February, 2015. The increase in instances where discipline has been imposed has been achieved as part of a broader VSEA effort on this issue, especially through the continuing engagement of VSEA General Council Tim Belcher with DHR attorneys.It is also true that another contributing factor towards this achievement can be understand as the lengthy discussions between VSEA (AOT) Union Rep and AOT Operations Upper-Management over the course of the early part of 2015.Through these conversations or otherwise, Management has come to see value in creating a more timely process (which impacts morale and productivity).Having one Union Rep interface with one DHR Manager further creates opportunities to come to such understandings as a basis upon which to implement a better functioning process. Also note that Loudermill Letters in AOT Operation have increasingly used the language "we are considering disciplinary action up to and including suspension" as opposed to "termination". This allows VSEA Union Rep and members more ability to seek a resolution guided by fairness as opposed to one propelled by a workers' fear of being terminated.This improvement was achieved through the same means (outlined above) that lead to the decrease of use in General Releases (met one year goal).

Section Summary (Contract Enforcement)

- **AOT Stewards In The Garages: 10 –1 Steward For Every 50 Workers;**
- **AOT Operations Terminations/Forced Resignations: None Since February, 2015;**

Building Rank & File Union Power During Hard Times

The Story of Vermont's Agency of Transportation 2015–2016

David Van Deusen

January 1 2017

The Stewards:

- AOT Stewards are expected to represent workers in their District and areas in Investigations and for Step I Grievances.AOT Stewards have generally done a good job in this essential Union work. These include, but are not limited to, Allen Brown, White River Junction Garage, Scott Lane, Dummerston Garage. As discussed in Section II, we now have 10 AOT Stewards in Operations, accounting for approximately 1 Steward for every 50 workers,

Discipline/General Release:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point –Majority of Disciplinary cases resolved through the use of a General Release (Note: a General Release negates any and all legal and Contractual rights of the worker to take action against the State for any past issue, know or unknown, since "the beginning of time" through to the moment the General Release is signed;

- 1/1/16 Goal: Minor Discipline Imposed (With Right To Grieve And To Take Legal Action Against The State Retained) Becomes Norm (Stipulated Agreements The Exception); Where Stipulations Are Found Appropriate, Limited Release (and Not General Release) Becomes the Norm;

- **Since January 1, 2015, the majority of Disciplinary cases within AOT Operations have been settled without a General Release.Imposed Discipline has occurred 8 times, a Limited Release was used 4 times, and a General Release was used 3 times.No General Release has been used since February, 2015. Additionally, no AOT worker in Operations has been terminated/forced to resign since**

- **AOT Operations (Garages) Membership Rate: 77.48% (Significant Increase);**
- **Total AOT Operations (Garages) New Members: 64;**
- **AOT Operations (Garages) New Hire Recruitment Rate: 64.44%.**

VI. Contract Enforcement/Representation:

A Contract is only as good as the Union's ability to enforce it. The following section looks at some basic metrics concerning Grievance and Disciplinary activity.

Representation by the Numbers:

- From January 1, 2015, through the present, AOT Operations has seen:
- 6 Grievances;
- 30 Investigations;
- 9 Investigations resolved with No Discipline;
- 9 Investigations resolved via Imposed Discipline
- 8 Investigations resolved via a Limited Release;
- 3 Investigations resolved via a General Release;
- 6 Loudermills;
- 2 Terminations/Forced Resignations [Employees off Original Probation];
- 60 Other issues (tracked in the AOT Operations mapping/tracking document, numerous issues dealt with via the above organizing methods as outlines in Section III);

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asking them to join via a provided link to the VSEA online membership application.

AOT Operations (Garage) New Hire Recruitment to Union:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point –These numbers were not previously tracked;
- 1/1/16 Goal: Implement outreach to new Hires especially through member to new worker outreach;
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): 64.44% of new hires in AOT Garages/Operations were signed up as Union members (surpassed rate in rest of VSEA, which is at 33.78% for 2015, by 30.66 percentage points);**
- This was achieved by having a VSEA Admin inform Union Rep of new hires, and Union Rep, in turn, passing these names along to in District AOT Stewards. Stewards (using Steward Time as achieved through Labor Management) are then expected to meet with the new worker to explain the Union, and to present them with a Union Card.At times Union Rep also has informed local Garage Contacts if a new hire has not immediately joined the Union, and thereby asking the Garage Contact to talk with them about joining.

Section Summary (Union Membership)

- **VTrans/AOT Overall Membership Rate: 69.82% (Significant Increase);**
- **Total VTrans/AOT New Members: 105;**
- **VTrans/AOT New Hire Member Recruitment Rate: 51.55%;**

- 1/1/15 Starting Point –N/A
- 1/1/16 Goal: Increase AOT/VTrans Union Membership
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): AOT/VTrans has seen 105 new Union members;**
- See above.

Specific Number of New Union Members in AOT Operations (the Garages):

- 1/1/15 Starting Point –N/A
- 1/1/16 Goal: Increase AOT Operations Union Membership
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): AOT Operations has seen 64 new Union members;**
- See above.

Overall AOT/VTrans New Hire Recruitment to Union:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point –These numbers were not previously tracked;
- 1/1/16 Goal: Implement outreach to new Hires;
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): 51.55% of new hires in AOT/ VTrans in 2015 were signed up as Union members (surpassed rate in rest of VSEA, which is at 33.78% for 2015, by 17.77 percentage points);**
- This was achieved by having a VSEA Admin inform Union Rep of new hires, and Union Rep, in turn, making the simple point of sending an email to these new hires, using a personal tone, extolling the virtues of Union solidarity, explaining recent victories and struggles, and

Building Union Power in AOT Year One: 2015 In Review[1]



AOT-VSEA Union Workers In The Randolph Garage

Provided by David Van Deusen,
Senior Union Representative-VSEA/AOT
January 1, 2016

AOT 2015 Highlights:

[1] This report was first provided to VSEA Union Officers & senior staff in 2016. David Van Deusen is a former Vermont AFL-CIO District Vice President & Member-At-Large and was a co-founder of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective.

- **All 61 Garages are Organized, with a Union Activist deployed in each (71 overall activists in the Garages including Labor Management Delegates, Stewards, Council Members, & official Garage/ Union Contacts);**

- **180 Acts of collective Union activism recorded in the Garages, including participation in the Fight Back Rally (AOT composed 20% of the VSEA members in attendance), the 'Fight Back' Petition (AOT accounted for 19.6% of the signatures), the 'Dignity & Respect' Petition (AOT accounted for 36% of the signatures), the 'Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract' Petition (this petition was signed by 50 Union leaders in the Garages on behalf of their co-workers, and marked the only utilized petition in support of NMU Bargaining for 2015), the AOT March on The Boss (which was conducted by Garage workers, using their Annual Leave, when the State failed to show up to negotiate on AOT issues during Bargaining);**

- **AOT Membership has grown consistently in each quarter, 105 new members overall in VTrans, 64 new members in the Garages. Garages now have 77.48% total Union Membership, surpassing VSEA overall;**

- **Majority of new AOT hires recruited as Union Members;**

- **2016 NMU Contract Gains have been secured via TOK ($25 increase to Boot Reimbursement, $1 increase to Tool Pay), or are likely to be achieved ($100 increase to Snow Pay, Full Pay for those on Workers Comp For Lyme Disease);**

fee payer mailing was also done by VSEA with a specific appeal to AOT/VTrans workers.However, reports indicate that *less* than a nominal number of Union Cards (one) were returned to VSEA as a consequence. Also, as a result of a Labor Management victory, Stewards have begun (June) to meet with new hires in order to educate them on their Union (see both above & below) and to present them with Union Cards. Half way through the year, Garage Contacts were also mailed lists of Fee Payers in their Garages with a corresponding amount of Union Cards.This precipitated in a significant number of fee payers joining the Union [Note: Many Garage Contacts & AOT Union leaders including Justin Irish, Chimney Corners Garage, Peter Boyd, Marlboro Garage, sent back multiple signed Union Cards for area AOT workers.]

Union Membership In AOT Operations:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point -Total AOT Operations Membership approximately 66%;

- 1/1/16 Goal: Increase AOT Operations Union Membership to 75%;

- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): AOT Operations membership stands at 77.48%, a significant increase over 2015. VSEA, overall by comparison, has seen its membership grow by 0.5 percentage points, from 73.2% to 73.7% during this same timeframe (surpassed one year goal);**

- See immediately above.

Specific Number of New Union Members in AOT/ VTrans Overall:

stagnate or (worse) decline. Other contributing factors to membership growth is fostering a good system of communication between Union Reps, Organizers, Union Leaders, etc., as well as making concerted efforts to reach out to non-members and new hires to personally ask them to join their Union. This section looks at the membership trends in AOT over the past year.

VTrans/AOT Overall Union Membership

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: Total AOT/VTrans Membership was approximately (a dismal) 62+%;
- 1/1/16 Goal: Increase AOT/VTrans Union Membership to 70%;
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): Overall AOT/VTrans membership stands at 69.82%, a significant increase over 2015. VSEA, overall by comparison, has seen its membership grow by 0.5 percentage points, from 73.2% to 73.7%[6] during this same timeframe (fell just short of one year goal);**
- Central to growing membership is the clear awareness that the Union is engaged, active, and fighting for the interests of its members as defined by the members (and with participation of the members).As we maintained higher levels of engagement around the Fight Back Campaign, and later around Bargaining, it should not be surprising that our numbers went up.In addition, membership increases have been pursued by ALWAYS including a pitch (with link to membership form) to join the Union with every email sent by the VSEA Union Rep that may reach fee payers.This is especially effective when we are reporting out victories or strong Union efforts to uphold the interests of the workers.A direct

[6] These overall year to year VSEA membership numbers were provided by VSEA Operations Director Ray Stout on 12/16/15.

- **$250 Winter Retention Bonus (to be paid to Garage workers in May 2016) secured (extra to the Contract -achieved through Labor Management Committee);**
- **Union Members now to serve on all Hiring Committees within AOT Operations, even for the hiring of AOT Managers (achieved through Labor Management Committee);**
- **No Terminations in the Garages in over 10 months;**
- **General Releases (as part of a Grievance or Disciplinary resolution) have, in essence, stopped as a common occurrence;**
- **All Garages have seen a visit from their Union Rep/ Union Staff/Union Leader;**

Overview:

On January 1, 2015, upon the request of Agency of Transportation (AOT) Operations Labor Management Chair, Jason Heath, & (former) Vice Chair, Art Aulis, (and with the support of then Union President, Shelley Martin) the Vermont State Employees' Association (VSEA) implemented a pilot project whereby one Union Representative (myself, David Van Deusen) would assume responsibility for all of (Non-Management) Agency of Transportation/VTrans. AOT was afforded this opportunity, in part, because with 1000+ workers (Non-Management & Supervisory Unit), it represents the largest group in VSEA (15.48% of the Union) and often has its own issues specific to its own distinct working conditions. The decision whether to make this pilot project permanent will, presumably, be made by the VSEA Executive Director and/or VSEA Board of Trustees, based on the achievement of clear benchmarks, goals, and the proven ability of AOT to be a more effective aspect of VSEA. It is the contention of

this report that this project is a success, and should be made permeant. It is also the contention of this report that aspects of this project would be well suited for other groupings within VSEA; especially those groupings which share a collective workplace identity (like within AOT), and/or those which are organized as their own Bargaining Unit (like Corrections & State Colleges). It is my intent to allow the case to be made for such reform within the broader VSEA via the objective achievement metrics in relation to the benchmarks set out on January 1, 2015, and, where the data is available, as compared to the overall performance of the VSEA in similar categories over the last year.

The Context:

At the start of this past year, I provided the VSEA Field Services Director a document entitled "AOT Goals and Benchmarks-2015." This document was crafted by myself, in cooperation with AOT Union leaders (Labor Management Delegates & Stewards), and was approved as a guiding document by the Field Services Director. What follows is a fact/numbers based comparison to the 'one year' goals articulated in this document, in relation to what was actually achieved as of January 1, 2016. One will notice that the primary focus of this report is within the AOT subgrouping of Operations. Operations (which includes plow truck drivers, mechanics, etc.) represents the largest subgrouping within AOT (515 workers). Because of this group's size, its visibility, the crucial nature of its focus of labor (keeping the roads open), and because these workers are located (more or less) evenly throughout the State (in 60+ Garage/worksites), it was decided that Operations would receive acute attention by VSEA for the duration of this pilot project. However, where notable activity has been

- Undoubtedly, as the NMU and AOT Specific Bargaining Survey demonstrated, the above more general issues remain as the top priorities for AOT/VTrans workers outside of Operations.

