

Minimum wage in SF set to rise 1.3%

By Mark Oswald / Journal Staff Writer

Saturday, December 28th, 2013 at 12:05am

SANTA FE, N.M. — Santa Fe's required nationally exceptional minimum wage is going up again, as of March 1, but probably not as much as in recent years.

City spokeswoman Jodi Porter said Friday that the hourly "living wage" rate required for all workers in the city limits is expected to go up by about 1.3 percent.

That would add roughly 14 cents to the current \$10.51 city minimum wage, for a new rate of \$10.65 an hour.

The precise amount of the raise will depend on final 2013 numbers for a federally determined annual consumer price index for the western United States. The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics has already posted CPI data for the first 11 months of the year.

Santa Fe's living wage ordinance ties the city's minimum wage to annual increases in the CPI. The final, official rate for the 2014 living wage is expected to be announced in mid-January, Porter said.

The new rate should keep Santa Fe's minimum wage as the second-highest in the country. San Francisco's minimum wage of \$10.55 will go up to \$10.74 on New Year's Day.

Santa Fe Mayor David Coss has made sticking with the living wage and its annual increases a focus of his eight-year tenure, citing it as part of "an economy that works for everyone" in his final State of the City speech in October.

He's also repeatedly rebuffed critics by citing jobs and growth rate statistics for Santa Fe that have surpassed other cities in the state and region.

In recent years, there have been hints that the City Council may consider capping the wage, but there has been no official proposal or council debate.

Simon Brackley, president and CEO of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, said Friday the chamber still wants to see the living wage "de-linked" from the cost-of-living index.

"We'd like to see Santa Fe governed by the same labor laws as the rest of New Mexico," Brackley said. "We don't think Santa Fe businesses should have to accommodate a different set of regulations, with no ceiling on the minimum wage."

The living wage ordinance was originally adopted in 2002, with an initial rate of \$8.50 an hour and a provision for regular increases that would have meant a rate of \$10.50 by 2008.

In late 2007, after negotiations with the business community, the City Council axed the planned increase to \$10.50 and replaced it with the annual cost-of-living adjustment.

Over the past few years, Santa Fe and San Francisco have traded places for the highest minimum wage. Santa Fe was on top in 2012 at \$10.29 an hour.

Brackley said he'd argue that the Santa Fe economy is "much more vulnerable" and in no way comparable to San Francisco's. "It continues to be difficult for us to recruit companies to Santa Fe when our mandated minimum" is so high, he said.

He said there are city councilors ready to consider a cap on the wage rate, but "it's election season and that's not

traditionally a time for spinal fortitude.”

The Santa Fe minimum wage went up 22 cents last March and had an even bigger jump – from \$9.85 to \$10.29 – in 2012, when two years of CPI increases were factored in because city officials forgot to make the required increase in 2011.

New Mexico’s state minimum wage is \$7.50 an hour. Albuquerque has a minimum wage of \$8.50 an hour that increases to \$8.60 on New Year’s Day, or \$7.60 if the employer provides certain benefits.