

Vocational Instructor

Local 4200A ~ AFT, AFTCT, & AFL-CIO

Volume MMXI Issue 9

"It Pays
To Be Taught
By a Vo-Tech
Teacher"

NOVEMBER 2011

Many Constitutional Changes Proposed

The Constitution and By-Laws Committee met on October 24 to discuss over two dozen proposed changes to the SVFT Constitution. Most of the changes were proposed by the Executive Committee after they reviewed the Constitution this past spring.

Many of the proposed changes are wording clarifications. Sections of the Constitution that referred to "teachers" would now read "members" under the proposals; the change reflects the role of Deans of Students, social workers, and others. Other changes would have the Constitution reflect the actual practice of the organization. For example, the Constitution states that Committee chairpersons select the members of the committee. In practice, members contact the Executive Committee to volunteer for committees, those committees are approved by the Executive Council, and when the committees meet the members select the chairperson. The proposal to the Constitution and By-laws would have the Constitution reflect that practice. Other changes acknowledged the technological advances since the Constitution was written. These proposals would formalize the use of emails and the website rather than home mailings to disseminate information.

There are substantive changes as well. Joe Scarduzio, building rep from the Sikorsky satellite, proposed a reduction in dues from 0.9% to 0.8%. This proposal would save each member over \$66.00. At the Constitution and By-Laws meeting, SVFT treasurer Greg Beyer showed the committee that the change would reduce the SVFT income by about \$80,000.

He stated that he believed the SVFT could make the adjustments necessary to deal with the change, and the proposal was accepted unanimously by the committee.

Another change was the addition of a Trade Advisory Committee to the list of SVFT committees. The committee would be charged with discussing specific trade issues and making recommendations for how the SVFT should address these issues. This committee would replace the Social and Welfare Committee, which has rarely if ever met.

The committee also accepted a proposal to add the reimbursement policy to the Constitutions and By-laws. Currently, the reimbursement policy is difficult for the member to find, since it is not on the website. Adding it to the Constitution makes it not only more accessible, but it makes the process for changing the policy the same as that of making changes to the other SVFT documents. A proposed change in the reimbursement policy freezing the stipends and eliminating any proposed SVFT officer pensions until the current SEBAC agreement ends in 2022 was unanimously approved. This proposal in effect repeals the increase in officer stipends scheduled for September, 2013 that was approved in the November, 2010 General Membership Meeting.

The proposed changes are present to the Executive Council for recommendation at the Council meeting on November 9th. Action is taken on proposals at the General Membership Meeting. The change in the dues will require the higher quota of 5% of the membership.

Letter to the Editor

Shame on Us!

Any successful organization must honor those who have served.

Effective July 1, 2011, SVFT President Rick Tanasi retired from state service.

This Letter to the Editor is a better-late-than-never attempt to address an oversight on our part; to say, "Thank you" and recognize Rick's service and contributions, with the hope that the SVFT will continue much of what he believed to be important.

For Rick, CT's technical schools were family. He graduated from Prince Tech; his father employed by the system. He spent his career as a carpentry instructor/Department Head at a number of schools and as a union leader; his wife employed by the system.

I met Rick and we began working together when he conducted a successful vote of no confidence at Grasso Tech, resulting in an administrator being removed from the school. School union representative, union secretary, vice president, and finally president; I don't believe any individual in the history of our union was elected to, and served in, more SVFT positions.

Rick made workplace health and safety one of his top priorities, was a leading proponent of green technology, and presented on these topics at national conferences. He believed it was incumbent upon union leadership to develop future leaders, and participated in that effort. He "kept his eye on the ball", recognizing the impact of contract negotiations and SEBAC on each and every one of us. He led without ego, unmotivated by personal gain, with a professionalism that was easy to overlook, and with a question he repeatedly asked to address any question, issue, or crisis, "What will be best for our members?"

I will miss him.

Aaron Silvia
English Instructor
Howell Cheney Technical High School
SVFT President 1995-2007

Safety First, Safety Always, Part II

By: Cory Rogers, Building Rep, Eli Whitney THS

Before you start your next Production job consider these questions: Have you entered an attic, basement or other confined space without air testing or respirators? Are machines in your shop loud enough to present a noise hazard? Are they missing guards or shutoffs? Is your arc flash protection expired? When was the last time your fall protection systems were tested? Did you know all of these seemingly innocuous questions might be violations of Conn-OSHA/ OSHA standards? Have you reported these types of problems to your administrator? If so, chances are nothing was done in the past. As of October 17th, all that has changed.

Recently, at the quarterly Labor Management meeting, SVFT presented system-wide safety violations to the Board. The reply we received was "We have no money" to ensure that our members are safe. SVFT did not accept that answer. Connecticut General Statutes requires that all state employees be covered under Conn-OSHA. As such, we have the right to a safe and healthful workplace free of hazards. No employer, whether federal, state or private, has the right to ask you to do something unsafe without training or protections.

On October 17th, Jan Hochadel, SVFT President, Ed Leavy, SVFT Executive Rep and Cory Rogers, Eli Whitney building rep, took our members' safety issues to Central Office. We prevailed!