Section Summary (Contract Negotiations)

- **AOT-NMU Bargaining Survey: 34.2% Participation Rate (VTrans Overall, Not Just Operations);**
- **Achieved Thus Far Via TOK In NMU**
- **$25 Increase In Boot Reimbursement ($175 Total);**
- **$1 Increase In Tool Pay ($18 Total);**
- **Likely To Be Achieved**
- **$100 Increase To Snow Pay ($2100 Total);**
- **Full Pay For Those Out On Workers Comp For Lyme Disease.**

V. AOT Union Membership Trajectory:

Growing Union membership is paramount in relation to growing Union power over time. The specific issues that the Union fights for needs to emanate from the real and perceived needs of the workers, and tactics employed to achieve victory on these (or some of these) issues also needs to be of the type which heighten member engagement and spark interest within the ranks. When all of these factors are aligned, and when a sufficient number of victories are attained, it is reasonable to project that the membership rate will steadily grow. When the priorities and tactics are not in line with the workers it is likewise reasonable to project that the membership rate will

what is typically provided to non-AOT Contract Captains by the NMU Bargaining Team[5]; all of this has been sustained and circulated by Garage Contacts/AOT Contract Captains.

Broad AOT Bargaining Priorities for NMU:

- AOT workers (who of course are part of the Non-Management Unit) also have emphasized broader Bargaining priorities that would apply to and affect the entire Unit. These are:
- **Fair COLA;**
- **Maintain regular pay Steps;**
- **Maintain current Benefits;**
- **Establish binding third party Arbitration as Step IV of the Grievance Procedure (presently Step IV goes to the Vermont Labor Relations Board).**
- As negotiations now move out of Mediation and into Fact Finding, it is reasonable to project that the regular pay Steps will be maintained. However, uncertainty, especially given the political climate, still exists concerning what will be achieved (for good or bad) beyond that.
- The top Bargaining priority for DMV Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspectors (who are part of VTrans), and all Group C, is achieving a Condensed Step system in order to increase the likelihood that they can reach their top Pay Grade before the mandatory Retirement at age 55.While this Bargaining goal remains a high priority for the NMU Bargaining Team, the outcome on this point remains uncertain.

[5] Note that AOT Bargaining Team Delegate, Art Aulis, has given his support and encouragement for these updates.

recorded in other aspects of AOT/VTrans (such as within DMV), it is also included in this report.

It needs to also be plainly stated that setting numerical targets concerning such topics as worksite visits, recruitment of Union activists, etc., is in-and-of-itself meaningless; here *meaning only arises through the context of outcomes.* In other words, the number of worksite visits, the number of self-identified 'Union Activists', etc., does not matter if these efforts (and numbers) do not result in (positive) measurable outcomes concerning increases in effective Union activity and other tangible results; bottom line, we must consistently ask ourselves if the efforts we put into a project produce results and in fact contribute to *building a more powerful member lead Union.* The measurables which provide this context, roughly, can be understood as:

- Ability of AOT/VSEA to meet defined activist goals;
- Ability of AOT/VSEA to deliver tangible Contract improvements;
- Improving membership/fee payer numbers;
- Ability of AOT/VSEA to improve Representational outcomes/processes.

Therefore, what follows will first be a short outline of some general points, followed by an objective assessment of numerical targets ('structure building'). After this will be a summary of activist data and a Bargaining update. These more meaningful measurables will provide the context through which the target numbers can be properly understood (as having a positive impact or not). Where activist outcomes and Bargaining goals are viewed favorably, this should reflect positively upon the efforts that were undertaken to provide the structure to achieve these goals. An unfavorable view of these outcomes must call

into question the cost/benefit associated with these meta-tasks. In addition, membership levels also need to play a role in understanding the effectiveness of the total effort, and therefore will be looked at further on in this document. Just as specific Union activity must weigh the likelihood that such actions contribute to a desired victory, such activity must also gage how and if that activity contributes to increasing the number of Union members. If two divergent roads can lead to victory, but one road carries the added benefit of increasing membership, it is down the path that leads to a broader membership that must be traveled. This must be the case insofar as the reader agrees that Union power, in a large part, extends or contracts based on a growing or stagnant membership base. And when a Union has a baseline membership of fewer than 80% (as does VSEA) stagnation is akin to the acceptance of a general weakness at worst or an unfulfilled potential at best. Therefore, understanding the effectiveness of this AOT project, it is crucial to look at the metrics, the outcomes, *and* the membership trends. And finally, Contract gains as supported by activism and membership growth is only as good as a Union's ability to enforce those gains. Hence a section of this work will also address Representational outcomes over the past year. It is towards these topics which I shall now turn.

I. Emerging Culture/Rank and File Leadership:

Immediately preceding this pilot project, VSEA Labor Educator, Tim Lenoch implemented a new and innovative training model; on a quarterly basis all AOT (Operations) Labor Management Delegates and AOT (Operations) Stewards would come together, as a group, for a joint training. This joint training, which has been implemented throughout the year, has allowed for the development of coordinated strategic discussions

- $100 increase to Snow Pay ($2100 a winter);
- Key Job Classes who do not plow (but have related responsibilities) will be secure in receiving Snow Pay;
- Full Pay for AOT workers out on Workers Comp for Lyme disease.
- However, it is now reasonable to also project that we will *not* achieve:
- An automatic 'escalator' effect on Snow Pay, Tool Pay, Boot Reimbursement;
- Full Snow Pay (not half) for those that volunteer for Snow Season Status.
- Furthermore, the State continues to bring forward proposals (to Fact Finding) that would do harm to AOT (and NMU) workers.And of course the outcome to the overall negotiations are still in question. The harmful State proposals include:
- 0% Cola in year 1;
- Dismantling of the OT Article;
- Elimination of most Union Leave Time.
- AOT Bargaining efforts, as described above, have been supported by the Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract Petition, the March on The Boss, by member phone calls being placed to the Administration (in relation to the March on the Boss), by a number of AOT/VTrans workers attending Bargaining on the day dedicated to AOT proposals, by one All-Garage Conference Call, and by the receiving and posting of regular AOT specific Bargaining updates from their Union Rep above and beyond

AOT/VTrans workers through direct emails from VSEA Staff and via a link provided in WIA. By comparison, the general NMU Bargaining Survey had 12% of its total Unit complete their survey.

AOT/NMU Bargaining So Far:

- Based on the results of the AOT specific Bargaining Survey, the NMU Bargaining Team (through AOT Bargaining Delegate Art Aulis) proposed the following when Contract Negotiations opened in early fall:
- **Snow Pay up 4% a year every year henceforth;**
- **Tool Pay up 4% a year every year henceforth;**
- **Boot Reimbursed up 4% a year every year henceforth;**
- **Secure Contract language guaranteeing Snow Pay to job classes that do not plow (but support road clearing activity);**
- **Full (not half) Snow Pay for workers who 'volunteer' to be on Snow Season Status, but who do not otherwise automatically qualify for Snow Pay;**
- **Full Pay for workers out on Workers Comp due to Lyme Disease;**
- As negotiations progressed the following has thus far been achieved via TOK:
- Boot Reimbursement up $25 (to $175 a year);
- Tool Pay up $1 (to $18 a paycheck).
- As negotiations are heading out of Mediation and into Fact Finding, it appears likely that AOT will also achieve:

between all top AOT Union leaders. This ability for rank and file Union leaders to better define, articulate, and compare perceived workplace issues (as well as hear report backs from the Union Rep who regularly visits multiple Garages in different AOT Districts), has allowed this leadership to cooperatively develop (in consultation with their Union Rep and Labor Educator) coordinated responses to identified issues. By fostering such group discussions, and having the results of these discussions followed up upon through various actions, VSEA has provided for more ownership of Union actions by Union members. This coordinated body further requested that the VSEA-AOT Union Rep provide them with detailed monthly reports concerning Grievance/Investigation/Issue/ activity in the Garages by AOT District, as well as updates concerning the carrying out of Union actions agreed upon at these quarterly trainings (and as may become necessary in-between these meetings). This request has been fulfilled. Providing these reports builds accountability between VSEA staff and member/leaders, puts extra sets of eyes on accumulated data (where additional patterns may be deciphered), and creates an environment of transparency & trust. The reports further aid in the collective task of measuring progress every 30 days.

As an additional tool aiding in the building AOT Operations into a more effective aspect of VSEA, a mapping-tracking document is maintained and regularly updated. This document, in excel spreadsheet form, lists every workplace, their membership numbers (over time), Union activists by Garage, Grievance/Investigation/result information by Garage, last Garage visit, activism, etc.. Maintaining a centralized depository for this information saves VSEA staff time when seeking to understand trends, rationalizing/prioritizing worksite visits, reaching out to key Union activists, etc.. This document further allows the VSEA the security of knowing that this information can rapidly be imparted to a new Union Rep, Organizer, etc., as needed in the absence of any one incumbent. The use of such

mapping documents are common in other Unions (although presently are not utilized in other sections of VSEA). This document was initially developed by myself and former VSEA Organizing Director Kristin Warner (with technical support from VSEA Admin Nick Stein and VSEA Operations Director Ray Stout), and was later modified to meet the developing needs of this specific pilot project. The original intent of creating such mapping documents were for use in every VSEA Rep territory. However, this goal has since dissipated within VSEA.

In summation, the joint quarterly trainings have consistently been carried out, and the agreed upon monthly reports consistently have been provided to AOT (Operations) Union leadership (as well as the VSEA President, Vice President, Executive Director, and Director of Field Services). The comprehensive AOT (Operations) mapping/tracking document is also consistently maintained and updated and is used as a tool for VSEA Reps and Organizers.

II. Concerning AOT Union Structure and Outreach

The following section looks at the efforts and structures that were put in place by VSEA in order to achieve a higher level of participation and effectiveness within AOT. In-and-of-itself, these efforts only have meaning in relation to measurable outcomes and overall membership growth. Such measurable outcomes will be reviewed later in this document.

Building AOT Operations Labor Management Committee:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: AOT Operations Labor Management had 5 AOT Districts represented on the Committee (plus Central Garage & Bridge Crew), with a total of 7 La-

order to maximize success at the Bargaining table, and in order to build Union membership and power in the process, it is also advisable that members play a strong role in setting Bargaining priorities, and remain engaged in the Bargaining process as it unfolds. Having a skilled and experienced Lead Negotiator is also key. Here VSEA is fortunate to have Gary Hoadley serve in this role for both the Non-Management Unit (and for Corrections Unit). This section looks at our achievements thus far, this year, concerning AOT Bargaining priorities within the Non-Management Unit. Please refer to Section III, above, to better understand the rank & file activism which has been implemented in order to support these Bargaining priorities.

AOT-NMU Specific Bargaining Survey:

- This survey was included in the annual goals document.The Survey was created at the request (and with the participation) of the AOT Labor Management Delegates and AOT Stewards;
- **This Survey was completed by 34.2% of all AOT/VTrans workers within the Non-Management Unit, and was central to the creation of AOT Specific Bargaining Proposals, such as the proposed added protections against Lyme Disease (further referenced below) which ranked as the top safety concern (ahead of traffic) for Agency workers [Note: The Lyme Disease/Tick question made it on to the survey because of the strong concerns voiced by Garage Contact (and former Labor Management Delegate) Jon Leonard, Lyndon Garage];**
- Survey was initially made available in print form to all AOT workers in Operations.Stacks were sent directly to Garage Contacts (with SAE). Later, an online version was created and repeatedly made available to all

AOT Operations Labor Management Committee Projects/Campaigns

- **AOT Stewards Meet With New Hires: Implemented;**
- **AOT Labor Liaison Seeks Training Feedback From Workers/Meets with Training Center Management: Implemented;**
- **AOT LM Delegates/Stewards Meet With District Management On District Issues As Needed: Implemented;**
- **Local Labor Management Meetings Occur At Garage Level: Not Implemented;**
- **Union Secures Rank & File Seat On AOT Operations Hiring Committees: Achieved;**
- **Garage Retention Challenge Addressed: $250 Retention Bonus Achieved.**

General AOT Operations Activist Stats

- **Activism In Garages: 54 Garages Have Engaged In Union Building Activity;**
- **Total Collective Acts of Union Activism In Garages: 180.**

IV. Bargaining Victories/Goals:

A central element of Union building activity is Bargaining Contract improvements, and defending those Contractual rights as may be challenged by Management at the table. In

not prepped for such questions. Regardless, the State *did not* take any ULP actions.

bor Team members [note that AOT Operations consists of 8 Districts, Central Garage, and Bridge Crew];

- 1/1/16 Goal: Number Of Districts with Labor Management Delegate: 8 (10 Total/One Per District + Central Garage and Bridge Crew);
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): 7 Districts Represented (+ Central Garage), 11 Labor Management Delegates [with 2 alternates serving in the absence of Delegates from District 3 and Bridge Crew and a Chairman who represents the Garages overall] (fell short of annual goal by lacking D1 and Bridge Crew Representation, but surpassed goal for total member participation);**
- Growth in this category was achieved through development of the Garage Contact system (see below) whereby Garage Contacts are asked to nominate LM team members, as well as by staff Garage visits, and through demonstrated success of the existing Labor Management Committee. By tracking Union activity VSEA staff was further able to identify reliable activists in the Districts for recruitment (as was the case with the recent recruitment of a District 1 Delegate). Note: Labor Management Minutes are shared with rank and file directly by VSEA staff via email, and in print via the Garage Contacts-who print them and post them on Union bulletin boards. They are also printed in the Management AOT Operations News Letter, and, upon request of Labor, forwarded directly to Managers.

