

Vocational Instructor

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



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

Volume MMXXI Issue 8

December 2021

The Path Forward

by Paul Angelucci

I know that I do not have to tell you how stressful and unpredictable this school year has been. What I will tell you is that I see you and I hear you and I am doing everything I can to improve your working conditions. In order to better serve you, we need to hear from you. Since March 2020, it has been near impossible for us to visit schools. We are starting that process again. After the holiday break, we will be doing in person meetings at each school. We will also be offering Zoom meetings to listen to your needs and concerns. We hope to see you there!

Negotiations are still taking place. At this point, we can only speak on the process of negotiations, not the particulars. When we are either at an impasse or have a contract to ratify, we will reach out and schedule meetings to inform membership. A ratification is decided by a member vote and arbitration is decided by an arbitrator's ruling when we are at an impasse. Either way, you will hear from me where we stand and why.

Dr. Solek, our new Superintendent, has been on the job for two months now and I can say that, as of now, I am encouraged. I asked for a meeting with Dr. Solek as soon as she was hired. I believe it is important to have an open and honest relationship with her. In our first meeting, I was very candid. I shared that in the 2020-2021 school year, we filed 38 grievances and won 37, the last one being a favor to the superintendent at the time. I don't take pleasure in having to file so many grievances. However, when some administrators use our contract as a suggestion book, we will continue to fight for our members. I asked Dr. Solek if we could schedule monthly meetings to address issues proactively and she agreed. The next meeting included HR representative Rafael Palacio and our Executive Union Rep Bob Riccitelli. This meeting was very productive and, at the end, Dr. Solek suggested that we meet on a weekly basis. I have been involved with the union since 2009 and I can tell you that while the last four superintendents acknowledged the issues we faced, none of them possessed the understanding that it didn't have to be this way. Dr. Solek does, and I am encouraged.

This week, the Commissioner of Education, Charlene Russell Tucker, stated there are over 1000 certified staff vacancies open in Connecticut and her office is committed to speeding up the process to certification. An already failing hiring system coupled with the pandemic has left our teachers stressed and exhausted. I spoke on the record at the November Board Meeting. I explained that the hiring system is broken and must be reviewed and addressed. During our latest meeting with the superintendent, Makenzi Hurtado shared the issues for Department Heads when we have so many substitutes. Department Heads are lesson planning and grading across grade levels and outside of their certification. Dr. Solek was surprised that this was a common practice in our district. She shared that her top priority is getting more teachers hired and quickly. She went on to say, "I don't need any more ancillary support staff or administrators. I need teachers. Teachers are the army that marches our product out the door. And that is the best tech kids in the state!". I did ask Dr. Solek if I could quote her for our newsletter, and she agreed. The superintendent is also showing that hiring teachers is a priority. In the last 11 workdays, I have seen 13 new hire letters and five promotions or transfers. This is a record and sorely needed. We hope to see this trend continue.

I am honored to serve this system that as a teenager gave me so much. If you have any questions or concerns, call or text me. Please leave your name and number and I will return the call. Cell: 203-627-0710

Joining the Team – Makenzi Hurtado

This week marks one month of my being Vice-President. While I miss my students, colleagues, and the everyday bustle of a school building, I appreciate the opportunity to serve all the teachers in our district and the chance to see all the communities that exist within our system. It is amazing seeing the distinct personalities of each building. It has also been helpful to see the similarities that exist throughout our district. We are so isolated in each of our buildings, it is easy to feel like issues only exist for us. This feeling of isolation is not accidental. It is easier for administration if we are isolated. So many schools are working independently to solve the same problems. My goal, while visiting schools and meeting teachers, is to begin connecting members across the district.

Committee meetings are in full swing this year. I have been able to work with members on Grievance & Arbitration, Health & Safety, Minority Teacher, Labor/Management, and Sick Bank. I am impressed by the dedication and honesty that these members bring to each committee. Thank you all for your hard work! This year I will also be working on improving communication between SVFT Officers and its members. We are working on a new Facebook page and looking into other social media platforms. We will also be looking into ways to update our website.

I look forward to meeting and working with as many members as possible in the coming months. Please feel free to reach out to me through email or by cell. mhurtado@svft.org or 860-371-6382. I hope to hear from you!

Know your Rights – Bob Riccitelli

All Union members have the right to union representation in any investigatory meetings. This was a Supreme Court decision in the case of NLRB vs. Weingarten, Inc. of 1975. In our system this includes all Full Time Teachers, Part Time Teachers, Substitutes, Coaches, and Advisors. Typically, our system's administration will advise you to bring a union representative with you to the meeting. However, if you go to any meeting and you believe the questioning is about you, you can stop the meeting and ask for a union representative. You can do this even if you said no at the beginning of the meeting. At that point the administration can stop the interview until a union representative can attend or call off the investigation.

You will have an opportunity to talk with your representative before and/or during the meeting. The administration can ask any questions they want, and the union representative can ask clarifying questions and ask for supporting documentation. Your responses should be as short and honest as possible. DO NOT elaborate. Let the investigator do their job. Do not do it for them. Some documentation is protected by FERPA and will need to have a formal FOIA Request. Everyone should be aware that other than student names, all other names can be released. Remember, if you want representation and it was not offered ahead of time, you have the right to stop the meeting until a union representative is provided.

