

SC council postpones living-wage proposal

Living Wage
Sugar, Fitzmaurice,
Krohn fail to pass
interim measure

By **HEATHER BOERNER**

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Now that the City Council has postponed a decision on a living-wage ordinance, supporters of the proposal say they will redouble their efforts.

“Last night did not take us by surprise,”

SANTA CRUZ

Nora Hochman, a leader of the Coalition for a Living Wage, said Wednesday. “But our concern is that the ensuing delay of asking for more information will come up against the August recess.

“We’re very concerned that this ordinance be implemented no later than Sept. 1 because it cannot be discussed in a political context. It is not acceptable to make these workers pawns in electoral politics.”

The council does not meet in August and September, considered the beginning of the political season leading up to November’s council election.

Before the next council meeting July 11,

‘This is the biggest litmus test of all. In the political landscape of the city of Santa Cruz, this is the issue on which we test the council. ... They need to deliver in a significant way.’

NORA HOCHMAN, COALITION FOR A LIVING WAGE

Hochman said, coalition members plan to meet with council members Mike Rotkin and Katherine Beiers to ensure they feel they have the information they need to pass a living-wage ordinance.

Mayor Keith Sugar and councilmen Tim Fitzmaurice and Christopher Krohn voted Tuesday night in favor of providing city workers with a minimum wage of at least \$11 per hour while city officials work on finding ways to raise the amount. With the motion needing four votes for passage, and with council members Cynthia Mathews and Michael Hernandez abstaining because of conflicts, Fitzmaurice’s motion failed.

Rotkin and Beiers both said they supported the concept but could not vote for it without detailed information on costs and the city’s ability to cover them.

Under discussion are a minimum wage of anywhere from \$8 to \$14 per hour, with some proposals including benefits and others excluding them. At the meeting Tuesday, there was

some discussion about whether temporary employees would be included and whether increasing pay for the city’s lowest-paid workers would force the city later to increase pay for its higher paid workers. Cost estimates for the program range from \$800,000 to \$33 million.

Sugar said Wednesday he was disappointed the council hadn’t passed the ordinance and said he wasn’t sure how long it would take for Beiers and Rotkin to feel they have enough information.

“I think the information they need is there now,” the mayor said.

As members of her organization did Tuesday night, Hochman said she will continue to call the council’s progressive credentials into question until the proposal is passed.

“This is the biggest litmus test of all,” she said. “In the political landscape of the city of Santa Cruz, this is the issue on which we test the council. ... They need to deliver in a significant way.”