

Belmont endorses recycling center

■ Better service, higher rates to result from \$65 million facility

By Mike Rosenberg
MEDIANEWS STAFF

More convenient, frequent and expensive recycling collection is in store for Peninsula homes and businesses after a proposed recycling center this week received the last endorsement it needed.

Nearly four years after the Shoreway Environmental Center was proposed, Belmont on Tuesday became the crucial eighth and final city needed to approve issuing a total of \$65.5 million in construction bonds. The new San Carlos facility will allow for weekly recycling pickup and cause residential and business garbage bills to go up by about 5 percent, or 50 cents to \$1 more per month.

Eight of the 12 Peninsula cities that comprise the South Bayside Waste Management Authority needed to approve the bonds before work could begin on the center. Belmont joined seven other cities in approving the bonds, with Atherton and Burlingame lodging opposition. The authority's other two members, San Mateo County and the West Bay Sanitary District, haven't decided yet, but their votes are essentially moot.

The cities will again have to formally approve the specifics of the financing when the waste authority presents them within the next two months before construction can begin this summer. The center is slated to open in January 2011 with the new services taking effect at that time.

Tuesday's 3-2 vote by the Belmont City Council came on the heels of Hillsborough's approval on Monday.

"Essentially, it's going to be a state-of-the-art facility that will benefit all of San Mateo County," said Belmont Council Member Warren Lieberman, who voted to authorize the bonds.

The 70,100-square-foot facility will be a substantial upgrade from the obsolete 48,000-square-foot recycling center built in 1968 to house a commercial laundry facility, the waste authority said.

Most notably, the new facility will support single-stream recycling, in which customers place all their recyclables in a wheeled cart. Currently, they are forced to separate plastic and paper materials. It also will allow for anticipated increases in recyclable material, said Monica Devincenzi, the waste authority's recycling outreach and sustainability manager.

The bonds will also fund an expansion of the trash transfer station from 53,700 square feet to 80,000 square feet.

Critics say the higher collection rates necessary to fund the facility would be levied at a time when residents and businesses can least afford them, and that financing bonds in today's market is too risky.

"I still think it's a glorified trash can," said Burlingame Council Member Jerry Deal, whose city has been the new center's most vocal opponent. "Spending that kind of money in today's market, I don't think makes sense."

Each city in the waste authority is responsible for paying back the bonds based on its share of solid waste tonnage.

San Mateo, for instance, is responsible for nearly \$15 million of the bonds and will have to raise the average homeowner's monthly garbage rate from \$11.14 to \$11.68, Devincenzi said.

The only remaining point of contention regarding the center's construction is whether the agency will use cheap but risky variable-rate bonds, or expensive but safe fixed-rate bonds, said Brian Moura, vice chairman of the authority's board.

The agency could soon hold a financing workshop on the topic, he said.

*City of Belmont
San Mateo Times
March 13, 2009*

City Council
Bay Area News Group
Jan. 15, 2009

Belmont approves citywide fees for sewage

■ City Council says multimillion-dollar improvements to be paid for by residents, business

By Mike Rosenberg

MEDIA NEWS STAFF

Belmont residents and businesses will be asked to contribute hundreds or thousands of dollars a year for a \$404 million sewage-improvement project.

Starting next year, homeowners will pay a median price of \$250, apartment dwellers \$175 and condo residents \$200 under a new annual sewer treatment facility charge approved Tuesday night by the City Council. Businesses will typically be charged by the square foot, with the median price for a restaurant at \$3,285, a store \$480 and an office building \$533.

The fee was instituted to pay Belmont's \$45.2 million share of a \$404 million sewage capital improvement program introduced in May by the South Bayside System Authority. The program consists of 131 different projects designed to improve sewer reliability and efficiency for more than 200,000 businesses and residents in the southern Peninsula.

The council voiced concern over the size of the fees but argued that they should have been in place long ago so funds would be available now to pay for the project.

"One could make the argument that for the last 25 to 30 years, the ratepayers ... have paid less than their fair share," Councilman Warren Lieberman said.

The council will approve the final resolution instituting the fees at its Feb. 14 meeting. The first bills won't be sent out until late 2010.

The fees will generate about \$3.1 million in their first year and would produce \$105 million during a 36-year span, although the exact termination date of the fee will be determined over time based on project expenses, city growth and financing costs.

The \$404 million capital improvement program would be paid by residents of Redwood City, San Carlos, and the members of the West Bay Sanitary District, which serves the residents of Menlo Park,

East Palo Alto, Atherton, Portola Valley, and unincorporated areas of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Those groups are following suit with their own fees, said Dan Child, manager of the South Bayside System Authority.

Child argued massive corrosion of the sewage system has forced the cities to implement the fees.

"It's just deteriorated to the point where it's no longer in a

state that we have confidence that we won't have a system failure," Child said after the meeting.

The cities involved would purchase bonds at the start of the project and then use the fees to pay them back over time.