Nominations/Elections

This school year is an election year for our SVFT officers. Per our constitution, the deadline for members to provide written notice to the Nominations & Elections Committee Chair, Andrew Taddei, is 30 days prior to the May election (April 11, 2022). Notice of intent to run can be sent to Andrew via email at ataddei04@comcast.net. Candidate statements will appear in the April Newsletter.

During the November General Membership meeting, some nominations were made for different positions. The following members were nominated:

President
Paul Angelucci

Vice President
Makenzi Hurtado
John Pascone

Executive Union Rep
Bob Riccitelli

Treasurer
Emily DelPiano

Secretary
Tamara Connors
Dan DelPiano
Jamie Lamitie

Committee Spotlights

SVFT has 10 standing committees and several special committees. These committees are made up of members throughout our union. Members serve on committees for two-year terms. This term is May 2021 – April 2023. Throughout the year we will be spotlighting different committees to give you an idea of what they do, and the commitment needed to serve. Joining a committee is a great way to have your voice heard and make change.

Sick Leave Bank

Sick Leave Bank eligibility is described in our contract. Members in need of days from the Sick Leave Bank submit their application to HR and HR shares the application with SVFT committee members.

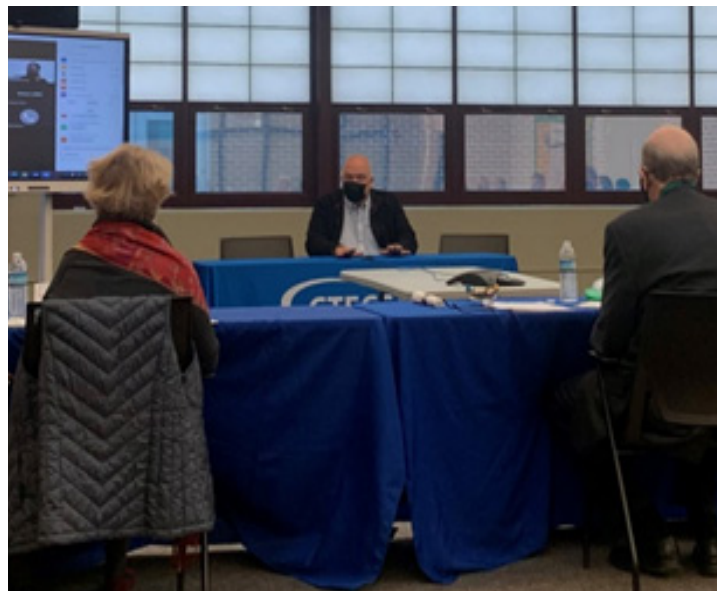
The Sick Leave Bank Committee consists of three members. Two members represent our union, and one member represents HR. The member that represents HR only votes as a tiebreaker. This committee meets as needed and always after 3pm. The committee does not always meet in person. They are able to review applications and discuss via phone or online meetings. Committee members meet to determine if a member meets the requirements.

Nominations & Elections

Nominations & Elections Committee is chaired by Andrew Taddei of Wilcox Tech. As chair, Andy receives all written notification of nominations and intentions to run. Most of the work done by committee members happens around the election of officers. Committee members may be asked to replace a union representative during voting if the representative is running for office. The committee is responsible for receiving all ballot boxes, counting votes, recording votes, and providing election results at the May General Membership Meeting. The results must then be announced within one week to members. The committee is also called upon if there is a runoff election or special election.



Steve Orloski, along with a student, gave a presentation at the November CTECS Board Meeting on the Precision Machine Tool shop at Emmet O'Brien. It was clear that the Board members were impressed by the professionalism, WBL placement, and career goals of the students in Orloski's shop.



SVFT President, Paul Angelucci, gave testimony at the November CTECS Board Meeting on the hiring process. He told the board, "This process is broken." and offered SVFT's support in reviewing the process. While this has always been a problem, it is timely because of the number of retirees we are expecting throughout the district and the separation from the State Department of Education on July 1, 2022.

Labor/Management Minutes

The December Labor/Management was scheduled to take place on December 7, 2021. This meeting was postponed. We are hoping to meet in December and provide the minutes for this meeting in the January Newsletter.

Future Articles

In the next newsletter, we will begin a “School Shout Out” article and a “Member Spotlight” article. Invite us to attend an event or share something from your school that makes you proud.
Please email Makenzi at mhurtado@svft.org if you have something great to share.

What else do you want to see in the Vocational Instructor? Please let us know!
Email Makenzi at mhurtado@svft.org.



**Not Receiving Emails from
SVFT?
Check your junk mail and pro-
motions folder!**

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

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Vice President.....Makenzi Hurtado
Executive Union Rep.....Bob Riccitelli
Treasurer.....Emily Lozinak
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SVFT Mission Statement

The SVFT is an organization of professional educators that promotes excellence through the mutual adherence to policies, documents, and procedures negotiated with the CTEC. We work to guarantee that the contract is followed and positive working conditions are maintained. This organization shall be to provide a safe and positive teaching environment for all by:

1. Maintaining the integrity of the contract, the Vocational Technical High School System, and the solidarity of the union
2. Ensuring all members are protected by the contract and equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to make them successful
3. Protecting the jobs of our members and strengthening our system
4. Providing members opportunities to further their education and receive quality professional development
5. Responding quickly to the emerging changes to the workplace and technological challenges
6. Handling all interactions with fairness and integrity
7. Striving for productive, open communication between the SVFT leadership and our membership
8. Building and improving relationships with our union affiliates and local labor councils