

...PDC construction wage policy will be amended Jan. 24

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programs when no women or minority apprentices are otherwise available." The policy makes no reference to open-shop contractors.

"The clear intent was to include open-shop contractors as well," Jackley said. "It will be those types of technical changes" that the Board will make on Jan. 24.

Other terms of the construction wage policy include:

- PDC will appoint a Wage Rate

Oversight Group that includes PDC, union and nonunion representatives, women in trades, the minority community, the construction industry and other stakeholders to review the affirmative action report and make recommendations.

- Environmental remediation and demolition shall be done consistent with current BOLI rules.

- Contractors that are on the BOLI list of ineligible cannot participate in construction projects subject to the

wage policy.

- Projects constructed privately that include public and private ownership may be separated for the purposes of this policy.

- When the total floor area of publicly-owned space is less than 50 percent of the total floor area of the combined public/private space, the policy will not apply to the construction of the privately-owned space unless that portion of the project receives \$1 million or more in PDC resources.

- Any project that is constructed which will be owned by the public is subject to the policy.

Jackley told the NW Labor Press that PDC will act as the monitor and enforcer of the new construction wage policy.

Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner said his agency will continue enforcing state prevailing wage laws. "Regardless of their new policy, if we receive a complaint about a PDC project, we will apply the state law as

it is currently written," he said.

The threshold for applying state prevailing wage rates on a public project in Oregon is \$50,000.

John Mohlis, executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council, said the PDC's new construction wage policy "is a good starting point. It's not perfect, but there is a process for fine tuning it."

Mohlis was appointed by Mayor Tom Potter to a vacant seat on the PDC Board. His nomination was confirmed by City Council on Jan. 17. Mohlis' first Board meeting as a commissioner will be at the next regular meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 24, when amendments to the policy will be heard. The meeting starts at 8 a.m. at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, 4134 N. Vancouver Ave., Portland.

Seattle stiffens wage enforcement on low-income housing projects

SEATTLE — Stricter enforcement of prevailing wage rules on all city-financed low-income housing projects began Jan. 1 in Seattle.

The new policy revises how the City of Seattle deals with developers, contractors and subcontractors who receive loans and other public subsidies for the construction and rehabilitation of low-income housing. Under the new policy:

- Developers will be required to certify that their general contractors and subcontractors are paying the state-mandated prevailing wage for each job classification.

- Contractors must pay either the federal Davis-Bacon required wage or the state prevailing wage, whichever is higher.

- Contractors will be required to inform workers in English and Spanish about prevailing wage laws and they must maintain payroll records for inspection.

- Workers must sign in and out at the job site daily, identifying the contractor or subcontractor for whom they are working, their job classification, and their wage rate.

- The City's Department of Executive Administration will conduct random on-site audits to ensure wage rate compliance, and a new City position

will be created to ensure compliance.

"This is an example of people in authority doing the right thing for the right reason," said Eric Franklin, spokesman for the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, which along with the Painters Union assisted in drafting and moving the enforcement policy forward.

Franklin said the city is not legally obligated to pay prevailing wages on low-income housing projects.

Adrienne Quinn, director of the Office of Housing, which administers the programs and helps leverage additional funding to develop projects, confirmed that. "A prevailing wage policy is not required," she said. "These are internal benchmarks set by the mayor and our department."

In 2002, the voters of Seattle passed a seven-year, \$86 million union-backed property tax levy to provide affordable housing opportunities for low-income residents. The housing levy contained language "encouraging" contractors to comply with the City's fair contracting practices ordinance. The ordinance "aspires to utilize" more women and minority businesses, and contractors that offer apprenticeship training, but does not mandate it.

Mayor Greg Nickels and the Office

of Housing later added prevailing wage benchmarks whereby contractors and subcontractors on low-income housing projects were required to sign documents stating that they paid employees prevailing wages and benefits.

Quinn told the NW Labor Press that her department looked at the paperwork and that on its face, everything looked fine. "We're basically a bank. Our employees are underwriters, so if the records looked fine that was it."

However, the Carpenters and Painters unions had been logging instances of contractors cheating workers — who are primarily Latino — on wages and benefits on several of the housing projects. Union officials took that information to Quinn.

"She was very bold. She put staff on it, she held public meetings and basically pushed it forward," said Clark Gilman of the Carpenters Union.

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