

LINN COUNTY MINIMUM WAGE STUDY GROUP

Thursday, March 31, 2016 8:30 a.m.

Members in attendance: Nick AbouAssaly; Jill Ackerman; Aaron Anderson; Ron Corbett; Kim Etzel; Karla Goettel; Don Gray; Jim Houser; Pat Loeffler; Sofia Mehaffey; Rick Moyle; Ben Rogers; Kirsten Running-Marquardt (via phone); Susie Weinacht

Members absent: Aime Wichtendahl

Supervisor Rogers called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The group, along with interested members of the public in attendance, introduced themselves. Rogers noted that the group was appointed by the Board of Supervisors and that it is a recommending body, not a policy-making body. He asked if members had any input regarding the group's goals and objectives.

Mayor Corbett advised that he would be interested in a presentation on why Johnson County believed they had jurisdictional authority over setting a minimum wage. Ms. Goettel agreed and mentioned that Paul Iversen, an attorney with the University of Iowa Labor Center, is an expert in labor law and might be willing to make himself available to the group. Rogers asked that she speak to him about attending the next meeting and mentioned that we could include one of the assistant county attorneys as well.

Mayor Gray remarked that he believes this is an issue that should be left to the state; Rogers noted, however, that action by counties has in the past motivated the state to take its own action. He asked Rep. Running-Marquardt to comment on the possibility of the state acting on this issue. She advised the group that a minimum wage bill has been introduced in the legislature for the last several years and that this year the governor's office indicated they have some interest in it; however, nothing will come of it during this session. She believes the convening of this group is a good opportunity to allow the community to have input.

Mr. Moyle indicated that he agreed with the suggestion to have Paul Iversen make a presentation to the group; he also suggested inviting Peter Fisher of the Iowa Policy Project. Rogers distributed to the group a paper authored by Mr. Fisher regarding the minimum wage. He also advised that while the group's purpose is to analyze the issue, it is also an opportunity to help educate the public on the issue and dispel myths. He noted the many exemptions to the minimum wage provided for by the state and in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Ms. Goettel remarked that she has a list of the exemptions and will provide them to Rogers via email, which he can then forward to the entire group.

With regard to future meetings, the group agreed to a standard 8:30 a.m. meeting time; Rogers advised that a doodle poll will be sent for purposes of scheduling the next meeting. Upon motion and second, Ben Rogers was unanimously voted Chair of the Study Group. Rogers invited public comment from those in attendance.

Madeline Cano advised that she is with Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, and she expressed her interest in learning how the Supervisors made the decision to form this study group. She also noted her belief that minimum wage workers in Linn County should have a seat at the table.

Scott Smith of the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Building Trades Council remarked that extensive legal research was done in Johnson County prior to the passage of its minimum wage ordinance and noted that Johnson County follows all state and federal exemptions.

Hannah Kustes of Abode Construction expressed her hope that unbiased comprehensive analysis is done throughout this process.

In response to Ms. Cano's question, Rogers advised that the impetus for forming the study group was Johnson County's action. Linn County wanted to get out in front of the issue and not repeat Johnson County's process, which many felt was rushed.

Ms. Mehaffey also responded to Ms. Cano with regard to minimum wage workers having a place at the table; she reported that while she is no longer a part of that group, as a Horizons employee she works every day with people in the community who struggle to raise their families on minimum wage, so she feels she is at the table to represent them.

Mr. Moyle announced to the group that the Hawkeye Labor Council is sponsoring a workshop on the minimum wage on April 7 at 6 p.m. Mr. Iversen of the University of Iowa Labor Center will be making a presentation, and anyone interested is invited to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.