The fees were calculated by the Walnut Creek-based HF&H Consulting group using a formula that determines each ratepayer's impact on the

sewer system based on size and type of business, home or institution.

Notre Dame de Namur University, the city's only college, will be the hardest hit and pay more than \$42,200 at \$28 per student. Other groups facing lofty charges include supermarkets (\$13,976 median price), shopping centers (\$13,513) and convalescent homes (\$10,200). Homes and condominiums will all pay the

same price regardless of size while the most expensive bill for an apartment complex is \$31,835.

The cheapest fees will be for businesses classified under the categories of open storage (\$149 median price), club and lodge halls (\$157) and lumber yard (\$164).

"One of my concerns is, are we charging the residents and businesses too much too soon?" Councilwoman Coralin

Feierbach said. "We don't want our businesses to go broke."

In response, Vice Mayor Christine Wozniak suggested discounts for businesses that implement "green" practices to lessen their impact on the system, and the council agreed to explore the option as it adjusts the rates each year.

Mike Rosenberg can be reached at mike.rosenberg@dailynewsgroup.com.

OPEN SPACE

From page 1

spaces and parks, was crushed in the November election.

But Feierbach said that Measure W would have affected several private residences and companies, while her proposed ballot initiative would only affect open spaces and park land owned by the city. Measure W also required two-thirds approval from voters for any open space development to occur. It is still unclear what voter threshold Belmont's proposal would require.

Feierbach said the proposal came as a result of past ideas to build a hotel on the city's sports complex center.

"I feel very strongly about this, we need to protect our parks and open space," Feierbach said. "It's an important legacy to leave."

The measure would not be unprecedented. San Mateo has a voter-approved charter amendment requiring majority public approval of any development in city parks and open spaces

larger than four acres. No public votes have been called for in the past six years as a result of the ordinance, said San Mateo City Attorney Shawn Mason.

Feierbach said her proposal would include parks of all sizes, to protect the smaller "pocket parks" that are scattered throughout the city.

In 2001 the Belmont City Council, composed of an entirely different quintet, discussed placing a similar measure on the ballot but ultimately declined to do so, citing the restrictions already in place protecting open space from development.

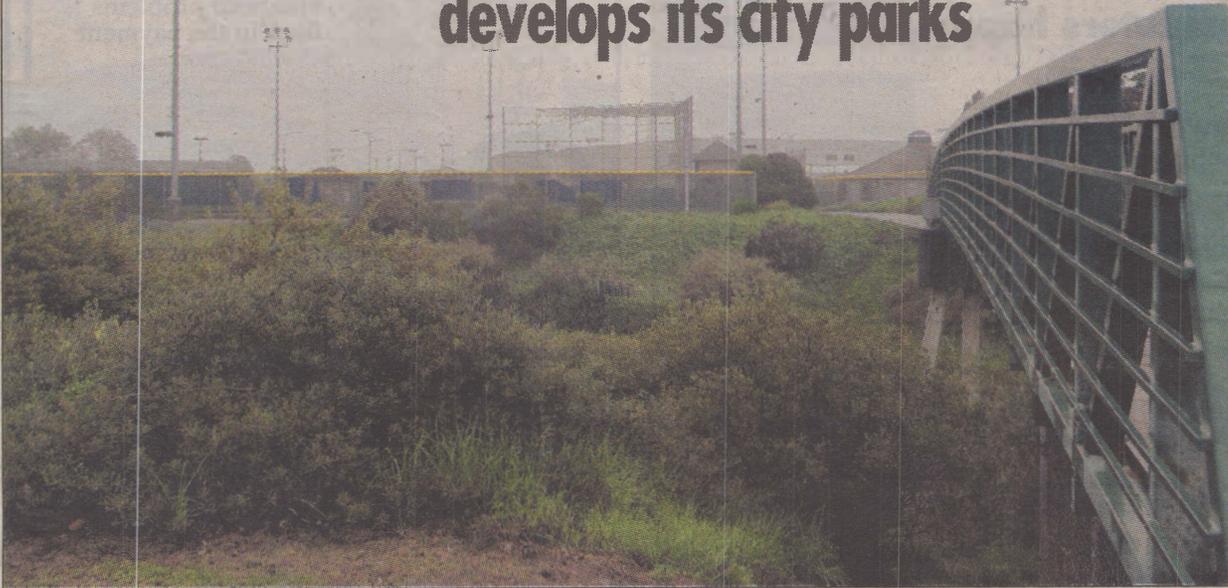
In 2005 Feierbach led a campaign for Measure F, which Belmont voters approved to limit development in the 83-acre Western Hills above Carlmont High School and in the 173-acre San Juan Canyon. Under the measure, new subdivision requests in the two areas must be approved by voters if the units exceed the number legally allowed.

*E-mail Mike Rosenberg at
mike.rosenberg@dailynewsgroup.com.*

City Council
San Mateo Daily News
Jan. 24, 2009

The open-space debate

Voters may decide how Belmont develops its city parks



Konstandinos Goumenidis / Daily News

Belmont's City Council will decide whether to launch the process to place a measure on the November ballot to allow development in city parks and open spaces. The Belmont Sports Complex is one area the city has reviewed for development.

