

# 9 Belmont council cand. hope they have write stuff

ELECTION '95

SM Times  
Friday  
Nov 3, 1995

## DIANA MARSZALEK

Times Staff Writer

**BELMONT** — In a city that at the start of election season couldn't drum up enough candidates for two City Council seats, there are now eight people who want the jobs.

Mayor Adele Della Santina — the only candidate who filed during the regular period — will face seven write-in candidates in Tuesday's election.

The candidates each have their priorities, which range from attracting businesses to Belmont to increasing the dialogue between City Council members and residents.

Della Santina has been on the City Council for four years and was a planning commissioner for nine years before that. Della Santina said she is running on her track record.

"If people like the direction that Belmont's been going then I hope they vote for me



**BILICH**



**CARRILLO**

because I feel really good about what's happening," she said.

Write-in candidates include Michael Bilich, owner of a business valuation company and a resident of Belmont for 19 years.

Bilich said he believes the City Council would benefit from his management skills. "My decision making and management skills are some-

thing that Belmont could use right now," he said.

Candidate Bob Carrillo, a waiter who has lived in Belmont for eight years, said his goal is to get the City Council to listen more carefully to residents and curb spending. "I want more ethical treatment of the citizens and better use of taxes," Carrillo said.

Coralin Feierbach, a software developer, is a former planning commissioner and current president of the Cipriani Neighborhood Association. A fiscal conservative, Feierbach said she wants to rein in city spending. "I would like to see a lot more thought involved in spending money," she said.

Robert Fitzgerald, a retired teacher, was on the City Council for eight years during the 1960s. He said he believes it is time for the City Council to get back in touch with residents.



**DELLA SANTINA**



**FEIERBACH**

increasing revenues to ensure adequate financing to central business services," he said.

This election will be Gloria Purcell's third try for a City Council seat. A member of the Homeview Homeowners Association and the city's railroad grade separation task force, Purcell said she wants to be the first City Council member since 1968 who lives east of El Camino Real.

"There's been a sort of benign neglect of this part of the city," she said. "We must have representation on the council."

Candidate Maria Rugani, a marketing manager, is a member of the San Mateo County Commission on the Status of Women and the Community Advisory Committee of The Breast Center of Mills-Peninsula Hospital system.

Rugani said her goals are attracting businesses to the



**MATHEWSON**



**PURCELL**

area east of Bayshore, building an affordable City Hall and making parks and open space available.

Della Santina will be the only candidate whose name will appear on the regular ballot. Voters will be given the names of write-in candidates at the polls.

*Editor's note: Candidates Robert Fitzgerald and Maria Rugani did not provide photographs.*

"The average citizen has to get back in dialogue with the City Council," he said.

Candidate Phillip Mathewson is a banker who has lived in Belmont for 20 years. A member of the Chamber of Commerce and Central Homeowners Association, Mathewson said he wants to keep Belmont's finances in check.

"The biggest topic is



# Belmont

*Belmont Bulletin*  
bans 1-31-96

## cigarette displays

BY ALAN SISENWEIN

Staff Reporter

A divided Belmont City Council last week reaffirmed its support of a ban on self-serve cigarette displays, but rejected a motion to put extra teeth into the ordinance.

The new ordinance outlaws both tobacco vending machines and the self-serve displays.

The law punishes merchants who don't remove the displays or machines with a fine of \$100. If a second violation occurs within the course of a year, the fine is \$200. Further offenses in the space of a year are punished with \$500 fines.

Della Santina suggested expanding the ordinance's scope

# SMOKING: Belmont passes cigarette sales law

*Continued from 1A*

to penalize merchants for selling tobacco to minors. The local penalties would be equivalent to state civil penalties which can dock a violator up to \$6,000 for multiple offenses within a 5-year period.

Noting that penalty revenues would be split between Belmont and the state, Della Santina further proposed that the city's share be used to finance local youth programs.

In addition to including new local punishments for selling tobacco to juveniles, she initially proposed dropping the display prohibition from the ordinance.

In previous sessions, Della Santina had argued that the display ban would hurt businesses without decreasing teen smoking and that laws against juvenile tobacco use should be more strictly enforced.

When the idea of removing

the display ban met with resistance, Della Santina dropped it.

Nonetheless, her revised proposal, which was supported by Councilmember Garry Harris, was voted down by the council's other three members.

Councilmember Pam Rianda, who first proposed the ban to the council, said the new law's current ban is adequate to deter the use of the self-serve cigarette displays.