Building A Robust AOT Steward System:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: AOT Operations Stewards existed in all but one AOT District;

- 1/1/16 Goal: Number Of Districts With At Least One Steward: 8 (Minimum One Per District);
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): 7 Districts have at least 1 Steward, 10 Total AOT Operations Stewards (increased number of Garage Stewards, but D1 remains open);**
- New efforts to recruit new Stewards have been conducted through Garage Contact system, by VSEA staff visits, via a question on an AOT specific Bargaining Survey, and by the VSEA Labor Educator. Tracking activity by Garage, and making positive assumptions regarding relevant Garage Contacts has also allowed VSEA to more rationally recruit potential Stewards (as was the case with the recent targeted recruitment of a new Steward in AOT District 7). AOT Operations now has a healthy ratio of approximately 1 Steward for every 50 workers.

AOT Participation in VSEA Council:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: 3 AOT Operations Members served on VSEA Council (AOT is allotted 10 Council seats);
- 1/1/16 Goal: Number Of AOT Operations Council Members: 10;
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): In AOT Operations all allotted Council Seats have been filled, plus 2 additional Council Seats attained through Chapter elections. 12 AOT Operations workers now serve on Council (surpassed one year goal);**
- Growth in this category was achieved through discussions resulting in volunteers at seasonal meetings of AOT Stewards and Labor Management Delegates,

tasks were carried out by AOT workers, and resulted in three media stories in VT newspapers (two being generally favorable to the Union, one unfavorable).It is also worth further noting that moments prior to the March On The Boss, the VSEA Executive Director (who was not present at the Union Hall) called in order to suggest that the workers consider standing down, in order to allow him an additional opportunity to call the Administration in order to seek to get the State to negotiate that day.This option was presented to the workers; it was unanimously voted down and they (along with VSEA First Vice President Aimee Towne) marched. One week later VSEA and the State did in fact meet to Bargain AOT issues.AOT workers again used Annual Leave to be part of this.The result was a $25 increase in Boot Reimbursement, a $1 increase in Tool Pay, and no extension of Snow Season (as was being proposed by the State). The actions and results were reported back to Garage Contacts by VSEA Union Rep.Garage Contacts then informed workers. Feedback from AOT workers/leaders to the Union Rep on this action was overwhelmingly positive. Note that the Non-Management Unit was under no ground rule restrictions when this act was carried out.[4]

Section Summary (AOT Union Activism)

[4] One aspect of the March On The Boss that proved to be controversial was the fact that the media did not simply find out about the action, but were directly informed about the action by VSEA staff, although without the apparent knowledge of the Executive Director. A media interview with the AOT spokesman gave an appearance that AOT members in NMU had knowledge of demands being pushed by the State upon the Supervisory Unit. The Supervisory Unit, unlike NMU, was operating under ground rules that prohibited public communication about Bargaining proposals without first providing 24 hours' notice. VSEA did not anticipate the media asking questions that, depending on the answer, could contribute to the AOT worker/spokesperson giving the appearance of this knowledge, and hence he was

the meeting. VSEA responded to the State making it clear they were not agreeable to this cancellation and would be in the VSEA conference room at 10am, ready to Bargain.AOT workers were informed of the great likelihood that the State would be a no show, but were also informed that in that event an appropriate action would be carried out.The afternoon previous, VSEA staff (Union Rep and Organizing Department) crafted a contingency action plan which would be presented to AOT workers as needed. On the day in question, 10 AOT workers (from divergent Garages) came to Bargain; the State was a no show.These workers, with the full support of the AOT/NMU Bargaining Team Delegate, Art Aulis, adopted the plan to march on the boss in order to deliver the 'Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract' Petition (which was previously delivered by AOT Stewards to the Secretary of the Agency of Transportation) to the Governor's office as and to the Department of Human Resources, as well as to articulately express their dissatisfaction with the State for disrespecting them by not showing up. These workers elected to empower AOT worker Leavitt Sayer, Williamstown Garage, as their spokesperson. Phase two was to break into two groups (after the march on the boss); one group would flyer downtown State workers in Montpelier concerning the action (flyers were previously crafted by the VSEA Organizing Department), and the other group would head back to the Union Hall to call all the Garage Contacts asking them to inform their co-workers that the VSEA is requesting that workers call the Administration to express their displeasure with the State's failure to Bargain and to demand a fair Contract (this call request was supported by a VSEA-wide email, crafted by VSEA Communications Department, asking all Union members to do the same).All these

and with reliable Garage Contacts. It needs to also be noted that as AOT workers witness and participate in meaningful ways to build their own power and achieve specific victories, it becomes more likely that workers will consider engaging in their Union on broader levels such as with on Council.In a word, engagement breeds engagement, and success breeds success.

Recruiting New AOT Operations Union Activists/Organizing Garages:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: 11 Garages had identified Union activists;
- 1/1/16 Goal: Number Of Worksites/Garages In Operations (Out of 60+) With Identified Union Activists (Council, Stewards, Labor Management, Garage Contacts): 22 (Double 1/1/15 Numbers);
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): *All 61 Garages are now organized*; there are now 52 Garage Contacts, 11 Labor Management Delegates, 10 Stewards, 12 Council members, & 1 member of the NMU Bargaining Team; this makes 71 Union activists in the Garages (as some activists hold multiple positions/roles). These 71 Union activists each understand themselves as also serving as Contract Captains while Bargaining is underway between the VSEA and the State. All told this represents 60 new Union activists over the last year recruited and deployed from within AOT (greatly surpassed/more than tripled one year goal);**
- Four VTrans-NMU Contract Captains, from outside AOT Operations, have also been identified and recruited by VSEA Organizers (3 from DMV, 1 from AOT Program

Development).In total AOT/VTrans has 75 Contract Captains, representing 52.82% of all current VSEA Contract Captains (total of 142);

- Central to growth in this area has been VSEA staff visits to Garages.When a Garage is visited that has no official Union Contact, VSEA staff asks all the assembled workers, together, who should serve in this role.Typically all the workers will nominate one person to serve. This volunteer, before agreeing, is clearly informed that this role will mean they will be responsible for keeping their co-workers informed on issues, will print VSEA-AOT communications and place them on the Union bulletin board, and will be tasked facilitating Union activity in the Garage as needed (i.e. petition signatures, attending a rally, etc.). Potential Garage Contacts are also made known that being nominated or selected to serve their Union and co-workers in this position is an honor. In addition, District AOT Union leaders have greatly aided in identifying and recruiting Garage Contacts. Also note that these Garage Contacts are regularly provided these written updates on unfolding Union issues directly from their Union Rep, which they are expected to print and share with their co-workers (point being—if we recruit new activists it is important to give them something to do or they will inevitable fade way)

Communicating Union Struggles/Imparting Union Values:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: previous, targeted communications, Union updates, etc., was not provided to AOT workers beyond those that go to all VSEA members and fee payers;

- 1/1/16 Goal: While this was not a specific category in the Goals & Benchmarks document, AOT Union leaders

was delayed as the Dignity & Respect Petition remained open (and still does) and it was agreed that having two petitions circulating in the Garages at once was a bad idea.However, it became necessary to launch the AOT petition in late August in order to present the petition prior to the advanced stages of negotiations. But given the tight timeline, it was decided that only the Garage leaders would sign, on behalf of their co-workers, after they gained consensus for the content of the petition from their Garage. All told, 50 Garage leaders representing 42 Garages signed, and the petition was delivered (in early September) to Transportation Secretary Sue Minter and AOT Operations Director Scott Rogers by AOT Stewards Jerry Comstock, Central Garage, & Nick Davis, The Fort.

September 19 AOT March on The Boss:

- Prior to September 19th it was previously agreed to by the State and the NMU Bargaining Team that both parties would sit down in order to seek to negotiate on AOT specific Bargaining proposals. It was also understood that a number of AOT workers (who are not on the NMU Bargaining Team) would use Annual Leave in order to attend these negotiations.Through Labor Management and through the NMU Bargaining Team, it was also made clear that VSEA would welcome the participation of AOT Operations Management at this meeting (which did in fact occur, but not until the following week).It was further agreed to at AOT Operations Labor Management that Upper-Management would communicate down the chain that pending no conflict with operational needs that Union workers seeking to attend these negotiations would not be denied Annual Leave.However, 24 hours before this meeting, the State unilaterally cancelled

workers covered by VSEA CBAs]. AOT's disproportional effort on this aspect of the Fight Back campaign contributed to the overall Fight Back victory whereby no Contracts were opened, and whereby hundreds of threatened job cuts were avoided.

April 11th Fight Back Rally:

- Of the identified VSEA participants in the rally, 20% were from AOT/VTrans, including a significant contingent from the Randolph Garage (including Foreman Jerold Kinney & Garage Contact David Lambert). AOT's disproportional effort on this aspect of the Fight Back campaign contributed to the overall Fight Back victory whereby no Contracts were opened, and whereby hundreds of threatened job cuts were avoided.

Dignity & Respect Petition:

- Of the names entered into the VSEA database (gathered from the petition), 36% of them were listed as from AOT/VTrans (not broken down by division or subgrouping) [Note: although this petition was launched in the summer of 2015, VSEA has yet to utilize it in support of its Bargaining efforts or otherwise. The Executive Director has indicated that it may be used in support of the passage of the Pay Act].

Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract -Petition:

- In the months leading up to NMU Bargaining AOT Union leaders endorsed the tactic of crafting an All-Garage petition in support of their Bargaining priorities (these included increases to Snow Pay, Tool Pay, Boot Reimbursement, and full pay for workers who go out on Workers Comp for Lyme Disease).The launch of this petition

made it clear to their Union Rep that their expectation was that their Rep would keep them intimately informed about unfolding Union issues;

- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): Union Rep (and AOT Union leaders) crafted and provided AOT specific communications on emerging Union issues throughout the year.Such communications were provided to the Garage Contacts, who in turn printed them and posted them in the Garages (met one year goal);**

- Topics for these communications were an April 11 Fight Back Rally report back, a recap of our victory in keeping the Contract closed (and heading off mass layoffs), the workings of the Retirement Incentive, AOT specific Bargaining updates, the need to build 100% Union membership in the Garages, and a recruitment document for the AOT Rapid Response Team –to be discussed in Section VII. On two occasions the Union Rep also worked with rank & file AOT Union leaders (activist Ed Olsen, Mendon Garage & AOT Bargaining Team Delegate and Steward Art Aulis, Derby & Westfield Garage) to assist them in laying out communications to AOT members (both on the Governors want to open the Contract and/or threat to cut jobs). [The Olson letter was first printed as op-ed in various newspapers, and was later adopted as a posted AOT Union communication. This op-ed was widely circulated in VT, and ranked as one of all the all-time most 'liked' posts on the VSEA Facebook page.] Throughout the year these communications were provided to Garage Contacts who in turn printed them, and posted them in the Garage. All communications were tailored specifically to AOT Garage workers.

Union Worksite Visits:

- 1/1/15 Starting Point: VSEA did not previously track Garage visits (although numerous Garages expressed that they had not seen a Union Rep in "4–6 years");
- 1/1/16 Goal: Number Of Garage/Worksite Visits (in Operations) Over Coming Year: 52;
- **1/1/16 (One Year Measure): 107 Garage visits to 63 distinct Garages/worksites have been done in AOT Operations since January 1, 2015. Every Garage has been visited by VSEA staff/leadership (more than doubled one year goal);**
- Since the first of the year the VSEA Union Rep has also made 6 visits to other various VTrans/DMV worksites.
- VSEA-AOT Union Rep has set time aside, each month, to focus visits in a select AOT District.Union Rep seeks to coordinate with VSEA Organizers in order to not unnecessarily duplicate visits. Worksite (staff) visits are and remain critical to building a stronger, more responsive VSEA.Through these site visits Union Rep is able to hear concerns from members that go beyond pure Contract enforcement, and in turn those concerns which are heard in multiple Garages are than brought to AOT Union leaders (Labor Management Delegates & Stewards). And here Union leaders are able to weigh in on these issues and, where appropriate, are able to work with their Union Rep in crafting a plan of action to address them.The successful effort to have Union workers serve on Hiring Committees (discussed in more detail in Section III) is a direct example of how site visits can and do lead to concerted Union activity which is relevant to members.In brief, it is the workers themselves who know the issues, and it is the workers themselves who should set the activist agenda.

- 32 Garages circulated the Fight Back Petition (hard copy-paper format-Winter, 2015);
- 36 Garages circulated the Dignity & Respect Petition (hard copy-paper format-Summer, 2015);
- 42 Garages (50 AOT Union leaders) signed on to the Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract Petition (Fall, 2015);
- 14 Garages had members use Annual Leave to attend NMU Bargaining (on a day dedicated to AOT issues) or to previously March on The Boss (as related to Bargaining). This constitutes the only dedicated use of Annual Leave by VSEA members in order to further their Bargaining priorities with the possible exception of a single Liquor Control Investigator and a single Game Warden [Note that a number of DMV Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspectors, acting upon the request of NMU Bargaining Team member and fellow DMV Inspector, Paul Beebe, also attended a relevant section of NMU Bargaining, which took place on the same day, but these VTrans workers were able to do so on-the-clock as their vehicles were being serviced at Central Garage. These DMV Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspectors came to show their support for a Bargaining proposal to create a condensed Step plan for those in Group C retirement plan in order to make it increasingly probable that an employee in Group C can reach their top Pay Grade before the forced Retirement at age 55].

