

300 Crowd Belmont Hall For Debate

BELMONT—A crowd of 300 jammed into this city's council meeting hall last night to hear a debate on the much-publicized proposals of the Belmont Citizens for Better Government (BCBG).

Councilman Wallace Benson, who initiated the debate, accused the BCBG of suggesting ideas, but never presenting any facts.

His adversary, Mrs. Norma Gallagher, leader of the BCBG, reading from a typed speech, hammered away at five proposals submitted over a period of months by her organization and claimed that Belmont "has fallen behind the other cities of the Peninsula."

Moderator Walter Truce, who ran the show with an iron hand, said at the outset that debates seldom settle anything and this one didn't.

The BCBG's campaign in recent months has centered around five main proposals, said Mrs. Gallagher. They are:

"Adoption of an up-to-date zoning ordinance; adoption of a clear-cut apartment zoning policy; adoption of a capital improvements plan; adoption of a tree ordinance; and adoption of a plan to develop Belmont's downtown area."

"It is our firm conviction that our five proposals represent necessary steps in city planning which will greatly benefit Belmont now and in the future," she said.

Benson took the five ideas apart one by one.

"We've changed the zoning ordinance as times changed," he said. "We've never been taken to court over zoning because we have a mighty fine zoning ordinance."

"Why do we want a new zoning ordinance when the Valerga property (a large parcel of land

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300 Hear Belmont Debate

(Continued from Page One)

on the southwestern limits of the city) is the only piece of unzoned property?"

About the apartment policy proposal, the councilman said:

"There are areas where apartments should go and must go or the city's tax structure will be out of place for many years."

He said the council had set no "clear-cut policy" because council personnel changes every two years and such a policy would not be binding anyway.

Five hundred eighty apartment units in the city produce only 58 children, Benson noted to illustrate that apartments pay their way better than single family dwellings as far as taxes are concerned.

As to the tree ordinance plan of the BCBG, Benson said it was unnecessary because it is already a misdemeanor to cut down trees on private property.

His prime argument against suburban renewal was that the Carlmont Shopping Center at Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue has captured the market in most of the city and there would be so small a market for downtown that development is not warranted.

On the question of a master plan for the city, Benson said he believed there was not enough area left to plan to make such a proposal worthwhile.

He contended that the "capital improvement plan" requested by the BCBG is reflected every year in the budget.

Mrs. Gallagher read letters and clippings as substantiation for her claims that the 10-year-old ordinance is out of date. She noted that it was declared out of date three years ago by the firm of Pacific Planning and Research, which developed a general plan for the city at that time.

She asked further why the city council had developed a 123-page revised zoning ordinance last May and then dropped it seven months later.

She contended that an apart-

menting policy is needed because too much "spot zoning" is going on.

A tree ordinance is important, she said, because "it establishes the intent of the community to preserve its trees whenever possible."

A capital improvement plan is sorely needed, according to Mrs. Gallagher, because a city must "carefully anticipate its needs." She said the city budgets never reflect the plans for the future.

As to urban renewal downtown, Mrs. Gallagher said the BCBG's main point was that the city council had not thoroughly investigated the idea.

There was much talk about taxes.

The BCBG claimed that the Belmont property owner pays a higher rate (including school, county and other taxes as well as city) than any of 17 cities on the Peninsula.

Benson claimed this untrue.

And Benson pointed out that city taxes had been reduced 15 cents in the present fiscal year.

"Belmont takes on 57 cents of the \$9.40 which you pay," said the councilman. "How come you don't explore the other agencies which take all your money?"

Thirty people in the audience fired questions at the two debaters and most of the queries required restatements of the debaters' texts.

The councilman's rebuttal was mostly a little pat on the back for himself.

"I have enjoyed serving you," he said. "I have served you well and honestly."

"Benson will remain here indestructible for many years to come."

However, the councilman said after the meeting that he had not yet decided whether he would run to succeed himself in the municipal elections coming up in April. He and Councilman L. C. Reynolds, who has decided not to run, both reach the ends of their terms.

In her rebuttal, Mrs. Gallagher said she wanted "no part of this political rally."

Then she reviewed the BCBG's proposals and said:

Out of 17 cities on the Peninsula, Belmont is the only one not working on a general plan, the only one without professional planning assistance and it has the highest tax rate.

The BCBG stage was well set. During the course of Mrs. Gallagher's presentation, a neat little blue booklet called "Belmont Is Growing," setting forth BCBG arguments, was passed out to everybody in the audience.

Belmont Has To Get Organized-

JUL 26 1962

By WARREN B. GROSHONG
Tribune Staff Writer

BELMONT — The clearest thing about master planning in Belmont is that it is confusing.

Several months ago the Belmont Citizens for Better Government suggested a moratorium until the city could put together a workable master plan to control the destiny of the city.

On Oct. 9 during a council meeting the group brought up the matter, pointing out that Belmont was one of the few without a general plan.

case of planning by "amateurs" and proceeded to draw up a referendum seeking to put down the rezoning as had been done successfully by election two years in a row previously.

At the time, the BCBG decided to bring its suggestion of a moratorium to a head and started a petition around on this subject also.

On June 28, Benson, by this time, mayor, took a somewhat different attitude about the mas-

ter plan idea. "We wholeheartedly agree," he said, "that Belmont must adopt a master plan."

However, he thought the moratorium might bring an undue curtailment on the progress of building in the city. This was somewhat of a side issue, but the BCBG argued that a moratorium would create no serious problems.

Did it appear that Mayor Benson at this point was against a master plan?

It would seem not.

Remembering that Belmont had accepted the 1958 plan, but hadn't adopted it although the council indicated some use had been made of it for reference purposes, Belmont citizens next heard from Mayor Benson following a council meeting July 9:

"A master plan was adopted in the 1950s, and it has never been rescinded."

