

ARTICLE VI. LIVABLE WAGES¹

21-80 Findings and purpose.

In enacting this article, the city council states the following findings and purposes:

- (a) Income from full-time work should be sufficient to meet an individual's basic needs;
- (b) The City of Burlington is committed to ensuring that its employees have an opportunity for a decent quality of life and are compensated such that they are not dependent on public assistance to meet their basic needs;
- (c) The City of Burlington is committed, through its contracts with vendors and provision of financial assistance, to encourage the private sector to pay its employees a livable wage and contribute to employee health care benefits;
- (d) The creation of jobs that pay livable wages promotes the prosperity and general welfare of the City of Burlington and its residents, increases consumer spending with local businesses, improves the economic welfare and security of affected employees and reduces expenditures for public assistance;
- (e) It is the intention of the city council in passing this article to provide a minimum level of compensation for employees of the City of Burlington and employees of entities that enter into service contracts or receive financial assistance from the City of Burlington.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-81 Definitions.

As used in this article, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) *Contractor or vendor* is a person or entity that has a service contract with the City of Burlington where the total amount of the service contract or service contracts exceeds fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) for any twelve (12) month period, including any subcontractors of such contractor or vendor.
- (b) *Grantee* is a person or entity that is the recipient of financial assistance from the City of Burlington in the form of grants, including any contractors or subgrantees of the grantee, that exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) for any twelve (12) month period.

(c) *Covered employer* means the City of Burlington, a contractor or vendor or a grantee as defined above. The primary contractor, vendor, or grantee shall be responsible for the compliance of each of its subcontractors (or of each subgrantee) that is a covered employer.

(d) *Covered employee* means an "employee" as defined below, who is employed by a "covered employer," subject to the following:

(1) An employee who is employed by a contractor or vendor is a "covered employee" during the period of time he or she expends on furnishing services under a service contract with the City of Burlington, notwithstanding that the employee may be a temporary or seasonal employee;

(2) An employee who is employed by a grantee who expends at least half of his or her time on activities funded by the City of Burlington is a "covered employee."

(e) *Designated accountability monitor* shall mean a nonprofit corporation which has established and maintains valid nonprofit status under Section [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and that is independent of the parties it is monitoring.

(f) *Employee* means a person who is employed on a full-time or part-time regular basis. In addition, commencing with the next fiscal year, a seasonal or temporary employee of the City of Burlington who works ten (10) or more hours per week and has been employed by the City of Burlington for a period of four (4) years shall be considered a covered employee commencing in the fifth year of employment. "Employee" shall not refer to volunteers working without pay or for a nominal stipend, persons working in an approved apprenticeship program, persons who are hired for a prescribed period of six (6) months or less to fulfill the requirements to obtain a professional license as an attorney, persons who are hired through youth employment programs or student workers or interns participating in established educational internship programs.

(g) *Employer-assisted health care* means health care benefits provided by employers for employees (or employees and their dependents) at the employer's cost or at an employer contribution towards the purchase of such health care benefits, provided that the employer cost or contribution consists of at least one dollar and twenty cents (\$1.20) per hour. (Said amount shall be adjusted every two (2) years for inflation, by the chief administrative officer of the city.)

(h) *Livable wage* has the meaning set forth in Section [21-82](#).

(i) *Retaliation* shall mean the denial of any right guaranteed under this article, and any threat, discipline, discharge, demotion, suspension, reduction of hours, or any other adverse action against an employee for exercising any right guaranteed under this article. Retaliation shall also include coercion, intimidation, threat, harassment, or interference in any manner with any investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this article.

(j) *Service contract* means a contract primarily for the furnishing of services to the City of Burlington (as opposed to the purchasing or leasing of goods or property). A contract involving the furnishing of financial products, insurance products, or software, even if that contract also includes some support or other services related to the provision of the products, shall not be considered a service contract.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-82 Livable wages required.

(a) Every covered employer shall pay each and every covered employee at least a livable wage no less than:

(1) For a covered employer that provides employer assisted health care, the livable wage shall be at least thirteen dollars and ninety-four cents (\$13.94) per hour on the effective date of the amendments to this article.

(2) For a covered employer that does not provide employer assisted health care, the livable wage shall be at least fifteen dollars and eighty-three cents (\$15.83) per hour on the effective date of the amendments to this article.

(3) Covered employees whose wage compensation consists of more or other than hourly wages, including, but not limited to, tips, commissions, flat fees or bonuses, shall be paid so that the total of all wage compensation will at least equal the livable wage as established under this article.