Fight Back Petition:

- Of the names entered into the VSEA database (gathered from the petition), 19.6% of them were listed as from AOT/VTrans (not broken down by division or subgrouping) [Note: AOT/VTrans represents 15.48% of the total

but rather fellow rank and file Union leaders who have asked their co-workers to take action;

- **1/1/16 Specific Acts of Union Activism have been recorded in 54 different Garages;**
- **1/1/16 A total of 180 distinctive examples of activism have been recorded (Note: These are recorded by Garage, not by individual; i.e. five workers in one Garage who attend a rally, counts as a single example of activism);**
- Of these 180, An All-Garage Conference Call (kicking off the Fight Back Campaign), the Fight Back Petition (circulated and returned to VSEA by Garage leaders), the April 11th Fight Back Rally, the Dignity & Respect Petition (circulated and returned to VSEA by Garage leaders), the Garage Workers United For A Fair Contract Petition (which was delivered by AOT Stewards to Management & the Administration), and the AOT March on The Boss account for 145 of these recorded acts (other acts ranging from participation in the May Day Rally to Fight Back LTEs to Phone banking in support of the April 11 Rally, etc., constitute the remainder);
- 15 Garages were on the AOT Fight Back Conference Call (which typically has all or many of the workers in one Garage listening on speaker phone –Winter, 2015);
- 12 Garages (plus DMV offices and other VTrans workers) had a presence at the April 11th Fight Back Rally [the Mendon Garage, working with VSEA Organizer Cecile Reuge, went the extra mile in taking part in a phone bank, out of their Garage, asking other area AOT workers to attend the rally. In addition, Mendon Garage worker, Ed Olson, severed as the primary rally speaker for VSEA.];

Section Summary (Building Union Structure)

- **AOT Operations Labor Management Committee: 11 Delegates;**
- **AOT Garage Stewards: 10 (Aprx 1 Steward For Every 50 Workers);**
- **VSEA Council: 12 Council Members (All AOT Seats Filled);**
- **Garage Contacts: 52;**
- **Total Garage Activists: 71;**
- **Organized Garages: All;**
- **Staff/Union Worksite Visits To AOT Operations Garages: 107**
- **Total VTrans/AOT Contract Captains (Includes All AOT Operations Labor Management Delegates, Stewards, Council Members, Garage Contacts, + Designated Contract Captains Outside AOT Operations But Within VTrans): 75 (Accounting For 52.82% of All VSEA Contract Captains).**

III. Measures of Success Concerning AOT Union Activism

What precedes this section are the efforts and structures that were pursued and put in place by VSEA in order to achieve a higher level of participation and effectiveness within AOT. What follows are the measurable results of these efforts. If the below outcomes are viewed as favorable (in conjunction with membership trends), then the meta-efforts must also be viewed

as favorable. On the contrary, if the below is viewed as unfavorable or otherwise not standing up to expectations, than the meta-efforts that went into creating these outcomes must be critically re-thought. Immediately below will be a synopsis of activist engagement conducted through and by the AOT Operations Labor Management Committee, followed by a more general outline of activist engagement throughout 2015:

AOT Operations Labor Management/Worksite Organizing Goals:

- District Stewards 15 Minutes Of Time With All New Hires Carried Out (Member Lead);
- **This ability was established through the AOT Operations Labor Management Committee. This system has been implemented in the month of June. Stewards are now informed of new hires (by their Union Rep-Union Rep in turn is notified regularly of new hires by VSEA Secretary Laurie Hassett) in their Districts, and can/are expected to use Steward Time to meet with these workers to inform them about their Union, and have a Union Card presented to them for their signature. In some instances Union Rep will alternatively (or in conjunction with AOT District Steward) also notify the local Garage Contact, and have the Garage Contact seek to sign up new worker as a Union member. Point being, an effort is made to have a rank & file Union member approach every new hire in AOT Operations and seek to sign them up as members. [Note: AOT Steward Seth Perry, Rutland Garage, should be especially recognized for his diligent and successful efforts to sign up new members in AOT District 3.] While VSEA (excluding AOT/VTrans) has only converted as an acute challenge, especially with increasingly competitive wages being paid to road crews by the towns.[3] This issue came to a head this fall when over 35 Garage positions remained unfilled on the eve of Snow Season. Therefore, Labor Management Delegates advocated for a one time retention and sign on bonus above and beyond economic incentives provided for within the Contract. Management agreed. As a result, Management implemented a $250 Winter Retention Bonus (paid to classified Garage Union workers in May, 2016, and technically considered a merit bonus). Management also implemented a $1000 Sign-On Bonus for new hires (to classified positions) who are in possession of a valid CDL. Indications are that the number of applicants for AOT Garage positions are on the rise as a result (one year goal, as it emerged throughout the year, met).**

Recorded Activism With AOT Operations & By Garage:

- With nominal exceptions, all instances of recorded Activism have been facilitated by a Garage Contact, Steward, Labor Management Delegate, etc., after being asked to do so by their Union Rep and/or Organizer (utilizing Garage visits, phone calls, emails, and text messages).What is significant is that *it has not been VSEA staff directly asking workers to sign petitions, etc.,*

[3] An additional result of this Labor Management discussion was a commitment from Management & Labor to look at factual data regarding the wages and salaries of town road crews with thought to how this may create challenges to AOT retention and recruitment. These figures, and possible action items, will be discussed further at future Labor Management Committee meetings in 2016.

of a classified worker, one who has typically taken the 'Interview' class at the AOT Training Center, in every hiring committee up to and including those convened for hiring Managers.Hiring Committees make recommendations concerning new hires.Union Rep has conveyed to members that the VSEA expects them to report the results of these hiring's (did the person who was hired line up with the Committee recommendation?) to their Steward or Rep.Union Rep now, in turn, tracks these results in the AOT Operations mapping/tracking document in order to keep an eye out for patterns specific to Districts.This information may help inform future dialogue concerning hiring/promotion issues within this section of AOT. At any rate, establishing this as the SOP provides a meaningful avenue for member input and a rank and file perspective into a process which carries a direct bearing upon their working lives; namely who will be their boss, and who they will labor alongside of (one year goal, as it emerged throughout the year, met).

- Improve Retention & Recruitment of Garage Workers:
- **While not specifically listed in the Goals and Benchmarks document, it has been known that retention of quality workers and recruitment of quality employees has been a difficult challenge in recent years within the Garages.Previous to the scope of this review document, the AOT Operations Labor Management Committee, under the Labor leadership of Chairman Jason Heath, Georgia Garage, repeatedly discussed this issue with Management.Management understands this**

33.78% of new hires in 2015 into Union members (177 members compared to 347 fee payers), AOT Operations has a membership rate for 2015 new hires of 64.44% (29 members & 16 fee payers).[2] While 30.66 percentage points hirer than the rest of VSEA, it should be noted that anything under an 80% sign up rate should not be considered sufficient. Hence there is more we can build on concerning this process (one year goal met).

- In VTrans overall, 51.55% of new hires have become Union members in 2015 (50 members 47 fee payers); 17.77 percentage points higher than for the rest of VSEA, excluding VTrans. Outside of AOT Operations, where we do not have in place the ability for Stewards to meet with new workers while using their Steward Time, and where we do not have a developed system of workplace contacts (yet), the Union Rep makes a point of sending an email to new hires explaining the basics of the Union, why it's important to join, and a link is provided to the online membership application.
- Labor Liaison To AOT Training Center Communicates With Rank & File, And Brings Thoughts/Concerns To Training Center At Least Twice In The Year Via Official Sit Down Meeting (and Meetings Reported Back to VSEA Union Rep -Member Lead);
- **This position was created through the AOT Operations Labor Management Committee.To date,**

[2] These figures include two known AOT Garage workers who were hired in 2015, were recruited to the Union, but later resigned from State employment (for personal reasons). These figures additionally include workers who are known to the AOT Union Rep to have signed Union Cards or filled out the online membership application but who do not yet appear as members in the VSEA database.

AOT-LM appointed one member of LM to serve in this role, Nick Davis (out of The Fort).He has had one meeting with Training Center Management, and reported back to the AOT-VSEA leadership at the spring training (AOT Stewards & LM Delegates). In December 2015, this Liaison had a training survey emailed to Garage workers, the results of which he will discuss with Management at an upcoming Labor Management Committee meeting (Liaison carried out task once for year, not twice, but program continues forward fruitfully).

- District Management Meetings Regularly Include Local Stewards/Labor Management Delegates (and Stewards/ Delegates Report Meetings Back To VSEA-Member Lead);

- **This ability was created through the AOT Operations Labor Management Committee.This process was further clarified in June through discussions between Labor and Management, and was implemented in fall, 2015. The goal here is to have AOT Union Stewards/Labor Management Delegates address issues with AOT District Management at the District level, to seek a resolve before it needs to go to the Statewide Labor Management Committee. Union leaders have been made aware of this tool, and thus far it was invoked, once, in AOT District 2, by AOT LM Delegate Brian Labounty, Dummerston Garage (one year goal met).**

- Dummerston Garage (District 2) Labor Management (Pilot Project) Takes Root, and Local (Garage) Labor Managements Expanded To Minimum of Three Districts (Member Lead);

- **This effort has largely been unsuccessful in the Dummerston Garage and is presently on hold overall.Here the idea was to have rank and file NMU-AOT Union leaders address workplace issues with the Garage Forman (Supervisory Unit) at the local Garage level (once a month), and resolve issues before they grow unnecessarily large and need to be addressed at the AOT District level (via AOT Stewards/Labor Management Delegates). However, in Union strong Garages this process is occurring informally anyway.This goal will be considered, as opportunities arise, in 2016, but will not likely be a priority. It is of interest to highlight that the idea for this potential innovation came directly from the Union Rep, as opposed to the workers themselves.While the idea was supported by AOT Union leaders, support was mild.Suffice to say that the failure of this idea to take root should not be surprising as it was not an idea that grew out of the organic concerns and ideas of the workers themselves (one year goal not met).**

- Secure Rank & File/Union Participation on Local Hiring Committees (Effort Staff Supported, Outcome Will be Member Lead);

- **Union Rep (at Garage visits) repeatedly heard that workers perceived the hiring process as unfair and not transparent.Therefore an effort was launched through the Labor Management Committee (with D9's Barton Garage and LM Delegate Alain Pion in the vanguard) to achieve worker (Union) participation in the hiring process.In the fall of 2015 this was achieved.The Standard Operating Procedure of AOT Operations is now to secure the participation**

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- **Use of General Release As Part of Resolution Process: None Since February.**
- **Loudermill Letters: Increasing use of term "Suspension" as opposed to "Termination."**

VII. Looking Towards 2016 in AOT

New annual goals and benchmarks will be set by the AOT Union leaders (Labor Management Delegates & Stewards, with participation of their Union Rep) over the course of the winter. Prior to setting these goals, Union Rep will encourage these AOT Union leaders to talk with the Garage Contacts and other AOT Union members in regards to their priorities and concerns. Once these goals are definitively set, they will be shared with the Garage Contacts, AOT Council Members, etc.. The Union Rep will then work with AOT members to create tactics on how these goals will be achieved, etc.. That said, it is already known that the following issues will be part of these priorities (as they have already become issues/projects that have been adopted by the AOT Union leadership in late 2015):

- **Reaching 80% Union Membership In The Garages;**
- **Successfully concluding Contract negotiations;**
- **Growing working class/Union solidarity in the Garages (and stamping out any vestiges of Discrimination);**
- **Building an AOT Rapid Response Team.**

I will conclude this brief section by elaborating on the planned AOT Rapid Response Team. While the meaning of other above priorities may self-evident to the reader, this point may not be. That said, many Unions have built 'Flying Squads'

as part of the tools at their disposal. Such groups are made up of rank & file members, and will be called upon from time to time to take direct action in support of their Union. The intent to build and AOT Rapid Response Team came out of a discussion on Bargaining during the All Garage Conference Call (held in November). Here the idea was supported of building an AOT Rapid Response Team that would be committed to converging on Montpelier, upon 24 hours' notice, come hell or high water (and using Annual Leave) when asked to do so by the AOT Union leadership. The intent is to build this team from Garage Contacts and other Garage activists (not including Labor Management Delegates, Stewards, etc., as the idea is to build out Union power, not place more and more responsibilities on those already engaged in high level Union activity). The goal is to recruit a team of 12. Those recruited will be vetted by the AOT Union leadership before being definitively placed in this position. Once established, and where appropriate, the team, in principle, could be called to action in in response to an acute workplace issue, to support Bargaining efforts, to support aspects of a Union legislative priority, etc.. The actions which they may be called on to carry out could, in principle, be to stage an informational picket, to deliver a petition or message from the workers to a key decision maker, to take part in a press conference, meet with lawmakers, or to generally be a protest presence.

By starting the process of building Rapid Response Teams within VSEA, we will be creating a new tool in our collective tool belt. The more reliably we can turn out members, on any given day, to the State's Capital, the more we will be growing our overall all ability to demonstrate worker power. Of course building this first team will be a challenge, but one that AOT is well suited for and which the AOT Union leadership supportive of. [For bragging rights: The first volunteer to serve on the AOT Rapid Response Team was Pierre Lamarche, Barton Garage. Pi, as he is known, is an AOT member of the VSEA Council, and

was a Union Steward in his previous job with the Department of Corrections where he worked as a CO. Pi was also one of the AOT workers who used a day of Annual Leave in order to take part in the March On The Boss.]

