

**TOWN OF GUILFORD
EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE
REVISED MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2010
7:00 P.M. – GUILFORD TOWN HALL**

Present:

Task Force Members: Michael Dowley, Chairman Gary Gilbert, Jim Galvin, Mark Matlosz

Town Officials: Selectman Charles Havrda

Clerk Karen Quercia

Mr. Gilbert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. 7:00 – 7:01 p.m. Approval of minutes of the June 1, 2010 meeting.

Motion: Upon a motion by Mr. Dowley, and seconded by Mr. Galvin, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2010 meeting.

Approve: Dowley, Galvin, Gilbert,

Oppose: None

Abstain: Matlosz

2. 7:01 p.m – 7:30 p.m. Review of Information Received to Date

Mr. Gilbert explained that the purpose of this meeting is to chart the course for the Efficiency Task Force going forward. He asked Mr. Galvin to summarize the information he has gathered to date.

Mr. Galvin stated that he reviewed the insurance policies and loss runs for the Town which had been provided by the Human Resources Director. The Town has a very high Worker's Compensation loss rate compared to other towns in the State. Guilford's Worker's Comp premiums are 42% higher than the average municipality in Connecticut. Reducing the losses could result in an average savings of \$400,000 yearly for the Town. Mr. Galvin stated that working safely is an attainable goal for the Town.

Since Mr. Galvin began his review of the claims, the trend of accidents has come down. The Efficiency Task Force helped to bring the issue of workplace safety to the attention of Town Officials, the HR Director and the Safety Committee, which in turn helped to get employees on board with greater safety awareness. The ETF established that there was a problem and brought it to the attention of the First Selectman, and also recommended that adherence to Safety regulations be tied into performance evaluations. The First Selectman then discussed the issue with the Department Heads to communicate to their employees.

Mr. Galvin went on to explain that he attended a meeting regarding the renewal of the Town's insurance policies and was told that the rate would not be as high as originally anticipated. The rate will increase by 7 ½ % rather than the 15% which was expected. Mr. Matlosz asked how that percentage was arrived at. Mr. Galvin explained that the Town's insurance broker outlined two options and the 7 ½% was a fully insured guaranteed rate, so it was decided this was the best choice. The alternative was a 15% rate increase over last year which would be retroactively rated based upon actual claims. If claims continue at their current level this could wipe out any potential savings versus 2009 worker's compensation premiums.

Mr. Galvin went on to comment that the over a six year period, the Board of Education custodians have the highest Worker's Compensation loss rate of any group of town employees, including Police and Fire. The Town had over \$800,000 worth of comp claims, and factoring in the approximately 30% pay subsidy, this brings the cost to roughly \$1,000,000. These numbers highlight the need to investigate the outsourcing of this group of employees as a priority for cost saving purposes. The insurance representatives explained that the trend of WC claims for BOE custodians is the highest in the State.

Mr. Galvin went on to explain that any reductions in claims would not affect the Towns' experience modification rate until next year. The rate is based on a running three year average, and the current year is not taken into consideration. The goal is to continue to reduce the claims over the next three to five year period to get the rate to where it should be.

Mr. Gilbert stated that having the Safety Committee in place has helped to create a general awareness of working safely. The Golf Course employees are now wearing hard helmets to avoid being struck by golf balls. Mr. Mazza recently noted a trip hazard in a meeting room which was corrected. It is paramount to continue to work with Department Heads to keep safety in the forefront and to hold them accountable within their departments. This can only benefit both the employees and the town.

Mr. Gilbert asked Mr. Dowley for an update on the job descriptions. Mr. Dowley stated that progress has been slow. There are still descriptions for positions which no longer exist, and the organization chart in the job description book was not the one agreed upon in a meeting of the ETF, HR Director, First Selectman and In-House Counsel. There are still redundancies, and some positions in the job description book do not appear anywhere on the org chart.

Mr. Dowley has requested more updates, but continues to get push back from the town. An update of all managerial positions has been requested. The supervisory responsibilities need to be tied into the performance evaluations.

When asked what a good starting point would be, Mr. Dowley responded that you look at what people are doing today, and then you can plan for where you would like the departments to be in the future, and how to get there. There is a sense is that there is no general understanding of what employees of the town do. The ETF cannot make recommendations if they do not understand how things are being done. You cannot move forward and make improvements if you don't know where you are starting from. Redundancies cannot be identified.