"There's no need to pound someone deeper into the ground," she said.

Feierbach, who voted in favor of the ban but against the increased penalties, also said she believed the ban sends a message which does not yet need reinforcement.

Mayor Nancy Levitt, who was out of town three weeks ago when the council originally passed the ban, voiced her opposition to it.

Arguing that the measure would not curb teen smoking,

she called it a "naive, do-good, do-nothing ordinance."

Levitt noted that the council rejected the measure in October. At the time, former Councilmember Ed Rodriguez held the swing vote. More recently, that vote was exercised by new member Coralin Feierbach.

Levitt said the only thing that had changed since October was the council's new make-up, and there was no new evidence to support the council's reversal.

After Della Santina's modifications were rejected, the council voted on the ordinance in its original form. The measure was again passed 3-2 with Della Santina and Levitt in the minority.

Prior to this vote, local merchant Ray Richards also testified against the ban.

Noting that there have not been any citations issued against Belmont stores for selling tobacco to juveniles,

Richards said the ban puts an unnecessary strain on his business by taking away \$8,000 of his gross annual profit.

Richards asked the council to reimburse him for his loss.

"We're only one little independent grocery store trying to make a living, we don't need anyone accusing us of wrongdoing," he said.

Richards said his loss would be irreplaceable because only tobacco companies pay for advertising stands. The ban also devalues his business should he try to sell it, Richards said.

In an interview, Feierbach disagreed with Richards' stance.

Feierbach said the phrase "Put children first" is one that gets more lip service than action. She said the ban is a means of preserving children's health by keeping tobacco out of their reach.

"Children come before business," she said.



# SMOKING: Belmont passes cigarette sales law

## Belmont bans cigarette displays

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Staff Reporter

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S M Times Feb 22, 1996

# Mayor says Belmont in store for busy week

*Safeway closing,  
City Hall moving,  
tracks being laid*

**DIANA MARSZALEK**

*Times Staff Writer*

BELMONT — This week is a busy one in Belmont.

The downtown Safeway store will close on Saturday for renovations that are supposed to transform the store into the centerpiece for downtown revitalization.

Crews are starting to put down temporary railroad tracks along El Camino Real that will be used during the construction of the railroad overpass at Ralston Avenue.

And city officials agreed Tuesday that it's time to start moving into the new City Hall.

Mayor Nancy Levitt says that's just the way she likes it.

"Overall, I think it's been a pretty good week," Levitt said. "Decades worth of work . . . are all coming together this week."

Levitt made her comments Wednesday in the annual State of the City address to residents and business people up-to-date on city activities.

In her speech, Levitt said this week's activities are part of the continuing evolution of Belmont. It's a process that will help move the city into its next era of being a place that's even better for business and residents, she said.

Levitt made her point by showing how Belmont has retained some of the flavor of the city that started more than a century ago — and yet is so different.

For example, 100 years ago,



**NANCY LEVITT:** State of the City

most businesses were located along Old County Road near Ralston Avenue. Today, that intersection is the focus of redevelopment efforts, Levitt said.

A century ago, Belmont residents celebrated the first concrete sidewalk in town. Today, officials still are putting in sidewalks, roads and street lights, Levitt said.

Yet the city is an entirely different place than when it was founded, Levitt said. Belmont today is home to big businesses, such as Oral B Laboratories, and has much larger police and fire-fighting forces.

The need for school and library space is growing as well — and today's facilities are a far cry from the one school and 59-volume library Belmont had in its earliest days.

Such changes, however, are all part of the process, Levitt said.

"Belmont today bares little resemblance to what it was in 1900," Levitt said. "Lots has happened. Lots has happened right now."



# Residents to foot curb, gutter bill

## CITY

### Homeowners say they are being treated unfairly

BY BRENDA JORDAN  
Staff Reporter

The Belmont City Council recently approved an ordinance, 3-2, requiring residents to foot the bill, at least in part, for installing curbs and gutters in front of their property.

The ordinance states that if the homeowner petitions for the work to be done, the owner would bear 100 percent of the cost.

If, on the other hand, the Council calls for the work to be done, 50 percent of the cost of installing first-time curbs

and gutters would be reimbursed to the homeowner.

Installation of curbs and gutters is estimated to be about \$2,000 for a 50-foot property frontage. The work would be done when the street is scheduled to be repaved.

Brian Chan, Belmont senior engineer, said areas that may be affected by this ordinance in the next few years include residences which presently do not have curbs and gutters on Notre Dame Avenue, Hillman Avenue (between Mills and North roads), a small section of North Road, and Chula Vista (between Ralston Avenue and just past Escondido Way).

