

HOMETOWN

Council reconsiders two issues

BY MARILYN GREEN
Staff Editor

At the request of Belmont Mayor Adele Della Santina, a special City Council meeting was called Dec. 19 to reconsider two issues from the Dec. 13 meeting.

The issues are the city's prevailing wage policy, and budgeting for a new residential care facility for chronically ill AIDS patients.

Wage policy remains

The four council members present unanimously agreed to

add a provision to the city's prevailing wage policy.

The prevailing wage, also known as minimum wage, is determined by the director of the California Department of Industrial Relations through a wage survey of certain trades.

Normally these rates are closer to union wages or higher, said Maria Robbins, deputy chief of Labor Statistics and Research for the California State Department of Industrial Relations.

At its Dec. 13 meeting, the council voted 3-1 to keep Bel-

mont's 1990 prevailing wage policy, without amendments.

The council took action Dec. 19 to revise the 1990 ordinance to exempt the Summerfield Suites hotel project and any other project whose developer had a reimbursement agreement with the city's Redevelopment Agency prior to the Dec. 19 action.

An additional prevailing wage policy resolution regarding city redevelopment projects was also unanimously passed. The

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resolution solidifies the city and Redevelopment Agency the position on wage policies.

According to Dan Vanderprien, director of Planning and Community Development, there are two reasons for the sudden change of attitude not to enforce the prevailing wage issue with Summerfield Suites: The project represents an economic asset to the community and enforcing the prevailing wage issue might have jeopardized the project and the legality of a city's enforcement of a prevailing wage policy on private construction projects is currently in arbitration with the Ninth Circuit Court.

AIDS Hospice Receives Funds

The council unanimously ap-

proved an additional \$200,000 in additional capital funds needed to renovate and reconstruct a residential care facility for chronically ill AIDS patients.

The money will be appropriated to the project from the city Redevelopment Agency's low-to-moderate income housing fund.

The council also unanimously directed city staff to apply for a San Mateo County community development block grant for \$235,000.

The actions, in part, reversed the council's Dec. 13 decision not to allocate an additional \$435,000 needed to complete the project.

"The council was pleased to see the county's commitment to this project. We feel strongly that our request for the addi-

tional \$235,000 needed to complete this project will be granted by them," Vanderprien said.

The increased funds were needed for extra costs for the property purchase, an elevator modification required for state licensing, and structural additions of a secured medical storage area and a multifunction room.

Because the deadline for the project's completion is approaching, the council's action was an important step in securing federal funds needed for social services to run the project.

San Mateo
Times
Feb 23
1995



SCOTT BUSCHMAN

Workers unload piping needed for Ralston Avenue grade separation.

City won't dip into reserves

Belmont looking good

By SANDRA BURNETT

Times Staff Writer

BELMONT — Homeowners get a lot for the approximately \$28 per month the city gets from the average property tax bill, Mayor Adele Della Santina told the Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday.

"See how much you get for your money!" she said during the annual state of the city meeting. Sharing the presentation with City Council members Ed Rodriguez and Nancy Levitt, she pointed out a number of milestones from the past year and expected this year.

For the first time in several years, the city won't have to dip into reserves to balance its \$7.4

million budget this year. Previous shortfalls were blamed on the state government, which took a bigger share of taxes.

Rodriguez also pointed out that the city has received awards for its financial planning for the past six consecutive years.

But the city also is poised for a number of more obvious development changes. Although the most noticeable project for most Belmont residents is the start of the Ralston overpass project to separate the CalTrain line from car traffic.

However, several projects are taking place in Island Park, the



Adele Della Santina

portion of Belmont east of Highway 101 that is adjacent to Redwood Shores. The announcement was made at the luncheon that the city has just completed a deal with Cupertino-based Lucas Dealership Group for Mercedes and Saturn dealerships in what Della Santina referred to as "Belmont Shores."

Last year, the city broke ground on a Summerfield Suites Hotel in Island Park. The hotel, expected to open later this year, is anticipated to produce tax revenues to the city of some \$125,000 annually the first five years and twice that afterward.

The Lucas dealerships, which are to replace the 25-year-old Autohaus Brugger Mercedes in Redwood City and Saturn of Burlingame, are expected to produce \$250,000 to \$300,000 in annual sales tax revenue to the

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Belmont

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city.

In addition, Island Park also is the new home of Oral B world headquarters.

The city accomplishments have included sprucing up a couple of parks and city entrance signs, creating the Dog Park near Cipriani School, hiring a teen specialist in the Park and Recreation Department, storm drain improvements, a police-student partnership at Carlmont High School, and a partnership between the city, county and nonprofit agencies to create a six-bed AIDS hospice.

Della Santina said future projects include creating a community policing program, although Belmont has one of the lowest crime rates in the county.

New City Budget Will Show Effects of Inflation Too

The City of Belmont isn't as hard-pressed by inflation as the schools are, according to Finance Director Al Beck, but they feel it nonetheless. And the situation is not getting any better just because inflation is in the news less than it was before the recession got serious.

The city tax rate has been going down in recent years, but it is not clear that this trend will continue, although Beck says he does not foresee an increase this year.

The City administration is currently working on its preliminary budget for fiscal year 1975-76, and they have no idea as yet what the final figure will be.

But Beck noted that the drop in the tax from 76 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation in 1970-71 to 63 cents in 1974-75 was made possible partly by eating up reserves from past years, a trend which he said cannot continue.

SALARIES

The City Council will get the preliminary budget some time in May, and the City Manager and Finance Director have not yet received salary proposals from employees groups. Employees are currently winding up a two-year pay contract that gave them, for the second year, a cost of living increase plus one percent, which worked out to a 9.2 percent pay raise.

The pay contract which the employees get will be an important variable in what the budget looks like, but inflation has taken some of the control out of

the hands of the City.

