North Carolina Open Government Coalition Board Meeting
October 11, 2019 – Brooks Pierce, 150 Fayetteville St., Raleigh, NC

Members in Attendance (in person): Rick Thames (president), Brooks Fuller (director), Pauletta Brown Bracy (treasurer), Rick Gall (immediate past president), Phil Lucey, Kym Hunter, Mark Prak, Monica Hill, Rick Mercier

Members in Attendance (by phone): Ju-Don Marshall, Jessica Gisclair, Hugh Stevens

Members Absent: Beth Grace, Annette Privette-Keller, Angie Newsome, Robyn Tomlin, Jon Buchan

I. Call to Order – Brooks Fuller called the meeting to order at 1:09pm

II. Welcome Ju-Don Marshall and Rick Mercier
   a. The board welcomed two new members, Marshall and Mercier, who introduced themselves to the members in attendance.

III. Words from Elon School of Comm. dean Rochelle Ford
   a. Dean Ford thanked the board for its work and reiterated Elon’s support for the Coalition and its mission.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes
   a. Fuller circulated the previous meeting’s minutes by email the week before the meeting. Mark Prak moved for the approval of the minutes. Kym Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Whistleblower and Conflict of Interest Policies
   a. Fuller reported that board members must sign and return the whistleblower and conflict of interest policies as soon as possible. Fuller reported that the policies would be kept in the Coalition’s digital files and records.

VI. Budget and Dues Update
   a. Fuller delivered a brief budget report including the following pertinent information.
      i. Frank Barrows Fund – the NCOGC received some donations in memory of longtime board member and journalist Frank Barrows. Fuller suggested that the funds could be used to start a Frank Barrows award given at each Sunshine Day for student journalism that makes good use of public records or information gained during public meetings. Fuller reported that the NFOIC gives matching funds for such awards. The board asked Fuller to prepare a draft call for such an award and circulate it prior to next meeting.
      b. Hill asked for the NCOGC to welcome a representative from the Elon financial office who manages the endowment to give an annual report to the board. Fuller will ask Elon to send a representative during the February 2020 meeting to report on the prior year.
      c. Fundraising – Fuller reported that some of the NCOGC’s supporters have used social media (primarily Facebook) to publicize its work and solicit donations around their birthdays. One NCOGC member raised more than $500 this way. Fuller will publicize similar efforts on the NCOGC’s social media accounts and
conduct a letter-writing campaign to founding donors to ask for continued support.

d. Prak moved for the approval of the budget. Thames seconded. The budget was approved unanimously after discussion of the matters set forth in VI(a)-VI(c) above.

VII. Director’s Activity Report

a. Hotline data – Fuller delivered a report (attached) showing the types of issues journalists and citizens are confronting regarding access issues.

b. Public talks and media appearances – Fuller reported that he will attend an NC Scholastic Media Association event at UNC-Asheville in October to speak about media law issues and access. Fuller has been asked to give three guest lectures to students at Elon this semester. He has also appeared or been quoted on behalf of the NCOGC in 10 news stories since February 1, 2019.

c. UNC-CH transparency issues – Fuller reported that Fuller, Stevens and Hunter met with a group of UNC-CH professors to listen to concerns regarding access to documents and meetings at the university.

VIII. Z. Smith Reynolds State-Level Systemic Change Grant

a. Fuller reported that the grant application was declined. He will pursue an invitation to submit a project-specific grant application during the spring cycle. Board members Hunter and Prak suggested contacts that they could make on the NCOGC’s behalf to understand how to produce a more competitive application.

IX. Board Composition update

a. The board discussed which members will roll off of service during the next three years, including Stevens, Buchan, and Prak. Fuller asked board members to think about suitable replacements who would be good additions to the board. The board suggested modifying the NCOGC bylaws to reduce the number of media seats by three, increase the number of government seats by one and increase the number of at-large seats by two to attract a more diverse pool of board members to the NCOGC. Fuller will prepare a motion to that effect to be presented at the December 2019 meeting.

X. NC Open Data Forum Update

a. Fuller reported that participants from UNC-CH, NC Atty. Gen., NC Dept. of IT, and industry are interested in partnering on an Open Data program, but commitments have been difficult to solidify. Thames and other board members suggested canceling the scheduled Nov. 25 forum and building an open data program into Sunshine Day.

XI. Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press local legal initiative

a. Phil Lucey reported that the RCFP is funding a local attorney initiative and hiring an access law attorney in up to five jurisdictions to support the press. North Carolina is a jurisdiction that the RCFP is very interested in. The NCOGC and the NC Press Foundation will submit an application to the RCFP by October 31, 2019. The RCFP will conduct further due diligence and ask for supplementary materials during November and December before making a decision.

XII. Break – 10 minutes

XIII. Sunshine Day 2020
a. Fuller reported that NC A&T has agreed to host Sunshine Day 2020 the week of March 9. The board broke into two groups to discuss possible panels and themes. These included:
   i. Open Data
   ii. Update on police body cam laws
   iii. Training session on fees issues and fee disputes
   iv. Records requests issues surrounding major tragedies and shootings (suggested by Privette-Keller in a separate call)
   v. Covering major national political conventions (RNC 2020)

XIV. Value for Members
a. The board discussed ways to enhance the NCOGC’s value to citizens. The following were discussed:
   i. Producing webinars for members on access issues
   ii. Holding educational session for public servants and meetings/talks with NC City/County Communicators (of which Rick Mercier is a member)
   iii. Working with the State library on records retention
   iv. Reaching out to more members of local government, such as the municipal attorneys and public university systems
   v. Prak suggested sending an annual update to members explaining how their donations and dues were used.

XV. The meeting adjourned at 4:42pm.