By taking a principled stance, SVFT forced Central Office to recognize that many of our teachers are exposed to preventable hazards and lacked training. We got about 95% of what we asked for at the October 10 meeting plus negotiated the restoration of a \$1000 OSHA line item to each school's budget and testing for those that were exposed to environmental or noise hazards.

Further, on October 18, the Department issued bonded equipment funds with the mandate to use up to 10% to get all trade employees Conn-OSHA compliant. President Hochadel has introduced a Constitutional amendment to create a Trade Advisory Committee. Among its purpose is to continue to monitor instructor safety training and the State's compliance.

Safety is integral to our working conditions. It's not an option and it's enforceable by contract. If there are suspected violations, all instructors have the legal right to complain to their administrator or consultant. If that doesn't work alert your building representatives. They will make sure all avenues are taken for you to be safe and healthy.

Solving Problems Before They Start

SVFT building reps are confronted with many challenges, but few are as difficult as dealing with problems between members. Arguments between teachers inevitably lead to a more stressful working environment, staff divisions, and occasionally discipline. To learn how to prevent issues from escalating, twenty-two reps went to a two-day training on how to mediate disagreements before they create real problems.

The trainers stressed to the reps that to be effective mediators, they had to realize they were now in different roles. Instead of advocating for one side, as they do when they serve as building reps, as mediators they must stay impartial and objective. The goal of mediation is to have the parties find consensus on what the problem is, develop a plan to address the problem, and then sign an agreement. The mediators guide the participants through the process, help them identify obstacles, and facilitate positive discussions between the participants.



The mediation training was a collaborative effort between the CTHSS and the SVFT. The program has existed for several years, but the number of trained mediators has become significantly reduced through retirement. The SVFT made the commitment to train more mediators. In addition to discussing the five stages of mediation, participant engaged in role playing activities focusing on the role of the mediator.

The mediation program is facilitated by Deb Paradis at the Department of Education. Anyone who could benefit from mediation should contact the union office. Both participants must be willing to agree to mediation. The program is confidential; participants meet off-site, and the mediators would be from a different school or a different State department. Though most mediations in our system are between teachers, that doesn't have to be the case; mediations can be held between members of different bargaining units. Mediation is a valuable program offered to our members.



Internship Applications Being Accepted

The SVFT is again offering an internship to a college student interested in exploring a career in labor. Applications for the internship are available at our website, svft.org or from your building representative. Completed applications must be submitted to the SVFT office no later than November 15. Children of SVFT members are preferred, but all applications will be considered.

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor must be limited to 200 words or less; Counterpoint essays must be 400 words or less.

You must provide your real name, school where you teach, and a daytime phone number.

All letters are subject to editing. We will not publish unsigned letters, and only one letter is allowed per writer every 30 days.

NOVEMBER 2011

Vocational Instructor is the monthly newsletter of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11/7	11/8 District Wide PD Kaynor School Visit	11/9 SVFT Retiree Lunch 12:30 @ Vinal THS SVFT Council Meeting @ 5:00 pm	11/10 5:00 AFT-CT Executive Committee Meeting Goodwin School Visit	11/11 Veterans Day NO SCHOOL
10/14 Health & Safety Norwich THS Whitney School Visit	10/15 Wilcox School Visit	10/16 CT Tech Committee Meeting 10:00 @ Grasso THS	10/17 VoTech Task Force Meeting 10:00 @ Wilcox THS Vinal School Visit General Membership Meeting 6:30 Wilcox	10/18 Kaynor School Visit
10/21	10/22	10/23 Half-Day Prior to Holiday	10/24 Thanksgiving Day NO SCHOOL	10/25 Vacation Day NO SCHOOL
10/28 TEAM Mentor Training	10/29 TEAM Mentor Training	10/30 TEAM Mentor Training	12/1	12/2 9:00am SVFT Executive Committee Meeting
12/5 Meriden Labor Council Meeting	12/6 Waterbury Labor Council Meeting	12/7 CT State Board of Education Meeting 9:00am @ LOB SVFT Council Meeting @ 5:00 pm	12/8 Labor Management Meeting @ SVFT Office 9:00 am	12/9

Union Certifies Members in First Aid

One of the benefits of our association with AFT (American Federation of Teachers) is the quality professional development they offer our members. October 18-20, AFT provided "train the trainer" professional development in First Aid, CPR, and AED (Automated External Defibrillator). After they completed the program, the participants received a certificate and are able to conduct one-day courses for people in their buildings who are interested in these topics.

Participants gave presentations on specific topics and were involved in a number of hands-on activities. They had to pass a skills test. Everyone who successfully completes the program receives a certification card that is good for two years.

The AFT offers a number of resources to make the training possible. Most of the presenters who run the program are members of other AFT affiliates. In addition, AFT provides money for the substitute coverage for attendees, the book required for the course, and will lend participants equipment such as mannequins and the necessary training materials. Mileage to and from Prince, breakfast, and lunch were supplied by AFT as well.



**SVFT General
Membership Meeting
Thursday,
November 17, 2011
@ Wilcox THS
Oregon Road, Meriden
6:30 PM in the TLH**