

Council Delays Workforce Law

The Santa Fe City Council unanimously voted Wednesday to delay implementing a “community workforce agreement” ordinance requiring union wages, membership and working conditions on city building projects.

City officials will meet with union leaders, contractors and others to create guidelines and administrative procedures for the ordinance.

“It became apparent additional time was needed to implement those procedures,” City Attorney Geno Zamora said.

Originally approved in late February, the law will now become effective Oct. 1.

There was little debate about the delay, though councilors did ask for some clarifications on the new law.

According to a January city memo, a community workforce agreement is a “pre-hire collective bargaining agreement that sets out in detail the terms of employment and hiring for all workers on large scale public works constructions projects.”

All workers on a project governed by a community workforce agreement must belong to a union, although they can join just for the duration of a project.

Under the new law, on all city public works and construction projects over \$500,000, the city pays union wages and follows union-mandated working conditions relating to hiring, hours worked, overtime, holidays and grievance procedures, in exchange for unions agreeing to not strike, complete projects in a timely manner, follow certain procedures for resolving problems and allow non-union workers and contractors to work on projects.

City advocates say union involvement streamlines the process for managing wages, ensures safe working conditions and provides specialized training. Having such a measure in place will also benefit the city by ensuring high productivity and work quality, according to city officials.

Ray Baca, executive director of the New Mexico Building and Construction Trades Council, said unions actually suggested the city delay the ordinance.

“We don’t want there to be any major glitches. We want it to be successful. We want the city to get the best possible value on all construction projects,” Baca said.

Baca said having community workforce agreements in place will provide the city with high value on construction projects and ensure workers are paid and treated fairly.

Groups such as the Associated Builders and Contractors of New Mexico argue that community workforce agreements may raise the cost of public works projects by 20 percent, impose burdens on contractors and constitute a “special interest scheme.”

They say laws are already in place to ensure workers are paid good wages and have safe working conditions.

In response to contentions that the ordinance passed without much notice, Zamora noted the measure had five public hearings.

Agreement Now Effective Oct. 1 See COUNCIL on PAGE 3 Council Delays Workforce Agreement from PAGE 1 “We don’t want there to be any major glitches. ... We want the city to get the best possible value on all construction projects.” RAY BACA, N.M. BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

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