(b) The amount of the livable wage established in this section shall be adjusted by the chief administrative officer of the city as of July 1 of each year based upon a report of the Joint Fiscal Office of the State of Vermont that describes the basic needs budget for a single person but utilizes a model of two (2) adults residing in a two (2) bedroom living unit in an urban area with the moderate cost food plan. Should there be no such report from the Joint Fiscal Office, the chief administrative officer shall obtain and utilize a basic needs budget that applies a similar methodology. The livable wage rates derived from utilizing a model of two (2) adults residing in a two (2) bedroom living unit in an urban area with a moderate cost food plan shall not become effective until rates meet or exceed the 2010 posted livable wage rates. Prior to May 1 preceding any such adjustment and prior to

May 1 of each calendar year thereafter, the chief administrative officer will provide public notice of this adjustment by posting a written notice in a prominent place in City Hall by sending written notice to the city council and, in the case of covered employers that have requested individual notice and provided contact information to the chief administrative officer, by notice to each such covered employer. However, once a livable wage is applied to an individual employee, no reduction in that employee's pay rate is permissible due to this annual adjustment.

(c) Covered employers shall provide at least twelve (12) compensated days off per year for full-time covered employees, and a proportionate amount for part-time covered employees, for sick leave, vacation, personal, or combined time off leave.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 5-2-11; Ord. of 6-13-11; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-83 Applicability.

(a) This article shall apply to any service contract or grant, as provided by this article that is awarded or entered into after the effective date of the article. After the effective date of the article, entering into any agreement or an extension, renewal or amendment of any contract or grant as defined herein shall be subject to compliance with this article.

(b) The requirements of this article shall apply during the term of any service contract subject to the article. Covered employers who receive grants shall comply with this article during the period of time the funds awarded by the City of Burlington are being expended by the covered employer.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-84 Enforcement.

(a) Each service contract or grant covered by this article shall contain provisions requiring that the covered employer or grantee submit a written certification, under oath, during each year during the term of the service contract or grant, that the covered employer or grantee (including all of its subcontractors and subgrantees, if any) is in compliance with this article. The failure of a contract to contain such provisions does not excuse a covered employer from its obligations under this article. The covered employer shall agree to post a notice regarding the applicability of this section in any workplace or other location where employees or other persons contracted for employment are working. The covered employer shall agree to provide payroll records or other documentation for itself and any subcontractors or subgrantees, as deemed necessary by the chief

administrative officer of the City of Burlington, within ten (10) business days from receipt of the City of Burlington's request.

(b) The chief administrative officer of the City of Burlington may require that a covered employer submit proof of compliance with this article at any time, including but not limited to:

- (1) Verification of an individual employee's compensation;
- (2) Production of payroll, health insurance enrollment records, or other relevant documentation; or
- (3) Evidence of proper posting of notice.

If a covered employer is not able to provide that information within ten (10) business days of the request, the chief administrative officer may turn the matter over to the city attorney's office for further enforcement proceedings.

(c) The City of Burlington shall appoint a designated accountability monitor that shall have the authority:

- (1) To inform and educate employees of all applicable provisions of this article and other applicable laws, codes, and regulations;
- (2) To create a telephonic and electronic accountability system under this article that shall be available at all times to receive complaints under this article;
- (3) To establish and implement a system for processing employees' complaints under this article, including a system for investigating complaints and determining their initial credibility; and
- (4) To refer credible complaints to the city attorney's office for potential enforcement action under this article.

The designated accountability monitor shall forward to the City of Burlington all credible complaints of violations within ten (10) days of their receipt.

(d) Any covered employee who believes his or her covered employer is not complying with this article may file a complaint in writing with the city attorney's office within one (1) year after the alleged violation. The city attorney's office shall conduct an investigation of the complaint, during which it may require from the covered employer evidence such as may be required to determine whether the covered employer has been compliant, and shall make a finding of compliance or noncompliance within a reasonable time after receiving the

complaint. Prior to ordering any penalty provided in subsection (e), (f), or (g) of this section, the city attorney's office shall give notice to the covered employer. The covered employer may request a hearing within thirty (30) days of receipt of such notice. The hearing shall be conducted by a hearing officer appointed by the city attorney's office, who shall affirm or reverse the finding or the penalty based upon evidence presented by the city attorney's office and the covered employer.

