

City Council
RW City Tribune
Jan 1972

Clerk Hits 'Strange Politics'

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Belmont City Clerk James W. McLaughlin last night had his duties cut back by the city council for the second time in the past year.

Councilmen voted 4-1 to shift some of his responsibilities for the April 11 municipal election to the San Mateo County Elections Department. McLaughlin and Councilman Edward D. Vallergera objected that the action, introduced at midnight and not listed on the agenda, was unjust.

McLaughlin said today he was puzzled that no one had informed him of any intention to change the responsibilities at this time. He said the action was "strange politics." He said he would have to study the alternate resolution to see how it affects him.

"I consider this very underhanded, not even knowing of the alternate resolution," he said.

Councilman Vallergera said "this doesn't sound fair to me. The city clerk should have had notice to defend himself."

He also asked if "you couldn't have at least put it in the (councilmen's) kit so the minority (Vallergera) could see it? This is irresponsible," he exclaimed. "I object to you not putting it on the agenda."

The erosion of responsibilities apparently was not as complete as had been intended in the alternate resolution, as the council deleted portions which would have turned the selection of election officers and polling places over to the county.

Because McLaughlin already has done preliminary work toward the upcoming election the council allowed those responsibilities to remain part of his duties.

Although he said he had not had time to study the alternate resolution, McLaughlin said he did not think there was a tremendous amount of change. The county will submit ballots to the printer, and the county will take ballots to the post office instead of the city clerk.

"We have always used the county voting machines," McLaughlin said. "I have had the utmost cooperation from the county."

Majority of election duties are assigned by state law to the city clerk.

85 Belmont Residents Launch Fluoridation-on-Ballot Drive

JAN 1 2 1972

By OTTO TALLENT

Eighty-five Belmont citizens today started a five-day campaign to obtain 2,100 signatures on an initiative petition to place the question of fluoridation on the ballot at the Belmont municipal election April 11.

Mrs. Cynthia Hall, leader of the fluoridation proponents, said the petition must be presented to the city by Monday in order to qualify for the ballot. She said proponents will check signatures Sunday.

Kickoff of the campaign was preceded yesterday with a Belmont Chamber of Commerce luncheon at Holiday Inn at which a panel argued the pros and cons of fluoridation. About 30 persons attended.

On the panel for the pro side were Dr. David Brown, Belmont general practitioner, and John T. Ball, San Jose attorney who is general counsel to the California Dental Health Council. On the negative side of the debate were Mrs. Margaret Scott, chairman of the Citizens Against Compulsory Fluoridation, and Mrs. Eileen Emery, Belmont housewife. Chamber President Chon Gutierrez was moderator.

Ball said there is no middle ground on the fluoridation is-

sue, that is is just like any public health program, it has to be mandatory. He said "there is not one single solitary case of any harm or unsafe results as a result of the program."

Fluoridation is done in many cities in the U.S., including Palo Alto.

Mrs. Scott, who also was co-chairman of a committee fighting against fluoridation in 1963, said that "fluoridation is the addition of a powerful, cumulative poison (sodium fluoride) to our public drinking water, for the purpose, supposedly, of lessening dental decay in the teeth of children . . . under 8 years of age."

"The soluble fluoride is listed . . . along with arsenic and cyanide, as one of the deadliest poisons known. The recommended amount is 1 part per million . . . but 1.5 pmm (very slightly more) is declared 'unsafe for water drinking'."

Mrs. Scott declared that "we've been though this battle before, and frankly, we would prefer never to go through it again — if for no other reason than to avoid the bitterness and misunderstanding that comes on the heels of every fluoridation fight."

Use of fluoridation for Bel-

mont water users was defeated in a 1963 election by 15 votes.

Warren McClure, general manager of the Belmont County Water District who was present at the meeting but not on the panel, said the total cost of adding fluorides to the district's two water sources would be \$56,000, and the annual maintenance cost would be \$10,160. For residential consumption this would amount to approximately 10 cents per month per citizen.