ASPHALT

One of the biggest items in any government budget is capital improvements and maintenance, and those costs are way up this year.

Beck especially pointed to asphalt, which is a petroleum product, which is up about 200 percent in the last year.

Other items in construction and maintenance which have gone up include concrete and wood. And since many street work projects are jobbed out to private contractors, labor as well as materials has driven the budget up.

GASOLINE

Gasoline for city vehicles is more expensive than it was two years ago, although the increase in the past year is not quite as serious as it was the year before.

Between November of 1973 and June of 1974 the cost of ethyl gasoline to the City (which does not have to pay federal taxes) went up from about 25 cents a gallon to 38 cents. Now it is at around 48 cents.

PG&E

Other expenses which are up this year include office supplies. Paper in particular is up by as much as 50 percent for certain types. The city uses paper not only for its own stationery but also for mailers such as the Recreation programs.

And utility bills continue to climb. Last year the City made an educated guess about how much the P.G. and E. bill would go up in the 1974-75 fiscal year,

and they came up with 12.5 percent.

The actual figure, at between 13 and 14 percent, was close.

Now, if current P.G. and E. requests for rate increases are approved, the City's utility bills could go up by as much as 20 percent in the next year.

About the only silver lining on the city's budget cloud as City Manager Jim DeChaine and Finance Director Beck begin to look at preliminary figures is that the City doesn't have to struggle with a 3 percent budget increase limit imposed by the State, as the schools do. Small consolation.

*Belmont Courier
Bulletin
March 26, 1975*

Enquirer-Bulletin

INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS

WEDNESDAY MAY 24, 1995

PHONE: (415) 367-9834

Belmont looks at City Hall consolidation

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

After years of planning and months of negotiations, Belmont's efforts to obtain a new City Hall may be heading toward a climax.

City Manager Damon Edwards said it is probable that municipal staff members could move to a new City Hall site at 1070 Sixth Avenue in 60 to 90 days.

Edwards expressed a cautious optimism that the city staff and the building's owners, who have been haggling over the price of the three-story structure since the beginning of the year, may be close to finalizing a contract.

"It's almost a certainty we're going to purchase it, but there's always that possibility something unexpected may come up," Edwards said.

Mayor Adele Della Santina

said the building was chosen to be the new City Hall site about five years ago, after a citizens task force study determined that renovating the current City Hall at 1365 Fifth Avenue or constructing a new building simply would be too expensive.

Part of the building's price would come from \$7.5 million in bonds the Belmont Redevelopment Agency sold in August, but Edwards could not offer further details of the transac-

tion at this time.

The building's downtown location is also part of its attractiveness, Della Santina said.

"It's the most prominent building in town, which City Hall should be," she said.

The need for a new City Hall, Della Santina said, is acute. With municipal department offices scattered throughout Belmont, residents frequently have to visit multiple sites to conduct business with the city,

she said.

At the moment, the city's administrative offices, such as the city manager's and clerk's, are located at 1365 Fifth Avenue. Public Service offices, such as Sewers and Streets, are at 110 Sem Lane. The Parks and Recreation Department is in Twin Pines Park.

Most of the Police Department is housed in Twin Pines

See CITY HALL, page 12A



SUSAN GARRISON/E-B

City government's new home: Belmont plans to move its City Hall to the above three-story building at 1070 Sixth Ave. in 60 to 90 days.

CITY HALL: Consolidation under way

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Park offices while its administrative personnel and detectives work out of a rented space in the prospective City Hall building.

The new City Hall would unite the departments under one roof, Della Santina said,

and make doing business with the city easier.

Furthermore, the new City Hall would allow complete access for the physically disabled, which the current building does not.

"The present City Hall is way, way below standards for federal requirements for access for the

disabled," Della Santina said.

She pointed out that the City Council this week shifted its meeting place from City Hall to the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center because the hall's study session chamber is not accessible to the physically disabled.

Win-win situation for residents, city

Late last summer, the City began talking about the possibility of using the assessment district process to improve the City's downtown area.

This idea was examined and negotiations were undertaken with major property owners.

The District would be formed to install public improvements such as a public parking lot, street lights, sidewalks, curbs and gutter, street trees and street paving.

The need for these improvements was identified a number of years ago by a citizens task force that was assembled to study and determine what use would best serve the community.

The citizens task force produced and the city council adopted the Downtown Specific Plan.



MAYOR'S DESK
BY ADELE DELLA SANTINA

The plan would make the area more attractive by completing the sidewalk system, planting additional trees, undergrounding utilities and installing new street lamps.

For those properties without parking, off site locations would be made available. This would provide a reasonable alternative to an otherwise difficult situation for smaller parcels.

Safeway's plan to rebuild their store, the construction of the Ralston-Harbor grade separation, and the undergrounding of PG&E power lines provide a timely opportunity for the City Council to implement the Specific Downtown Plan.

As most of the improvements contemplated would improve certain properties in the area bounded by Emmett, Sixth, O'Neil and El Camino Real, the City is proposing to use the Assessment District method of financing.

This method requires property owners in the area to pay for the improvements that benefit their respective property.

The City would then sell bonds and collect the money through property taxes over a

See **MAYOR**, page 6A

Inquirer Bulletin May 24, 1995

MAYOR: Assessment benefits downtown

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period of 25 years.

All property owners were notified in April about the improvements and the specific cost.

The City in an effort to understand the concerns of the property owners scheduled two informal informational meetings in addition to the two legally required public hearings.

The City received valuable feedback at that meeting and that information has been crucial in addressing citizen concerns and changing the scope of the project.

The property owners worried about having to pay for street improvements, a traffic signal, a parking lot and parking on Waltermire.

The City Council heard their concerns and came up with

other ways to finance these improvements.

At a second public meeting, the staff presented a plan reducing most assessments by 40 to 50 percent.