(e) The City of Burlington shall have the right to modify, terminate and/or seek specific performance of any contract or grant with a covered employer from any court of competent jurisdiction, if the covered employer has not complied with this article.

(f) Any covered employer who violates this article may be barred from receiving a contract or grant from the city for a period up to two (2) years from the date of the finding of violation.

(g) A violation of this article shall be a civil offense subject to a civil penalty of from two hundred dollars (\$200.00) to five hundred dollars (\$500.00). All law enforcement officers and any other duly authorized municipal officials are authorized to issue a municipal complaint for a violation of this article. Each day any covered employee is not compensated as required by this article shall constitute a separate violation.

(h) If a complaint is received that implicates any City of Burlington employee in a possible violation of this article, that complaint will be handled through the City's personnel procedures, not through the process outlined in this article.

(i) Any covered employee aggrieved by a violation of this article may bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction against the covered employer within two (2) years after discovery of the alleged violation. The court may award any covered employee who files suit pursuant to this section, as to the relevant period of time, the following:

(1) The difference between the livable wage required under this article and the amount actually paid to the covered employee;

(2) Equitable payment for any compensated days off that were unlawfully denied or were not properly compensated;

(3) Liquidated damages in an amount equal to the amount of back wages and/or compensated days off unlawfully withheld or fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each employee or person whose rights under this article were violated for each day that the violation occurred or continued, whichever is greater;

(4) Reinstatement in employment and/or injunctive relief; and

(5) Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

(j) It shall be unlawful for an employer or any other person to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of, or the attempt to exercise, any right protected under this article. No person shall engage in retaliation against an employee or threaten to do so because such employee has exercised rights or is planning to exercise rights protected under this article or has cooperated in any investigation conducted pursuant to this article.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 2-17-04; Ord. of 5-2-11; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-85 Other provisions.

(a) No covered employer shall reduce the compensation, wages, fringe benefits or leave available to any covered employee in order to pay the livable wage required by this article. Any action in violation of this subsection shall be deemed a violation of this article subject to the remedies of Section [21-84](#).

(b) No covered employer with a current contract, as of the effective date of this provision, with the City of Burlington for the use of property located at the Burlington International Airport may reduce, during the term of that contract, the wages of a covered employee below the livable wage as a result of amendments to this article.

(c) Where pursuant to a contract for services with the city, the contractor or subcontractor incurs a contractual obligation to pay its employees certain wage rates, in no case except as stated in subsection (d) of this section, shall the wage rates paid pursuant to that contract be less than the minimum livable wage paid pursuant to this article.

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (c) of this section, where employees are represented by a bargaining unit or labor union pursuant to rights conferred by state or federal law and a collective bargaining labor agreement is in effect governing the terms and conditions of employment of those employees, this chapter shall not apply to those employees, and the collective bargaining labor agreement shall control.

(e) Covered employers shall inform employees making less than twelve dollars (\$12.00) per hour of their possible right to the Earned Income Tax Credit under federal and state law.

(f) The chief administrative officer of the city shall have the authority to promulgate rules as necessary to administer the provisions of this article, which shall become effective upon approval by the city council.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-86 Exemptions.

An exemption from any requirement of this article may be requested for a period not to exceed two (2) years:

- (a) By a covered employer where payment of the livable wage would cause substantial economic hardship;
and
- (b) By the City of Burlington where application of this article to a particular contract or grant is found to violate specific state or federal statutory, regulatory or constitutional provisions or where granting the exemption would be in the best interests of the City.

A covered employer or grantee granted an exemption under this section may reapply for an exemption upon the expiration of the exemption. Requests for exemption may be granted by majority vote of the city council. All requests for exemption shall be submitted to the chief administrative officer. The finance committee of the City of Burlington shall first consider such request and make a recommendation to the city council. The decision of the city council shall be final.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-87 Severability.

If any part or parts or application of any part of this article is held invalid, such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining parts of this article.

(Ord. of 11-19-01; Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-88 Annual reporting.

On or before April 15 of each year, the city attorney's office shall submit a report to the city council that provides the following information:

- (a) A list of all covered employers broken down by department;
- (b) A list of all covered employers whose service contract did not contain the language required by this article;
and
- (c) All complaints filed and investigated by the city attorney's office and the results of such investigation.

(Ord. of 10-21-13)

21-89 Effective date.

The amendments to this article shall take effect on January 1, 2014, and shall not be retroactively applied.

(Ord. of 10-21-13)

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Cross reference—Personnel, Ch. 24.