VIII. Conclusions/Exporting AOT Success To Broader VSEA

Undoubtedly there is much positive work being done within the broader VSEA. The Judiciary Unit having close to a 90% membership rate is testament to that fact. It is also true that we were not compelled to open the Contracts in 2015, and we did not suffer the threated 450 layoffs. The hard and effective work of our Organizing Department and activists members (building the Fight Back Campaign) demonstrated their talent, dedication, and effectiveness leading up to that victory (i.e. total 2500 signatures on the Fight Back Petition, and 500 workers at the April 11 Fight Back Rally). And of course our Union Reps do a great job defending workers Contractual rights. However, it is also clear that there is still much work to be done (both within AOT and VSEA generally).

AOT, over the course of the last year, has done many things well and has consistently hit above its weight. Factoring in that VTrans/AOT represents approximately 15% of VSEA, and recognizing that AOT has time and again achieved a higher participation rate than the rest of VSEA, the question becomes: what would VSEA look like if it were to achieve what AOT (proportionately) has thus far achieved?

If VSEA achieved what AOT Operations has proportionately achieved:

- Overall Union membership would be up significantly more than the 0.5% increase from 2015–2016;

- A majority of new hires would be members of their Union (not the 33.78% we saw in 2015 for VSEA excluding AOT);
- There would be a Contract Captain/designated Key Union Contact in every workplace;
- 100 NMU workers would have thus far used Annual Leave to attend a Bargaining meeting or to take part in an action to support their Bargaining Team;
- All of the Non-Management Unit's Steward positions would be filled;
- Every VSEA Council Seat would be filled;
- The Dignity & Respect Petition would have 2500+ signatures as of September 1, 2015 (not the 1100+ as of 12/23/15);
- The April 11 Fight Back Rally would have had 650+ workers in attendance (not the estimated 500).

If we were to achieve all of the above, across VSEA, we would still not be as powerful as we need to be; after all, we should (eventually) be able to put 1000+ workers (VSEA & Labor allies) on the Statehouse lawn, not 650 (if our brothers & sisters from the Vermont Workers Center can do it, we should be able to as well). But even so, if we could expand our reach to include the above we would be further down the road of building a more vibrant base of the Union and the Vermont working class by extension. But to get down this road, and to realize a truly member lead and member run Union which is capable of decisive action, staff will need to play a strong role in building the structure, or the bones, that will allow for higher levels of member engagement.

- Terminations/forced resignations [employees off original probation]: **2**[22]
- Other issues (not contract violations) looked at and dealt with: **3**

In 2017 VSEA will continue to provide quality representation to AOT employees through the grievance procedure and disciplinary process. AOT stewards will also continue to receive training. Overall I expect the number of stewards in AOT to increase from 12 to 15 (two of the three new stewards being from outside the garages).

END OF 2016 REPORT

[22] In both these cases the workers resigned just prior to the holding of a Loudermill Hearing. In one case the allegation was in regards to using state equipment to embezzle public funds. In the other it was a clear cut violation of a Last Chance Agreement.

at stake at a hearing and can adjust their defense strategy accordingly.

What follows are the two year totals (2015 & 2016), in the Garages, concerning representational work:

- Grievances filed: **10**
- [Management/DHR] Investigations into [alleged employee] misconduct: **47**
- Loudermills [termination/suspension hearings]: **10**
- No discipline issued (worker cleared) [following Investigation]: **10**
- Discipline imposed [following Investigation]: **16**
- Limited Release [which prevents future legal action the issue which is being resolved]: **6**
- General Release [which prevents future legal action on all past issues, known and unknown, with few exceptions such as relating to Workers Comp]: **4**
- Terminations/forced resignations [employees off original probation]: **2**
- Other issues (not contract violations) looked at and dealt with: **100**

What follows are the 2016 totals, in DMV, concerning representational work:

- Grievances filed: **1**
- [Management/DHR] Investigations into [alleged employee] misconduct: **10**[21]

[21] These 10 cases are still open.

Therefore, based on the experiences of AOT over the course of the last year, it is recommended that VSEA take the following steps to replicate those successes as are evident above:

- A centralized worksite mapping/tracking document be kept and updated by VSEA staff (and made accessible to Union activists);
- VSEA Union Reps and Organizers continue to conduct regular worksite visits and that issues which arise in multiple worksites (in the same Department) continue to be the basis for moving a Labor Management agenda forward (such visits should also have a strong focus in identifying and recruiting Key Union Contacts);
- Single Union Rep be assigned, statewide, to key worker groupings or to distinct Bargaining Units such as the AHS social workers, Corrections Unit, State Colleges Unit, Vermont State Housing Authority Unit, Office of Defender General Unit, etc. (as is already done for the Judiciary Unit, the Supervisory Unit, and AOT) ;
- That assigned Union Reps for these groupings act as Lead Negotiators for these Bargaining Units (as is presently the case with Senior Union Rep Brian Morse for the Judiciary Unit but counter-intuitively not for the Supervisory Unit), or that the Rep assist in the Bargaining process under the Lead Negotiator (as is presently the case with myself and AOT/NMU under the direction of the VSEA Labor Relations Director & NMU Lead Negotiator Gary Hoadley);
- VSEA Union Reps and Organizers be assigned territories that reflect one and other, and (continue) to rationalize Union building activities in these areas;

- That assigned Organizers for these identical Rep territories assist in facilitating the organizing efforts of these Units during negotiations;

- Union Reps and Organizers prioritize the *systematic* recruitment of Key Union Contacts in *every* VSEA worksite;

- Key Union Contacts be regularly asked to do Union building tasks which are in line with the culture of their workplace and/or are supported or framed by the Union leaders in their Department or Unit;

- That seasonal Steward trainings increasingly become organized by Department (as has already been implemented in a number of areas by VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenoch), and that they be combined, where possible, with the relevant Labor Management preparatory meeting in order that Union leaders in work groups can collectively articulate an evolving organizing agenda for their sections of VSEA;

- Union Reps and Organizers *systematically* track collective acts of Union activism by workplace, and Key Union Contacts in active workplaces be recruited to serve on Council, as Stewards, and on their Labor Management Committee;

- That relevant Stewards and Key Union Contacts be regularly provided lists of new hires in their workplace with instructions (and trainings) to seek to recruit these new State workers into their Union [Note: It is my understanding that this practice may already be starting within the broader VSEA];

- All electronic communications sent out by the Union that may reach or be viewed by fee payers include a brief

+10.43 percentage point increase

AOT Garage New Hire Recruitment Rate: 2015 **64.44%** 2016 **68.75%**

+4.31 percentage point increase

DMV New Hire Recruitment Rate: Not Tracked

VSEA-Wide New Hire Recruitment Rate: 2015 **35% (apx)** 2016 **48.16%**

+13.16 percentage point increase

VI. Contract Representation

Internal structure, activism, contract gains, and membership recruitment are not meaningful unless the Collective Bargaining Agreements are also defended. In this regards the Union Rep and AOT stewards continue to provide quality representation to AOT workers. First and foremost I am happy to report that the AOT garages have not seen a classified non-probationary employee terminated since February, 2015; *nearly two years ago.* I am also pleased to report that the use of General Releases, as part of the conflict resolution process, remains a rare occurrence. We have only had one General Release[20] in 2016 (and only four over the last two years). And finally, AOT management/DHR has increasingly come to identify the basic level of discipline they are considering in Loudermill Letters. In multiple cases in 2016, the Loudermill Letter states that Management is considering disciplinary action up to and including "suspension" (where previously they would all say "up to termination"). This represents an improvement in the disciplinary process, as the worker and Union Rep now have a clearer understanding of what is

[20] From a union point of view, a General Release is a bad thing as it compels the worker to sign away all his/her rights to take legal action against the state for all known and unknown issues that may have occurred with few exceptions (a workers comp related claim being one of said exceptions). A Limited Release, on the other hand, only compels the worker to sign away their legal recourse on things stemming from the specific issue at hand.

2014: **40** (New contract brings significant increases to Snow/Tool Pay/Boot Reimbursement)

2015: **87** (Single Union Rep to AOT/Governor threatens mass layoffs/seeks to reopen contract)

2016: **164**[18] (VSEA begins membership recruitment campaign/new contract sees increases to Snow Pay/Tool Pay/Boot Reimbursement/Time-And-A-Half OT for PG 23–24 i.e. garage foremen/full pay for AOT employees on workers comp for Lyme Disease/average wage increases of 7.25% over two years/wage increases 10.25% for workers in their first 5 years of state service over two years.)

Membership Rate on Jan 1 2016 (or earliest recorded figure) & on Jan 1 2017

AOT in Total: 2016 **69.82%** 2017 **72.63%**

+2.81 percentage points increase

AOT Garages: 2016 **77.48%** 2017 **81.65%**

+4.17 percentage point increase

DMV: 2016 **78.9%** 2017 **80.56%**

+1.66 percentage points increase

VSEA-Wide: 2016 **73.7%** 2017 **75.52%**

+1.82 percentage point increase

New Hire/Union Membership Recruitment Rates By Department for 2016[19]

AOT Total New Hire Recruitment Rate: 2015 **51.55%** 2016 **61.98%**

[18] In the 2015–2016 AOT 1 Year Review document, 105 new members we reported as being recruited. This was accurate. However, this number included those that recently filled out a union card and whose membership (in the database) was not yet processed. Therefore, some new members identified here (by searching the "started paying dues" option in the database) for 2016 were actually recruited in 2015.

[19] These new hire recruitment rates do not calculate in new hires that join the union (or did not join the union) but for whatever reason are not still employed with the State as of January 1 2017. In the 2016 AOT annual report, I calculated those into the equation. Thus last year's numbers reflect that.

pitch on why one should join the Union (along with a 'click here' link to the online membership application);

- Union Reps and Organizers regularly provide more personalized and specific (to the job type/Department) Union communications to workers in their territories [Note: while it is 100% true that the VSEA Communications Department, under Communications Director Doug Gibson, does something more than a *phenomenal* job, it is also true that more personalized communications from Union Reps to the workers they represent has a positive effect. This insofar as 'asks' emanating for the Rep, as the person who the worker knows they may one day have to go to in order to push back against an unjust Disciplinary action, carries a certain weight that should not be under-utilized.];

- That Union actions, where appropriate and when called for, seek to further engage the membership in ways *beyond* basic lobbying efforts. Point being, for many members and potential members (although not all) exclusively engaging politicians in the Statehouse, especially when there are expectations that said members need to interact with lawmakers who may be 'fucking' them in a 'respectful manner' (which understandably is a tried and try hallmark of traditional lobbying) is not something they get excited over, grow their expectations around, or that sparks their imagination and a sense of ownership and engagement.Therefore, it is important that our overall Union activity include the outside game *along with* the inside game just as it is also important to, at times, utilize the stick and at other times the carrot;

- That VSEA continuously evaluate the interconnection between Union activism on specific issues/campaigns,

the tactics used, the outcome (won/lost), and membership levels.Where our win/lost column becomes undesirable, or when membership growth is not increased, that the identified issues and/or tactics employed to seek redress on those issues be appropriately modified;

I will conclude this report by offering my opinion that VSEA would be well served to make this AOT pilot project a permanent fixture of the Union. It has been, and will continue to be, my honor and pleasure to serve in my role as Union Rep for workers in the Agency of Transportation.

Respectfully Submitted (and in the Spirit of Solidarity),
David Van Deusen, Senior Union Representative
Vermont State Employees' Association
END OF 2015 REPORT

tact would be cc'ed, and a reminder would go to them to also make a point of talking to them about joining the union. This effort resulted in 68.75% of new hires in the garages becoming union members. While this rate is well below the desired 80% mark, it is a significant improvement to the rate achieved in the rest of VSEA.

The effective recruitment of new members within AOT was done, by enlarge, through our garage contact system, our steward's ability to meet with new hires, and through effective use of email by the Union Rep. Having reached an 80%+ membership rate in the Garages and in DMV, it should not be expected to see additional growth in these sections of AOT. I would project that the membership rate in these areas will fluctuate between 78–82%. However, we can and will seek to fine tune the new hire procedure, and the goal will be to bring that rate up. We also should aim to increase the membership rate in Program Development and Finance & Administration. As we begin to build structure into these sections of AOT we should find success in recruiting new members. For 2017 the overall goal will be to increase AOT's overall membership rate to 75%.

AOT Union Membership Recruitment By The Numbers

Historic Perspective/AOT New Union Members by Year

2006: **37**

2007: **29**

2008: **36**

2009: **41**(Year Governor Douglas-R pushed for pay decreases)

2010: **25** (Year after VSEA suffered pay decreases and step freezes)

2011: **31**

2012: **50** (Organizers begin concerted effort to visit garages-VSEA Organizing Dept. formed)

2013: **45** (Organizers continue effort to visit garages/AOT Labor Management re-formed)

ficers and having them take the lead on this effort.[16] As a secondary means of member recruitment, the Union Rep also sent occasional mass emails to non-members in AOT asking them to join highlighting pending challenges and union victories. These emails included an appeal to join the union and provided a link to the online membership application. After the successful conclusion of contract negotiations, the Union Rep also sent personalized letters to non-members who were tagged in the VSEA database as having taken an action in support of their union over the last two years. This letter included an appeal for them to become full union members.