■ Lengthy process ahead if measure goes on November ballot; first discussion is Tuesday

BY MIKE ROSENBERG
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Belmont residents could reject any development in city parks and open spaces if the city council decides to place a measure allowing that on the November ballot and they approve it.

Council Member Coralin Feierbach's proposed measure would require a public vote on planned developments in any of the city's open spaces or 18 parks.

Currently, developers can build in open spaces or parks if they get four-fifths approval from the council. When they get an OK, developers must also provide for park space equal to the size of the open space they take for construction or pay a fee to the city's parks department.

The proposed ballot measure

will first be discussed at the Tuesday council meeting. It would require more than 100 hours of staff time and additional council meetings prior to a decision being made by the end of July, according to City Attorney Marc Zafferano.

In October 2007, Feierbach floated an idea similar to the one she will be bringing to the council Tuesday, but two of the other four council members have changed since she last explored the topic.

Her proposed measure includes principles similar to those proposed by environmental groups during their Measure W campaign in Redwood City last year. That measure, which would have required two-thirds voter approval of proposed developments in the city's open

OPEN SPACE, page 9



Konstandinos Goumenidis / Daily News

*Making Good
San Bates Turner
2-11-09*

No heat over Belmont smoking ban

■ City officials say residents have had questions, few complaints

By Mike Rosenberg
MEDIANEWS STAFF

Despite all the hoopla and national spotlight treatment it drew, Belmont's landmark smoking ban in multi-level apartment buildings has proven far less draconian since going into effect a month ago than many expected.

In fact, not a single smoker has been cited for puffing up inside apartments that share

See SMOKE, Page 15

Smoke

FROM PAGE 1

a floor or ceiling with another unit, Code Enforcement Officer Kirk Buckman said.

In the months before and after the law kicked in Jan. 9, the city has received about 30 calls from residents, mostly with questions about what it would do, said City Manager Jack Crist. The city has also logged a few complaints from residents reporting that their neighbors were violating the ordinance, he added.

Unique ordinance

Because the ordinance is unique, city leaders did their best to prepare for its enforcement but admitted they braced for a wide range of results. Would smokers comply? Would other cities enact similar bans? How would Belmont be judged by the rest of the country? Would someone file a lawsuit accusing the city of violating the rights of smokers?

On Tuesday, city leaders decided the ordinance appears to be working about as well as can be expected thus far. Various city department heads met in the morning for a one-month follow-up and decided not to make any significant changes in the way they enforce the law or respond to inquires and complaints.

For starters, the public's response has been mostly coop-

erative, Buckman said.

"No major shockers," said Buckman, adding that the city will review the ban again in a couple months. "We're working with people and providing the education to them."

Other cities are watching Belmont, said Serena Chen, regional director of policy and tobacco programs for the American Lung Association of California.

The California cities of Dublin, Novato, Loma Linda and Calabasas adopted less restrictive smoking bans since Belmont approved its original ordinance in 2007, she said. The most restrictive part of Belmont's ordinance — banning smoking in multiple-story apartments — was phased in last.

How Belmont's ban works could determine whether other cities ultimately enact their own ordinances, she said.

"Belmont broke this invisible barrier to say that government can make rules about smoking in the home," said Chen, who works with cities as they investigate potential new smoking laws. "And other cities have followed."

The nation certainly does appear to be watching the city of 26,000 residents. On Jan. 27, a story on Belmont's ordinance appeared on the front page of the New York Times, next to an article on the impeachment proceedings of then-Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

CBS's Katie Couric and Fox News also recently inter-

viewed Belmont locals for national news stories on the ban.

Some of the stories have cast city leaders as villains for infringing on residents' rights, or made a mockery of the city, said Council Member Coralin Feierbach, who originally proposed the ban.

Privacy preferred

"Belmont people don't like to have that kind of focus on them, attention on television," Feierbach said. "Belmont people want to, I think, remain private. And they don't want their community to be made a laughing stock."

As for potential lawsuits against the city, which Feierbach had feared in the months leading up to the apartment ban taking effect, none has been filed yet. The city has not received any threats of potential lawsuits either, said City Attorney Marc Zafferano.

Whether residents are actually smoking less as a result of the ban is nearly impossible to answer, but Feierbach, for one, seems to think locals have gotten the message.

"I've talked to a lot of people in Belmont and they're happy with it," Feierbach said. "I think it's working well; I see less smoking in this town."

E-mail Mike Rosenberg at mike.rosenberg@dailynews-group.com.

Examiner
Examined -
1-29-09

Examiner

10 PA | THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2009

Eviction dealt as Belmont's strict, new law is enforced

Less than three weeks after Belmont imposed the first ban on smoking in apartments in the nation, at least one renter is being kicked out of his home for continuing to light up.