The residents were still concerned about parking on Waltermire.

City staff took note and instructed the engineer to develop satisfactory on-street parking.

June 14, 1995

Enquirer-Bulletin

BENEFITS: Belmont retirees

Page 13A

may sue over cuts

INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS

WEDNESDAY JUNE 14, 1995

Belmont cuts retirees'

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

Whether or not the city of Belmont is obligated to pay health benefits for municipal retirees' dependents may be a matter for a jury to decide.

Last month, 13 former Bel-

mont employees filed a complaint against the city for stopping the practice of paying health insurance premiums for their dependents.

Contending that the benefit is essentially a right they earned while working, the retirees want their dependents'

health insurance payments reinstated.

"They (the retirees) are trying to enjoy their retirement and the rug is being pulled out from under them," said Daniel Connolly, a San Francisco attorney who is representing the former city employees.

health benefits

The city, however, has a different perspective.

According to City Attorney Jean Savaree, none of the bargaining agreements made between Belmont and its employees obligate the city to pay health care costs for retirees.

Health care coverage is limited to the retirees themselves, she added, and the city is honoring this obligation.

Finance Director Sandy Salerno said city funds are scarce and cutting the depen-

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dents' coverage will save taxpayer dollars.

"Things are tight," Salerno said. "It's not a common practice to pay for dependent's coverage."

Savaree noted that the city has occasionally required its former employees to pay for their dependents' health care.

"This is not the first time this

has occurred," she said.

So far, meetings between the city and the retiree's legal representatives have not broken the stalemate.

According to Pat Moran, a retired police sergeant, the dispute could end in a lawsuit against the city.

Retired for two years, Moran, 60, said the city has been paying for his wife's health care costs since he retired.

Moran said he is worried that if the city takes away one benefit, others could follow.

"Once you begin this, what's around the corner?" he asked.

Most of the retirees, Moran said, no longer have children to support, but will find paying for their spouses' health care benefits a hardship.

"We relied on it as part of our retirement package," he said.

Belmont budget swells to twice normal size

New City Hall, railroad overpasses escalate city costs

By DIANA MARSZALEK

Times Staff Writer

BELMONT — Plans to buy a new City Hall and two railroad overpass projects have swelled Belmont's budget to nearly twice its normal size.

Otherwise, the 1995-96 budget calls for maintaining business as usual with a few new programs.

City Council members on Tuesday approved the \$49.1 million budget, which includes money for railroad overpass projects at Ralston and Harbor avenues and the purchase of an office building at 1070 Sixth Ave. for a new City Hall.

That's a minimal change from

last year's budget of \$50.9 million, which was also larger than normal because of the projects.

"That sounds like a lot for a city used to spending in the \$30 million range, but the (railroad) projects and the new city hall account for about \$20 million of the budget," Finance Director Sandy Salerno said in an interview.

The extra money will come from a variety of sources, including the Belmont Redevelopment Agency, which sold bonds to help fund the projects, Salerno said.

Council members agreed to fund several new programs during the next year, including a strategic planning program at a cost of \$50,000, and to buy a new police dog.

It's not just spend, spend, spend this year, however. There is good financial news as well, Salerno said.

For example, the state will not be taking property taxes for its budget this year, as it has done for the past three years. In addition, the opening of a new Summerfield Suites Hotel should bring in some cash by the end of the year, Salerno said.

0-28-95 Enquirer Bulletin

Belmont's on-line government is a hit

The City of Belmont has had a "home page" on the World Wide Web for approximately two months. We are making some exciting advances in bringing City government closer to the citizens and in providing services that enhance and strengthen our community.

Our new Web Site Belmont - Access for the Community" (BAC) is attracting an average of 39 visitors a day and is growing rapidly.

You can find information about local business, education and the library, local government, the metropolitan area, organizations, groups and clubs, news and activities as well as technology and partnerships.

Of particular interest is our community calendar (news and activities) where you can see what is happening in Belmont on any given day.

Listed by meeting date, you will find City Council meetings, Belmont school activities, concerts, homeowner's association meetings, and other meetings and events in our community. If you know of an event that should be added, you can fill out a form and submit it for inclusion on the calendar.

Another popular attraction is our organizations page. We are beginning to add information for homeowner's associations and other local groups. There are links to valuable services provided by non-profit organizations in San Mateo County and the Bay Area. Belmont-based organizations are encouraged to contact the city's Technology Specialist at 595-7446 to



learn how they can participate in this project.

The local government page contains information for all city departments. We have included regular updates of the City Council agendas and minutes, the Planning Commission agendas, and the zoning ordinance is available in ASCII format along with the Planning Department application that you can download and complete.

Our latest addition is the Summer 1995 Recreation Guide that many people have requested.

The metropolitan area page is a listing of resources and fun places to visit via your computer in the Bay Area, California, United States and the World. You can get information on local transportation, earthquakes, weather, news, and see what other Bay Area cities are doing.

You can jump to information from state and federal government agencies including the IRS or you can take a virtual tour of the White House.

information on the BAC Web Site continues to grow and improve thanks to the many suggestions from visitors to our

pages. Please continue to send us your comments and suggestions, we are striving to make the information provided relevant and useful for the citizens of Belmont.

Citizen volunteers have spent many hours helping to develop the structure of our web pages and formatting information to enhance its presentation.

A local Eagle Scout candidate, Jonathan Herbach, is working with other Boy Scouts, the Belmont Historical Society and Belmont Seniors club to put a chronological history of Belmont together that will be available through BAC.

This project, to be completed by mid-August, is in the research stage now. Boy Scouts are delving into the Belmont Historical Society's archives, interviewing long time residents as well as writing and formatting the resulting documents.

When the history pages are complete, Jonathan and other Boy Scouts will work with the Historical Society members and Belmont Senior's Club to teach them how to access the information from a computer. The scouts may also train Historical Society members so that they will be able to format additional documents to be included in the future.