Mayor Benson had no details. A call to City Clerk Catherine M.

In defense of city council, then councilman Wallace Benson asked:

"What good will a general plan do us?"

He told the BCBG that Belmont does not lend itself as well to long-term planning as cities with more level topography. The hills make it difficult to plan years ahead, he said.

Did this mean, as it seemed, that Benson and the council were against the adoption of a master plan for the city?

It would seem so.

On Jan. 12, during a debate with Mrs. Norma Gallagher, president of the BCBG, Benson said he believed there was not enough area left to make a full-blown master plan.

During this period it was understood by all parties that the general outline of a master plan, drawn up by Consultant John Boucher in 1958, had been accepted but never adopted.

For several months the council and the BCBG argued about zoning, about planning and especially about the application of Safeway Stores, Inc. for a rezone of the old Pullman Estate.

The BCBG argued that good planning would not allow the Safeway project on the land at the corner of the Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue.

The council argued that it was the perfect place for a retail food outlet and adopted an ordinance calling for the rezoning. The BCBG then called this another

-Next Week

Heatsner by a newspaper reporter brought no details. A call to City Attorney Sameul J. Whiting Jr. brought no details either, but Whiting said he believed the mayor might be right. He said he intended to check on the matter.

At this point, it appeared that Belmont had a master plan but nobody knew anything about it. And during six or eight months of wrangling over a proposal for adoption of a master plan, nobody ever mentioned the plan that Ben-

son claimed had been adopted "in the 1950c."

This, then left the matter up to the city attorney. Was there a plan or was there not a plan? Adopted, that is?

After considerable research, Whiting said:

"In or about 1953, Hahn-Wise Associates prepared a master plan for the city of Belmont.

"The city council adopted Ordinance 138 (the present zoning ordinance) on Feb. 24, 1953. Section

2.2 of the ordinance says the zoning ordinance 'is part of the master plan and consists of various districts.'"

Whiting said he had read over the entire thing and concluded:

"As of the law at that time the city did adopt an ordinance which in effect is the adoption of a general plan (master plan) as required by government code.

"It would seem to me that the city has adopted such a plan as the law then required."

Oct 1962

Belmont Citizens for Better Government
Redwood City Tribune
January 1962

Ground Rules Laid For Belmont Debate

1-8-62

BELMONT — The ground rules and procedures for the Belmont debate between Councilman Wallace Benson and Mrs. Pat J. Gallagher have been outlined by the moderator.

In a letter to the two speakers, attorney Walter Truce listed the regulations under which he will conduct the meeting, scheduled for Jan. 12.

A drawing was conducted yesterday which designated Benson as the first speaker. Mrs. Gallagher, the spokesman for the Belmont Citizens for Better Government (BCBG), will follow. Each will be allowed 25 minutes for the opening presentation.

In the rules, Truce laid down these requirements:

1. The only speakers will be the two participants. Audience participation will be through questions only.
2. Wide latitude in subject matter will be permitted.
3. Questions should be relevant and directed to the party being questioned. Truce will rule on the relevancy.
4. Printed or written material

may be examined by either participant and will be made public following the meeting.

Truce said he hoped the meeting would be limited to two hours. It will begin at 8 p.m. in the Belmont City Council chambers.

At the conclusion, each speaker will be given eight minutes for concluding remarks and rebuttal.

Truce said the meeting will be run on schedule with a representative of the San Carlos-Belmont Toastmasters Club serving as timekeeper for the time periods allowed.

Mayor Assails BCBG

JAN 23 1962

BELMONT — Mayor Kenneth M. Dickerson last night compared Belmont Citizens for Better Government statements with those of former Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels.

He challenged a press release in which the BCBG said "... Belmont has the highest taxes on the Peninsula."

"I think citizens have the right to complain," said Mayor Dickerson, "but I think they should stick to the truth."

"Joseph Goebbels followed the theory that if you say something enough it becomes the truth."

Mayor Dickerson said the BCBG statement about taxes is "absolutely not true." Belmont taxes are among the lowest in the county, he said, and then named a list of cities with rates higher than Belmont's 63 cents.

Not to be outdone, Mrs. Norma Gallagher, president of the BCBG, issued a counterstatement to newspapers this morning.

"The proper comparison of our taxes," she said, "can only be made on the basis of the combined city and county rate because unlike most other Peninsula cities Belmont city taxes do not include water charges, sewer fee and fire protection."

"The Governmental Research Council of San Mateo County and the San Mateo County Development Association cover 17 cities, all in San Mateo County, and their report shows Belmont's combined rate of \$9.45 (per \$100 of assessed valuation) as highest."

Mrs. Gallagher said members of her organization would be glad to sit down and talk with the council on tax matters.

Feb 27, 1962

New Belmont Consultant: BCBG Fights Council Move

FEB 27 1962

BELMONT — The city council took less than two minutes last night to approve the hiring of a part-time consultant to the planning commission.

Robert Brown, 1999 Notre Dame Ave., a city council candidate, took even less time to condemn the action.

"I charge that it is plain political trickery to hire a planner on a limited hourly basis just six weeks before the election," Brown noted in a prepared statement issued to the press following the meeting.

"The council hopes by this device to whitewash its record of high taxes and no planning. The council is on record both in the council sponsored debates and in the minutes rejecting (1) the master plan, (2) a new zoning ordinance, (3) development of the downtown, (4) a tree ordinance, (5) citizen participation.

"The sudden dusting off of the master plan for a \$15 an hour limited review, therefore, can only be construed as a political gimmick."

The council approved the expenditure of \$150 for the hiring of a consultant to work with the city planners to modify the present master plan.

"This represents about 10 hours of work," said councilman Robert Fitzgerald.