Margaret Cunningham, a resident of 1604 Notre Dame Ave., told the council at their Sept. 10 and Sept. 24 meetings that she was upset because she said an agreement was reached in 1993 for the city to

install curbs and gutters at no cost to the residents when the street was repaved.

The city did repave and construct curbs and gutters on Notre Dame Avenue in phase 1, from Arbor Avenue to North Road, just short of Cunningham's property.

"They said they ran out of money," Cunningham said. "They said they'd do it next year."

Her neighbors said they were told the same.

But 1994 came and went and the project was not done.

In the summer of 1995, Cunningham and 15 neighbors signed a petition asking the city to be fair and put in curbs and gutters on the rest of Notre Dame Avenue at no cost to homeowners. But to no avail.

At the Sept. 24 meeting, Cunningham, with the support of seven of her neighbors

who also attended the meeting, spoke out again against the ordinance, persuading Councilwomen Pam Rianda and Coralin Feierbach to vote against the ordinance.

"Can't we table this (ordinance) until Notre Dame Avenue is finished?" Rianda asked. "These people were promised this and for some reason it didn't get done... We owe it to these citizens to make right with them."

"I don't believe that the citizens should pay for curbs and gutters that the city dictates are needed," Feierbach said. "This is going to be a big issue. I think it sets up a bad precedent and this could happen with street paving. Watch out, this is coming, we are going to be taxed for streets!"

The majority of council members and city

See **ORDINANCE**, page 12A



# ORDINANCE: Either way residents pay

Continued from 1A

staff agreed that it was unfortunate that some of Cunningham's neighbors had to pay for the installation of curbs and gutters and many did not.

But Mayor Nancy Levitt said, "I believe the longer we take to pass this, the more unjust things will happen."

Public Works Director Peg Divine said that these sort of inconsistencies happened because there has been no ordinance in place for installing needed curbs and gutters.

As for tabling the issue, the majority of council said they felt it would hold up many street and public works projects.

Vice Mayor Gary Harris suggested that the Notre Dame Avenue issue be solved by applying for special state funds for this portion of curb and gutter.

## Ordinance details

The ordinance states that homeowners be given notice of their duty to construct curbs and gutters and be given the option of doing it themselves or having the city do the work. Construction must begin within 60 days of notice and be

completed within 30 days.

It also requires that two sets of public hearings be held. One, to be held following the initial notice to construct, would afford property owners the right to appear and protest. If less than 50 percent of the homeowners protest or if the council by a four-fifths vote overrides the majority, the work would proceed. A second public hearing would be held once the work is complete to confirm the actual cost of construction and to order that a lien be put on the property if the owner does not pay.

The ordinance is not a new concept. It was based on state Streets and Highways Code, said City Attorney Jean Savaree. "Cities (vary) all over the place - some have residents pay 100 percent, others half and some provide curbs and gutters."

In San Carlos, if property owners want curbs, gutters or sidewalks, the policy states that an assessment district will be formed and the property owners will be charged for the work. Public Works Director Parviz Mokhtari said the policy has never been enforced.

Cunningham and her neighbors said no matter who



BRENDA JORDAN/EB

**Unfair treatment:** Margaret Cunningham states that she shouldn't have to pay anything for gutter improvements in front of her house because the city, in the past, said they would pay for it.

pays for it, they still need and gutters on my side of the street work to be done immediately to prevent rain runoff from damaging their property when it rains."

She said she spent \$2,800 on a retaining wall in an attempt to stop flood waters from going under her house, but now has a rather ugly trench of unpaved dirt in front of her house. "No matter what I put in there, it will be washed away - I'm in for a big expense either way."

"We're all victims of this runoff," said Phillip Haslip, another Notre Dame Avenue resident without curb and gutter. "They could do a great deal to help us by putting curb

and gutters on my side of the street. A humongous amount of water is dumped onto my property when it rains."

Haslip has extensive flood damage to his property. "I've got to replace my driveway; it's hollow underneath but I really can't do anything with it until the water problem is taken care of," he said. He has also painstakingly designed a complex drainage system that is operated by three pumps.

"Even if I paid half, I wouldn't mind as long as they get it done," he said. "I pay much more than that every year."



Enquirer Bulletin  
October 16, 1996

# Rent control not a good solution

## BELMONT

### Council sympathetic, but wants other options

BY BRENDA JORDAN

Staff Reporter

With only a .03 percent vacancy rate in Belmont and rental rates shooting through the roof, residents are knocking on the door of City Council Chambers asking about rent control.