If you have access to the World Wide Web, you will find B A C a t <http://www.belmont.gov/> If you have comments or suggestions about the city's Internet project, please contact the Technology Specialist at 595-7446 or send an e-mail message to the city at city_hall@belmont.gov.

San Mateo Times
Aug 29, 1995

BELMONT CITY HALL

San Mateo Times
8/29/95

Decision makers out of touch with residents

The recent article on property owners suing the city of Belmont comes as no surprise to those who follow the actions and attitudes of city staff and Belmont's City Council.

As president of one of Belmont's neighborhood associations, I've experienced the arrogant attitude of city staff who have their own agendas and try to follow the spend-then-tax approach. We've watched a City Council that tried for over a year to avoid responding to a petition signed by 140 residents. We've witnessed the effects of a conference center in a residential area that on several occasions dumped raw sewage, including feces, onto a residential street where children played.

We've watched the size and cost of city staff increase while cutting benefits to retirees.

In their eagerness to "bond," city staff managers and the Council tried to arrange a two day/overnight team building session in Monterey at taxpayer expense.

And now, the Council and staff's idea of an "improved" and renewed downtown is to move a bloated city hall a few thousand feet (at a taxpayer cost of \$8 million) and subsidize the expansion of a grocery store by taxing those residents and small businesses who are unfortunate to be in the area of the store.

Although the proposed store will be profitable to its owners, few Belmont residents see the need for another "super" grocery store; nor do they have a strong interest in visiting the area.

In some cities, a renovated downtown has art galleries, restaurants, a museum and a performing art center. In Belmont, it's a grocery store and new city hall. Any wonder why citizens are fed up with Belmont government?

Gregory A. Lizak
Belmont

TEAM BUILDING: It's not always pleasant, but it's effective

Continued from 1A

it."

Over a period of months, the council met with a representative from the firm who put them through a series of instructional exercises and games.

The program began by having the councilmembers define a goal and then decide how to surmount the obstacles which lay in the path of reaching that goal.

In the case of the city council, the goal was to make Belmont the best place to work, live or do business.

The exercises were not always pleasant.

During one session, the councilmembers paired off and told each other exactly what they thought of one another.

This exercise taught the councilmembers to vent their frustrations immediately, so they do not build up inside them.

"A lot of hurtful stuff came out," said Councilmember Nancy Levitt. "But by getting it



Working as a team? The Belmont City Council contracts with a team-building consultant.

MATT SUMNER/ ENQUIRER-BULLETIN

out, you can get past it."

Levitt enthusiastically supported the idea of having the council engage in team building. A Hewlett-Packard Co. employee, Levitt has seen pro-

grams similar to team building at work for years.

The main strength of team building, Levitt said, is it helps people overcome their preconceptions of their colleagues and

see them in a clearer light.

"Team building is a form of therapy," Levitt said. "The council meetings are more pleasant now and shorter."

Although the council no

longer employs the services of American Consulting, it continues to utilize the lessons of team building.

Before and after every public meeting, the council gathers

together to critique its performance. If one member has done something to irk another, the matter is immediately discussed and not allowed to fester.

Mayor Adele Della Santina said the team building program enabled the council to agree on methods for streamlining meetings.

When someone makes a point, Della Santina asks the council if anyone agrees. Instead of indulging in lengthy discussions, the agreeing members simply nod their heads.

"Team building has helped us to discourage grandstanding and monotonous monologues," Della Santina said with a laugh.

The program has also been good for the city staff, Della Santina said. When councilmembers disagreed in the past, their differences would send mixed messages to the staff, making their job harder.

Since the advent of team building, it has become easier for them to get a clearer message from the council.

"The staff are much happier campers," said Della Santina.

Can't we just get along?

Belmont Bulletin 9/26/95
BY ALAN SISSENWEIN

Staff Reporter

Going to a Belmont City Council meeting last year was sometimes like going to a professional wrestling match.

Tempers flared and councilmembers talked over each other in their efforts to be heard. Angry debates over public policy sometimes stretched the meetings way into the night.

Councilmembers would walk away from meetings feeling stressed and frustrated.

"You can carry stress home," said Mayor Adele Della Santina. "It can be with you for the rest of the day."

The council realized its behavior was not healthy and decided to do something about it.

"We wasted time," said Councilmember Pam Rianda. "We weren't clear."

To remedy this problem, the councilmembers hired American Consulting, a Mill Valley firm which teaches business people and public officials the practice of team building.

This process allows them to put aside their differences and streamline work practices.

"I feel that I have become a better councilmember," Rianda said. "We can disagree without becoming unprofessional about

See **TEAM BUILDING**, page 10A

Two sue Belmont over land district

Englewood Bulletin 9-13-95

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

Two Belmont businessmen are suing the city to repeal an assessment district designed to pay for downtown improvements.

Michael Lindeburg and Louis Gamba, two downtown property owners, strenuously argued against the district during July hearings which preceded its approval by the city council.

While many of the downtown residents and business people complained bitterly about being

See **ASSESS**, page 6A

Englewood Bulletin 9-13-95

ASSESS: Property owners fight back

Continued from 1A

assessed thousands of dollars, others saw it as a means to make a profit by converting their residences to commercial use.

The district was designed to pay for such improvements as new gutters, curbs, landscaping, trees, and a parking lot in the area, which is roughly bounded by El Camino Real and O'Neill, Emmett and Sixth avenues.

Moreover, the district is meant to provide Belmont with a central shopping district. A new, expanded Safeway is slated to provide an anchor for other stores, attracting passers-by on El Camino Real.

The total project is slated to cost about \$2.3 million, with \$1.8 million coming from Safe-

way.

Lindeburg, who owns a half block of property in the district, is being assessed about \$150,000. Gamba, the owner of an office building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and O'Neill Street, is being assessed about \$80,000.

