

Living wage: Council passes law

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service workers and about 100 for-profit contract employees of the city. The Service Employees International Union Local 415, with the council's approval on Oct. 10, is attempting to unionize the approximately 600 temporary city employees and raise their salaries as well.

The ordinance:

- raises the wages of permanent city employees;

- requires contractors who receive contracts with the city of more than \$10,000 to raise their wages in kind;

- creates a Living Wage Advisory Committee that will allocate funds and monitor city contractors to ensure they've raised their employees' wages; and

- creates an administrative assistant and an analyst position to administer the program.

The council also passed a resolution applying the same rules to Redevelopment Agency contracts.

But the ordinance's passage is only the first step. Fitzmaurice said there will be difficulties in implementing the social service section. The new advisory committee will be charged with sifting through the city's contracts with over 100 service providers to determine which workers are eligible for a living wage and how to determine whether the organizations are complying with the ordinance.

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BOB FITCH, CO-CHAIRMAN,
COALITION FOR A LIVING WAGE

The city ordinance is only one step in creating a living wage for everyone who works for a local government agency or social service group in the county. The coalition has already begun discussions with county officials and Watsonville city officials. Nora Hochman, coalition co-chairwoman, said part of the key to ensuring that social service providers pay their workers a living wage is to get other municipalities to agree to a similar package.

Bob Fitch, co-chairman of the coalition, said the impact of the ordinance will be two-fold.

"One is that, as a city resident, your tax dollars are no longer going to support poverty," he said. "The second is that for the city employees this affects, people will be going from \$7 per hour to \$11 per hour. That's a real serious change in someone's life. That's a real heart-felt sigh of relief."

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