

PAY | Santa Cruz sets record with new living-wage law

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ships or unusual circumstances could appeal to the city council for an exemption.

Although the minimum is generous compared with other living wages, it's also perhaps more symbolic from the standpoint of Santa Cruz city workers. Only two current city employees, both of whom make \$9.74 an hour to set up the Loudon Nelson Community Center, make less than the adopted minimum.

Patty Haymond, a city analyst, said the city is not sure how many contract employees would be affected, but she said she had not heard of any opposition from for-profit employers, and none protested at Tuesday's meeting.

The big winners under the ordinance might be employees of non-profit groups who have contracts with the city. Responding to concerns from some non-profit agencies, the ordinance calls for the city to set aside \$250,000 to help such groups pay living wages to their employees.

Details about how the ordinance would apply to non-profit agencies, however, still need to be worked out.

Under the ordinance, the council also will consider annual adjustments to the minimum wage based on cost-of-living increases mea-

LIVING WAGE

The living wage ordinance adopted by the Santa Cruz City Council will cover most city employees and some others. Here's a look.

WHO'S COVERED

Full-time workers employed by the city of Santa Cruz.

Full-time workers employed by for-profit companies that have a contract to provide service with the city.

A plan also is being developed to provide the wage to full-time employees of non-profit agencies that contract with the city.

WHO'S NOT COVERED

Part-time employees.

Employees younger than 18.

Trainees.

Employees who work for a city contractor with fewer than six employees.

Source: City of Santa Cruz

sured by the Consumer Price Index for the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

The living wage would go into effect Thanksgiving Day if the council, which gave a preliminary unanimous approval Tuesday night, formally approves it, as expected, when the measure returns Oct. 24 for a second reading.

Council members said approving

the living-wage ordinance was a good first step toward helping city employees afford to live in Santa Cruz, where housing prices are sky high.

So high that the National Association of Home Builders Housing Opportunity Index released six weeks ago placed Santa Cruz as the second least-affordable community in the nation, behind only San Francisco.

The index defines affordability based on a comparison of wages and home prices within a community.

"We are experiencing the widest gap between rich and poor in this country, at a time when prosperity is unprecedented," said Amy Dean, founder of the non-profit Working Partnerships, which helped conduct the research used to draft the ordinance.

"The economics of living in Santa Cruz is a struggle," said Councilman Michael Hernandez. "We really need to strive to have greater benefits for our workers."

Representatives from the Living-wage Coalition plan to work toward getting similar ordinances passed in other parts of Santa Cruz County, where an increasing number of people no longer can afford to own or rent housing.

"We're hoping to work with every jurisdiction in the county," Werlin said. "We absolutely see this as the beginning."