Another important element of membership recruitment efforts within the AOT garages is the now standard practice of having stewards and garage contacts reach out to each new hire with the goal of having them become a union member. The ability for stewards to use a brief amount of VSEA leave time to meet with new hires in their AOT Districts was achieved through the AOT Labor Management Committee in 2015. In brief, a practice was set up whereby VSEA Administrator, Laurie Hassett, would regularly provide the AOT Union Rep a list of new hires in AOT.[17] The Union Rep would then do two things: first, all new hires would get an email from the Rep explaining why union membership is important, a personal request to join, and a link to the online applications. Second, if the new hire was from within the garages, the Union Rep would email the name to the District steward with a reminder to make time to meet with them. In the same email, the local garage con-

[16] Early in 2016, Garage Contacts/Union Officers were mailed a hard copy list of names of non-members in their Garage. The mailing included reasons why we need to sign up new members, talking points, and Union Cards. Late in the year these Garage Contacts/Union Officers were emailed a broad list of fee payers broken down by Garage. Throughout the year, the Union Rep would encourage said officers to sign up new members in order to build the power of the Union.

[17] Laurie Hassett did a great job keeping this Union Rep informed about new hires, new members, and helped immensely in this on-going effort.

Building Union Power in AOT Year Two: 2016 In Review[1]

Provided by David Van Deusen,
Senior Union Representative-AOT/VSEA
January 1, 2017

With the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, we need to expect that organized labor, including VSEA, will come under attack. It should be expected that Trump will appoint a Justice to the US Supreme Court who will rule against agency fee and will generally seek to weaken the rights of unions. It should also be expected that Trump will appoint persons to the National Labor Relations Board who will also be hostile to labor. Any attack on labor must be resisted by unions (individually and in aggregate). But to effectively resist, each union, including VSEA must be internally organized and prepared to meet such a struggle. While there is still a long road to go, the Vermont State Employees' Association (VSEA) has made significant strides in building an effective internal union structure within the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT). Therefore, this document should not only be read as a memorialization of what we have done in AOT, but also with an eye to what can or should occur in other sections of VSEA. Of course there are numerous examples of effective work being done in other sections of VSEA, but

[1] This report was first provided to VSEA Union Officers & senior staff in 2017.

these examples our outside the scope of responsibility of this writer and therefore are not included in this report. Even so, the reader is encouraged to seek out those examples and give thought to how they too may relate to the broader challenges facing VSEA.

I. AOT Overview:

The Vermont Agency of Transportation, with 1191 workers and 80+ worksites (covered by both the Non-Management Unit & Supervisory Unit Collective Bargaining Agreements), remains a significant bloc within VSEA composing 15.81% of the Union. These 1191 workers can be subdivided into the following major groupings:

- **Garages/Maintenance (Operations):** 9 Geographic Districts/534 Workers;
- **Program Development:** Largely Montpelier Based/284 Workers
- **Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV):** 11 Branch Locations + LE/217 workers;
- **Finance & Administration Division:** Montpelier/94 workers
- The remainder being made of smaller divisions such as Aviation, Rail, etc..

AOT, specifically the Garage workers and those who support them, are a foundational element of Vermont functioning as a society. During the winter months, State Government and the private sector would shut down during a snow event if these workers did not labor to keep the roads open. In a State

AOT employees out on workers comp for Lyme Disease were all won at the bargaining table prior to going to Fact Finding or Last-Best-Offer. All told, AOT exceeded their own expectations concerning the contract that is now in place.

AOT workers (represented by Art Aulis-Westfield Garage on the NMU bargaining team) and their 86 contract captains in NMU did much to work towards these victories. The above discussed union photo action serves as one example. However, since much of the negotiating and major actions in support of the NMU bargaining team occurred in 2015, and since those actions were discussed in detail in the January 1 2016 "AOT-VSEA 1 Year of Building Union Power" report, they are beyond the scope of this document. Suffice to say that AOT, again, did well in contract negotiations.

V. Union Membership Recruitment

VSEA put a strong emphasis on membership recruitment in 2016. AOT members worked hard on this priority. The results of this effort are an unmitigated success. All told we saw 164 AOT workers join the union. Union membership in the garages (where we have a fully functioning garage contact system in place) is now at 81.65%. Union membership in DMV (where we have just begun to recruit local union contacts) stands at 80.56%. Overall AOT membership has climbed 2.81 percentage points to 72.71%. This improvement to AOT's membership rate is in line with the broader trend within VSEA. Likewise, VSEA overall added 821 members, increasing the membership rate by 1.82 percentage points to 75.52%.

In AOT we achieved this not by having staff individually sign up new members, but rather providing names of fee payers and talking points to garage contacts and other union of-

- Average 7.25% wage increases over 2 years (Steps & COLA), 10.25% wage increases for workers in their first 5 years of State service (Steps & COLA);
- The State and VSEA would continue to seek to negotiate Third Party Binding Arbitration and insert it into the contracts before they expire.
- $100 increase to Snow Pay (that equals a 5% increase to Snow Pay);
- $1 increase to Tool Pay (that equals a 5.8% increase to Tool Pay);
- $25 increase to Boot Reimbursement (that equals a 16.66% increase to Boot Reimbursement);
- Full Pay for AOT employees out on workers comp due to Lyme Disease;
- Time-And-A-Half OT for Pay Grades 23–24 (this amounts to a HUGE raise for garage Foremen).

At the end of the day AOT union members did not get everything they were after. An automatic 'escalator' on Snow/Tool/Boot Pay was not achieved. Binding Arbitration was not locked down. Full Snow Pay for "volunteers" was not delivered. And, for DMV Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspectors, a condensed step system for Group C workers did not come to fruition. Even so, without making any meaningful concessions, it is true that most of AOT's priorities were addressed. And while much of the basic wins were achieved through the victory of a favorable Fact Finder's Report and a positive ruling by the Labor Board at Last-Best-Offer[15], it is meaningful to note that the increases to Snow Pay, Tool Pay, Boot Reimbursement, and the full pay for

[15] Here VSEA Director of Labor Relations, Gary Hoadley deserves much credit.

where snow can be expected 7 months of the year (October-April), the strategic need for these workers to be organized into a strong union cannot be overstated.

Up until January 1 2015, VSEA did not assign a single Union Rep to represent AOT. Rather Union Reps were assigned geographic regions. One Rep may have had 5 garages/AOT worksites in their territory, but no VSEA staff person covered AOT as a whole. Therefore, no single staff person was in a position to gage the overall issues facing AOT workers or to evaluate if the contract(s) were being exercised in a uniform and consistent manner. And of course VSEA staff was also hampered in potential efforts to mobilize AOT workers towards collective goals due to this fragmenting of territory. And likewise, previous to 2015, AOT did not have an internal rank & file union structure in place that would efficiently allow communication and organizing activities by the workers themselves. Prior to 2015, membership rate in the agency was approximately 62%, and approximately 66% in the garages [today, as will be discussed later in this document, this membership rate is significantly higher]. As of two years ago, many Garages reported not having a visit by a Union Rep in 4–6 years [for the last two years there have been in excess of 200 worksite visits by VSEA staff to garages and other AOT worksites-see below].

At the urging of AOT garage Stewards & AOT Labor Management delegates (such as Labor Management Chair Jason Heath-Georgia Garage), VSEA created a pilot project at the start of 2015 whereby a single Union Rep (myself-David Van Deusen) would be assigned to cover all of AOT stateside. This pilot project proved a success in that membership increased, gains were made at the bargaining table, worker activism grew, and a rank & file structure was built into the workplaces (all this was outlined in January 1 2016 "AOT-VSEA 1 Year of Building Union Power" report). As a result this pilot project was made a regular fixture within VSEA in 2016. In addition (as was recommended in the 2016 "AOT-VSEA 1 Year of Building

Union Power" report) VSEA exported this model to the rest of the union; all Union Reps (and Organizers) are now assigned territory based on bargaining unit/agency/department (and are no longer geographically based).

This report documents the outcomes of year two of this effort as they unfolded with AOT. It is the intention of this writer to chart these experiences in order to not only continue to build Union Power within AOT for 2017, but also to extrapolate lessons that could prove useful to VSEA as a whole. It is towards these tasks that I now turn.

II. Rank & File Union Structure

Sustained membership growth (or maintenance), effective internal mobilizing, long term bargaining success, and the building of an increased political power are all largely predicated upon an effective internal rank & file structure based primarily in workplaces and networked within an department/agency/bargaining unit. Internal structure is what allows members to efficiently engage in union activities. Internal structure is also the vehicle through which the membership can make itself heard. Without a workplace based internal structure, a union may win on a given issue, but those wins will often rely disproportionately on staff and will often be reactive (stopping a bad thing from happening) as opposed to proactive (making a good thing happen). And wins without a backing structure often fail to result in the union emerging from a specific struggle stronger than it went in. With a rank & file structure in place and utilized, success often increases the confidence and enthusiasm of involved members. This growth in confidence and enthusiasm can be contagious, and can help inspire more workers to take on specific union roles (thus increasing the potential power of the union). Victories under these conditions also can elevate the aspirations of the

IV. Bargaining

2016 saw the conclusion of Bargaining for the current contract. VSEA did well. Going into negotiations AOT members had the following priorities (although initial proposals were higher):

- Retain quality Healthcare;
- Retain Pay Steps (worth 3% every two years for most workers);
- Fair COLA;
- Establishment of Binding Third Party Arbitration (as opposed settling disputes through the Vermont Labor Relations Board);
- Snow Pay up 2% a year every year henceforth;
- Tool Pay up 2% a year every year henceforth;
- Boot Reimbursed up 2% a year every year henceforth;
- Full (not half) Snow Pay for workers who 'volunteer' to be on Snow Season Status, but who do not otherwise automatically qualify for Snow Pay;
- Full Pay for AOT employees out on workers comp due to Lyme Disease;
- For DMV Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspectors (and others outside AOT in the Group C Retirement Plan): a condensed step system.

Through the new Non-Management Unit & Supervisory Unit Contracts the following was achieved:

- No change to Healthcare Plan;

example, there were about a dozen State Reps (out of 150) that voted in favor of a $2 hotel occupancy tax that we were supporting (as a means to close the budget gap without layoffs or pay cuts). What if we only endorsed those incumbents in 2016?

All told, for AOT members to become more engaged in the electoral process and for them to begin to contribute to the PAC, they must come to believe that the politicians their union endorses are on their side on their issues. Endorsing the worst of two candidates (just to oppose an incumbent who is not a champion of labor) is not a rational option. But given our level of member support for the PAC and our minimal level of member engagement in the electoral process, doing things as they have been done in the past is also not a rational option. If the two suggestions above are not workable/desirable (for whatever reason) a new approach must be articulated and tried. Unless and until this happens, I see the likelihood of AOT's increased participation in the PAC and/or the electoral process to be minimal at best.

AOT Rapid Response Team

Another area where AOT fell short was in the creation of an AOT Rapid Response Team. This effort began as an outcome of an all-garage conference call held in late 2015 in support of the bargaining efforts. The idea was to put together an elite team of 10–12 AOT activists who did not hold union office above the level of garage contact. This team would be committed to using annual leave to attend 2–4 union actions a year. They would be committed to being anywhere they needed to be in Vermont upon 24 hours' notice (and as requested by the union leadership). This team would engage in informational picket lines, marches on the boss, key press conferences, etc.. However, despite efforts to build this team, to date only 4 persons have been recruited. In 2017 this project will be reevaluated. It is possible that this project will draw to a close, and energy will instead go into the continuing effort to build the garage contact/local union contact system in new areas of AOT.

union membership, thus pushing the union (organically) into more proactive power building struggles.

However, internal union structure does not build itself. If a goal of VSEA is to create a member lead or member run Union, the path towards this goal must rely heavily upon paid full-time staff to get there. And without internal structure a union cannot be effectively member run. Hence much of my time in 2015 was spent building such a structure in the AOT garages. In 2016, I worked to maintain this system (which is increasingly maintained by the members themselves) and began to expand this system to other areas of AOT and beyond.[2]

Garage Contacts/Local Union Contacts

In the AOT garages it has proven elemental to have a garage contact in every worksite, or at least in every worksite that does not include a steward or other union officer. However, garage contacts are not just names on paper. Nor are they just potential activists identified by VSEA staff. Rather, garage contacts have come to be understood as foundational union officers with the specific responsibilities of printing communications (sent by Union Rep) for posting on their union bulletin boards, circulating petitions or facilitating other union actions as is called for by union leadership, recruiting new hires and fee payers in their worksites into the union, acting as a conduit between their co-workers and the AOT union leadership/VSEA staff concerning any and all issues, and serving as contract captains as negotiations become active[3].

[2] As a Union Rep I am also responsible for the Office of the Defender General Unit. Here there are 8 worksites. As of January 1 2017, all 8 of these worksites have deployed local union contacts and/or other union officers. In addition to the Defender General I am also responsible for the Vermont State Housing Authority Unit. Likewise I am working with that Unit Chair to establish the same system in that Unit.