Although he wasn't mentioned during the regular meeting, it was indicated that George S. Gatter of San Francisco would be hired for the job. The Belmont Citizens for Better Government has declared that Gatter is not qualified for the work.

In other action last night at the city hall, the council:

— Heard William Addison of the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. outline a master light plan for the city. Addison told the council that the city already has made progress since taking over from the county in April, 1960. At that time, the city was paying \$24,802 for zero miles of standard lighting. Now 22.5 miles of lights are up to standard at a cost of \$30,271. Ultimate plans call for 57 miles up to standard (the entire city) within 10 years at a yearly cost of \$64,499. Sales tax money is used to pay for city lighting.

— Approved the purchase of two Plymouth autos from Ely Motor Co. of Redwood City for use by the police department. Ely submitted the low bid of \$3,306.09.

— Commented on a letter by the Barrett School PTA protesting an on-sale beer and wine license for a pizza parlor at 2039 Ralston Ave. The council noted that the city had protested to the ABC, and that a public hearing would be set soon.

— Granted an extension of an excavation permit on Carlmont Subdivision No. 2.

— Continued consideration of a scale model for Belmont problem areas because of the illness of councilman Henry Hughes, who was to have made the presentation.

— Denied a claim against the city by James N. Yoxsimer, 1612 Notre Dame Ave., for sewer damages.

— Accepted several grand deeds for storm drain easements.

Belmont Citizens for Better Government
Redwood City Tribune
Feb 1962

BCBG Fights Idea:

FEB 22 1962

New Belmont Planner?

BELMONT—The Belmont City Council and Planning Commission found out last night they are going to have sticky going in their planning discussions with George S. Gatter of San Francisco.

The Belmont Citizens for Better Government is against any expenditure of funds on Gatter. The group believes he is not qualified.

BCBG members feel so strongly about their complaint that they

hired a court reporter to take down the proceedings of the joint meeting last night.

In a statement to the council given early in the day to newspapers, the BCBG referred to Gatter as "a young man starting out in business."

"The BCBG feels," said the statement "in view of the controversy in Belmont over planning, the only sensible move is to hire

a firm with a history of full-scale city planning."

Mayor Kenneth M. Dickerson, often at odds with the BCBG, and Mrs. Norma Gallagher, the group's president, had a few words over the BCBG's latest campaign.

Dickerson asked how Mrs. Gallagher had gotten the information that any decision concerning Gatter had been made. He chal-

(See Belmont, Pg. 2, Col. 1)

Belmont Discusses Planning Program

(Continued from Page One)

lenged the BCBG handout statement: "There was never any discussion or vote at a regular

council meeting on the important policy decision to hire a city planner."

Dickerson said the council never had made any decision in the matter. The council is only at the stage "of seeing what Mr. Gatter can do for us."

Gatter will go over the present developed, but unadopted "General Plan" with the planning commission and then report to the city council how much his planning services will cost. He told the council that the general rate for his services would be \$15 an hour.

The main object in going over the plan is to determine how to bring it up to date and make it acceptable for adoption.

The council and planners reviewed some facets of the plan last night and also went over proposed downtown development, zoning and capital improvements.

The BCBG offered for council review a complete rundown on the personnel of the newly formed firm, Planning Associates, of which Gatter is a member.

The group pointed out that Gatter is not a full-fledged member of the American Institute of Planners, merely an associate.

The BCBG said further that it hoped "that Gatter's name will not be used in the newspapers since its charge is directed towards the policy of the council, not towards a young man starting out in business."

Safeway Rezoning Voted

OCT 31 1962

BELMONT—A referendum designed to block commercial rezoning of the Pullman Estate corner suffered a stinging defeat at the polls here yesterday.

The vote was 2,585 for the rezoning and 1,407 against.

◆ Mayor Wallace Benson, jubilant over the outcome of the election, announced that Safeway Stores, Inc., who had applied for the rezoning, will start construction of a supermarket at the historic corner of Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue within 90 days.

Benson gave the Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Chamber credit for gaining the necessary "Yes" votes for the victory as a result of their campaign.

"I believe this is the best thing for the corner," Mayor Benson said. "Soon there will be four lanes for traffic, sidewalks and light signals at the intersection."

Benson said he wanted "to assure the people that the only thing that will be built on the property will be a Safeway Store and parking."

A spokesman for the Belmont Citizens for Better Government, noting that referendum efforts against commercial rezoning had been victorious for the past two years in a row, said acidly:

"We won two out of three. How about trying for the best three out of five? No non-political organization has a chance with the political juggernaut that is now loose in Belmont."

The BCBG, which motivated this year's referendum campaign, announced Monday that it is disbanding after filing in City Hall initiative petitions calling for a moratorium on all zoning changes until the city adopts a master plan.

City Atty. Samuel J. Whiting Jr. reported today that at the proposed moratorium could have no effect on the Safeway rezoning because the city council had authorized the Pullman corner change several months before the initiative petitions were turned in.

The petitions ask that the city council either accept the moratorium proposal or submit the question to the voters.

Belmont Campaign Ethics Outlined

MAR 17 1962

BELMONT — A six-point outline of ethical campaign standards has been sent as a reminder to all four candidates in the Belmont Citizens for Better Government.

The BCBG, which does not endorse nor support individual candidates, urged citizen participation in politics and said the files of the organization are available for research. Mrs. Cyril Jobson, LY 3-0703, is research chairman.

The six points specified in the letter to the candidates were:

1. That campaign expenditures over \$200 must be reported. (The BCBG indicated that since councilman are not paid, expensive and extensive mailings are not in keeping with the office.)
2. That city stationery should not be used for campaign purposes, regardless of who pays for it.
3. That scurrilous or abusive mailings should be reported to the postmaster.
4. That campaign handouts should not be left in mail boxes.
5. That election mailings by organizations must contain names and addresses of two members. (The BCBG admitted that in 1961 in inadvertently sent out a cartoon without names but publicly took responsibility for the error.)
6. That log-rolling groups such as "Citizens' Committee" and "Citizens' Tax Committee" which suddenly appear before elections but are never again heard from are not considered ethical campaign practices.

