

East African Community Session Summary

January 26, 2017

General comments:

- I'm in favor of the minimum wage - the City has spent money on a stadium and now they need to do something to benefit workers.
- I work with low income workers (elderly, single mothers, etc.) who aren't able to make ends meet. Poverty impacts social life, public life, etc. and leaves very unfavorable conditions in the community. The person who gets everything will never understand the pain of poverty. People who live well below the poverty level need to have a decent income. This issue needs a human face. If the minimum wage is not increased, there will be people who can't afford to live in MN or in US.
- I have a technical degree and work in a blue collar job. Not making a living wage eats away at your mental and physical health. We should have a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The cost of a lower wage eventually comes out in other ways such as poor health. Businesses are doing well enough. The City needs to stop giving subsidies to businesses and stadiums. There is too much business influence in City Hall already that prevents minimum wage from passing.
- How is small business owner defined? When you have a higher wage requirement, industry fails and no one can get work, we all fail. Need to consider the size and type of business.
- We go to work, leave early in the morning, but don't bring in enough money. We keep working hard, yet I don't hear companies raising wages. We make a wage, but have to make payments. I would support anyone that would do anything about this situation. We are tired of politicians getting our votes, but not doing anything for us. We are supporting politicians who work for us and advocate for us.
- Everyone can empathize with small businesses needing to make it, but what is frustrating is at what cost we favor small business struggles. What else can the City Council do to make sure that small businesses can survive and not starve workers?
- I support a \$15 an hour minimum wage. I'm a single mom who raised 5 kids on my own. I understand the struggle of supporting family, but not making high enough wages. \$15 an hour is still low but the proposed wage shouldn't be lower than that.

- City could be moving in the right direction with \$15 an hour minimum wage. Gentrification is a big issue and rents are increasing, but wages are not and low wage workers are being pushed out of the city. Someone would need to make \$17 - \$20 an hour to afford current rent levels. There is a conflict between raising housing prices and raising wages, and not supporting affordable housing - the City Council/elected officials are sending mix messages.
- This is a great cause that should be supported. We need to raise the wage to support the community. My business could support a higher minimum wage.
- People couldn't come to the session because they are working. There is a statewide ban on rent control so landlords can raise rents as much as they want and we're in a rent/housing crisis. Affordable housing is not in good condition and not raising the minimum wage is allowing for more homelessness and people living on the margins who can't make ends-meet.
- There is a myth spreading about raising the minimum wage will negatively impact the economy, but data shows that raising the wage actually stimulates the economy.
- If you give people enough money to live on they will take care of themselves. If you force people to live in poverty, then the city has to pay for more social services to support community members.
- My father owns a seasonal business and pays above the minimum wage. As a result, he saves money on re-training employees because he's able to retain workers. Youth workers are sometimes important contributors to household incomes so should not be exempt from making a higher minimum wage.
- If an increase minimum wage is phased in for small businesses it would have a lesser impact on their bottom line.
- Keeping wages consistent throughout industry would help to prevent loop holes.
- We need to value labor for what it.
- Workers living in cities or states that have a tip penalty are more likely to live in poverty.

- I only made more than minimum wage occasionally. Tips are very dependent on a number of outside factors and I would have rather been paid a higher wage then depend on tips.
- Tips can also be based on decisions of management and you're subject to if they like you, they put you in a good section etc. so they shouldn't count as wages.
- Having a higher minimum wage promotes investment back into the company.
- For contract workers, their wages will often mimic wages of people around them. If the minimum wage is low, they will be paid low. Work is not consistent and contract workers are often paid minimum wage.
- Minneapolis should take the first step to put pressure on other cities to raise their minimum wages.
- We have a moral opportunity to positively impact poverty. Minneapolis can be one of the first cities to make a statement about the importance of paying a fair wage.
- Why is it so hard for me to start a small business and get government support? We need better small business support. If Minneapolis was to raise the wage it would have a strong likelihood of becoming a statewide policy.
- I have seen the struggle with the minimum wage. The city should already have a higher wage.
- We use money to make statement about someone's worth, but we need to see money and wages as a tool.
- Having a Minneapolis only policy would attract better workers and community members who would have more money to invest in their business.
- I am a business owner in the West Bank and support a minimum wage increase because I know that if my customers have more money, they will spend more money. Community members in Cedar Riverside spend money in the community so a higher wage is better for business.
- It takes a lot to mobilize the community and change happens slowly so if a minimum wage increase is passed it should be a \$15 an hour instead of starting from a lower wage first.

- The City should frame the question around how we can help businesses to support them paying a \$15 an hour wage, not how a minimum wage policy will affect them.
- The study came out and showed that 71,000 workers would benefit from an increase the minimum wage and yet the City Council blocked a vote to increase the wage based on community member signatures, Instead it sent a directive to staff to explore the issue. City council needs to listen to community members.

Comments in response to what considerations the City should take into account if moving forward on a minimum wage policy:

- If there is difference in the wage types of businesses have to pay then it will allows small businesses to continue to perpetuate poverty. The City could consider offering incentives or assistance to small business.
- Consider including an exception that allows employers to pay youth workers a training wage, but allowing a training wage will allow big businesses to find a loop hole.