Pam Arellano, manager of the 35-unit apartment complex Carlmont Comstock, said she gave one of her tenants a 60-day notice to vacate, as is her right under the new law, because she received four complaints from other tenants that he continued to smoke after the smoking ban went into effect Jan. 9.

She said she investigated and found cigarette butts "all over," enough cause to require the

tenant to vacate.

Belmont's smoking ban, approved by the 25,000-population Peninsula town's City Council in 2007 but only fully implemented this month, outlaws smoking in condos or apartments that share common floors or ceilings with another unit. The ban has drummed up a lot of press — including an article this week in the New York Times — though Belmont Information Services Director Valerie Harnish said the city has yet to send a code enforcement officer or police to enforce the ban. Since the ordinance was implemented, she said, the city has received about nine inquiries about it, ranging from where to put signs to what to do about a smoking neighbor.

"All I was asking them to do was smoke in the street, so it wasn't that big of an inconvenience for them," Arellano said. "And secondhand smoke kills." — *Katie Worth*

For more
OF THE BEST PHOTOS, LOCAL NEWS, OPINIONS AND SPORTS, CLICK ON sfexaminer.com



City wooing industrial area property owners

Belmont letter offers financial assistance for annexation of unincorporated area

By Dana Yates

DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Belmont is making another attempt to woo property owners in the nearby Harbor Industrial Area into annexation with an offer to pay up to \$5,000 in related expenses, according to a letter sent by the city last week.

The letter concludes what's been a two-year effort on behalf of the city to improve the rocky relationship with the HIA, an area of unincorporated San Mateo County that sits on the border of Belmont and San Carlos near Highway 101. In the past, Belmont has lost favor with the property owners there for what was perceived as hostile annexation

attempts. The recent letter, dated Jan. 23, offers approximately 50 property owners in the unincorporated HIA up to \$5,000 to cover fees and expenses associated with a voluntary annexation. The offer expires Dec. 31, 2010.

The effort may win over property owners, but it will take time, said HIA member Howard Jones.

"I think we're going to need a number of years for people to set aside hard feelings," Jones said.

Several years ago, 60 percent of the HIA annexed itself to San Carlos and took with it property and sales taxes. The entire area wished to annex to San Carlos at the time, but after political negotiations, only about 60 percent annexed, leaving

the rest of the area to either annex to Belmont or remain unincorporated and governed by the county. Belmont has made attempts to annex the property in the past, a move that would help its budget and future planning of the prime Peninsula real estate.

See **PROPERTY**, Page 16

PROPERTY

Continued from page 1

If annexed to Belmont, the property owners could take part in the city planning process that would develop a master plan for the area. What that plan could include — housing, retail, mixed use — would be a result of community meetings with the HIA property owners, said Belmont Councilman Warren Lieberman.

"You get an area that can be developed with the desires and the needs of the community as

well as beneficial to the property owners," Lieberman said.

By annexing to Belmont, property owners could ensure the best zoning for their property and have a say on how neighboring properties are developed. Right now, each property can be developed at will with little coordination with nearby properties, Lieberman said.

Lieberman was on the council's HIA subcommittee that spent the last two years improving the city's relationship with HIA property owners. Lieberman said the subcommittee's work is complete and any council consideration of the HIA will be folded into the economic development subcommittee.

"There's a different tone, a different type of

thinking now," Lieberman said of the voluntary annexation plan.

Jones agrees the city is making strides in its relationship with the HIA, but generations of hard feelings are hard to break, he said.

Many of the properties were purchased in the 1950s and are now owned by third and fourth generation family members. Many have inherited feelings of distrust for Belmont, Jones said.

Many fear the city will pressure property owners to redevelop into housing so it can meet regional housing requirements and earn funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments. Redeveloping the area would eliminate one of the few places left on the

Peninsula for industrial businesses, Jones said.

Regardless of Belmont's future plans, Jones said the City Council is earning points by making more stable decisions, like hiring permanent City Manager Jack Crist.

In the long history of Belmont troubles, Jones said the surprise letter is not really ruffling feathers.

"I don't regard this as a big faux pas on their part," Jones said. "In the long run, Belmont can probably win us over."

Dana Yates can be reached by e-mail: dana@smdailyjournal.com or by phone: (650) 344-5200 ext. 106.

City Council
San Mateo Times
April 2, 2009

Belmont mayor backs development project

■ In annual address, official offers ideas for ways city can survive recession

By Mike Rosenberg
MEDIANEWS STAFF

Belmont must launch a major economic development project, help local businesses survive the recession and avoid potential high-speed rail pitfalls, Mayor David Braunstein said in his State of the City address.

Braunstein tackled a variety of issues — from the economy to

the removal of a traffic lane from Alameda de las Pulgas to the Emmett House — during his speech Tuesday at Carlmont High School, where he works as a teacher.

Braunstein was perhaps most vocal in demanding the city prepare to launch its first major economic development project in 10 years. The city has picked four sites, one of which would be a mixed business and residential project, with public plazas and underground parking, he said.

