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Page: 13

Exemption Sought In Living Wage Law

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The Omaha City Council will consider removing recipients of a certain kind of federal grant from the reach of the living - wage ordinance. Councilman Frank Brown has proposed that the federal Community Development Block Grant not be one of the kinds of financial assistance that triggers the living wage.

The council passed the living - wage ordinance last month and overrode Mayor Hal Daub's veto 15 days ago. The ordinance requires companies that receive at least \$75,000 in financial assistance from the city, or a city contract of that amount, to pay their workers at least \$8.19 an hour plus health insurance.

Brown said Tuesday that he believed federal block grant money was not affected by the ordinance. But he said City Attorney Paul Kratz advised him that the exemption should be specified to remove any doubts.

Brown said his proposal, which tentatively will be voted on early next month, had nothing to do with the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce's contention the living - wage measure dissuaded a company from seriously considering locating at the North Omaha Business Park. The industrial park is in Brown's district.

Two council members, Paul Koneck and Marc Kraft, expressed skepticism Tuesday that there ever was any such business. The chamber has declined to name the company, saying that would betray a trust. (7)

"Personally," Kraft said of the chamber's assertion, "I think that was a contrived statement." (7)

Natalie Peetz, a chamber vice president, said it wasn't contrived. (7)

"I don't lie," Peetz said after the council meeting. "They're basically calling us liars, and that's unfortunate." (7)

In other action, the council:

Gave a \$731,364 contract to **Daedalus** Construction Co. for the reconstruction of Dodge Street from 67th to 69th Streets.

Approved the **Abbott Drive Plaza** redevelopment plan, a \$6 million project near 15th Street and Abbott Drive. The project will provide for a motel, restaurant and fast - food outlet. About \$495,000 in tax - increment financing will be used.

Signed agreements with New Community Development Corp. involving \$400,000 in federal community development money for construction of 10 houses in northeast Omaha and \$280,000 for seven others in the same vicinity.

Purchased two pieces of heavy machinery from Nebraska Machinery Co.: a crane for \$176,898 and a bulldozer for \$149,907. The council also agreed to spend \$128,933 for a grader from Murphy Tractor & Equipment Co.

Denied the Human Relations Department's proposal to buy a new copying machine.