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Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) continues its work in the key areas of democracy, disaster recovery, housing, healthcare, employment, education, and Latino Outreach in an effort to advance social, economic and health opportunities for the residents of the city of Galveston and Galveston County and the Gulf Coast area. Collaborating with local congregations and community advocacy groups, we are consistently reaching to fulfill our goal to produce tangible, sustainable solutions to the issues facing our neighbors.

GCI

There has been several informal discussions about the Galveston Living Wage Study Group continuing as a separate entity or as a sub-group or committee of Gulf Coast Interfaith. Many have felt that most folks are confused about the relationship of GCI to the Study Group or already believe it is part of GCI. It was agreed that it would probably be best to continue as a group within GCI and that the group have a separate advisory committee to advise and consult as needed. No final decision has been made and the discussions continue.

GALVESTON COUNTY COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

GCI made its office at 2728 Ave Q available to the Collaborating Organizations¹ for meetings on January 23rd and March 14th. There were wide ranging discussions covering Sandpiper Cove Apartments, affordable housing, payday lending ordinances, Section 3, rebuilding public housing, living wages, and social justice and prioritizing the needs of the community and the available volunteer time.

Section 3

On February 9th Steve McIntyre met with John Simsen at Galveston city hall to discuss the confusion about producing requested documents to the Collaborating Organizations. Simsen and McIntyre informally discussed and speculated about the possibility, reasonableness and desirability of adopting a comprehensive “Sec.3” policy for the city not just one tied to HUD funds. McIntyre met with John Simsen again on March 3rd and obtained the requested Sec. 3 data. All the data received from GLO, GHA and Galveston will be reviewed in the coming weeks.

¹ The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour’s Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition.

EMPLOYMENT

Payday Lending Ordinance

Steve McIntyre worked with Ann Baddour, Texas Appleseed staff attorney, and Galveston Councilmember Terrilyn Tarlton and former Councilmember Elizabeth Beeton to obtain passage of a Payday Lending Ordinance in Galveston. It passed 5-1 on Jan. 22nd. Galveston is the 22nd city to pass an ordinance and joins Dickinson in Galveston County and other cities-Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Amarillo, Austin, etc. Dickinson passed an ordinance in September.

After a discussion about the effect of payday lending facilities on low wage workers, it was agreed passing an ordinance in Texas City would help protect Texas City as well as Galveston and Dickinson low wage workers. With the assistance of Joe Compian in scheduling a meeting, Steve McIntyre met with Texas City Councilmember Thelma Bowie on March 11th about the adoption of a payday lending ordinance in Texas City. She stated she would be presenting a copy of the model Texas Municipal League ordinance and other information to Mayor Doyle for his review.

Galveston Living Wage Study Group

The Living Wage Study Group held their monthly meetings on January 29th at 6:30 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and St. Patrick Catholic Church on February 21st at 10:30 am and March 19th at 6:30 pm.



GCI leader Joe Compian leading the March 6th Living Wage meeting at the Galveston Islamic Center as Father Maynard, Father Richard and others listen and participate.

- ***Outreach***

A house meeting focused on living wages was held on March 6th at the Galveston Islamic Center. It was attended by six GCI members. The meeting was led by Joe Compian and Steve McIntyre with the participation and assistance of Father Maynard Tetreault, Lisa Windsor, and Rick Altemose.

On March 10th Steve McIntyre made a presentation about the Living Wage effort in Galveston to the Neighborhood Democrats Club in League City. A similar presentation has been scheduled for April 22nd for the North County Democrats Club in Dickinson.

- ***Report on data from government employers***

Nick McIntyre has volunteered to assist Karl Eschbach in processing the employee data from Galveston, Galveston Independent School District, Galveston Housing Authority, Galveston College, College of the Mainland, Galveston Park Board, Galveston Port Authority, UTMB and Texas A&M.

- ***3rd Annual Living Wage Conference on September 28, 2015***

On March 11th Steve McIntyre attended a meeting of the Galveston Ministerial Alliance to discuss the September 28th 3rd Annual Living Wage Conference. During the meeting Rabbi Marshal Klaven volunteered to participate in the conference on a panel of religious leaders that will discuss faith traditions. The agenda is almost completed and confirmed.

- ***GCI Employment survey***

Lisa Windsor and Steve McIntyre met on March 5th to discuss better use of social media like Twitter and Facebook to publicize the employment survey at GCI's website. The hard copy of the GCI survey has been edited by adding an easier link to the internet for online entry of the requested data.

- ***Success stories***

Many folks would agree the work of the Living Wage Study Group has helped to prompt the following:

Galveston: On January 22nd there was an update of the salary survey during the city council work session. The wages and benefits of all employees of the city, wharves board, and park board are being reviewed. [See Item 3D <http://galvestontx.swagit.com/play/01222015-562>]

Galveston Independent School District: At the beginning of the 2nd Annual Living wage Conference on September 29th Supt. Larry Nichols asked for time to make an announcement about GISD reconsidering its 3% raise each year for two years for low wage workers and

instead to immediately give a \$.50 raise. On March 13th there was further clarification by GISD of the significance of Nichols announcement.

- There were 83 employees that received the \$.50 raise
- The cost to the District the first year was \$26,064.49
- 10 full time employees still remain below \$9.00 an hour
- If another \$0.50 raise was given (5) full time employees would remain below \$9.00 an hour

GISD also advised the Study Group that the issue of working to raise the rate of pay for the lowest paid full-time workers at GISD will remain a priority



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