The project would provide new sources of revenue as others, such

as building permit fees and hotel and sales taxes, continue to decline, Braunstein said.

“When the economy improves, you will see redevelopment begin,” he said.

Braunstein also invited the Belmont Chamber of Commerce and the business community to an informal city meeting to discuss business retention and attraction.

“Real business people are struggling,” he said.

The proposed high-speed rail

See BELMONT, Page 5

Belmont

FROM PAGE 3

project and the city’s controversial removal of a traffic lane in front of Carlmont last winter were also covered in the annual address.

Braunstein said he has been meeting informally with San Carlos Mayor Bob Grassilli about the lane removal, which has fouled traf-

fic and angered residents in both cities. Braunstein said the Belmont City Council will discuss potential short- and long-term improvements on April 14.

In response to the developing high-speed rail project, Belmont last week joined the Consortium of Peninsula Rail Cities in an attempt to avoid problems similar to those that accompanied the Caltrain grade-separation overcrossing at Ralston Av-

enue, Braunstein said. The Palo Alto-based consortium was created to form a unified front that could negotiate with the California High Speed Rail Authority.

Assemblyman Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, will hold a town-hall meeting on the high-speed rail project at City Hall on April 23, Braunstein noted.

Braunstein also urged fellow city leaders to focus on repairing city streets. While

the entire street resurfacing project tab is \$30 million, it needs to be “prioritized and addressed,” he said.

As for the historic Emmett House, Belmont is on track to start construction on the site in early summer and expects to finish by spring 2010, Braunstein said.

Mike Rosenberg can be reached at mike.rosenberg@dailynewsgroup.com.

CITY OF BELMONT
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES
JULY 31, 2009

Belmont loans itself \$1 million

■ Budget woes make it difficult for fire agency to borrow on open market

By Mike Rosenberg
mike.rosenberg@
bayareanewsgroup.com

BELMONT — The city has agreed to dole out a \$1 million loan, and expects to collect a bit of interest from itself.

The City Council on Tuesday approved the loan from the city budget to the Belmont Fire Protection District. The city will collect interest on the loan, with the rate is expected to fluctuate around 2 percent, even though both funds are municipal entities.

The fire district, which is also governed by the City Council, funds the city's share of the Belmont-San Carlos Fire Department. It must contribute about \$500,000 a month to keep

the fire department running, but only receives property tax revenue in December and April, said Finance Director Thomas Fil.

Normally, the district borrows money from the open market through a California communities pool, Fil said.

"But this year the investors are not buying debt that has any name associated with California," Fil said.

So, the city budget, which is technically separate from the fire protection funds, loaned the district the \$1 million it needed before it collects revenues in December.

The city had a \$1 million budget shortfall of its own in June, but has a separate investment portfolio that it uses to boost its finances. As a result, Fil said the loan will essentially be a city investment.

Mike Rosenberg covers San Mateo, Burlingame, Belmont and transportation issues. Reach him at 650-348-4324.

Agency

From Page 1

can get a quick fix," Fil said. "They have multibillion dollar deficits as far as the eye can see."

Belmont's agency is likely the city's most effective tool in revitalizing neighborhoods and improving the community's economy, Fil said. The city faced a \$1 million deficit in June and the agency is thought to produce projects that bolster tax revenue.

About 80 percent of available agency funds are typically used for redevelopment projects and 20 percent for housing, he said.

Fil said the city would not be able to dissolve the agency during the current fiscal year, which runs through June 2010, but that it may be an option next year.

The City Council, which also serves as the redevelopment agency's board of directors, will ultimately decide the agency's fate. In the meantime, the city awaits results from a report that will project the agency's cash flows for the next 10 to 20 years.

The council is also expected to vote at a future meeting whether to join the California Redevelopment Agency and other cities as plaintiffs in a likely forthcoming lawsuit against the state that will seek to block the fund seizure.

"The cities, I'm sure, are going to sue," Feierbach said. "We have to."

Belmont is not alone; the state will grab a total of \$1.7 billion from California redevelopment agencies. Other local cities will lose more than Belmont, but few may

BY THE NUMBERS

Estimated amounts the state will take from redevelopment agencies of San Mateo County cities this fiscal year.

City	Amount
Daly City	\$2.4 million
Pacifica	\$115,000
Redwood City	\$3.6 million
East Palo Alto	\$3.3 million
Menlo Park	\$3.4 million
Belmont	\$2.3 million
South SF	\$8.5 million
Millbrae	\$1.2 million
Foster City	\$5.6 million
San Carlos	\$1.6 million
San Bruno	\$2.0 million
Brisbane	\$1.7 million
San Mateo	\$4.1 million

*Not all cities have a redevelopment agency.

Source: California Redevelopment Agency

be in such a perilous state. San Mateo's redevelopment agency, for instance, will lose more than \$3 million, but has \$6 million available to spend on projects this year.