The letters were sent to candidates Councilman Wallace Benson, Ray Faber, John J. McInerney and Robert Brown.

Councilman Hits BCBG 'Code of Ethics'

MAR 21 1962

BELMONT — Councilman L. C. Reynolds today took exception to the six-point code of ethics proposed for the city council election campaign by the Belmont Citizens for Better Government.

Reynolds said he opposed action by the BCBG "to assert itself arbiter of our election ethics."

The BCBG had invited voters to use its files as research material in the campaign.

Said Reynolds:

"It is far more sensible to go direct to the candidates themselves or to the city hall rather than to a secondary source such as that proposed by the BCBG."

The councilman challenged the

BCBG suggestions, one by one: **BCBG Point 1:** "That campaign expenditures over \$200 be reported."

Reynolds: "Reported to whom? And why the \$200 minimum? The State Election Code already requires that all campaign expenditures be reported and sworn to before the city clerk before the benefiting candidate is permitted to take oath of office."

Point 2: "That city stationery should not be used for campaign purposes."

Reynolds: "The gross impropriety of such use needs no emphasis. This 'specification' obviously springs from the mayor's report to the electorate in con-

nection with last year's referendum, which report conveyed only the facts of the issue and had nothing to do with the election of anyone."

Point 3: "That scurrilous or abusive mailings should be reported to the postmaster."

Reynolds: "Federal law prohibits federal employes from participating in political activity. Thus it would be illegal for the postmaster to function as a censor of political mailings as required by this 'specification.' Furthermore, the current volume of overwork now required of the postmaster is already onerous."

Point 4: "That campaign hand-

outs should not be left in mail boxes."

Reynolds: "This use, and all similar uses, are already strictly prohibited by federal regulations."

Point 5: "That election mailings of organizations must contain names and addresses of two members."

Reynolds: "BCBG should have learned from its own violation last year (which, incidentally became an 'inadvertency' only when BCBG discovered the council was considering prosecution) that the State Election Code makes adequate provision for identification and origin of political literature."

(The BCBG admitted that in 1961 it inadvertently sent out a

cartoon without names but publicly took responsibility for the error.)

Point 6: "That log-rolling groups such as 'citizens committee' and 'citizens tax committee' which suddenly appear before elections but are never again heard from are not considered ethical campaign practices."

Reynolds: "Considering that this is a long-standing and accepted practice throughout this country — that is, groups organizing temporarily for the sole purpose of electing a candidate, then disbanding after the election — this 'specification' perhaps should be referred to Congress for study."

*Belmont Citizens for Better Government
Redwood City Tribune
March 17, 1962*

March 31, 1962

Belmont Candidates:

BCBG Draws

MAR 31 1962 Spotlight

BELMONT — Candidates for the Belmont City Council focused attention on the Belmont Citizens for Better Government, planning, bickering on issues and taxes last night.

A crowd of 150 persons turned out for the Candidates' Night sponsored by the Belmont Chamber of Commerce.

Incumbent Wallace Benson, first to speak because of the order of the alphabet, lit right into his old foe, the BCBG.

"I stand here indicted by the BCBG," said Benson just as soon as he reached the rostrum. He said he would attempt "to prove they are wrong and vicious."

Then he summarized all the complaints of the organization and concluded "they always give the minus side but never tell you what's on the plus side."

He defended the zoning ordinance which the BCBG has called out of date, he defended the city's lack of a tree ordinance, he defended the tax rate, which the BCBG has been calling the highest in the county. He noted the drop in the city rate from \$1.27 in 1952 to 63 cents today.

Robert Brown, a newcomer to city politics, hammered away at the need for expert planning in his statement of candidacy.

"I have found that Belmont has its problems," said Brown.

Then he endeavored to show that "amateur planning is behind most of these problems.

Following closely the proposals of the BCBG, Brown called for an updated zoning ordinance, a priority-guided capital improvements plan, a recreation plan, exhaustive investigation of the possibilities of expanding the downtown business area and adoption of a master plan.

Raymond Faber, one of two planning commissioners running for the council, spoke out for a balanced economy and broadened tax base and he defended the city's use of a master plan that was drawn up in 1958 but never adopted.

He said he thought it proper that the document should be used as a guide instead of a hard-and-fast plan.

"A master plan is wonderful, but how do you transfer it to reality" he asked.

Throughout his speech, Faber said he believes most projects, including development of the downtown area, should be done at the expense of the people involved, not at the expense of the entire tax-paying community.

John J. McInerney, the other

planner, took a different tack than the other candidates.

"I am seeking better relations between the council and the citizens," he said.

McInerney said he believes much of the "predicament" the city is in right now is caused by bitterness and strife. There have been too many of "Belmont's famous hassles".

He criticized the city council for often being blind to ideas.

"We should harness the individual thinking in Belmont," said McInerney.

The bitterness that now prevails, he said, has had the effect of keeping prospective investors away from Belmont and it has developed a city council "whose main premise is the status quo."

McInerney called for "a new era of confidence and loyalty" and said "I am running on a platform of fairness."

He, too, added the need for better planning in the city.

The fact that Safeway Stores, Inc., has announced it will seek rezoning of the Pullman Estate again pushed this matter to the fore in the question and answer period.

Each candidate was asked if he would vote for commercial rezoning of the 3.8 acres of land if he were elected.

McInerney and Brown said they would want to see the plans for the proposed Safeway Store and then hear the advice of planning experts before making up their minds.

Benson said: "I was for it then (when it was voted on but turned back by referendum last year) and I'm for it now."

Faber's opinion was the same.