Mr Dowley stated that if the job descriptions had been updated, tasks could then be color coded to look for redundancies. For example, every position that was responsible for grass cutting could be color coded green. Then you would have a visual tool to see where there were overlaps in duties, as well as deficiencies.

There is no malicious intent in trying to get the descriptions updated. It is a tool the ETF needs to move forward, and it has been frustrating trying to get the information. Mr. Dowley questioned whether the Town Officials and Department Heads have a true understanding of the value of the job descriptions, and the need to update them.

Mr Matlosz asked what a typical turn around time to update job descriptions would be. Done in a collegial way, whereby the Department Head and employee are provided with the existing descriptions and a template for a new description, the process should take one to two weeks. The department head asks the employee to fill out the template and describe what they do. Often a supervisor will be surprised to learn some of the tasks the employees are performing, as well as to see what tasks are not being done. The descriptions would then be sent back for review, and at the

end of a month should be finalized. The Town could hire analysts perform this task, but it would be costly.

Mr Dowley commented that this exercise is meant to be a positive one, and will give the entire organization a chance to review itself.

The ETF discussed where the roadblocks to getting requested information are and why. If the BOS makes a concerted effort to communicate that updating the descriptions is a priority, it will get done. Employees will react when lead by example from the top. The ETF discussed the lack of a sense of accountability as the Town has grown, in both performance and safety areas. The ETF expressed sympathy for town employees because there is no clear sense of what each employee's responsibilities are. The First Selectman understands the issues and will do what he can. Mr. Gilbert stated that there is a sense that Human Resources is getting push back from the Department Heads. Perhaps a one or two line note from the First Selectman reiterating the safety goals and the importance of updating the job descriptions would be helpful, as well as a push to get the performance evaluation process in place.

3. 7:30 p.m. – 7:50 p.m. Plan Strategy, Objectives, and Targets

Mr. Gilbert requested a more detailed cost analysis from the Finance Director regarding the cost of trash collection vs. the cost of a truck to collect the trash than the analysis which was originally provided. If a hauler were to be hired, a small performance bond to protect the fields may be required. The ETF also discussed investigating a cooperative effort with the BOE regarding trash removal.

The ETF discussed which departments and commissions would be invited to their upcoming meetings, as well as areas of consolidation between the Town and Board of Education. Areas of consolidation would include Facilities Maintenance; both personnel and buildings, and Information Technology. It was proposed that the ETF invite the BOE to their next meeting, and perhaps include representatives from both the Town and BOE Information Technology Departments as well.

Town employees should also be invited to a future meeting. The ETF discussed the format of that meeting to provide the best use of time, as well as to insure that employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas on how to improve efficiencies. Depending on the number of employees interested in sharing their ideas, the ETF discussed allotting 5 – 10 minutes per employee.

Mr. Havrda asked if the ETF will be meeting with the Standing Building Committee to review the various facilities from a maintenance and building use perspective.

Mr. Matlosz recommended that the ETF also investigate areas of revenue generation. He suggested that the ETF meet with the Assessor to find out what system is in place to make sure that all businesses in Town that should be paying taxes are in fact doing so.

4. 7:50 p.m. – 8:16 p.m. New Business

Mr. Galvin cautioned that the ETF does not have much time left before making their final report to the BOS. While he understands that there is some interviewing left to do, he strongly suggested that the ETF come up with an outline of bullet points to focus on. Include in the bullet points would be: the review of outsourcing of lower skilled positions; and establishing an hourly rate for jobs for evaluation purposes, (i.e. whether it is more cost effective to outsource a public works project or to do the work in house.) Other bullets would be the updating of the job descriptions and safety.

It was also suggested that the Town investigate the possibility of having Town employees work a 40 hour work week. The ETF discussed the feasibility of phasing the hours in over several years through attrition, or beginning departmentally. The ETF recognized that this may be a point of negotiation when contracts are renewed.

Mr. Dowley stressed that it is important for all employees to understand the problems the Town is facing, as well as to understand the goals everyone is trying to achieve. Once that happens, we believe everyone will be on board to move forward to meet those goals.

The Efficiency Task Force meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Quercia
Clerk