Not all cities have a redevelopment agency; Burlingame, for instance, does not. Other cities' agencies are isolated to specific portions of their communities. As a result, some smaller communities, such as Foster City, are expected to lose more to the state than bigger cities such as Daly City.

Mike Rosenberg covers San Mateo, Burlingame, Belmont and transportation issues. Reach him at 650-348-4324.

CITY OF BELMONT
(REDEVELOPMENT)
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES
AUGUST 11, 2009

State cash grab may kill off agency

■ Budget deficit fix calls for redevelopment panel in Belmont to lose \$2.8 million in funding

By Mike Rosenberg

mike.rosenberg@bayareanewsgroup.com

BELMONT — The state's cash grab from the city's redevelopment agency is so damaging that officials may have to dissolve the entity that aims to reduce blight and bolster the local economy, or freeze its spending.

The recently approved state bud-

get calls for \$2.8 million to be taken from the Belmont Redevelopment Agency between now and June 2011, including \$2.3 million this year, and the money will not be paid back. Councilman Bill Dickenson said it amounts to \$88.50 per resident this year alone.

The redevelopment agency, which funds projects such as afford-

INSIDE: Belmont approves \$1 million loan to aid city's fire-protection district. Page A17

able housing and retail centers, has \$1.5 million to spend this year — and those funds have already been allocated to pay off debt from previous initiatives, said Finance Director Thomas Fil.

As a result, the city will have to re-evaluate its impending projects,

and may not be able to incur the debt necessary to fund new developments for some time, he said.

"It absolutely raises into question the long-term viability of the redevelopment agency," said Fil. "We cannot pay that (\$1.5 million) bill. They have wiped out more than what we have coming in."

The redevelopment agency was established around 1980 and is scheduled to expire in 2024. Councilwoman Coralin Feierbach said dissolving the redevelopment agency

now may prove to be the soundest option for the city.

"If we have to, we have to," Feierbach said.

Fil said he was also concerned the state may simply keep taking money from redevelopment agencies in future years. He added the actions did nothing to solve California's long-term financial woes.

"This is like a heroin addict who came down and robbed us so they

(OVER)

Belmont to join suit to block state's cash grab

■ City stands to lose nearly \$3 million in redevelopment funds

By Mike Rosenberg

mike.rosenberg@bayareanewsgroup.com

BELMONT — Hoping to send a message to their counterparts in Sacramento, city leaders on Tuesday voted to join a lawsuit against the state that seeks to block the Legislature's seizure of local redevelopment money.

As part of its July budget deal, the state will take \$2.8 million from the Belmont Redevelopment Agency through June 2011, which amounts to roughly \$88 per resident. In all, state leaders "helped themselves" to about \$2 billion from local redevelopment agencies, money that will not be paid back, City Manager Jack Crist said.

Acting as the Redevelopment Agency board of directors, the City Council voted unanimously, with Vice Mayor Christine Wozniak absent, to join an upcoming lawsuit against the state. The California Redevelopment Association will file the suit, which will aim to block the state funding grab.

"I think cities have to defend ourselves from this take," said Councilwoman Coralin Feierbach. "We need to give a message to Sacramento that money's not going to be taken away from us. It's a strong message."

Other local governments are expected to join Belmont. The county supervisors of Alameda and Los Angeles had already

CITY OF BELMONT
(REDEVELOPMENT)
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES
AUGUST 13, 2009

given authorization to join the suit.

It should come as little surprise that Belmont would emerge as the first Peninsula city to join the suit.

By the time the city's Redevelopment Agency pays off its annual debt and obligations to other local governments this year, the state grab will actually leave the fund with a \$900,000 deficit, pushing future projects onto the back burner.

"Belmont's downtown revitalization efforts have essentially been gutted in the short term," Crist said.

Council members and city finance officials said the long-term viability of the agency is now in question, and some leaders have wondered whether they should simply dissolve the agency next year.

About 80 percent of Belmont's redevelopment agency funds typically bankroll blight-reducing and expansion projects, while the remaining 20 percent of the

money is spent on housing initiatives. The projects often produce key tax revenue for the city budget.

The California Redevelopment Association also sued to block the state's take of \$350 million in local redevelopment funds last year, and an appellate court recently ruled in the association's favor. The state earlier this month appealed the decision to the state Supreme Court.

Winning the case should prove more difficult this time, however.

Belmont officials said the state this year routed the redevelopment funds into local school districts, allowing the state to then cut an equal amount of money to schools. The accounting trick should allow the state to circumvent the cities' legal argument that the funds needed to be spent locally.

The Sacramento-based law firm representing the California Redevelopment Association also serves as legal counsel to the city. Belmont will not need to contribute funds toward the case, but will need to spend some staff and attorney time coordinating with other plaintiffs.