Council members, however, said they were not interested in passing a rent control ordinance at this time.

Senior citizen Mary Pretious told council on Oct. 8 that her rent was raised from

\$835 a month to \$1125 a month.

"He just keeps gouging us and gouging us," Pretious said of her landlord.

Another woman said her rent was raised \$170 a month and she chose to move when her landlord asked for an additional \$200 a month increase.

Local tenant Mark Berkson said he has heard of many other instances of drastic rent increases in the community. He tried fervently to make an argument for the need of some sort of rent control ordinance in Belmont.

"Tenants should not have to face the constant prospect of increases," Berkson said. He further suggested a rent control ordinance that would allow 5 to 7 percent annual rent increases.

But other community residents, homeowners and council members were not

persuaded.

"Rent control is the worst thing you can do," said Belmont resident Joe Amos, who has owned rental property on the Peninsula since 1969.

Amos explained that because of the high value of property in the Bay Area, a landlord's profit margin has plummeted. In fact, he often has to pick up a good portion of the monthly expenses on his rental units.

"For example, I just rented a house in Redwood Shores for \$1,750 a month - it's a \$350,000 house - I'm paying half the payment," he said. "(Owning rental property) is a poor investment today. Rents would have to double to make it profitable."

He said the shortage of rental housing is also part of the problem, and rent control would only make it worse.

Mayor Nancy Levitt echoed this view.

"My whole issue with rent control is would it solve the problem? No. The problem is that there isn't enough affordable housing," Levitt said in a telephone interview.

Levitt explained that rent control discourages property owners from leasing their property because it limits their ability to make a profitable return.

"Then there's less housing available," she said. "You see houses boarded up in San Francisco and Berkeley (because it's less expensive than renting them out)," she said. (Berkeley and San Francisco have rent control.)

Katherine Thibodeaux, government relations director of the Tri-County Apartment Association of San Jose, also

See RENT, page 14A

# RENT: Finding solutions

*Continued from 1A*

spoke at the meeting and gave additional reasons why rent control would not be a good solution.

She said rent control "deters investments in property improvements, causes degradation of the quality of life in a community and creates an adversarial relationship between tenants and landlords.

"Rent control sounds good but its not a solution... we're dealing with a short term situation," she said. She further explained that landlords, like many business owners, experience "feast or famine" situations as the economy changes. And now that the economy is good, they have a chance to recoup their losses after years of struggle.

She suggested mediation as a worthwhile step for tenants and landlords to resolve rent increase disputes.

Council members were sympathetic to the tenants who were suffering from large rent increases but said they felt rent control was not a reasonable solution.

"I'm not ready for a rent control ordinance," said Councilwoman Pam Rianda. "I believe government should stay out of this but, on the other hand, people are hurting. It is scary to know that at any time you could be priced out of your home."

Rianda suggested a solution of better educating the tenant community about what they can do to negotiate with a landlord or to find subsidized housing.



Enquirer Bulletin  
Nov 20, 1996

# Belmont appoints new mayor

## CITY COUNCIL

BY BRENDA JORDAN  
Staff Reporter

In a special meeting held last week, the Belmont City Council appointed Gary Harris as the new mayor and Adele Della Santina as vice mayor.

Harris said he hopes to make his administration one of inclusion.

"We want to include as many communities of interest in our (decision making) as possible," Harris said.

Harris also warned the council that he felt it would be another difficult year.

"It will be a very trying year for the city. We've got personnel changes, the grade separation project, refurbishing (City Hall),.... and the people of Belmont deserve the best leadership we can give them."

Outgoing mayor, Nancy Levitt, said she felt her year in office had gone very well.

"We had been going at such a pace the staff hasn't had a chance

See **MAYOR**, page 11A



Adele Della Santina



Gary Harris

## MAYOR: Gary Harris takes over City Council post

Continued from 1A

to sit back and pat themselves on the back or let us acknowledge them for their hard work," Levitt said. "The year went by so fast. We saw the opening of Safeway and Autobahn Motors, and the grade separation projects are coming along. I'm happy with how things are going (in Belmont)."

The position of vice mayor for the coming year had two nominees, Della Santina and Pam Rianda.

Della Santina won by a vote of 3-2.

Coralin Feierbach, who nominated Rianda, said, "If we went on rotation and common respect, it is Pam's turn."

"I think it is only fair that people get to serve," Rianda said.

