

15/Now Tacoma Minutes, 02/23/2019

Attendance:

COORDINATORS: Facilitator: *Ryan T, Note Taker, Alan OS.*

ATTENDEES: *Nancy F, Ryan T, Alan OS, Anthony J, Sarah M, Chris B*

Introductions:

Attendees briefly identified themselves.

Reports/Discussion

Ryan T briefly reported on our initial meeting discussion and that we had decided to hold another meeting to continue strategizing. This is that second meeting. He asked attendees what attendees thought was the state of Tacoma's left, the labor movement here, and what our focus should be.

Anthony, a marketing representative of local 252 of Laborers Union, said that the \$15/hour minimum wage demand is a desirable thing. He said that in the public mind, \$15/hour has become a mindset. Nationally, \$15 might have originally seemed high. But later \$15/hour became accepted as a reasonable demand in many places and here locally.

However, he said that most workers tend to feel overworked. Workers often find the 8-hour day, 40-hour work week to be pretty draining. He feels that in the real world, the \$15/hour minimum wage might be more suitable for 40-hour-a-week workers but might prove to be inadequate for part-time employees.

Anthony described the need for us to find a point of focus. He said his union had liberals, conservatives, and even radicals. However, the union does not focus on these differences. Instead, the union focuses on such issues as contract negotiations and enforcement, as well as on working conditions.

Nancy mentioned that various states and local regions had already passed minimum wage laws that exceeded the federal minimum wage (\$7.25 since 2009). She hopes that Bernie Sanders can make the \$15/hour a campaign issue and, if elected, get it enacted. She also wondered if we should set the minimum wage at \$20/hour. Someone suggested a slogan "20 for 20," and Alan and Nancy liked it.

Sarah said she has not been focused much on political matters since moving from Pierce County and other changes in her personal situation. She came mostly to support and encourage Ryan T. She is interested in quality-of-life and environmental issues. When she becomes more familiar with the political situation in her new community, she will decide what she wants to focus on politically. In general, she feels that workers will get a fair deal only after socialism has replaced capitalism.

Chris, a new City of Tacoma Council Member, said he was interested in the minimum wage. He said that there was a group of more progressive-minded council members who might support a \$15/hour minimum wage. When asked, he mentioned Anders Ibsen and Ryan Mello. He thought others perhaps might go along with a rise in the minimum wage. He is willing to discuss this matter with his colleagues on the City Council.

Chris said he was not overly familiar with what had happened last time around. Alan gave a brief description of the old 15/Now Tacoma's interaction with the city council and described some details of the personal interactions he had had with both Councilmember Ibsen and

Councilmember Mello regarding this issue, as well as their lack of support for our initiative. Instead they had favored the much more conservative counter-measure that the Mayor had asked the council to put on the ballot.

Ryan T asks the group if we should have a focus on a minimum wage initiative again or perhaps have some other focus. He asks how wide our focus should be. He is interested in activities that encourage redistributing power into the hands of workers. For example, he wants to help build a left caucus in his union. He wants to encourage unions to be more independent. He is also interested in ending laws that permit at-will employment. He feels the law should require employers to justify firings. Ryan T says he's not in favor of begging the authorities for concessions, and he thought that petitioning the City Council last time was too weak because we had come hat-in-hand.

When Nancy posed the question of what we could do, Ryan T said educating people about wealth inequality and the desirability of passing laws to make wealth distribution more equitable could be part of our strategy. Nancy said an example of educating workers about these types of issues was Sarah Morken's campaign for city council. Sarah had managed to create a lot of interest, and her campaign involved many new people into workers' issues.

Alan seconded Nancy's observations about Sarah's campaign. He also said he liked what Anthony had said about his union focusing narrowly on labor issues. Alan felt we should also be focused on an issue like the minimum wage.

We should be non-exclusionary and nonpartisan. We should welcome all people, irrespective of their political, social, or religious views, so long as they agreed to support our focus.

That means we should be independent from Republican, Democratic, or other party's electoral efforts.

Alan said that unions shot themselves in the foot when they support the capitalist candidates of the Republican or Democratic parties. Workers would be better served if unions ran politically independent candidates as champions for labor or even by forming a labor party to run candidates.

Alan also said that the old 15/Now Tacoma had won an important though partial victory. He referred to an editorial he wrote about that and asked if attendees would like a link to it. Attendees seemed interested.

The old 15/Now campaign was not just begging for reforms. Instead, we demanded this reform and fought for it all the way. Our uncompromising campaign eventually forced the City to raise the minimum wage against their original intention. The mayor conceded this in a public statement.

Next Meeting Plans:

COORDINATORS

- **Facilitator:** Ryan T
- **Note Taker:** Alan OS

LOGISTICS:

- **Event:** General Meeting for further discussion.
- **Time and place:** TBA

Adjournment:

At 5:00 PM