Lindeburg alleges that the district was formed improperly because Safeway and the city agreed to support the district before notifying its residents and small-scale businesses.

He also argues that he is being arbitrarily assessed to pay for a commercial parking lot which his property does not need.

Lindeburg, who said that most of his assessments spring from the lot, added that he his buildings already have their own parking.

The suit also calls into question the constitutionality of the district. Lindeburg noted that the district was designed so the city and Safeway controlled 51 percent of the property, giving them a majority vote within it.

"This is taxation without representation," he said.

Belmont City Manager Damon Edwards disagrees with Lindeburg.

Edwards disputed Lindeburg's contention that the district was improperly designed, saying that the city had specialists work on it.

"I don't know how many districts Mr. Lindeburg has set up," Edwards said, arguing that Lindeburg could not know more about setting up assessment districts than the city staff.

Foul-foul situation for Belmont residents

Belmont Mayor Adele Della Santina's May 24 column, "Win-win situation for residents, city," is not how I could have reported what is happening in Belmont. I think the City Council and staff are now struggling with one of the worst examples of special-interest politics ever seen in Belmont.

If there had been enough room in the mayor's "win-win" column for additional facts, I think Belmont residents would rightfully be calling "foul-foul." Here are more of the facts:

- Belmont and Safeway entered into an unpublicized agreement guaranteeing the success of the assessment district before the assessment district was even announced.
- The assessment district was formed in such a way that Belmont and Safeway control

GUEST OPINION BY MICHAEL R. LINDEBURG

more than 50 percent of the property in the assessment district, making it impossible for the property owners to vote down the assessments. Belmont City Manager Damon Edwards and Director of Planning Dan Vanderprieem have openly and repeatedly admitted that this was done so that the assessment district "would not fail (to pass)."

- Assessed property owners are being forced to pay for the purchase of historical buildings that will be torn down and turned into a parking lot for the benefit of a Safeway-constructed commercial strip mall on the old Texaco site on El Camino Real.
- Safeway has been granted a

50 percent property tax rebate to offset its assessment so that it doesn't even fully pay for its own improvements.

- Assessments will be added to the annual property tax bill. Owners who fail to pay their assessments will have their properties seized and sold.

"Win-win" states that the assessments were negotiated with "major property owners" during the past year. However, I am a major property owner and this is news to me. Nothing was negotiated with me or with anyone else in the assessment district, with the possible exception of Safeway. I learned of my \$370,000 assessment just this April by mail.

"Win-win" gave the impression that the 40 percent to 50

See **FOUL**, page 12A

FOUL: Project is only a win for City Hall

Continued from 4A

percent reductions in preliminary assessments resulted solely from the City Council hearing property owners' complaints. However, it appears that most of the reductions are the result of the city responding to imminent litigation by shifting costs of some questionable items to other sources of funding.

"Win-win" gave the impression that the assessment district was formed to implement improvements identified by the Downtown Task Force in 1989. I was a member of that task force for the entire three years

it was active.

However, the task force's Downtown Specific Plan mentioned by the mayor never recommended covering the creek, straightening and widening Sixth Avenue, destroying historic buildings on Fifth Avenue, creating the public parking lot, or building a strip mall.

Neither did our Downtown Specific Plan ever mention having one square block of property owners shoulder half the cost of beautifying Belmont. In fact, my block was essentially excluded from the Downtown Task Force's 1989 final report altogether.

Mayor Della Santina's "win-win" situation is about to turn into a big "lose-lose-lose-lose" situation for the city of Belmont, the City Council, the city staff and Safeway. The city stands to lose a beautification project; the council and staff stand to lose substantial trust and credibility; and Safeway stands to lose the goodwill of a community it depends on.

Everybody likes street trees, but this assessment district isn't about a few street trees. It's about special interests. To get a "win-win" situation out of it, we should start this ballgame over again.

Reactions mixed on 'team building'

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

Belmont residents disagree over whether the city council made a wise investment last year spending more than \$10,000 on exercises designed to help the members get along better.

Known as team building, the council members credit the exercises with helping them to get past personal animosities so they could get down to the business of running a city.

Gary Selick, a representative from the firm American Consulting who worked with the council for over a year, noted

that it is very rare for a city council to engage in team building.

Although scores of firms offer team building to corporations throughout the Bay Area, he said the Belmont and Sunnyvale councils are the only ones so far to take this page from the private sector.

"Belmont was very brave," Selick said, adding that the city may engage him again on a short-term basis when it adds new members after the November election.

What people think

Many residents applaud the council's actions, seeing it as an

investment which has led to better government. Others, however, view it as an unnecessary waste of funds which could have been better spent elsewhere.

Sally Salih, a Belmont resident who works for the plan-

See **TEAM**, page 2A

TEAM: Money well spent?

Continued from 1A

ning commission in Colma, said the council should never have needed Selick's services.

"Adults should behave as adults," she said. "Leave your ax to grind at home."

A better use for the funds, she said, would have been to fill in potholes around town.

"They've lost sight of their common sense," she said.

Peter Markovich, the father of a 7-year-old boy, said he would rather see the money spent on upgrading and maintaining the city's playing fields.

"The council should find common ground without spending the money," he said. "It seems like an awful lot of money to spend for someone to tell you to get along."

Chuck Mignacco, stage man-

ager for the rock 'n' roll band "The Alley Boys," said he also thinks the council should be able to work harmoniously without the aid of team building.

"What about Belmont is such a political mecca that five people can't get along?" he asked.

"They are elected to perform a duty to the city," he said. "The time they wasted on not getting along is taxpayer money wasted."

Mignacco said he would have liked to have seen the \$10,500 used for a local youth center where teens could safely spend their afterschool hours instead of lingering around Carlmont Village shopping center.