1404 202 50 4110
2300 171000 001 1414 1413
PO BOX 10 119 512

Blachnik C
Puffels d
get Mekeel discou
APR 1974
1974
CALL

NAME: _____
ON THE _____

Pedestrians, cyclists: No bridge woes here

■ Last funding chunk
kicks in for span that
will cross Highway 101

By Mike Rosenberg

mike.rosenberg@bayareanewsgroup.com

BELMONT — The city's long-awaited pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Highway 101 toward Redwood Shores is finally funded and construction should begin soon next to the busy Ralston Avenue interchange.

The city on Thursday received nearly \$600,000 in county Measure A transportation sales tax money to spend on the \$6.7 million project, the final chunk of money needed before officials could request construction bids from contractors. Without the funds, the city would

have needed to take money out of the pot it uses to bankroll street improvements.

Public works officials now expect to award the construction contract by December, a key date because the building firm must be picked by the end of the year for the project to be eligible for federal stimulus money. The city is relying on the U.S. government program to kick in as much as \$4.5 million.

Construction should begin in January and the bridge will likely be finished by July 2010. Once completed, the span will provide bicyclists and pedestrians with a safe 300-foot crossing over Highway 101 next to the Ralston Avenue interchange. The current bridge over the freeway is designed for

cars, and has sidewalks that cross into onramps and no bike lanes.

The new bridge will connect bicyclists and pedestrians from the Caltrain station and downtown area on the west side of the freeway to the Belmont Sports Complex and into Redwood Shores and the Oracle campus. Officials say it will be the only Highway 101 bridge dedicated for pedestrians and bicyclists between the Third Avenue exit in San Mateo and the Woodside Road off ramp in Redwood City.

But the project may also result in lane closures and noisy construction work on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. during that year and a half. Two-way traffic will be maintained at all times, however.

Interim Public Works Di-

rector Karen Borrmann said most of the construction will occur off the road, so she expects lane closures to be rare.

When construction starts, it will be a momentous day for the city. The project was born in the late '90s and has been in the planning stages all decade, without funding, Borrmann said.

She said that although they hope to have as much as \$8.1 million in outside funding to spend on the project, if the construction bids come in higher than expected the city may have to kick in some of its own money. In addition to stimulus and county sales tax funds, the city will receive some state grants and cash from the Federal Highway Administration.

Staff writer Mike Rosenberg covers San Mateo, Burlingame, Belmont and transportation issues. Reach him at 650-348-4324.

Caltrain

Continued from Page 1

wipe out a record budget deficit. Caltrain received about 300 e-mails, letters and calls in the first week after the proposals were made, and expects many more before the cuts are decided on this spring.

What's at stake for the cities is the potential loss of service for hundreds of daily riders and key connections to major businesses, housing complexes and shopping centers.

"It makes no sense to me — where's the logic here?" said South San Francisco Vice Mayor Rich Garbarino. "If we don't have a train stop, we're going to contribute more to a lot of bad things — pollution and traffic congestion."

Garbarino and other South San Francisco officials have enlisted the help of the city's major biotech firms in fighting to keep its station alive,



PATRICK TEHAN/MERCURY NEWS

San Jose's Tamien Station might not survive because it's south of Diridon Station, the city's main terminal. Caltrain wants to save money by closing stations.

and are planning hearings on the topic. He said their goal is to make sure Caltrain officials know the city is a major work hub — he estimated there are some 100,000 jobs there — and not just a blip on the map.

In Burlingame, city leaders have started a "Help Save Burlingame Train Sta-

tions" campaign and are asking their residents to flood Caltrain's e-mail in boxes demanding the agency keep the city's service, and to show up in force at public hearings that begin Monday. Again, their message is that the loss of service will clog streets.

"We really do have a lot riding on this station," Burl-

At stake for the cities: potential loss of service for hundreds of daily riders and key connections to major businesses.

ingame Mayor Terry Nagel said last week. "I'm hoping we can get enough people to say, 'Save the Burlingame station.'"

Still others, such as Gilroy, have posted announcements to residents on the top of their city websites. In Morgan Hill, the City Council will hold a hearing Wednesday to hear from the public. Other cities plan to send council members to the March 3 board meeting to tell directors their concerns face-to-face.

However the message is getting out, they all include the same details: Our station could close, and here's how to contact Caltrain officials

before the public comment period closes in March.

But the leaders of other cities such as San Mateo, whose Hayward Park station is on the chopping block, said they weren't planning on launching any public relations blitzes.

"They already know how important these trains and stations are to us," said San Mateo Councilman David Lim. "They're fully aware of our position. I'm not going to get in their face about it because I know it's not something they wanted" to propose.

The angling comes after Caltrain officials on Feb. 3 proposed a slew of service cuts that could lead to the elimination of all train service outside of the weekday rush hour between San Francisco and San Jose. The cuts, which would take effect in July, could also involve closing up to half the rail line's 32 stations.

Although a good lobbying effort can be persuasive, the decision may likely wind up

being based mostly on each station's rider counts and location.

That wouldn't bode well for the six stations on the Gilroy extension, which are served by just five trains per day. The same goes for the Atherton station and Burlingame's Broadway depot, where trains stop only during weekends, and the Stanford stop used just for football games.