Directors of the Belmont County Water District have declared their neutrality on the fluoridation issue. The Belmont City Council last month used a 10-year-old legal opinion to get out of the controversial issue.

The council voted unanimously to table the issue, after a two-page legal opinion, written in 1961 by James Morton, attorney for the water district, was presented. The opinion stated that such an election is only in the province of the water district, not the city council, and in any event would only be advisory, and not binding.

Mrs. Hall said at the time that "an initiative may be the only way to get it on the ballot."

Fluoride Election April 11

JAN 28 1972

Belmont County Water District directors last night adopted a resolution calling for a concurrent election with the City of Belmont on the issue of fluoridation on April 11.

Water district boundaries vary from those of the city.

Belmont City Council Monday night voted to place the issue on the ballot at the municipal election. An initiative petition with more than 1,700 signatures had asked for such an election.

Water district directors last night reiterated their neutrality in the matter of fluoridation, established at a meeting on Nov. 30.

Boundaries of the water district extend beyond Belmont into parts of San Carlos and in the industrial area in unincorporated territory, and polling places must be provided for voters in those areas, directors pointed out.

Proponents and opponents of fluoridation presented a pro and con discussion last night at Ralston School. (See separate story).

Water district directors last night also decided to ask the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to reconsider its decision removing 11 acres of L. C. Smith Co. property on Marine View from the district and allowing it to be annexed to San Mateo.

If LAFCO fails to change its decision, the water district board will ask reimbursement of funds the district has put into the project. The amount is to be determined.

The LAFCO decision leaves the water district with a 410-foot long, 8-inch water main with a total revenue of approximately \$3.25 per month and a fire hydrant which probably will never be used.

Pipe has been put in the ground and pressure is to be tested in replacement of a six-inch water main in the 400 block of Hiller Street, it was report last night.

Since Dec. 15, 1959, there have been six major water leaks in this one block costing \$3,045 to repair.

Overpass, Fluoridation Issues Will Appear on Belmont Ballot

JAN 25 1972

By OTTO TALLENT

Belmont voters will be asked April 11 whether they want an overpass in their downtown area and whether they want fluoridation of their

water system.

After a discussion of more than two hours the Belmont City Council last night voted 4-to-1 to place the question of a \$2½-million Ralston Avenue

overpass across El Camino Real and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks on the municipal election ballot. About 250 persons attended the meeting.

It took the council only a matter of minutes to unanimously vote for a concurrent election of the city and the Belmont County Water District on the question of adding fluorides to the water supply.

Recommendations by the San Francisco firm of Booz, Allen Public Administration Inc. that would strengthen the city manager form of government in Belmont and make the elective posts of city clerk and City Treasurer Florence was submitted to the city's personnel board for evaluation and recommendation for implementation.

A change in the posts of City Clerk James W. McLaughlin and City Treasurer Florence Holland from elective to appointive could be made only by vote of the citizens. City Attorney Kenneth Dickerson said Feb. 14 is the deadline for

placing the issue on the ballot for the April 11 election.

Joseph J. Zucca, who has been the most vocal among the councilmen in favor of an overpass, moved that that issue be placed on the ballot. The motion was seconded by Councilman Edward D. Vallerga, who with Councilman Charles Ketcham have consistently opposed the project.

Mayor Robert A. Jones voted with Zucca, Vallerga and Ketcham in favor. Vice Mayor William H. Hardwick, who said "it'll be an emotional thing" and "I find I can't vote to put it on the ballot," voted no. Hardwick said 11,000 people are registered to vote in Belmont and that he thought only a part of them "know we're talking about an overpass."

The council also voted, 4-1 with Hardwick voting no, that the question on the ballot be "yes or no" on the overpass as presently proposed by the council.

City Engineer Gordon Tillson yesterday submitted "complete plans" to the state Public Utilities Commission and the Southern Pacific Co. He said some details, such as a stairway, had not been resolved by the council.