By contrast, Robert L. Dyer, a locksmith, said the financial cost of team building was worthwhile.

"If they had real conflict and this has allowed them to communicate better, then it's money well spent," he said.

In a parallel vein, Debbie McNaughton, a graduate student who commutes to UC Berkeley, said the importance of having a smoothly-functioning council outweighs the cost of the program.

"If they don't get along, nothing will get accomplished," she said.

John Pope, a retired teacher who has lived in Belmont for 30 years, said he saw team building exercises occasionally used during his career with the Sequoia Union High School district and said they are valuable.

"Things don't get done as well as they could, unless people get along," he said.

Belmont split on smoking

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

Belmont residents are sharply divided over whether the City Council made the right decision voting down a proposed ban on self-serve cigarette displays.

Two weeks ago, the City Council voted 3-2 to reject the measure. The majority argued that the proposed ordinance, similar to one recently enacted in San Mateo, would severely hurt local businesses while doing little to curtail teen smoking.

The majority were satisfied that store owners were keeping a close eye on the self-serve displays, ensuring that teenagers are not stealing from them.

This argument did not convince Rose Ozwirk, a long-time fixture at City Council meetings.

"If cigarettes are there, teenagers are going to take them if they want them," Ozwirk said.

Ozwirk said she has seen groups of teens steal cigarettes in stores. While one part of a group distracts the clerk, another filches the cigarettes.

Prohibiting the displays, Ozwirk said, would have made it that much harder for children to obtain cigarettes. With both parents working in today's world, Ozwirk said the shopkeepers are obligated to keep tobacco away from anyone under the age of 18.

"I'd like to keep at it till they're 30," she said with a laugh.

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November 8, 1995

Enqui

SMOKING: Citizens reactions

Continued from 1A

Ted Kai, a retired county employee, also thinks the council made the wrong decision.

"I think the council sent a message that money comes first and health comes second," he said.

"Business is business, but store owners shouldn't make money off an addictive substance."

Kai, a one-time smoker who quit, said he has been especially opposed to cigarettes since a colleague and friend died of lung cancer.

"It was very traumatic," he said.

Dennis O'Leary, a San Francisco firefighter who resides in Belmont, said he has seen so many fires caused by cigarettes that he is for banning them altogether.

"If you've seen people burned, it isn't pretty," he said, adding that he has frequently seen people die when they fall asleep smoking.

O'Leary said cigarette displays should particularly be kept out of shopping centers such as Carlmont to ensure that children do not fall victim to glamorous depictions of smoking.

The council's decision, however, found greater acceptance among local smokers.

Annette Legaspi, a personal, professional and corporate growth seminar teacher, said she would have approved of the ban if would have kept cigarettes from teenagers from smoking, but she does not believe it will.

"A smoker is going to be a smoker," she said.

Legaspi said prohibiting self-serve displays and other tobacco-related accessories will not halt the spread of under-age smoking. Only through education and individual decisions can teenagers turn away from cigarettes, she said.

Kerri Davis, a computer programmer, agrees that the council made the right choice. Davis said she sees

the proposed ordinances as just another way to restrict the liberty of smokers.

"They're trying to control how I live," she said.

Wayne Fogell, a management consultant, agreed the defeated measure is an example of the infringement of smokers' rights. Fogell added that is hard to even smoke in the open air without being hassled.

"The whole anti-smoking movement is extreme," he said.

He said he is frequently bothered when he smokes outside Starbuck's at Carlmont— an atmosphere where the prevalent smell is exhaust fumes from passing vehicles.

"There's nothing more obnoxious than exhaust fumes," he said.

He also said the ban would not have been effective. While biking through Twin Pines Park recently, Fogell said he saw teenagers puffing on marijuana.

"If they can get hold of pot, they can get hold of cigarettes," Fogell said.

SM Times

Tues, Nov 14, 1995

ELECTION '95

With all the absentee ballots, the election ain't over till it's over

For 26,000 voters, high-tech system just did not count

DAN SEAVER

Times Staff Writer

SAN MATEO — A little over two hours after the polls closed on Election Day, Recorder Warren Slocum released the preliminary results, turned off the office lights and followed his staff out the door.

As San Francisco election officials struggled with power shortages and computer glitches, Slocum's office — aided by a new computer system — saw once again just how fast and efficient high technology can be.

And then, on Wednesday morning, with thousands of absentee and write-in ballots still to be processed, elections workers got down to counting the remaining ballots the old-fashioned way.

By hand.

"This is a good reminder of how important the electronic process is," said Bill Jackson, the county election manager. For four days, up to 15 specially hired campaign workers hand-counted some 26,000 absentee ballots and waded through the

more than 3,000 ballots cast in Belmont to tabulate the votes for write-in candidates in that city.

As more voters opt for absentee ballots, election results ready-made for the 11 o'clock news may become less common.

Some 72,327 ballots were cast, scanned and counted election day. But the additional 26,387 absentee ballots — including 7,000 uncounted by election night — left the outcome of several races undetermined and presented Slocum's office the chance to turn off the computer and sharpen pencils for some hand-counting.

The City Council race in Belmont had one candidate on the ballot and seven write-in candidates competing for two seats. Jackson said that meant that each ballot in Belmont had to be hand-checked to make sure the write-in candidates had been monitored, something the high-speed computer scanner is unable to do.

The Belmont election was further complicated because the close race for city treasurer between Robert Blake and Howard Mason — only 28 votes separated the candidates — provoked a request for a hand count.