All the councilmen also were asked how they felt about the BCBG.

Benson and Faber, running as mates, both believed the group is doing more harm than good.

McInerney accused the BCBG of being unfair and unobjective at times, "but on the other hand, has the council been objective?" he asked.

Brown said he agrees with all the principles the BCBG has been proposing, especially those involving planning.

Belmont Citizens for Better Government
Redwood City Tribune
April 1962 May - June 1962

BCBG Gets Praise From Mosk

APR 3 1962

BELMONT — The Belmont Citizens for Better Government, most active group in civic affairs for many years, got a pat on the back from Atty. Gen. Stanley Mosk today.

Mosk sent the organization a letter of commendation for its proposed "code of ethics" for city council elections.

"I think it is a splendid idea to have a code of ethics for candidates for public office and I commend you for preparing such a document," said the attorney general.

Mr. Norma Gallagher, BCBG president, said the group has compiled a file of past election mailings in Belmont to show that many contained "personal attacks and unsubstantiated charges."

"Election time should be the opportunity to bring out the issues and debate them rationally so that the voters will clearly understand how each candidate stands," Mrs. Gallagher said.

The Tribune printed the group's code of ethics several weeks ago.

Group Asks Moratorium On Zoning

MAY 15 1962

BELMONT—The Belmont Citizens for Better Government last night renewed its appeal for a one-year moratorium on zoning until the city council adopts a master plan.

The BCBG had proposed such a moratorium almost a year ago, but the council had spurned the idea.

Ray Lang, 14 Debbie Lane, appeared on behalf of the BCBG to issue the new appeal, but because of a newly adopted policy against recognizing a group whose members' names are not made public, Lang's testimony was written into the minutes as that of a private citizen.

Reading from a prepared statement, Lang noted that George S. Gatter, the city's new part-time planning consultant, had recommended the adoption of a planning policy.

"The BCBG is happy that the council has taken steps towards planning by allocating money for review of the master plan. Also that the planning commission will revise Zoning Ordinance 138 and reprint it," Lang said.

Lang said the BCBG wanted to approach the council in a spirit of cooperation to work out the zoning program.

"What will a freeze do?" asked Mayor Wallace Benson. "I wish you would come down to our next study meeting and tell us." Benson also questioned Lang's contention that development of the downtown area could produce an extra \$100,000 in sales tax income per year.

"Come down and explain to us how this can be true when we are getting a total of only \$90,000 from sales tax now," Benson said.

"I'll be happy to meet with you," Lang answered.

BCBG Explains Plans for Petitions

JUN 19 1962

BELMONT — Circulation of an initiative petition calling for a zoning moratorium until a master plan is adopted by the Belmont City Council could start as early as July 5, the Belmont Citizens for Better Government announced.

On the heels of a favorable vote by the council on the commercial rezoning of 3.8 acres of the old Pullman Estate, the BCBG announced that it would, if necessary, start two petitions going the rounds: one for the moratorium and the other to force an election on the rezoning issue.

Members of the BCBG in a statement issued to newspapers pointed out, however, that the city council has not actually adopted the ordinance which establishes the rezoning.

The ordinance will be introduced on July 9.

In its bid to beat down the rezoning request by Safeway Stores, Inc., the BCBG says it would "consider it most regrettable if the council's vote should force a third Pullman referendum. (Referendum elections in 1960 and 1961 turned back other requests to rezone the property.)

The BCBG says it has been assured of public support by an extensive poll, referring to the victories in the last two elections.

The BCBG believes that the Pullman development should be held up until a master plan is adopted. The group is determined to bring a professional master plan into the Belmont picture.

"Buffer zoning, traffic patterns and other problems can then be better evaluated by experts in relation to over-all plans," the group said.

The California government code, says the BCBG, "states that all cities shall adopt a master plan."

Some other claims by the citizens group:

— The city no longer needs to bargain for land to widen Ralston because the mayor stated that the cost of widening will be included in a county bond issue proposal.

(This refers to an offer by Safeway to widen the street up to Coronet Boulevard and give the area to the city. City Engineer Robert E. Roberts explained at the last council meeting that all of Ralston west of the Alameda de las Pulgas, except the part up to Coronet, would be widened by the county.)

— Food markets yield minimum sales and property tax. Instead of a substantial sales tax increase, because business will be split, the yearly sales tax yield would not even represent as much as the price of a hamburger per average taxpayer.

— Westward population growth was anticipated and the Carlmont Shopping Center rezoning was planned to take care of this for many years. This was also affirmed in the \$10,000 unadopted master plan.

— This master plan also recommended that commercial development should stop at the Alameda. This issue of the Alameda dividing-line was stated on the ballot measure in the 1961 election, and it is therefore the council's obligation to hold this line.

Belmont's Statements

APR 12 1962

BELMONT—The Belmont Citizens for Better Government issued a special post-election statement today.

Mrs. Norma Gallagher, president of the organization, said:

"The BCBG did not sponsor or endorse a candidate. We believe that our suggested code of ethics had considerable effect because, for the first time in years, there was no election mail containing scurrilous or abusive material.

"The BCBG will continue to work in the interest of good planning in Belmont."

BCBG Answers Stand By Belmont Chamber

JUL 9 1962

BELMONT—The Belmont Citizens for Better Government today answered a Belmont Chamber of Commerce statement on the Pullman Estate rezoning issue.

The chamber had charged that the BCBG's campaign to block rezoning of the corner to allow a Safeway Store on the property was "unjustified and unwarranted."

The BCBG answered that it and the chamber "have a common interest — what is best for Belmont."

The chamber had also criticized the BCBG for its plans to circulate referendum petitions on the rezoning matter.