The council voted unanimously to put out a pro-and-con information sheet about the overpass project.

City Attorney Dickerson, in answer to questions from the audience, said the vote of the citizens on the overpass issue would be advisory. Asked if the councilmen could be bound by the vote, Dickerson pointed out that terms of three members of the five-man council will be up and said "we don't know who is going to be on the city council after the election."

Warren McClure, general manager of the Belmont County Water District, told the council that more than 1,700 persons had signed an initiative petition asking that fluoridation be placed on the ballot and said enough names had been certified to call for an election.

Highlights of the recommendations by the Booz, Allen firm calling for a new plan of top management organization were presented by Richard A. Hughes, Vice President.

Vallerga questioned Hughes whether the plan was for the city or for the firing of City Clerk McLaughlin. Hughes responded that the purpose was to take a look at the top management organization and that it was not to focus on the issue of the city clerk, city treasurer or the public works department.

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Belmont 'Writes'

By OTTO TALLENT
Tribune Writer

Belmont City Council had decided at its Jan. 24 meeting that it would give residents the opportunity to vote April 11 on whether they want a \$2½-million Ralston Avenue overpass, but it took considerable time last night to decide on the wording to be placed on the ballot.

After long discussion and amendment on top of amendment, the council voted 4 to 1 to use the wording proposed by Councilman Joseph J. Zucca: "Shall the city council proceed with the construction of the proposed overpass at Ralston and El Camino Real. Yes or No." Councilman Charles Ketcham voted no, contending the statement was a misleading oversimplification.

It likewise took considerable time for the council to decide not to place on the April 11 ballot anything to do with the widening of Ralston Avenue from South Road to Maywood

Drive, one block east of Alameda de las Pulgas.

By a vote of 4 to 1 the council adopted a motion by Councilman Zucca "that the matter be postponed to that time when and if widening of Ralston Avenue is proposed, that our policy position will be: Ralston Avenue from Maywood to South Road shall be widened to four to more lanes only with the approval of the people through an election."

Councilman Ketcham voted no. He contended the present council cannot bind a future council.

A public hearing on the traffic circulation element addition to the General Plan was postponed to the second meeting in April — after the April 11 election — because the overpass is included in the plan.

The council voted for the introduction of an ordinance concerning dog fees for the impoundment and care of animals. It was the third meeting at which dog fees had been

discussed. The council resisted the request by supervisors to increase the cost of dog licenses — which has been approved by most cities in the county — but agreed to work out an arrangement whereby fines, outside of funds needed for attorney fees, be automatically turned over to the Peninsula Humane Society.

The council voted to place two stop signs temporarily on Ralston Avenue at the Belmont Canyon Road intersection, one block from Ralston School, and instructed the city staff to reach a better solution to a traffic congestion there. Floyd E. Sampson presented a petition with 400 signatures seeking relief from the traffic problem.

By a 3-to-2 vote the council authorized completion of a photographic model of the Ralston Avenue grade separation for public display purposes, with the cost not to exceed \$3,000. The model size will be 9 feet by 3½ feet, with the overpass structure to be five feet long and the height of

Overpass Ballot Question



STORM CENTER: Superimposed model of overpass stretches over El Camino Real

structure two inches.
A resolution was adopted requesting the U. S. Army Corps Engineers to undertake a feasibility study for a deep

water channel at Marina complex which would pave the way for boat slips, restaurants and other public facilities.

Five persons were named to

a new noise abatement committee — Robert J. O'Connor, Mrs. Patricia Anne Hunter, Denny Lawhern, W. W. Kessler and Harold A. Malliot.

A resolution was passed changing the name of Lock Avenue in an attempt to avoid confusion, but it will not take effect until after the council

meeting of Feb. 28. The 3200 block will be renamed Upper Lock Avenue and the 3300, 3400 and 3500 blocks will be renamed Lower Lock Avenue.

MAR 11 1972

Overpass 'Delay Tactics'?

