

Council lobbied hard on living wage

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SANTA CRUZ — Calling it a "historic night" and challenging the progressive credentials of council members, dozens of labor activists, progressives, city employees and low-wage workers crowded the Santa Cruz Council Chamber Tuesday night to demand a vote on a living wage.

"I was proud, some years ago, that my mayor called himself a socialist," resident Fred Hirsch said. "If you don't vote for this proposal tonight, make a strong stand to enact a living wage, you're not going to be progressive anymore. You'll stop. You won't be able to call yourselves socialists anymore."

For the progressive-led council, the words were jarring. Councilman Mike Rotkin said he still considers himself a socialist and Councilwoman Katherine Beiers said every council member supports a so-called living wage.

Rotkin recited a litany of progressive actions the council has taken over the years. At 11 p.m., the council had yet to reach a decision, but both Rotkin and Beiers said they couldn't vote on the issue Tuesday because they didn't know where the money would come from.

Council members Cynthia Mathews and Michael Hernandez removed themselves from the discussion, citing conflicts of interest. Of the remaining five council members, four would need to vote for the proposal for it to pass.

The city is considering a living wage bill that would increase the hourly wage of city employees from \$7 to \$8 per hour to up to \$14 per hour. Living-wage ordinances have been passed throughout the country, but most only raise wages to about \$10 per hour. San Francisco and San Jose are considering similar proposals, and the

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