

GENERAL SERVICES AGENCY
OFFICE OF LABOR STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT
PATRICK MULLIGAN, DIRECTOR



SWEATFREE PROCUREMENT ADVISORY GROUP
Minutes from October 30, 2024, 3:00 pm

Members Present: Coyote Marin, Julie Fisher, John Logan, Samuel Thomas

Members Excused: Conchita Lozano Batista, Jason Oringer

City Staff Present: Pat Mulligan, Hallie Albert, Shawn Peeters

WRC Present: Ben Hensler

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

With the change to date listed, the October 30, 2024, meeting agenda was adopted without opposition.

PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

- What the group does is great and is a small step forward.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of June 13, 2024, meeting were reviewed, update to correct Samuel's last name from Taylor to Thomas and a typo, and adopted without opposition.

WRC UPDATE

Ben Hensler reviewed the inspection of the Northstar MFG factory on the Thai-Burma border, summarizing what was presented last meeting about the 2018 investigation and remediation obtained. Outreach was conducted in 2023 and WRC received complaints. WRC investigated and found that the improvements made pursuant to the 2018 investigation were sustaining but pregnant workers were experiencing mistreatment and violations of Thai law.

Sixteen pregnant workers – ten current and six former – were owed \$34,000, \$2125 per worker or 7.75 months' worth of wages. The majority of the sixteen were paid in September and October and payments will be completed in November. One worker is still in Myanmar and a migrant workers organization is holding her money until she can retrieve it.

WRC is hopeful other affected workers will come forward and they continue to work on remediation of all occupational health and safety hazards identified in the May 2024 factory inspection, including temperature and ergonomic concerns.

OCA was able to get more factory disclosures from Muscatello's and WRC is currently conducting outreach.

OCA UPDATE

Shawn Peeters reviewed the forms OCA uses. They changed the status to "complete" per the prior request from the SPAG. Peeters reviewed the changes to the 12U collection form given to suppliers to better retrieve the information WRC needs to do their outreach work. The onus is on the supplier to comply with the ordinance and disclosures and WRC can then hold them accountable.

Coyote Marin asked about section two and whether the subcontractors have trouble getting the relevant information. Peeters said it is incumbent on them to provide that information and WRC will affirm. Hensler said the form should add the URL to the living wage rate table on the OLSE website.

John Logan inquired what “complete” means. Peeters said it infers that all disclosures were received and Hensler confirmed that WRC has not received all information required to be disclosed on the form. Peeters said the chart provided does not include any contracts exempt from 12U so no need to note exempt contracts.

Hensler said WRC has returned to historic level of disclosures after a struggle to receive the info from Muscatello’s.

Pat Mulligan inquired whether WRC ever received incorrect information. Hensler said it is a “moving target” as there is a shifting network of suppliers. WRC once went to a factory in China and it clearly was not where the manufacturing work was being performed so they had to chase down the factory in Myanmar.

Julie Fisher inquired about a Banner contract that was listed as ending in 2028 and Peeters clarified that was a typo and should read 2025. Logan asked about WRC’s long-established relationships with companies and whether the ordinance is effective in changing behavior. Hensler explained that at the start it was more contentious because companies did not understand their obligations under the ordinance. Now, companies are more responsive to WRC’s inspections and they often do not need to loop in the suppliers because the factory cooperates. The City’s manufacturing volume is small in relation to the greater industry so companies do not tailor their practices to the City contracts.

Logan spoke about the NYTimes reporting on forced labor and child labor and how when Hensler first began doing factory oversight work there was a lot of excitement around reforming the garment industry. He asked if Hensler thinks the focus should now be elsewhere and not just on garments, such as lithium mining for cell phones. Hensler said the apparel industry has sustained the focus of labor rights and there are no longer the types of gross violations they used to see, like child labor. A discussion ensued on the garment industry, as it relates to other industries and the need for oversight and accountability by groups like WRC. Fisher raised the need for sweatfree enforcement in the electronics manufacturing industry and Peeters explained that 12U does not extend to those industries. Fisher asked for agenda item at the next meeting to discuss expanding 12U to electronics.

CONTRACT RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

The group agreed to wait until the other members are back to discuss the next steps.

POTENTIAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Electronics monitoring. Hallie Albert agreed to see if Bjorn Skorpen Claeson or someone else from Electronics Watch could present.