

**Delaware Coalition for Open Government
Virtual Board Meeting by Zoom
Tuesday, May 6, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER: John Kowalko III called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

Pre-board Reports:

1. Minutes of April 2, 2024
2. Bank Statements of April 30, 2024,
3. Treasurer's Report of April 30, 2024
4. DelCOG Agenda May,7 2024
5. DelCOG financial Audit Report 2023
6. Message from President Kowalko regarding the Inspector General Bill SS 1 for SB 21 and next steps.

PRESENT: David Breen, Letty Diswood, John Flaherty, Al Jackson, John Kowalko III, Sharon Kwiatkowski, Coralie Pryde, Anita Rush, Nick Wasileski.

Absent: Cynthia Smith.

DelCOG Members: Manu Chopra, Connie Merlet, John Kowalko, Sr., Warren Rosenkranz, Katherine Ward.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. **Introduction:** President Kowalko welcomed board members, DelCOG members and guests. A special welcome to Warren Rosenkranz.
2. **Board Meeting Minutes:** The board meeting minutes draft #1 of April 2, 2024, were accepted with a few minor edits from K. Ward to be included.
3. **Treasurer Report:** Anita Rush reviewed the reports.
The current balances in the checking and savings accounts:
 WSFS checking account balance as of April 30, 2024, was \$2,793.99.
 WSFS savings account balance as of April 30, 2024, was \$7,792.94.
 Total account balance as of April 30, 2024, was \$10,585.93.

The Treasurer's report was accepted and filed.

The National Freedom of Information Coalition dues payment was added to the agenda.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. **Inspector General Committee:** Nick Waseleski presented an update on the legislative session, highlighting the introduction of SS1 for Senate Bill 21 and subsequent actions taken to promote its passage. A significant development regarding a whistleblower from the Department of Labor who revealed a \$181,000 embezzlement was also discussed. Katherine sought suggestions to improve a letter urging the Senate Finance Committee to release SS1 for SB21 as soon as possible, expressing her hope for the bill's release and passing before the end of June.

Continued discussion focused on the establishment of an independent, nonpartisan oversight agency the Office of the Inspector General – to enhance transparency and accountability in state agencies following a 2023 embezzlement incident at the Delaware Department of Labor. Nick emphasized the importance of transparency in public institutions and expressed concern about the frequency of such incidents in the state. The committee also clarified that their intention was to promote public disclosure of information, not to attack any individuals. The proposal was met with agreement, and there was a consensus on the need to establish an OIG to prevent similar incidents from happening.

The DelCOG board unanimously decided to send a letter to the Senate Finance Committee supporting an OIG. The team discussed the language to be used in the letter and the inclusion of contact information for the Senate Finance Committee. The decision on whether to publish the letter as an Op-ed or a letter to the editor was left open. Kowalko also shared updates on various issues including the Department of Labor problem, the US Treasury's Finsen Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, and the proposed OIG bill.

2. **The Inspector General Book Chapter.** Katherine Ward. No update
3. **FOIA Committee:** No additional information reported.
4. **LLC Committee Updates:** Kowalko reported that the website has been updated and a page has been created to encourage the public to contact members of the Senate Finance Committee regarding the proposed office of the Inspector General bill.
5. **Bylaws and Procedures Committee:** No update.
6. **Website Committee:** A link has been added to the IG bill, news articles and letters to the editor. It was agreed to add a fact sheet on the website and a flyer, with DelCOG committing to provide a sample flyer to Katherine.
7. **The Sunshine Week Committee:** The date for the forum has been moved to June 1 or 2.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. **Police Radio Encryption:** The committee also reviewed the status of police radio encryption policy and planned to revisit the issue in November during the new budget preparation.
2. **Organizational Development:** No update other than suggestion that DelCOG explore a shared platform after the legislative session has ended. Lastly, they discussed the need to restructure account access and passwords,
3. **SB 13 (151st GA):** John Flaherty asked that this item be taken off future agendas.
4. **General Assembly Renovation:** Nothing new to report.
5. **HB 291, HB 292, HB 319:** John Kowalko reviewed each bill that aimed to reform the campaign finance laws in Delaware and DelCOG had previously agreed to support. It was moved and seconded,

to send a letter in support of the bills to the House Administration Committees. The motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Policy on public statements and consistency by DelCOG.

A long discussion centered on a recent letter to the editor by a board member which contradicted the committee's stance on avoiding mention of federal funding. President Kowalko emphasized the importance of consistent messaging and proper authorization for public statements on behalf of the organization. The current policy was clarified, stating that only the President or spokesperson, or authorized committee heads, could make such statements. He also cautioned members to be careful with their communications, advising against mentioning the organization in letters to the editor or legislators without explicitly stating their points are their personal opinions. The Delaware legislature's limited size, having only 62 legislators, was highlighted as a reason for caution to ensure future bills could be passed.

2. NATIONAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COALITION (NFOIC): The annual membership dues payment of \$250 to NFOIC will be due shortly. A motion was made and seconded to pay the \$250 membership dues and was approved unanimously.

OPEN FORUM (none)

The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. by zoom. Change of date due to the whistleblower forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Submitted by Letty Diswood, Secretary with help from AI.

Quick recap

The board members discussed various topics including environmental concerns, technological issues, and membership updates for DelCOG. They deliberated on ensuring transparency and accountability within government agencies and proposed establishing an independent oversight body. Additionally, they planned for upcoming meetings and discussed strategies for effective communication with legislators.

Next steps

- DelCOG will incorporate the information about Michael Brittingham's embezzlement into the next letter to the Senate Finance Committee, ensuring it is handled sensitively and not taken personally by the recipients.
- Katherine will contact the website committee members about setting a date to meet this summer.
- DelCOG will send a letter to the House Administration Committee requesting the removal of language allowing criminal convictions to prevent admission to higher education.
- Anita will write a check for the National Freedom of Information Coalition dues and send a receipt to DelCOG.