[3] All union officers in AOT, with the exception of those directly serving on the bargaining team or who are in the Supervisory Unit, serve as NMU contract captains when negotiations are active. Therefore, AOT garages/DMV in effect has 86 NMU contract captains. Not including AOT, NMU has

Unlike previous incarnations of a 'key union contact' system in VSEA (whereby multiple persons in a given worksite simultaneously serve in this role), garage contacts are not unlimited. Typically only one worker serves as a garage contact per worksite. Once the garage contact is recruited, it is understood that this position is filled. In this way workers come to understand the garage contact as being an important union position, and garage contacts can take additional pride in their specialized service to the their union. In rare circumstances a second garage contact exists in a garage. The creation of a 'second' may come about as a result of a garage contact in good standing transferring to a new garage where there is already a garage contact. Where a second exists, their role is to back up or fill in for the garage contact as needed.

The initial recruitment of garage contacts was largely done (in 2015) by the Union Rep visiting a worksite and asking the assembled workers to nominate someone for this role. Often all the workers would indicate that a certain respected person would be good at this. If that worker accepts the nomination, it is considered official. As this system has matured (in 2016) it is increasingly common that area stewards (and AOT Labor Management delegates) will recruit garage contacts in their region as is required. At other times, if a garage contact is retiring, or otherwise leaving their worksite, that garage contact will seek to recruit his or her replacement. As workers take an increasing responsibility for maintaining this system, the Union Rep/Organizer has more time freed up to build this system in other areas and or to focus their attention on different union building projects.

Garage contacts have also played an important role in recruiting area stewards (such as in District 1-Bennington

a total of 63 additional contract captains. Therefore, AOT, although composing approximately 20% of NMU, accounts for 54%% of the total number of NMU contract captains.

Democrat for Governor & David Zuckerman-Progressive for Lt Gov in the General Election). This new effort to further expand union democracy is to be applauded. However, AOT members still feel alienated from the endorsement process in general. After all, down ticket races are not voted on by the general membership, and while they are subject to ratification or reversal by the VSEA Council (on which AOT has allotted seats), it is still difficult for AOT members to understand how we can spend two years fighting against a lawmaker, appear to drag them kicking and screaming to the right side of an issue (in cases where we win), and then turn around and endorse them when their re-election comes up. And given the overall low number of union members who give to the PAC (again, zero in AOT) it is reasonable to question if this sentiment is not also felt in the wider VSEA. Regardless, the fact remains that if we are to honestly gage the level of electoral activism in AOT (and the rest of VSEA), we must understand it as low.

Given VSEA's inability to build the PAC and recruit a significant number of union members to volunteer on electoral work, perhaps a re-thinking of how we approach down ticket endorsements is in order. The AFL-CIO, for example, allows it's local (typically county or city based) Central Labor Councils (similar to VSEA Chapters) to make local endorsements and to organize electoral activity on the local level. In this way union members are directly vested and may personally know (or come to know) the candidates for State Senate, State Rep, Mayor, and City Council, etc..

If localizing the down ticket endorsement process is not advisable, another option would be to greatly reduce the number of endorsements we issue per election. Perhaps we continue to poll the members on the statewide races and continue to make these endorsements as we did in 2016. But for all down ticket legislative races we make clear that any legislator who does not vote in favor of any one of our legislative priorities will not receive our endorsement in the next election. In 2015, for

leave to attend a press conference also in support of the VSEA endorsed candidate for Governor (although this event was cancelled when other VSEA union leaders failed to make a similar commitment). AOT members did not volunteer to work phone banks, did not knock on doors, and remained apprehensive about our overwhelming support for many incumbent Democratic Party candidates.[14]

In fact, of the 1191 AOT workers covered by Collective Bargaining Agreements, not a single one belongs to the VSEA PAC. That number is striking. However, despite it being a stated goal of VSEA since at least since 2012, less than 100 union members (out of 5688) in total belong to the PAC. Given the zero AOT contributions to the PAC, and given the apprehension shown by AOT members towards many incumbent candidates, AOT members' minimal engagement in the election effort is not surprising. Perhaps what is surprising is that select stewards/leaders did provide quotes in support of our candidate for Governor and that two of these stewards were willing to take a day to support that candidate at a press conference.

To the credit of VSEA's Executive Director, in 2016 the union attempted to address the perceived disjunction between political endorsements and the political leanings of its members. For the first time in VSEA history, a poll was conducted prior to the Primary and the General Election. There the membership was asked to vote for the candidate in the statewide races that they wanted the union to back. For the poll prior to the General Election, following requests from a number of AOT garages, a "None-Of-The-Above" option was added to the ballots. In all cases, VSEA endorsed the candidate that won the vote (Matt Dunne for Governor & David Zuckerman for Lt Governor in the Democratic Primary, and Sue Minter-

[14] As I have travelled to AOT garages, I have often been asked by AOT members why we tend to endorse the same incumbent politicians we appear to fight against during the legislative session.

Garage where Garage Contact Tim Bortell recruited Brett Crawford as area steward). Garage contacts also constitute a "bench" whereby union members can gain experience and be brought up to higher levels of the union leadership (as is the case in District 8-Enosburg Garage whereby Ellen St. Marie, after proving herself an outstanding garage contact was recruited to serve as steward-steward paperwork currently pending).

It is in the garages that this system was first built in 2015. The effort to export this model to other areas of AOT was begun in late 2016 (DMV), but is still very much a work in progress. It was the intent to have DMV complete this year, however the departure of the VSEA Organizer assigned to AOT, and the fact that this position is yet to be filled has hampered these efforts. With or without an assigned Organizer, this effort should be complete in 2017. In addition, an effort will be made in 2017 to also begin to export this model to the remaining aspects of the agency.

I am pleased to note that the VSEA Board of Trustees & Chapter Presidents have expressed support for exporting a version of this model to the rest of VSEA (as was recommended in the 2016 "AOT-VSEA 1 Year of Building Union Power" report). The goal of building a similar system throughout VSEA is articulated in the proposal "The Challenges Facing VSEA and a Proactive Response" (penned by Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske).

AOT Stewards

Garage contacts/local union contacts, in brief, are the foundation upon which union structure in AOT is built. Another essential element of this structure is our steward system. NMU is afforded 95 stewards. Presently there are only 52 appointed stewards. This makes the steward to worker ratio in the Non-Management Unit 1:145. If all 95 steward positions were filled, that would improve the ratio to 1:79. The two things we should aim for if we are to rationally deploy quality stewards while

achieving a manageable ratio, is having a proportional number of stewards appointed in every major agency/department while making sure we deploy these stewards geographically so as to provide a steward presence across the state.

In the garages, there is 9 geographic AOT Districts (although District 6 is essentially akin to a central office without a plow fleet and is not factored into this section). Each District contains between 5–9 garages. Presently we have at least one steward in each AOT District [this was achieved in 2016 and marks the first time in memory that this has been accomplished], and no more than two stewards in any one District. With few exceptions (such as District 3 Steward Seth Perry-Rutland Garage), these AOT stewards only represent fellow AOT workers, and typically only in their geographic AOT District.[4] In total AOT garages have 11 stewards. This is 1 steward for every 49 workers (well within the minimum worker-to-steward target ratio of 1:79). Over the course of 2016 a total of 3 new stewards have been recruited from within the garages. One was recruited by a garage contact, one by the Union Rep, and one came forward on his own. In addition to providing their co-workers representation, stewards also play a crucial role in membership recruitment [membership recruitment will be discussed in more detail later in this report]. AOT garage stewards also work closely with AOT Labor Management delegates [there being much overlap between the stewards and the Labor Management Committee] and AOT delegates to the bargaining teams. All told, the stewarding program in AOT garages is strong and effective. Given the need for VSEA to expand its steward system, and given the low steward-to-worker ratio already achieved in

[4] Having AOT stewards primarily cover only fellow AOT workers in their geographic area increases their effectiveness as they provide representation on issues which they understand in the context of working for AOT, and by providing representation in their geographic area they are able to develop a more consistent relationship with their local management.

The union photo action, which was called for in January 2016 by the former NMU Chair Michelle Salvador, was the last larger rank & file action called for in support of the contract negotiations. This action resulted in a total of 107 photos being submitted to VSEA. 42 of those photos came from AOT garages (where our garage contact system was already in place), 2 came from DMV (Montpelier), and 1 came from AOT construction. Therefore, although AOT makes up (apx) 20% of NMU, 42% of the photos were AOT. This, like in other instances, is a testament to the effectiveness of the garage contact system.

With the AOT photos, a brief video was produced in support of AOT bargaining priorities. The video was publically posted on YouTube, drew over 700 views, and gained supportive comments from VT State Senator Anthony Pollina and VT State Rep Susan Hatch Davis (both members of the VT Progressive Party).

This AOT video can be viewed at the below web address:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUE-mTdAgLQ

AOT Activism & Electoral Politics

After contract negotiations concluded and the contract was funded by the Legislature (in the spring), 2016 was a year when VSEA asked less of its members with the exception of requests revolving around membership recruitment and electoral activity. Concerning electoral activity the asks tended to be related to phone banking for union endorsed candidates, providing quotes in support of candidates, etc. And like all of VSEA, participation from AOT members was minimal.[13] AOT workers, unlike other sections of VSEA, did provide four quotes in support of the candidate we backed for Governor (although only one of those quotes was used in an internal VSEA mailing). Two AOT stewards also committed to taking a day of annual

[13] In the 2016 VT General Election, in seriously contested statewide races, our endorsed candidate for Governor, Sue Minter-Democrat, lost to Phil Scott-Republican. In the LT Governor race, union endorsed candidate David Zuckerman-Progressive, won.

- 42 Garages, upon request from Union Rep, provided photos of themselves holding signs in support of the NMU bargaining team (i.e. "Hands Off OT-Fair COLA Now"). The scale of this action in regards to the number of garages taking part, is close to the high water mark thus far achieved in AOT;

- 16 Garages, at specific times requested by Union Rep, recruited new union members from among their targeted co-workers;

- 14 Garages made calls and or emails to key politicians in support of union issues, when asked to do so by their Union Rep (i.e. in relation to contract negotiations & expressing non-support for workers comp being privatized);

- 7 Garages had workers present to the AOT Union Motorcycle Run (which was intended as a celebration of recent contract victories, and as a mobile union rally);

- Remaining acts ranged of providing quotes in support of VSEA endorsed candidate for Governor, attending a press conference in support of union issues, attending VSEA political events, etc..

could begin to engage with their union. The failure for this effort to come off may decrease the credibility of VSEA with these 17 AOT members. Support from VSEA staff, after the BOT voted to support this action, could have and should have prevented this from playing out as it has. A similar failure to follow through also occurred over 2015–16 with the Dignity & Respect petition (36% of the signatures being from AOT) which was never delivered to the state/politicians or utilized in anyway, and the political press conference which two AOT stewards agreed to seek to attend in support of the candidate we endorsed for Governor. Point being: If you say you are going to do something, do it. Failure to do so decreases our credibility with the members and over time decreases our ability to get members to take action next time there is a need.

the garages, it is advisable that the number of stewards in the garages be capped at 12 for 2017.

While our steward program is strong in the garages, the same cannot be said for those other sections of AOT which we are just now beginning to be systematically organized. In DMV we have one steward (Ed Martin-at the South Burlington Branch). This means we have only 1 Steward for every 216 workers. At minimum our goal should be to recruit an additional DMV steward in Montpelier (where our membership is concentrated). This would improve our worker-to-steward ratio to 1:108. A secondary priority could be to recruit a third steward in more southern Vermont. Having a third steward in DMV would make the ratio a solid 1:72.

AOT Labor Management Committee (Garages)

The AOT Labor Management Committee (for garage workers) meets seasonally (4 times a year) on a perpetual basis. The committee strives to have one worker representing each AOT District, plus someone from Central Garage (the mechanics) & the Bridge Crew. All persons on this committee are from the Non-Management Unit.[5] The committee, with the concurrence of the Non-Management Unit Executive Committee, also elects a Chair (presently Jason Heath-Georgia Garage) and a Vice Chair (Shawn Ainsworth-North Montpelier Garage). Many stewards serve on this committee, although it is not exclusive to stewards. Presently 9 AOT workers serve on this committee. It is the responsibility of Labor Management delegates to gather issues and concerns from workers in their geographic area (AOT District) or work group (Central Garage or Bridge Crew). These issues are then brought to a labor only training/meeting (that includes both the AOT stewards &

[5] The practice of meeting 4 times a year (in perpetuity) and having up to 11 union delegates on it, surpasses the baseline labor rights guaranteed by the contract. This expansion of the rights of this committee were agreed to by both labor and management at their first meeting after the group was reformed in 2013.

