Resolution Calling for Enactment of a Citywide Project Labor Agreement Policy

Whereas project labor agreements are a proven instrument for public agencies to achieve best value in their construction contracting, with a history of success of more than three-quarters of a century; and,

Whereas cities such as Long Beach and Martinez have seen such value in project labor agreements that they have adopted citywide project labor agreement policies, which state that any work meeting certain criteria will be covered under project labor agreements; and

Whereas in regions where large numbers of workers in construction benefit from the advocacy and activism of unions, project labor agreements establish a cooperative relationship between public agencies and representatives of the construction workforce, and this relationship can have the effect not just of avoiding the conflicts that can result from advocacy and activism, but of resolving many workforce and contracting questions; and

Whereas new technologies requiring skilled work for their implementation inevitably raise workforce and contracting questions, and the City of San Francisco has recently faced just such questions in its contracting for solar power installation and is certain to face others; and

Whereas project labor agreements contain mechanisms that resolve such questions; and

Whereas the City has established the CityBuild Academy with the cooperation of some unions to help City residents obtain entry to union and employer jointly-administered apprenticeship programs, which are among the most effective workforce training programs in the world, and which have an outstanding record of success in serving otherwise marginalized communities; and

Whereas the CityBuild Academy poses a legitimate workforce question – that is, What guarantee do apprentices whom jointly-administered apprenticeship programs accept from CityBuild have that contractors for the City will actually hire from union hiring halls and give them the opportunities they have been promised?; and

Whereas only a citywide project labor agreement policy provides this guarantee and adequately answers this question; and

Whereas a citywide project labor agreement policy can therefore bring about greater cooperation between CityBuild Academy and unions; and

Whereas the City has recently adopted a local hire ordinance, one of the chief purposes of which is to ensure that taxes paid by City residents benefit City residents through employment
in City construction contracting, particularly residents from communities that have suffered from lack of 
other opportunities for employment and advancement, and that through the employment of City residents 
and the resultant multiplier effects the broader economy of the City benefits; and

Whereas the City has adopted recently also a prevailing wage ordinance in accord with the prevailing wage 
laws of the State of California, one of the chief purposes of which is to ensure that the livelihoods of local 
workers and the existence of responsible local contractors that provide adequately for their workers are not 
damaged by either contractors from low-wage regions or by local contractors that do not provide adequately 
for their workers; and

Whereas together the local hire ordinance and the prevailing wage ordinance, through their protection of 
the employment of and wages paid to City residents, should help ensure that the City receives best value 
and the expected economic multiplier effects from its construction contracting; and

Whereas workers from non-union-signatory contractors are frequently cheated of prevailing wage even in 
City contracting, notwithstanding the recent strengthening of the City’s prevailing wage ordinance, and 
even despite the laudable efforts of the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement; and

Whereas non-union-signatory contractors, local and not, have worked successfully under public-sector 
project labor agreements in San Francisco, both with the San Francisco Unified School District and with the 
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and some of these contractors have even been affiliates of 
the Associated Builders and Contractors, which advocates for “open shop” – that is, non-union – contracting 
and against project labor agreements; and

Whereas non-union workers for non-union-signatory contractors under public-sector project labor 
agreements work directly with union members, under union agreements, and with union stewards, and the 
exchange of information among workers and the assistance of union stewards help ensure proper payment 
of wages to all workers, union and non-union alike, and did so ensure under the project labor agreements 
with the San Francisco Unified School District and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; and

Whereas a citywide project labor agreement policy achieving maximum coverage of City contracting will 
therefore benefit City residents, protect responsible contractors, and help produce the economic multiplier 
effects the City expects from its contracting; and

Whereas provision of health benefits for workers by non-union-signatory contractors is rare, and provision 
of health benefits for their families rarer still, and many of these workers will have an opportunity to qualify 
for health benefits for themselves and their families for the first time by working under project labor 
agreements; and

Whereas, in combination with the City’s local hire ordinance, this means that the City’s public health care 
system can be spared expense through a citywide project labor agreement policy, and the more thorough 
the coverage of contracting by the policy, the greater the opportunity of obtaining health benefits for 
workers and their families, and the greater the likelihood that the public health system will be spared 
expense; and

Whereas the training of workers from union hiring halls is rarely matched by workers from non-union-
signatory contractors, and even though non-union-signatory contractors can and do work under project
labor agreements the pairing of workers from union halls with workers from non-union-signatory contractors under project labor agreements therefore results in an overall increase of training in the workforce; and

Whereas this higher level of training is reflected in the quality of construction and the utility and durability of the built product, to the long-term advantage in both facilities cost and internal workforce efficiency of the construction user; and

Whereas the more thoroughly the City’s construction contracting is covered under a citywide project labor agreement policy, the more complete will be this advantage;

Therefore be it Resolved that the San Francisco Labor Council joins the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council in calling on the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to enact immediately a citywide project labor agreement policy, and to instruct staff to begin negotiation of its details with the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council and its affiliated unions; and

Be it Finally Resolved that the San Francisco Labor Council joins the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council in urging the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, and their negotiators to seek maximum coverage of the City’s construction contracting under a citywide project labor agreement policy.


Respectfully,

Tim Paulson
Executive Director

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