

Community Advisory Board on the Living Wage

June 12, 2014

Minutes, Living Wage Advisory Board Meeting, June 11 2014

Members present: Terrence Smith, George Donahue, Nancy O'Brien, Lisa Yanakakis, David Slaney

Also in attendance: Sheila Keady Rawson, Personnel Department, James Williamson

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm and the Agenda was approved. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Current City statistics were presented by Sheila Keady Rawson. Of those 393 employees earning the Living Wage, 82% were working at the DHSP, with the remaining employees working in scattered departments across the City. 4% are over age 65, 56% under age 30. All of the positions are part time or seasonal. The current living wage is \$14.71 per hour.

Information received from the School department indicated that 14 of their employees are covered by the living wage. These positions are primarily tutors at the high school who participate in a college readiness program.

Sheila Keady Rawson reported that on the City side, step 1 of labor was now \$15.86 an hour, or approximately \$33000 annually at 40 hours. Lisa Yanakakis asked for information on how often people advance up through the step system, and Terrence Smith asked how the wage scale for the position was determined. Sheila Keady Rawson answered that steps typically progressed annually, and this position came under a collective bargaining agreement.

Before discussion of the next agenda item, Terrence Smith informed the committee that the City Council currently had before it an item sponsored by Councilor Mazen which proposes raising the minimum wage in Cambridge to \$15 per hour. James Williamson informed the group that there were questions on the Council order in terms of the legality of a municipality raising the minimum wage in Massachusetts, so the matter would be under review by the City's Law Department.

David Slaney had submitted proposals for discussion around increased publicity for the living wage, and having a decal program for businesses that pay the living wage. Mr. Slaney stated he would like to table discussion on the publicity proposal, stating that given the information about the proposed minimum wage it might not be helpful. He stated that he would prefer to have Dan O'Neil to explain, as it really began with him.

On the second proposal regarding the decal program, Mr. Slaney stated that he would like to move forward with discussion, as the \$15 minimum wage proposal might not pass, and he thought it would be helpful to see if the committee thought the decal program had merit. Mr. Smith reminded the Committee that the Living Wage ordinance states this group serves as an

advisor to the City Manager, so any recommendations should not be directed to the City Council. Mr. Slaney pointed out that copies of the proposal could still be sent to Council members. Mr. Smith invited James Williamson to comment and participate in the discussion as he wished.

Lisa Yanakakis raised the idea of asking the City Manger to look at the feasibility of the decal program, citing issues of resources particularly cost and staff time, as well as the enforceability of the program. David Slaney thought it made sense to ask that question. George Donohue raised the possibility that it might be better to get a legal opinion on whether this type of program was permissible. David Slaney stated that it would be great to get the ball rolling, as the issue of low wages was gaining nation attention.

James Williamson asked if it was possible to simplify the minimum wage/living wage issue by increasing the living wage to to \$15, then using that as a starting point for publicity.

Terrence Smith stated he thought that the program should be done outside the City organization structure by a community based entity. David Slaney responded that he didn't think it would be realistic for a private entity to take this on without financing, and also the imprimatur of a City seal of approval would be meaningful and effective. Terrence Smith mentioned allocation and funding issues that Local First had when it was started, and stated he would abstain from voting but felt the document was OK to send to the City Manager. The motion to send the proposal as amended passed on a 4 yes 1 abstain vote. David Slaney stated he would formalize the revisions and discussed and get final document to Sheila Keady Rawson.

The next meeting of the Advisory Board was set for September 17, 2014 at 6:00 PM.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:35 pm.

Minutes prepared by Sheila Keady Rawson for consideration by the Board.