The BCBG answered: "The Chamber of Commerce has been misinformed if it believes the BCBG opposes location of a national supermarket chain in Belmont. In fact, it has suggested that it locate on the 19-acre Davey property (on El Camino). This property was rezoned 1½ years ago, with no public opposition, and the rezoning was granted on the basis that a supermarket was to be located there. Development of this zoning should be expedited because of its high tax potential. Other considerations are the minimum traffic

problem, the fact that the council is already on record that a signal at Davey Road and El Camino is first on its list of traffic lights and the fact that rather than splitting available tax revenues, these will be augmented.

"The supermarket's own research also confirms this. Its research is based on the premise that it will capture business which presently goes out-of-town, and this business is shown going north on El Camino Real. Davey is therefore a logical answer.

"The BCBG believes that use of Pullman for a supermarket would represent sheer expedience and a repetition of the kind of planning that has resulted in commercial overzoning and underdeveloped tax potential. It bases this statement on expert planning opinion. While there is a preponderance of expert evidence to show that this would be poor planning, none whatsoever has been presented to the contrary.

"The BCBG believes that the Chamber of Commerce should also consider the facts that Pullman commercial zoning has been turned down twice by the voters; that these were very expensive elections and because they were called by the council when it should have accepted the refer-

endum of the people, were entirely unnecessary, and that the voters of Belmont have specifically opposed a supermarket at this location in the biggest election ever held in Belmont.

The BCBG is most anxious to cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce in bringing about a better Belmont. It would be happy to furnish background material for all its statements, or to meet with Chamber of Commerce representatives at any time they so request. Since the mayor of Belmont has recently reversed his long-standing opposition to a master plan for Belmont, if the Chamber of Commerce would join the BCBG in public support of a master plan, the BCBG would indeed be honored."

BCBG Attacks Stand By Belmont's Mayor

JUL 27 1962

BELMONT — "The mayor of Belmont has now made a public issue into a personal vendetta," a release by the Belmont Citizens for Better Government (BCBG) said today.

The group took Mayor Wallace Benson to task for statements he made during Monday night's council meeting about Mrs. Charles Sterry, a member of the BCBG steering committee.

"If it were not for Mrs. Sterry," the mayor said Monday, "there would be room for compromise." Benson's statement came after Councilman Robert H. Fitzgerald

had suggested the city call its own moratorium on zoning in the city and hash over the BCBG suggestions about adopting a master plan.

"It is extremely unfortunate for the city," the BCBG statement said, "that a public official should use the public rostrum to attack a member of a group that has been denied the right to speak at the council meetings."

The BCBG currently is circulating two petitions. One requests the city council to rescind action in which it granted Safeway Stores, Inc., commercial zoning for 3.8 acres of the old Pullman Estate. The other, an initiative measure, requests a moratorium on zoning until the city adopts a master plan.

"... The personal animosities and fights of the mayor should not be allowed to take precedence over the public interest," said the BCBG. "The only answer to the Pullman corner is zoning compromise—not extremism."

The statement was submitted by Mrs. Eleanor Jobson, 1904 Hillman Ave., Belmont.

Belmont Citizens for Better Growth
Redwood City Tribune
July 1962

BCBG Drive Under Way

JUL 1 1962

BELMONT—The Belmont Citizens for Better Government initiative and referendum petition campaign is underway.

Petitions are in the hands of about 50 people and circulation began during the weekend, according to a BCBG spokesman.

The initiative petition requests the Belmont City Council to issue a moratorium on zoning in the city until a master plan is adopted.

The referendum petition requests the city council to rescind an ordinance which rezones the old Pullman Estate corner from residential to commercial. The council had rezoned the property to permit Safeway Stores, Inc., to build an outlet on the 3.8 acres at Ralston Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas.

A total of 750 names, 10 per cent of the estimated 7,500 registered voters in the city, must be on the referendum petition to make it valid. A total of 1,125 — or 15 per cent — must be on the initiative petitions before City Hall will process them.

The city council then has a choice: it can act as the petitions request or it can submit the two questions to the electorate for settlement.

The BCBG reminds voters that commercial rezoning of the Pullman corner has been turned down twice at the polls in the last two years.

If the council decides to put the matters on the ballot, the question "When?" is a big one in the minds of the BCBG.

The citizens group had hoped that the matter could go on the ballot in the general election next November — if the council turns down the petitions — avoiding a special election.

Mayor Wallace Benson issued a statement last week that the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors had indicated the size of the ballot in November would prevent any additions.

In a statement today, the BCBG said Benson's claim was "totally in error." The group said "the county clerk stated that this matter had not yet been taken up either formally or informally by the board of supervisors."

County Clerk John Bruning said today the BCBG is correct. The board has taken no action.

"The board has the final say on it," said Bruning. "However, I would recommend against it (putting the Belmont matters on the general election ballot). I don't know how we can accommodate everything."

A resolution requesting that the elections be consolidated must be submitted to the board, Bruning said.

So far, only Sequoia Hospital District, which has a directors election coming up, has submitted a resolution to Bruning.

The BCBG said Benson had submitted "three spectacular misstatements" in recent days and they "have seriously damaged the prestige of the city . . ." The general election issue is one of them.

"The mayor was totally in error when he said Belmont already has adopted a master plan, and the facts indicate that he knew he was in error when he said it," said the BCBG statement.

Mayor Benson said last week

the city had adopted a master plan in the early 1950s and never had rescinded it.

The BCBG said there is no reference to a master plan in the city's new ordinance codification.

Benson and City Administrator John L. Watts are on vacation.

City Atty. Samuel J. Whiting Jr. said Mayor Benson was referring to "a master plan prepared by Hahn-Wise. Whether it was ever adopted I'm not certain, but I am going to do some research this week on the matter."

Whiting said it was prepared in conjunction with ordinance 138, the city's zoning ordinance.

The BCBG maintains:

"Anybody can check the records and they can find that no master plan has ever been adopted in the city of Belmont."