By Rianda's and Feierbach's understanding of the rotation process, Rianda should be vice mayor in 1997 and then mayor in 1998.

Nancy Levitt said, in studying the rotation history, she felt it was Della Santina's turn to be

vice mayor.

Harris said the rotation table is irrelevant and the vice mayor should be chosen based on her leadership ability.

"As I look at it, there's a lot of things you have to consider," he explained before the vote for vice mayor was taken.

Feierbach said the council's decision to make these appointments at a separate meeting, which broke with the tradition of doing so at the coronation ceremony, was because certain council members "didn't want the true

light to shine on them" in front of the general public.

Past Belmont mayors are:  
Nov. 1990 to Nov. 1991 - G.R. "Dick" Green  
Nov. 1991 to Nov. 1992 - Gary Orton  
Nov. 1992 to Nov. 1993 - David Bomberger  
Nov. 1993 to Nov. 1994 - Pam Rianda  
Nov. 1994 to Nov. 1995 - Adele Della Santina  
Nov. 1995 to Nov. 1996 - Nancy Levitt  
Nov. 1996 to Nov. 1997 - Gary Harris



Belmont Election  
San Jose Mercury  
November 1997

# Belmont voters providing blueprint on city growth

## ■ BELMONT

from Page 1B

the city of Belmont," Mayor Gary Harris said.

But Belmont can't solve any problems until it has a city council that can work together.

Incumbent candidates Harris and Nancy Levitt — who favor controlled growth — are often on the winning end of three-on-two clashes with incumbent Pam Rianda, a Measure E co-sponsor who advocates scaling back development.

The trio pull no punches, all saying that somebody's got to go. "The council needs a new team," said Rianda, a special-education teacher who paints her foes as

overpasses at once. "If we had just done Ralston, we'd be done with it," she said.

By rallying about 300 residents to public hearings, she won a battle to reduce a three-story apartment and retail complex at Ralston and El Camino Real to one story so Belmont preserves its village ambience.

Harris and Levitt contended that placing the taller, multi-unit complex near commuter rails and bus routes would have allowed high-tech professionals to live near work, relieving traffic congestion.

"If every Peninsula city says: 'I want the benefits of the Silicon Valley economy, but I don't want you to live in my town,' we're going to kill the jobs engine that keeps this economy growing," warned Harris, 54, an electronics firm development director. "Companies will leave the Bay Area."

Rianda, 52, scoffed, saying: "They want to make Belmont 'Silicon Valley North.' ... Excuse me, but what about the negatives development brings in congestion that clogs the city?"

Levitt, 50, a veteran high-tech manager, said she has the strategic planning and collaborative skills to build consensus on the council. She said she considers Rianda an obstructionist, saying: "Frankly, we have to get rid of somebody."

Levitt and Harris, both seeking second terms, said their top priority is wrapping up the railroad overpasses. They defend doing all three at once because building them one by one would have required the added expense and disruption of ripping up and relaying temporary tracks three times.

Also high on their list are doing long-overdue repairs on city streets and replacing the outdat-

Local ■ FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1997



Berg



Cook



Hahn



Harris



Levitt



Rianda

ed police station and a downtown fire station.

First-time challengers for the city council seats are Terri Cook, a city planning commissioner; Eleanor Hahn, a water district director; Michael Berg, a customer service manager; and Jerry Chapman, a county building inspector.

Cook and Hahn said they want to bring civility and collaboration back to the city council.

"I can work with anybody as long as we're all working together toward a common goal and not trying to work against each other," said Cook, 39, a school administrator who supports Rianda and Measure E. She said the council has to support the new

city manager and the city staff by giving them clear goals and direction.

Hahn, 55, an ex-IBM administrator who now sells real estate, said her work experience allows her to explore all options and opinions. "I think we can start from the ground up to build trust within the city departments and on the council," she said.

Berg, 40, said he decided to run out of frustration when his complaints about an illegal business sign in his neighborhood were ignored by city bureaucrats. He said his expertise as a purchasing and customer service manager would help the city be more responsive to residents and better

manage projects such as the railroad overpasses.

Chapman, 52, a contractor-turned-building inspector, said he's also found the city bureaucracy to be ineffective and uncooperative. He wants to create a "user-friendly government."

But if the old council adversaries win re-election, can they make peace for the public good?

Rianda said her foes might "bury the hatchet — in my back, probably." If her enemies win, she vowed, "my job will be to continue to shine a light on the insects that come out at night and make sure that the public knows everything that's going on."