And because Belmont voters were eligible to drop their

RESULTS

✓ = winner

County Measure B

(Sheriff's/coroner's combination)

Yes..... 43,697
✓ No..... 44,491

San Bruno City Council

Two seats

✓ Irene K. O'Connell..... 2,794
✓ Jim Ruane..... 2,487
George Kanakaris..... 2,340

Woodside Town Council

1 seat each

District 5:

✓ Peter Bohley..... 874
Debbie Mendelson..... 833

District 7:

✓ Pete Sinclair..... 857
Kathleen Braunstein..... 836

San Mateo Union High School District

Two seats

✓ Diane Vranes..... 18,688
✓ Marcia Cohn-Lyle..... 17,426
Michael Lennon..... 17,017

absentee ballots off at any one of the 522 precincts countywide, each of the 27,327 absentee ballots had to be hand-checked for a Belmont registration.

In spite of the time and labor costs to follow those ballots, Slocum said the computer system, even with shortcomings, makes his job much easier than that of his colleagues across the country.

"I remember before 1993 when we had those 800-pound election machines. Instead of being finished at 10:15, it would take us until 4, 5 or 6 the next morning to finish tabulating the election day votes. Only then could we think about getting through all the absentee and write-in votes" Slocum said.

Della Santina, Feierbach win Belmont City Council race

Mason is city's new treasurer; victory margin just 28 votes

DIANA MARSZALEK

Times Staff Writer

BELMONT — Nearly a week after voters cast their ballots, the results of the Belmont election are in.

Mayor Adele Della Santina and former Planning Commissioner Coralin Feierbach won the City Council race.

Howard Mason Jr., a longtime finance commissioner, is going to be the city's next treasurer.

Della Santina — the only one of eight council candidates whose name appeared on the ballot — received 2,366 votes. Feierbach, one of seven write-in candidates, received 711 votes.

Mason, who did not declare victory until all the absentee votes were counted, received 1,554 votes — just 28 more than Robert Blake.

It took nearly a week to tally the votes for council candidates because of the seven write-ins.

Della Santina was the only candidate who filed during the regular period. When it looked as though Belmont didn't have enough candidates to fill its two vacancies on the council, seven other people said they wanted the job, and ran write-in campaigns.

It also took nearly a week to tally all the votes in the treasurer's race. Voting was so close that neither candidate would claim victory before all the absentee ballots were counted.



ADELE DELLA SANTINA

Della Santina, the current mayor, has been on the council for four years and was on the Planning Commission for nine years before that.

She said her goal is to continue the work the council has started on big projects, such as building railroad overpasses and developing downtown.

Feierbach is a software developer and former planning com-



CORALIN FEIERBACH

missioner who has lived in Belmont for 22 years.

A fiscal conservative, Feierbach ran on a platform of keeping careful watch on city spending.

Mason is a certified public accountant who has been on the Finance Commission since 1978. He said he hopes to increase communication among the treasurer, finance commissioners and city staff.

Annexation tug of war

Belmont City Council making another try tonight to outfox

San Carlos for the Harbor Industrial area

DIANA MARSZALEK

Times Staff Writer

BELMONT — Belmont once again is going to try to annex the Harbor Industrial area, despite failed attempts in the past that led to legal battles with neighboring San Carlos.

The City Council tonight will be asked to approve city staff's recommendation that they file an application to annex the unincorporated area before any new action is taken by San Carlos, which wants the property as well.

And although Belmont's most recent attempt to annex the property failed after a lengthy legal battle, city officials said they're willing to try once again

to annex the area — primarily because they don't want San Carlos to have it.

"We're trying to keep San Carlos from having it," said Belmont City Manager Damon Edwards.

"If San Carlos weren't pursuing it on their end, then we wouldn't be pursuing it on ours," he said.

Meanwhile, San Carlos officials say they are undaunted by Belmont's plans. They say they are moving ahead with their own plans to annex the property, which is just west of Bayshore Freeway at the San Carlos-Belmont border.

San Carlos wants to annex the entire 149-acre parcel, which is

primarily industrial but is also home to a mobile home park. Belmont wants to annex about two-thirds of the property, which decades ago was determined to be in Belmont's "sphere of influence," or a likely candidate for annexation.

The Harbor Industrial area is a tax-rich home to a variety of businesses, which would provide a source of revenue to whichever city annexes the parcel. The cities have to apply to the Local Agency Formation Commission to annex the property.

San Carlos Assistant City Manager Brian Moura said that in pursuing the annexation San Carlos officials are acting on the request of Harbor Industrial

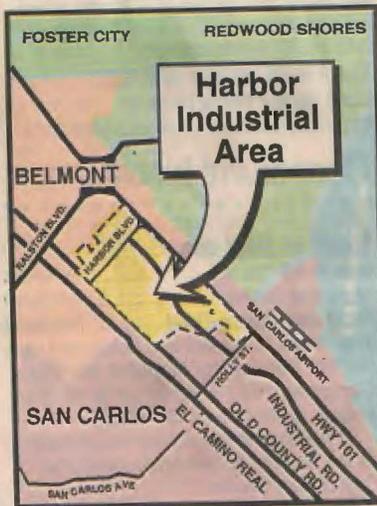
area property owners, who asked to be annexed to San Carlos several years ago.

San Carlos officials put that request on hold while the two cities and the property owners tried to negotiate an end to the dispute.

However, Moura said it is now time to move ahead with processing the property owners' annexation application, since attempts to negotiate an end to the dispute failed earlier this year.

"The people came to us. They paid their money. They filled out their forms," Moura said. "Even if we weren't interested in annexing them, we would have

HARBOR / A8



Times graphic

HARBOR: Annexation battle

From One

to take them through the process."

Inge Doherty, chairwoman of the board of the Harbor Industrial Association, said area property owners do not want the area to be divided between two cities and want to be annexed to San Carlos because the city is more supportive of business than Belmont.

Doherty said the association has defeated four other Belmont proposals to annex the property and will fight the current one as well.

"We're vehemently opposed to any annexation by the city of Belmont," Doherty said.

"We have beaten Belmont four times in these hostile annexation attempts and we will beat them again," she said. "We will fight it to the end until we are together as one community in the city of our choice."