Belmont Master Plan Claim Hit by BCBG

JUL 20 1962

BELMONT — The Belmont Citizens of Better Government have challenged Mayor Wallace Benson's claim that the City of Belmont already has a master plan.

Several weeks ago, Mayor Benson announced that the zoning ordinance adopted in 1953 constituted a master plan and City Atty. Samuel J. Whiting Jr. confirmed that the ordinance "as of the law at that time . . ." fulfilled the requirements of the government code for a general plan.

The BCBG has brought to the forefront Nestor Barrett, former Santa Clara County planning director, who says:

"I state categorically that Belmont's zoning ordinance did not in under the government code as a master plan."

The BCBG says further:

"It would indeed be a catastrophe if, as the mayor contends, our zoning ordinance is a master plan. Because the zoning ordinance has not met the many government code requirements which apply to the functioning of a master plan, it would mean that all rezones since 1953 — including Carlmont Shopping Center, Pullman, Belameda Park, the Davey development, etc. etc. would be illegal.

"The resolution of the city council adopting the zoning ordinance

states specifically, This ordinance shall be known and cited as the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Belmont. However, the government code requires that a master or general plan shall be officially certified as the master or general plan upon its adoption by the planning commission and the legislative body.

"Also, the government code requires that a master plan must be the basis for a zoning ordinance."

No master plan has been ever been adopted, said the group.

The BCBG has worked long and hard to bring about planned growth for Belmont. It believes that expert planning and an adopted master plan is Belmont's best hope for an improved tax base and community stability.

"These are the reasons why the BCBG is sponsoring the initiative petition and the referendum which is now being circulated. The initiative petition requests the council for a zoning moratorium until a master plan is adopted. The referendum is to hold the development of the Pullman property so that it can be evaluated by experts as art of the master plan, and on the basis of what is best for the city as a whole."

Benson Denies Charges

JUL 28 1962

BELMONT — Mayor Wallace Benson today accused members of the Belmont Citizens for Better Government (BCBG) of stretching things a bit in a statement the group made in the Tribune yesterday.

The BCBG statement referred to itself as "a group that has been denied the right to speak at the council meetings."

Benson said in retaliation:

"I will offer \$100 to their cause if any newspaper reporter attending the council meetings will attest to the fact that I have ever prevented any member of the BCBG or anyone else from speaking at a council meeting."

Benson said he had issued an ultimatum that no one can speak as a member of an organization unless the names of the organization have been made public.

"But anyone can speak as an individual at any time," he said.

BCBG Plans Drawing Fire

AUG 15 1962

BELMONT — Opposition to two Belmont Citizens for Better Government proposals has developed on an equal number of fronts, neither of which involves Mayor Wallace Benson.

The Belmont Chamber of Commerce has sided with Benson in declaring that the controversial Pullman Estate rezoning should go to a vote of the people.

The referendum petition presented by the BCBG asks the city council to rescind its rezoning action, thus negating the necessity of an election.

The Redwood City-San Carlos-Belmont Board of Realtors jumped into the fray on a second front concerning the BCBG's request for a zoning moratorium until a master plan for Belmont can be adopted.

The realtors' board of directors voted to go on record opposing a zoning freeze in the city. The letter, addressed to the council, was signed by realty board president Ralph Ebner.

Meanwhile, the BCBG requested an appearance before the Chamber of Commerce to explain its

stand in regard to the moratorium request. In a letter to the chamber, the BCBG said chamber secretary Edward Vallergera had stated that all growth and construction would cease if a zoning moratorium were declared.

Such is not the case, the BCBG indicated. Construction could continue in all areas where a change in zoning would not be required.

The referendum petition seeking to halt commercial rezoning of Pullman Estate is now in the hands of the city for verification of signatures. The council is expected to take action at its Aug. 27 meeting. It can either rescind its rezoning action or call for an election.

The council rezoned the property at the northwest corner of Alameda and Ralston Avenue specifically to allow construction of a Safeway Store.

An initiative petition to place a rezoning moratorium on the city now is being distributed by the BCBG but no date has been ascertained for its presentation to the council.

Belmont Citizens for Better Government
Redwood City Tribune
August 1962

BCBG Hits Pullman Petition Goal

BELMONT—The tug-of-war between the city council and the Belmont Citizens for Better Government reached the third stage yesterday.

For the third time in three years, the BCBG presented referendum petitions to the city to stop commercial rezoning of the old Pullman Estate property at the northwest corner of Alameda and Ralston Avenue.

The petitions, containing 1,033 names, were handed over to the city clerk's office yesterday afternoon. Ten per cent of Belmont's 7,500 qualified voters are all that are needed to bring the matter to a head.

The council now has two alternatives: To rescind its past action of rezoning the property from residential to commercial, or to allow the matter once again to be decided by the voters.

The BCBG has won both previous skirmishes when the voters negated the council's rezoning actions.

The BCBG's principal antagonist, Mayor Wallace Benson, said today he personally won't vote to rescind the council's action and added the issue should go to a vote of the people.

He said each instance has been different. The first time the rezoning was for planned community which included several items, the second was halted because it was claimed that broken-down stores and a gas station would be erected.

This time, Benson said, is the first time it has been quite clear what would be constructed: A Safeway market, all by itself.

He said he had no idea how his council colleagues would react to the petition and could not predict whether the rezoning

(See Mayor, Pg. 2, Col. 6)



—Tribune Photo

Here We Are Again

Mrs. R. F. Keeffe (left) and Mrs. Richard O'Connor of the Belmont Citizens for Better Government hand over petitions containing 1,033 names to Mrs. Chris Mealey in the Belmont city clerk's office. The referendum petitions call for rescinding of council action to rezone the Pullman Estate or to have a city-wide election on the issue.