By OTTO TALLENT

Belmont Mayor Robert A. Jones yesterday charged Councilmen Charles Ketcham and Edward D. Vallergera with using delaying tactics and trying to keep information from the voters regarding the \$2½ million Ralston Avenue overpass issue which is on the April 11 ballot.

Ketcham and Vallergera had charged they were left out in the planning of a brochure on the overpass issue which was mailed to 5,500 residences in Belmont March 3.

The pair in a joint statement

said that "the contents of the mailing are more of an argument than information and unfortunately contain distortions."

Mayor Jones said the majority members of the council on the overpass issue — he and Vice Mayor William H. Hardwick and Councilman Joseph J. Zucca — wanted to have a joint mailing but that Ketcham and Vallergera repeatedly missed deadlines.

Jones said that to the best of his knowledge Ketcham and Vallergera have yet to prepare their materials to be given to

the printer.

"By the time the printer finishes with it, it will be another two to three weeks before their material is available to the voters," Mayor Jones said. "They claim the delay was the result of failure of the city to provide them with the promised information and the overpass model. This is pure nonsense. They have had as much access to the material as we have."

He said the reason the brochure went out when it did was to get the information to the voters well in advance of

the election so they would have sufficient time to consider it.

"We are not the ones who are afraid to have information distributed to the voters," Mayor Jones said. "Instead they are the ones who have repeatedly tried to suppress information from going to the voters."

He said that the charge of distortions was a hollow charge. He declared the model builder has given specifications and technical information involving the model of the overpass. The scale of the

model has brought charges of distortion.

Jones said the brochure was printed at city expense, as he said would be the case for one to be distributed by Ketcham and Vallergera, but that the postage was paid for and labels put on by members of a newly formed pro-overpass group called the Belmont Alliance of Homeowners and Businesses.

Russel Estep is publicity chairman and Mrs. Patricia Kozub is treasurer of the new organization.

Two Councilmen 'Astonished' Overpass Brochure Stirs Row

MAR 3 1972

By OTTO TALLENT

A brochure which originally had been billed as a "fact sheet" concerning the controversial \$2½ million Ralston Avenue overpass in Belmont was in the mail to 5,500 dwelling units in Belmont today from the majority of the city council.

The mailing immediately drew the wrath of the two councilmen who oppose the overpass.

The overpass proposal will be on the April 11 Municipal election ballot.

The brochure contained a letter from Mayor Robert A. Jones and Vice Mayor William H. Hardwick on a letterhead which contained the names of all five city councilmen.

The letter stated there are no backup plans or alternatives for downtown Belmont if the overpass proposal is rejected by the voters.

"No one has been able to offer an alternative solution that can be financed and implemented by the city. Accordingly, voter approval of this proposal appears to be critical to achieving community goals . . ." the letter stated.

Mayor Jones said Councilman Joseph J. Zucca, the third member of the "majority" on the overpass proposal, had been "in" on the planning of the brochure.

Councilmen Charles Ketcham and Edward D. Vallergera, who are vigorously fighting the overpass proposal, said they were left out in the planning of the brochure, much to their consternation.

We are astonished that the city has mailed proponent literature on the proposed overpass to the voters of Belmont at city expense without council authority," Ketcham and Vallergera said in a joint statement.

"The council had authorized a joint mailing of both sides of the story. The contents of the mailing are more of an argument than information and unfortunately contain dis-

tortions.

"The overpass model and other information requested from and promised by the city have not been furnished us. When we have received the promised information we will reply to the proponents.

"At our insistence the mayor has confirmed that the city will mail the opponents' fact sheet and exhibits to the voters when ready.

"It is unfortunate that the precipitous action of the majority in mailing out only one side of the story will cause substantial extra mailing expense to the city. We can only conclude that the proponents on the council are afraid to

have the pros and cons of the overpass considered by the voters simultaneously."