In addition, up to seven more stations could close. Of those, Burlingame, Santa Clara, Lawrence in Sunnyvale and San Antonio in Mountain View all see 550 to 650 riders each day. Then there are Belmont, San Bruno and South San Francisco, where fewer than 400 people board daily. Finally, Hayward Park in San Mateo, Bayshore at the Brisbane-San Francisco city limits and College Park in North San Jose all have fewer than 250 daily riders.

Contact Mike Rosenberg at 650-348-4324.

City
General News
San Mateo Times
Feb. 14, 2011

CALTRAIN IN CRISIS



DAN HONDA/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

In Burlingame, city leaders have started a "Help Save Burlingame Train Stations" campaign to demand Caltrain keep service to the the city.

Cities launch efforts to save train stations

With up to half of Caltrain stops possibly closing, lobbying intense

By Mike Rosenberg

mrosenberg@bayareanewsgroup.com

Cities across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are battling to save their Caltrain stations from closure, launching massive letter-writing campaigns and enlisting the help of powerful businesses to aid their causes.

In each case, city, school and business leaders are fighting to persuade Caltrain officials that their station deserves to be one of the fortunate few stops to be saved from closure.

The competition has been fierce, and it started as soon as Caltrain officials earlier this month proposed closing up to 16 stations as part of plans to

See **CALTRAIN**, Page 6

over

BELMONT CREEK

Businesses suing over flooding

By Mike Rosenberg

mrosenberg@bayareanewsgroup.com

Two San Carlos businesses want Belmont and San Mateo County to pay them more than \$285,000 for a flood that damaged their inventories and buildings last year.

Quesco Kitchen Warehouse and Twin Dragon Kung Fu Academy allege in a lawsuit that the city and the county failed to properly maintain and clean out Belmont Creek before it overflowed its banks on Jan. 20, 2010, flooding the businesses.

Belmont Creek drains water from Belmont toward Redwood Shores and into the bay. It flows next to the two businesses on Old County Road in San Carlos just across the Belmont city limit.

See **FLOOD**, Page 6



JOHN GREEN/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Belmont Creek overflowed its banks on Jan. 20, 2010.

Flood

Continued from Page 1

The flood occurred on the last day of a three-day stretch in which the area was doused with 4 inches of rain-fall, according to the National Weather Service.

The five-page lawsuit filed last week in San Mateo County Superior Court claims the water damaged the businesses' buildings, carpets, displays, fixtures, rugs, dry-wall and flooring. Quesco said the damage cost the business \$105,000, while Twin Dragon pegged its losses at \$37,500.

Their San Francisco-based attorney, Ernest Pierucci, asks that the city and the county reimburse the businesses for their losses twofold — based on separate counts of negligence by Belmont and inverse condemnation by both parties — plus legal fees and other unspecified damages.

Kathleen Kane, Belmont's interim city attorney, did not return a call Tuesday requesting comment. The city lost its longtime city attorney last month and is deciding who should fill the spot.

City records show Belmont spent \$14,000 in December to dredge the creek — a process by which crews dig at the bottom of a waterway to make it deeper — between El Camino Real and Old County Road. At the time, officials said the work "is required to reduce

the potential for flooding in the area during the winter rainy season."

City officials have said they often remove silt from the creek next to Old County Road because of the potential for flooding. In 2008, for instance, the city paid \$15,000 for crews to remove 300 cubic yards of silt from the creek and its culvert, records show.

Officials in San Carlos recently disclosed plans to spend \$298,000 to bolster the creek's flood wall as soon as later this year.

Pierucci also did not respond to messages seeking further information.

The court has scheduled the first meeting on the case for June 9.

Contact Mike Rosenberg at 650-348-4324.

City
General News
San Mateo Times
Feb. 16, 2011



JOHN GREEN/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Twin Dragon Kung Fu Academy and Quesco Kitchen Warehouse, right, sit along Belmont Creek in San Carlos.

*City
General News
San Mateo Times
June 25, 2011*

BELMONT

Parts of 101 to be closed

By Joshua Melvin

jmelvin@bayareanewsgroup.com

Sections of Highway 101 are slated to be shut down early Tuesday and Wednesday mornings as part of the project to build a pedestrian overpass in Belmont, police said.

Drivers won't be able to head north on the freeway between Ralston Avenue and Hillsdale Boulevard from 12:30 to 4 a.m. on Tuesday.

The following day, southbound 101 will be closed between those same two freeway exits from 1 to 4:30 a.m.

Police said motorists can detour around the closure Tuesday by heading west on Ralston to El Camino Real and then going north to Hillsdale and driving east in order to get back on the freeway.

On Wednesday, police recommend taking the same

route in the opposite direction.

Officials have said they plan to finish the \$7.6 million project, which will connect the Belmont Sports Complex with the rest of the city, this summer. For more information about the closure, contact the Belmont Police Department at 650-595-7400.

*Contact Joshua Melvin at
650-348-4335.*