Mayor Benson Refuses Vote Change on Pullman

(Continued from Page One)

would be rescinded or allowed to go to the people for a decision.

"I have never equivocated," he said. "I was for it and I am still for it (rezoning)."

"Why shouldn't the council let the people decide?"

Benson offered congratulations to the BCBG for acquiring far more than the necessary number of signatures.

City Atty. Sam Whiting Jr. said today it probably will be at least the Aug. 27 meeting before formal city action either way can be taken. "It will probably take about 10 days to certify the signatures on the petitions," he said.

Council action may be taken only after the city clerk certifies the signatures are valid and total more than 10 per cent of the eligible voters.

The BCBG declared that "a large segment of the public welcomed the referendum because of great concern that the Pullman rezoning completely disregarded both voters and taxpayers — voters because it has been turned down in two elections and

taxpayers because they had to underwrite the great expense of these unnecessary elections."

Benson estimated an election would cost about \$1,500.

The BCBG urged the council to rescind its action since an initiative petition for a master plan will be presented shortly. The citizens' group has asked that all action on the Pullman property be held in abeyance until a master plan is fully evaluated.

BCBG

Protests

SEP 10 1962

Big Sign

BELMONT — Representatives of the Belmont Citizens for Better Government have appealed a permit for construction of a billboard on the old Pullman Estate.

The Belmont Planning Commission authorized the sign last week at the request of Safeway Stores, Inc.

In a statement addressed to City Clerk Catherine M. Heartner, the statement said:

"Neither under the present zoning nor under C-1 (commercial) zoning may such a billboard or advertising structure bearing the text approved by the commission, be authorized by the planning commission on either a temporary or permanent basis."

The letter was signed by Eve S. Sterry, Eleanor Jobson, Peter Frederickson, Edwood Cook and William Walker. Walker is a former member of the planning commission.

The BCBG and the city council have been at odds over the rezoning of the land for many months.

The council authorized the rezoning from residential to commercial and the BCBG got up some referendum petitions, repeating actions of two years before.

The council turned down the referendum request that the rezoning be rescinded and put the matter on the ballot for Oct. 30.

*Belmont Citizens for Better Growth
Redwood City Tribune
Oct 1962*

Referendum Vote Tuesday:

Pullman Rezoning Issue Up

OCT 24 1962

By WARREN GROSHONG
Tribune Staff Writer

BELMONT — The continuing battle over rezoning of the northwest corner at Alameda de las Pulgas and Ralston Avenue will reach another milestone next Tuesday in what is becoming the annual Pullman Estate referendum election.

For the third consecutive year, the city council has approved rezoning on the property. Now anti-rezoning campaigners are hoping that for the third consecutive year the council action will be turned back by the voters.

Last year, on April 11, the referendum was successful by a

margin of 29 votes — 1,759 to 1,730 — in a surprising 50 per cent turnout.

Waiting quietly in the wings is Safeway Stores, Inc., which twice has won the sanction of the council but has never gained the sanction of the voters to build one of its supermarkets on the 3.8 acres of land.

Standing steadfastly in the way of the council action is the Belmont Citizens for Better Government, which believes the city should have and utilize a master plan to guide it in such rezonings as this one.

The BCBG has placed on file in city hall this official statements

against the rezoning:

"Although the prospect of a grocery store on this corner is supposed to dazzle the public and obscure the real issue, the real issue concerns every Belmont homeowner.

"The character of Belmont is changing. The question is:

"Will Belmont remain primarily a residential single-family dwelling community or will it become predominantly apartment and commercial?

"This property stands as a symbol of a zoning policy which is devaluating property all over the city. This policy consists of hodge-podge rezonings without relation

to any well-defined plan. If this rezoning is upheld, it will represent an endorsement of this detrimental zoning policy.

"Although the arguments for this rezoning are for a grocery store, a closer look reveals that this acreage will accommodate more than just a grocery store, and once commercial zoning is granted the owners may use the property for many purposes without control.

"On the other hand, if this property is incorporated in a master plan, many uses which would enhance the tax base are available.

"Why is the council afraid to

for Another Election Tuesday

have this property evaluated in a master plan?

"Is it ethical and is it good government for our governing body to actively oppose the electorate in working for property owners and their real estate agent in this dispute?

"Shouldn't the verdict of two elections and three referendums persuade the council to put this property to planning experts, and accept their decision?

"Six thousand dollars in public funds will have been spent on special elections trying to force a rezoning. This would have been much better spent in seeking a solution to all of Belmont's prob-

lems in a reevaluation and adoption of our master plan. This master plan also costs taxpayers \$10,000. Unused and wasted, it lies gathering dust."

The prime personal opponent of the BCBG campaign, Mayor Wallace Benson, has submitted this statement as the official argument for rezoning:

"The unanimous recommendation of the Belmont Planning Commission rezoning the northwest corner of Alameda and Ralston for a Safeway supermarket was approved by the city council. We urge you to consider carefully the following reasons for voting 'yes' — the same reasons that led

to the planning commission's recommendation and the city council's approval:

"1. The property is not suited for single or multiple family residential development. Two previous planning commissions overwhelmingly rejected this type of use, and their decisions have been upheld by two previous city councils.

"2. Both streets at this intersection will be widened to four lanes, including sidewalks, at no cost to the taxpayers, and signal controlled when the Safeway store is developed. The single commercial development of Safeway would eliminate traffic hazards by lim-

ited driveways and by providing permanent visibility through setback lines proposed on Safeway's plans.

"3. Safeway food market will provide employment for Belmont Citizens, will yield substantial additional sales and property tax revenues, to the obvious benefit of all taxpayers.

"4. The previous referendum elections are not indicative of public opinion over the proposed Safeway market, the subject of this election. In the previous elections, Belmont citizens had no assurance that a desirable enterprise would be built on this corner.