Mayor Jones said a group which has not decided upon a name made arrangements for the mailing and labeling. He said he was not at liberty to give names of persons in the group. He said it was his understanding the group plans a statement of its own, as well as plans for advertisements in favor of the overpass proposal.

Neither Mayor Jones nor City Manager James P. DeChaine gave an exact cost of the brochure and mailing. DeChaine said the postage would be about \$220.

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Belmont
The Belmont

Overpass

APR 1 1972
Foes

Get Funds

Opponents of the controversial Ralston Avenue overpass proposed for Belmont will have their literature mailed at city expense, the City Council decided in a 3-1 vote last night during a short special meeting.

In addition, private citizens who paid for the postage and labeling of the city's overpass brochures — which opponents say painted an inaccurate picture of the project — will be reimbursed for their expenses.

Ironically, however, one of the two councilmen opposed to the overpass and who argued in favor of the city paying the tab for the opposition literature wound up casting the lone negative vote last night.

Councilman Charles Ketcham, who has been outspoken against the overpass proposal along with Councilman Edward Vallergera, argued last night it would be "only fair" for the city to pick up the mailing and labeling costs for literature aimed at rebutting the city's brochure.

Mayor Robert Jones offered the motion to reimburse the citizens who helped with the city brochure — an estimated \$340 for postage and labeling — and pay the same amount

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Councilman Won't Take City Funds

(Continued from Page 1)

to the opponents for their mailing.

But Jones also raised the point of a possible conflict of interest if Ketcham, who said he has volunteers doing the labeling, accepted the same amount of money that will be paid to the professional firm hired by the city to handle the labeling on its brochure.

"Rather than running the risk, I'll pick up the tab myself," Ketcham said.

Jones started to argue against his colleague paying the costs out of his own pocket, but Ketcham shot back, "No . . . I won't take the money!"

When the vote came, however, Ketcham opposed the council's action because it still provided for reimbursing him for the costs of labeling, while Vallergera, Jones and Joseph Zucca voted for it. Vice Mayor William H. Hardwick was out of town.

Overpass:

APR 5 1972

Two Views for

By OTTO TALLENT

Belmont voters now have before them a second "fact sheet" about the controversial Ralston Avenue Overpass issue which is on the ballot in Tuesday's municipal election.

The pamphlet, prepared by Councilmen Charles Ketcham and Edward D. Vallergera, opponents of the overpass, claims Belmont is at the cross roads — "not only the cross roads at El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue — but the cross roads of its destiny.

"The issue is not confined to the overpass itself. The real issue is the future character of Belmont."

A brochure prepared by councilmen who favor the overpass was distributed by mail on March 3. It contained a letter from Mayor Robert A. Jones and Vice Mayor William H. Hardwick, claiming that "no one has been able to offer an alternative solution that can be financed and implemented by the city."

Mayor Jones said Councilman Joseph J. Zucca, the third member of the "majority" on the overpass proposal, has been "in" on the planning of the brochure. Ketcham and Vallergera charged they were left out of the planning of the first brochure.

The second brochure which was mailed this week claims the concrete overpass would be huge in size. The initial pamphlet states the minimum clearance height over the railroad tracks, as established by state law, is 22½ feet.

"At its maximum point at the center of El Camino Real, clearance of the overpass will be 27½ feet," the original

pamphlet continues. "It would be possible to lower this high point by as much as 4½ feet — but only at an increased cost of approximately \$500,000, primarily for acquisition of additional right-of-way easterly of the railroad tracks. The overpass will be visible at El Camino Real and Old County Road but will be mostly hidden from view along Ralston Avenue by existing buildings."

The opponents' pamphlet states that "the proposed structure is the highest crossing of its kind over El Camino Real on the entire Peninsula. This four-lane mass of concrete will dominate the skyline at the entrance to our city."

The brochure states the overpass will be 720 feet long and 67½ feet in width (four lanes plus a four-foot divider strip, plus a sidewalk and sidewalls).

