforcement issues.

5. General Assembly Renovation: No report.

6. League Day in Dover: Letty Diswood thanked the board for cosponsoring this event and Letty shared her experience from a successful event, and the team acknowledged her team's significant work.

NEW BUSINESS (none)

OPEN FORUM

1. Cynthia proposed a visit to Delaware. The group discussed ongoing issues in Delaware, including the need for reforms and the upcoming open forum.
2. Letty Diswood discussed the impact of the Delaware Superior Court's decision to invalidate early voting and permanent absentee voting, particularly its effect on disabled and senior citizens. The group clarified confusion about the court's ruling and its application to primary elections. They agreed on the importance of keeping the public informed about any changes to Delaware's election process.
3. Katherine Ward shared the news of Rita Farrell's Alzheimer's diagnosis, and the group expressed their sympathy and empathy towards Rita and her family. The group also reminisced about Rita's contributions as a journalist and shared personal experiences with Alzheimer's disease.
4. In other matters, the group confirmed the passing of Mickey McKay.

The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. by zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57p.m.

Submitted by Letty Diswood, Secretary with help from AI.