

To: **Mayor and City Council**
Through: **Ryan Schroeder, City Manager**
From: **Kori Land, City Attorney**
Date: **April 12, 2021**

AT&T Resolution

BACKGROUND:

Councilmember Gulley recently requested that a resolution be placed on a Council agenda for approval regarding the closing of the AT&T Store in West St. Paul. A copy of the proposed resolution is taken directly from an email sent to the Mayor from Councilmember Gulley and reads as follows:

Resolution on Standing with Unionized AT&T Workers in West St. Paul

WHEREAS the AT&T Wireless retail store on Robert Street in West St. Paul has been the only fully bilingual corporate-owned AT&T store in Minnesota, employing young workers with union-wages and benefits and represented by Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7250, and

WHEREAS AT&T has announced the closing of nearly 100 unionized stores nationwide, including the Robert Street store, and will replace them with non-union franchised stores, and

WHEREAS these outsourced stores will employ fewer workers with lower pay, diminished benefits and lesser safety standards, and

WHEREAS AT&T has continued to earn billions of dollars in profits throughout the pandemic and related recession, and

WHEREAS the city of West St. Paul will be harmed by the elimination of unionized jobs—particularly jobs that have been accessible to young people in our community—and the living wages, benefits and safety standards they provide,

Be it RESOLVED the the City of West St. Paul stands with the CWA workers at the Robert Street AT&T store and calls upon AT&T to maintain the store under a union contract that provides living wage jobs with benefits and safety standards.

ANALYSIS:

Before the Council takes a position on a matter, it needs to understand the whole of the matter, because as the City Manager stated in his response to Councilmember Gulley: “Part of the role of the City Atty (sic) and City Manager is to ensure that we do not step into something unintended that leads us into a legal

matter....” Due to the late timing of the request to add it to the agenda, City Staff was unable to provide any detail for the Council packet, therefore it was not added to the agenda for the upcoming meeting on March 22.¹

At that March 22 meeting, a telecommunications union representative spoke during Citizen Comments and asserted many of the recitals from the resolution to the Council, emphasizing the loss of jobs and the public safety risk of harm to any employees without union support. It was a compelling plea to support union workers at this store.

Following the Council meeting, a representative of AT&T reached out to the City Manager by phone and by email to explain AT&T’s position. He confirmed that there are five union employees who will be impacted at the West St. Paul location when AT&T sells the business at this location. He detailed AT&T’s business perspective on the reasons for the corporate changes, and also explained the employment opportunities that AT&T will provide to its union employees at this store, including the ability to keep a union job in a nearby store, work from home or apply for other positions within the company. The representative also indicated he was a union member and takes pride in AT&T’s good corporate relationship with unions, as one of the largest union-represented companies. A copy of that email is attached, as well as the material referenced in the email.

ACTION:

Discussion

¹ We apologize for the delay in the discussion and that it may not be as timely as Councilmember Gulley would prefer. However, other than ceremonial resolutions honoring a “day” or “month” or someone’s 100th birthday, any policy or a resolution in which the Council takes a position on a particular matter, must be discussed by the entire Council, after it has been appropriately prepared for an agenda.