"It would be almost 40 feet in height, plus a chain link wire cage fence protruding from the top," the opponents state. "Every structure in the area will be dwarfed."

The proponents' brochure claims that pedestrian traffic from the west will continue to cross El Camino Real at grade to gain access to the Southern Pacific train depot.

"Pedestrian traffic from the east side of Old County Road will gain access to the depot either through a pedestrian underpass at Masonic Way, or by an on-grade pedestrian crossing at Ralston Avenue, subject to Public Utilities Commission approval, or by a stairway," the pamphlet states.

The opponents' brochure

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Belmont Voters to Ponder

The Other Side

contends the state's authorization provides that the present crossing at Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real will be barricaded and the ground level crossing for vehicles and pedestrians will be closed by a barrier fence.

"The overpass plans call for a 60-step zig-zag stairway located near the Whistle Stop," the pamphlet states. "If the suggested pedestrian underpass were practical, why wasn't it included in the plans submitted to the state?"

"Such a tunnel is hazardous from the standpoint of crime. For women and children it is particularly dangerous. The secluded subway becomes a source of violence and personal attacks. Homeview and Sterling Downs citizens will be sealed off from the rest of Belmont."

Proponents and opponents are at opposite extremes in answering the question, "Will Ralston Avenue Become an Expressway?"

Proponents say no.

"In fact," the proponents' pamphlet states, "the council recently banned the widening of lower Ralston Avenue unless there is voter consent. The 19th Avenue Freeway which connects the Bayshore Freeway with Interstate 280 now serves cross-county traffic and has reduced the potential of increased traffic on Ralston Avenue.

"Council policy against further apartment development in the Western Hills will also limit future traffic on Ralston Avenue. Many who have been concerned about additional traffic and potential widening of Ralston Avenue have also

advocated an underpass which, in our opinion, would have the same impact on traffic flow as an overpass."

The opponents' brochure states, "We submit that increased traffic created by the huge overpass would force Ralston Avenue into an expressway. The city's beautiful tree-lined lane from South Road to Maywood Drive is the only remaining two-lane portion of the route between Bayshore and 280.

"The multi-lane overpass will attract traffic from the entire area and the pressure to widen all of Ralston Avenue will be overwhelming. The heart of our town would then be pierced by an expressway. Our semi-rural atmosphere would be gone forever, and Belmont would be permanently divided north and south."

On the question, "Will the Overpass Help Business Expansion in the Downtown?" the proponents' brochure states that "a moment's reflection will suggest that shopper traffic does not mix with through traffic, i.e., non-retail traffic! Housewives shop at areas where there is convenient vehicular and pedestrian movement.

"The most successful shopping centers have been purposely located near but separated from through traffic which can cause traffic congestion. Wherever through traffic has been allowed to congest business areas, deteriorating conditions have resulted, such as in downtown Belmont."

The opponents' answer to

the question of an overpass developing the downtown area:

"This is a myth. No business has publicly stated it would come to Belmont if the overpass were built. On the contrary, Bayview Federal Savings & Loan Association has stated it will leave its present site if the present overpass is built. Longs Drugs has stated it is interested in locating in downtown Belmont should the present overpass not be built.

"We all know that overpasses blight the areas around them and such areas eventually deteriorate. There is no overpass at Hillsdale. The only hope of developing the downtown area is to avoid the blighting effect of an overpass, and develop other solutions to traffic problems."

Proponents state the overpass project is estimated to cost approximately \$2½ million. The opponents' brochure states that "it is felt by many that the final cost will be closer to \$5 million for the total project. Any costs in excess of \$2½ million will be borne by the city. All our street maintenance funds for years to come would then be diverted to the project."

In answer to the proponents' claim "no one has been able to offer an alternative solution that can be financed and implemented by the city," the opponents list among the alternatives a two-lane underpass down Ralston Avenue, a grade separation at Harbor Boulevard, a joint plan with San Carlos, a relocation of the railroad station, synchronization of signals and redirection of traffic flow.