

Town of Middlebury  
Safety and Wellness Committee  
Minutes of Meeting  
August 22, 2018

Members Present: Chris English, Bill Kernan, Dustin Hunt, Beth Dow, Dana Hart, Jerry Skira, Eric Steele and Victor Laberge. Jeff Warden was absent.

Also present was VLCT-PACIF Senior Loss Control Consultant Jeff Theis.

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

Discussion with Jeff Theis – Best Practice for Health & Safety Committees

Chris introduced Jeff Theis and said he was there to discuss best practices of safety committees he's worked with around the State. Chris passed out copies of the Charter developed prior to the start of this newer Safety Committee that began in 2013. He said the Charter was signed by all the Department Heads to signify their buy-in to the importance of the Committee and the Safety Program. Chris said a lot of the discussion in the meetings focuses on Public Works, and invited Jeff to discuss ways to engage all Town departments.

Jeff said now that the Committee has been going for 5 years, it's good to take a look at how things are working. He feels it's important for employees to have a mindset that every incident – no matter how trivial it seems – is a big deal, and this includes equipment damage as well as injuries. He also feels it's important to have an overlap of employees and supervisors on the Committee.

He mentioned a couple of successful Safety Committees around the State, such as Stowe, and one of the key factors is the membership needs to have some level of interest, and they don't just show up at the meetings, but actually take back what's discussed and share it and apply it. He said this may mean switching out Committee members from time-to-time.

Jeff said sometimes members can think attendance is secondary to something else they're doing, and it should be an expectation this is the employee's primary duty at that time. He said it's also important to have members of the Police and Fire Departments, who can bring their training and safety lessons to the Committee as well. Chris said that negotiations have begun for the new Police Union contract and he hoped that regular participation by the PD on the Safety Committee will be a subject of further discussion.

Jeff spoke about the importance of reviewing Workers Comp and Property Loss claims and the need to break through the fear the employee will be blamed for something if they report an accident. He said review of the claims will help identify corrective actions that need to be taken. He also suggested the Committee conduct periodic facility audits as a collective effort to identify safety issues. Another suggestion he made was for the Committee to do pre-VOSHA inspection work by watching training videos on various VOSHA topics, then discuss how it applies and take steps to correct areas that need work.

Jeff said our Property Loss/General Liability Claims for 2016, 2017 and 2/3rds of 2018 include 44 claims with 4 still open. He said these were not all employees, this was also people filing for such things as damaged tires from potholes or windshield chips from rocks (which are not covered). For that same time period, there were 29 First Report of Injury claims, and 7 are still open. He said it's important to always report an injury, no matter how small it may be. Chris said employees need to feel safe in reporting injuries and property damage to their supervisors, no matter how they occurred. Jeff said that was true, and that, although this is "no fault" insurance, there are times when disciplinary action may be appropriate if an employee has had all the necessary training and still does not follow proper procedures or neglects to use proper PPE-

Eric said that the highway representative doesn't typically attend the meetings, yet the Highway Department has a lot of claims. He said he has heard comments from the the highway staff that their concerns are often not addressed in these meetings, so they stopped going. There was discussion how that may have been the case in earlier renditions of the Safety Committee, but in recent years their items of concern had been looked into and worked on. Bill suggested that Committee members review the Safety Committee minutes with staff and see if there were issues they felt still weren't being addressed.

#### OSHA Accident/Injury Reporting Requirements

Chris explained that Beth had recently had problems gathering information on total lost-time from work related injuries that were needed to submit a report to OSHA. He said we needed to look into a better way of keeping track of how long an employee is out of work due to an injury that happened on the job. Jeff said this is a common problem throughout the State, but ultimately the burden falls on Department Heads to keep track of the time away from work and days with restricted duty, or days transferred to other work because of injuries. Chris said we'll need to look into a way to do this consistently in each department.

#### Review Incident – Injury in DPW Shop Review Incident – Injury in DPW Shop

Eric described his recent injury in the shop that was no more than a cut that didn't even require a band aid, but quickly escalated into to a severe infection requiring him to be away from work for 5 weeks. This is an example of how something you consider to be nothing can later turn into something more serious, and while you don't need to file a formal report for every cut and bruise, you should at least report it verbally to someone so there is some record of it happening at work.

#### Roundtable Discussion

Beth reported on the Employee Benefits Fair that will be held on Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 to 1:00 p.m. and will include our annual flu shot clinic. More information will be going out later.

Eric mentioned the presentation prior to the Safety Committee meeting on the Service Dog that will soon be a daily presence at Public Works for a staff member. He thought it was a good discussion and he had no major concerns about the dog.

Dana said Tom Hanley had recently gone over emergency scenarios with the Library staff, and how he had brought up the issue of someone coming in to pick up a child and identifying themselves as a guardian, when maybe they aren't. She said they are now thinking about their protocol for that type of situation.

Victor brought up concerns about the weight of the new Water Department trailer and how to determine if the weight is over the capacity of the truck to haul it safely. Eric said the new trailer could be towed safely by the Water Department trucks, with the exception of Heather's truck. He said the towing capacity of each truck is listed on the door of the truck, so if the driver feels the truck isn't heavy enough to tow a trailer, then it's the driver's responsibility to get a heavier truck.

Next meeting – Wednesday, October 17, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Dow