Labor Management delegates) which occurs one week before the official Labor Management meeting. Here the issues are discussed and the combined stewards/Labor Management delegates craft a draft agenda for the meeting with management. Here not only are agenda items agreed to, but unified labor positions are also hammered out.[6] As a rule, these common positions are supported by all Labor Management delegates when in front of management (even if an individual delegate may have argued for a competing position at the prior labor only meeting). Failure to uphold such common positions while in front of management is understood as grounds for being removed from the committee.[7]

The draft agenda that emerges from this seasonal meeting of Labor Management delegates & stewards is then sent to management prior to the official meeting. This prior notice helps to foster a more productive meeting whereby labor and management are prepared to address the issues, and other agency personal (who do not regularly attend these meetings but who may have a special relevance to an agenda item) can be invited to attend.[8]

The meetings with management are facilitated by the Labor Chair. All labor delegates (and Union Rep) sit together on one side of the table, and management on the other. For labor generated agenda items, the Labor Chair assigns a labor del-

[6] At the request of labor, management provides labor with its proposed agenda items prior to this meeting. This allows the AOT stewards/Labor Management delegates to also form a unified position on these agenda items.

[7] AOT Labor Management delegates have not broken this rule, and to date no delegate has been removed for this infraction.

[8] It should also be noted that labor's internal rules also prevent delegates from bringing personal issues into the meetings with management. Labor Management agenda items cannot be personal in nature, nor should they involve one specific garage. Labor Management is viewed as a forum for issues that are broad in nature and involve multiple AOT Districts. Where issues are specific to one garage or one District, there are other venues for them to be appropriately addressed.

In 2016 the garages had:[11]

- 90 Collective instances of union activism;
- 48 Active garages;

DMV (who is now getting organized & is very much a work in progress) had:

- 1 Collective instance of union activism (union photos supporting bargaining team priorities);
- 1 Active branch (Montpelier-although the South Burlington Branch has an active Labor Management Committee);

In the garages the bulk of the activism can be attributed to:[12]

[11] In this section I do not count 5 people in one garage who signed a petition as 5 instances of activism. Rather if people in one garage, be it 2 or 10, signed a petition I count that as one instance. What is recorded here is collective activism attributed to a specific garage, not individual acts as such.

[12] It should also be mentioned that as of December, **17 AOT union women** (not teased out by department or division) wrote to their Union Rep (and the BOT point person on the action) expressing strong interest in being part of a union delegation to the January 21 2017 **Million Women March** (a total of 37 VSEA woman expressed such interest). A number of these women have never been directly involved union activities prior to expressing a desire to attend this historic event. While the VSEA Board of Trustees allocated $5000 to send such a delegation, and while the VSEA Council backed this decision from the Board, no VSEA staff was assigned to coordinate logistics with the BOT member serving as point on this project. Therefore it appears increasingly unlikely that the planning for this delegation will be achieved, and it is unlikely that these women will be able to attend this event on behalf of VSEA or otherwise. This is unfortunate on a number of levels; not only is this an opportunity for VSEA to be part of a historic march, it is also an opportunity for VSEA to begin to develop alliances (through collective action) with potential allies external to VSEA (which will be needed in the looming Trump era), but it was also a porthole through which new activists

- 1 Steward (1 steward for every 216 workers);
- 1 Member of the NMU Executive Committee;
- 9 Worksite visits conducted by VSEA staff;
- 3 Worksite visits conducted by Union Rep;
- 6 Worksite visits conducted by Union Organizer.

III. Union Activism/Political Elections

Union activism is a necessary element of flexing union power. If a union never flexes its power, its power will decline.[10] Activism, which is another word for taking common action, is also in part a learned skill. Therefore it is important to find reason to practice such an activism in order for the membership to gain experience. Doing this will increase the union's effectiveness at times of crisis when action is demanded by events. Cultivating a healthy activism with a union also keeps the membership engaged and its energies aimed at achieving common goals. In this way activism, in and of itself, helps to build membership numbers.

AOT Collective Activism By Workplace/Issue

2015 saw the Fight Back campaign and the first half of contract negotiations. Therefore union activism was way up in AOT garages for that year (182 collective instances of activism, and 56 active garages). In 2016 contract negotiations were essentially concluded by spring. And while VSEA engaged in a number of legislative efforts and played a role in the Vermont General Election, there was not an overarching issue which drove activism on the scale that was witnessed during Fight Back.

[10] In the same way, I find if I let my chainsaw sit too long, it's a bitch to start up when I finally need it to.

egate to start off the discussion on the issue. The Union Rep keeps minutes. After the meeting, the Union Rep crafts draft minutes that include agreed upon action steps were they exist. These draft minutes are then provided to the Labor Chair and management for review and joint approval. Once approved, the minutes are sent to the garage contacts (for printing and posting) by the Union Rep, and to lower ranking managers by upper management. The minutes are also printed in the management generated AOT newsletter.

In 2016 the major topics of discussion/achievements have been as follows:

- **$250 Retention Bonus;** In order to address staffing deficits in the fall of 2015, the Labor Management Committee supported paying Snow Season eligible workers who remained employed with the agency over the winter, a $250 bonus. New hires were also allotted a $1000 sign on bonus. Although these bonuses were agreed to in 2015, the retention bonus was not paid out until May 2016. These bonuses were extra to the contract(s) and were one-time in nature.
- **Overcoming any vestiges of discrimination that may still exist in the garages;** Labor advocated for the establishment of mandatory (labor only) anti-discriminations trainings, given by the VSEA Labor Educator to all garage workers. This training, among other things, would articulate how it is in labor's collective self-interest to foster a common solidarity in order to grow the power of the union. A determination on this proposal is still pending.
- **Seeking to establish a uniform and fair system of garage to garage (lateral) transfers;** Recognizing that this is a bargainable issue, labor expressed support for a seniority based system like is presently provided for

in the Correction Unit Contract. Management stated its openness to developing a system [as presently there is no official system], but expressed that they would rather see it based on job performance. Both sides will continue to discuss this issue with an eye to coming to an agreement in principle prior to the start of bargaining in 2017.

- **A comparative pay analysis looking at state AOT workers vs town highway crew workers;** This study was conducted by a join subcommittee of labor & management using data provided by the VT League of Cities and Towns. The findings demonstrated that workers get paid higher when hired by a Town, but make significantly more with the state as their seniority grows.

- **Reforming the AOT Equipment Committee;** These committees, which are a creation of management, were previously organized differently by Region (An AOT Region is composed of two AOT Districts under the same regional management). These committees play a key role in recommending equipment upgrades and purchases for the agency. Labor successfully advocated for a uniform appointment process and meeting schedule whereby Equipment Specialists (who are NMU positons) would be appointed to these committees, and that they would meet twice a year (fall & spring).

- **Making sure good wood cut by AOT is put to a positive social use;** Although this issue was visited in previous years, it came to labor's attention that good (cut) wood was still being discarded in some Districts. Labor (again) advocated for good wood to be provided to garages which heat with wood (as many do) first, and any excess being given to state fuel assistance programs that help low income and elderly Vermonters stay warm

- 11 Stewards (1 steward for every 49 workers, 1+ steward in every AOT District);
- 9 Labor Management delegates (representing differing geographic areas/AOT Districts);
- 4 AOT Rapid Response Team members;
- 3 NMU bargaining team delegates;
- 1 Supervisory Unit bargaining team delegate;
- 1 Union Liaison to the AOT Training Center;
- 1 Member of the NMU Executive Committee (Vice Chair);
- 98 Total garage/worksite visits conducted by VSEA staff;
- 90 Garage/worksite visits conducted by Union Rep;
- 8 Garage/worksite visits conducted by Union Organizer;

In the 12 DMV branch sites/job groups:[9]

- 4 Are organized;
- 11 Total union officers/core activists (1 union officer/core activist for every 19 workers);
- 4 Local union contacts
- 4 Members of a local Labor Management Committee (South Burlington);
- 2 VSEA Council members;

[9] There are 11 branch locations across Vermont. In addition, DMV Law Enforcement constitutes a specific grouping within DMV. These police officers are home based, and for mapping tracking purposes are listed as their own 'worksite' within DMV.

9 union updates for posting over 2016. These updates ranged from bargaining updates to information on filing incident reports on tick bites to the need for membership recruitment in light of looming struggles. All postings sought to be specific to AOT garage workers and included photos of union members.

When priority issues arise, the Union Rep also regularly sent brief a text to the garage contacts/AOT union officers. These texts would ask the leaders to share the information with their co-workers, and/or to facilitate an action in support of one of their issues.

At times, the Union Rep also sent out general emails to AOT workers in general also highlighting recent union activity or challenges that union members need to be prepared for. Where appropriate, fee payers were also emailed on an issue. Where emails went to fee payers, the message always circled back to why their membership in the union is important and relevant to the issue at hand.

Rank & File Structure/Worksite Visits By The Numbers

What follows are the basic statistics for what has been achieved/maintained within AOT concerning this internal structure [note that no stats are included for AOT Project Development or Finance & Administration because these aspects of AOT are yet to be properly organized].

In the 64 garages/worksites for AOT Operations:

- 61 Are organized ("organized" meaning there is a union officer in the worksite responsible for specific union building tasks);
- 80 Total union officers/core activists (1 union officer/core activist for every 7 workers);
- 54 Garage contacts;
- 14 VSEA Council members (all allotted AOT Council seats are filled);

in the winter. Management agreed with labor's opinions, and this matter was favorably resolved.

Prior to 2016 (since 2013) this AOT Labor Management Committee has also successfully achieved the following improvements for AOT workers:

- **Union stewards afforded paid union leave to meet with new hires in their AOT Districts;**
- **Classified worker participation in all Hiring Committees (even for those convened to hire management positions);**
- **Appointment of a Union Liaison to the AOT Training Center.**

All told, the AOT Labor Management Committee for the garages continues to be productive in addressing issues of concern for union workers. There is no reason not to expect this committee to continue its positive trajectory in 2017.

At this time there are no other statewide Labor Management Committees in AOT. DMV has one local Labor Management Committee (South Burlington) which meets irregularly and were local branch issues are discussed. Some discussion has occurred with union officers about forming a statewide DMV Labor Management Committee that would meet twice a year. At the present time, the DMV Commissioner is not enthusiastic about forming such a meeting, and interest from DMV workers has been mild. This idea may be revisited in 2017. Other sections of AOT would prove challenging in forming a productive Labor Management Committee (for various reasons including a multitude of differing work responsibilities). Union members in these groups have not expressed strong interest in forming such committees at this time. Therefore there are no

plans to build Labor Management Committees in these other groupings in AOT.

AOT Union Leadership in the Garages

Together the stewards, Labor Management delegates, and bargaining team leaders, by default, constitute the top union leadership in AOT. The stewards & Labor Management delegates meet in person seasonally [discussed above] as part of the "training" program established by VSEA Educator Tim Lenoch (bargaining team members are also invited). At these meetings AOT union priorities are discussed and adopted for the coming quarter. Often these priorities involve the Labor Management Committee, but not exclusively and not always.

Issues (not directly related to the Labor Management Committee) that have been discussed at these AOT leadership meetings have included building union membership in the garages, and exploring the possibility of the Agency of Transportation seeking to become its own bargaining unit within VSEA. And of course the underlying garage contact system allows the AOT leaders a means to take meaningful action on priority issues. Prior to 2016, AOT union leaders also directed their Union Rep (myself) to provide them with monthly activity reports which track any and all progress on issues prioritized at these seasonal meetings [these monthly reports have been provided every month for two years, and are also forwarded to the VSEA Director of Field Services & Executive Director]. Providing these reports helps to create more accountability within AOT (for staff and leaders), and allows VSEA to track progress on issues over time.

These quarterly AOT (garage) leadership meetings have been a success not only in defining priorities & coordinating projects, but also have become a venue to better allow for union members/leaders to set the direction of their union; thus furthering the goal of realizing a member lead union. In 2017, these quarterly leadership meetings will continue.

Staff Worksite Visits

One advantage staff has over worker-union members is that staff is free to make time to visit all the worksites, and thereby get feedback from members on a multitude of issues. In turn staff are able to widen the conversation in the leadership meetings based on this feedback. This helps to better inform the union leadership when they are prioritizing issues and deciding on a course of action. Towards this end VSEA staff have done 98 worksite visits in the garages this year (in 2015 staff did 107). Of these 98, the Union Rep did 90 and a Union Organizer did 8 (in 2015 the Union Rep did 77 and Union Organizers/other staff-leaders did 30). All AOT garages were visited (in 2016 and 21015). In 2017 it should be expected that the Union Rep will again visit all the garages, and will complete between 70–100 garage visits.

In DMV there have been 9 worksite visits by VSEA staff (3 from the Union Rep and 6 from VSEA Organizers). It was expected that more visits would be done at DMV branches, and this work was to have been largely done by the assigned VSEA Organizer in the fall/early winter. However, the assigned Organizer left employment with VSEA, and is yet to be replaced. Therefore we have fallen behind in this area. In 2017, as we further build the local union contact structure in DMV, and as VSEA hires an Organizer to replace the one that left, it should be expected that all DMV branches will be visited by staff.

Also note that the Union Rep and Organizers have visited AOT workers stationed at the National Life complex in Montpelier on 5 occasions. National Life is the workplace for all or most workers in AOT Program Development and Finance & Administration, but also includes workers from Operations (who support the garages). Therefore these visits are logged as garage/worksite visits.

AOT Communications

In the garages, through the garage contacts, a system is in place which efficiently allows for the printing and posting of union information. Using this system, the Union Rep provided