Belmont officials, however, said they are determined to try to annex the property, despite property owners objections.

Edwards, the city manager, said Belmont officials would be willing to put their annexation plans on hold if San Carlos would too.

Edwards said Belmont officials would agree to leave the parcel unincorporated — which means that it is not technically part of any city, and receives services from San Mateo County — but will not stand for San Carlos's attempts to take over the area.

Edwards said that by annexing the Harbor Industrial area San Carlos would "take a portion out of the middle of our city."

"We want it because it's an extension of Belmont," Edwards said.

Nonetheless, Belmont has not been able to convince the other parties involved in the decades-long dispute of that.

The city's latest attempt to annex the property is the most recent development in a dispute

DETAILS

What: Belmont City Council

Where: Twin Pines Senior and Community Center, 1223 Ralston Ave.

When: Tonight, 7:30 p.m.

What: To discuss annexation of Harbor Industrial area.

More information: 595-7413.

that has lasted more than 20 years.

The most recent attempt to end the dispute through negotiations between San Carlos and the Harbor Industrial area and Belmont failed earlier this year.

Belmont's attempts to resolve the issue in court, through legislation and through a special election last year for the residents of the area's mobile home park also failed.

After the mobile home park residents rejected being annexed to Belmont last year, a judge also rejected the city's bid. A subsequent attempt by Belmont to change state legislation that would have given them another chance to annex the property also failed.

The Harbor Industrial Association's Doherty said she's not surprised by Belmont's tenacity, although she's not looking forward to another fight.

"We really just want to get on with our lives," she said.

Enquirer Bulletin 11-29-95

Levitt ready to lead Belmont

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

Belmont's City Council will experience a changing of the guard Nov. 29 when the members elect a new mayor.

Every year, the council chooses a new mayor from its ranks. By tradition, the mayor is usually the person who received the most votes in the previous year's election. This custom, however, is not always followed.

The most likely candidate for this year's mayor is Nancy Levitt, who is beginning her third year on the council.

"I'll be elected mayor unless the council decides otherwise, and I don't screw up big-time in the next week," Levitt said with a laugh.

The mayor's duties include running council meetings and representing the city at ribbon-cuttings and other ceremonies.

Outgoing Mayor Adele Della Santina noted that luring new businesses to town is one of a mayor's most important behind-the-scenes duties.

"Being mayor is an awful lot of work," Levitt said. "It's not a glamor and glory job."

Della Santina added that this year's mayoral election will differ from previous years in that the party for the new mayor will take place the night after the election. She said it was more proper for the celebration to be held after a new mayor is formally sworn in rather than in anticipation of it.

"I feel good turning the gavel over to Nancy," Della Santina said. "She's a capable person."

As 1995's vice-mayor, Levitt said she has undergone a kind of training program to be mayor. The vice-mayor, she noted, is the council's liaison to the finance commission and goes to all its meetings.

Levitt said she has received an in-depth education on the city's financial workings.

A salient part of this has been learning what can and can't be done with city funds.

An 14-year employee of the Hewlett-Packard Company, Levitt said her career has also

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MAYOR: Changing of the guards

Continued from 1A

given her good training to be mayor, particularly in the area of motivating employees.

But balancing her extra duties as mayor with her career will not be a very time-consuming task, Levitt said.

"I like the fact we rotate each year," she said. "Being mayor could burn you out real fast."

As she prepares to leave the mayor's seat, Della Santina said she will miss the job but is a bit relieved to be free of the extra work load.

One part of the job she has particularly enjoyed is meeting with dignitaries from the political and business worlds and putting the city's concerns to them.

Among these prominent figures, she has had contact with

Governor Pete Wilson and California senators Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

She's also proud of the role she has played in attracting new businesses, such as the Summerfield Suites Hotel in Belmont Shores, to town.

Della Santina added she would enjoy being mayor again.

"I would be honored," she said.

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Annexation study underway

Enquirer Bulletin
Dec 27, '95

BY ALLEN CLAPP
Staff Editor

After more than 23 years of hanging in limbo, a study to determine the fate of the Harbor Industrial Area between San Carlos and Belmont is finally underway.

December 27, 1995

HARBOR: Life in the land of limbo

Continued from 1A

area banded together to form a non-profit corporation called the Harbor Industrial Association (HIA) to represent the interests of their community.

The community has been struggling ever since to maintain its unity amidst annexation attempts by Belmont and boundary drawing by LAFCO.

Executive Director of LAFCO Peter Banning is optimistic the new study will bring some resolution to the longtime issue.

"This is a fully-charged situation. Some objective, outside information could definitely help," Banning said.

Seen as a potential cash cow, both cities have said they would like to annex the area.

The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) voted last Wednesday to hire an outside firm to study the "sphere of influence" boundary which could help determine future annexation possibilities for the lightly populated, mostly industrial unincorporated area.

But according to preliminary reports by San Carlos, any profit would come long after several million dollars of improvements are made to the area.

Over the past several years, Belmont has attempted several annexations of the portion of the industrial area that falls under its sphere of influence.

Belmont mounted an election campaign in 1993, trying to sway voters in a small trailer park to vote for annexation of their park as well as 163 acres of uninhabited industrial land.

The voters turned down the annexation, but San Carlos and the HIA sued Belmont for trying to combine inhabited and uninhabited areas in an election.

Belmont struck back by hiring a lobbyist to try to get the law changed, which would pave the way for another similar election.

The court ruled the issue was moot, however, since the trailer park residents voted against the annexation.

A recurring theme

An item on Belmont's City Council agenda several weeks ago called for discussion of yet another election attempt.

However, the item was pulled prior to the meeting because of LAFCO's announcement regarding the consideration of a study.

Prompting the vote was a flood of applications from Harbor area property owners who want to annex to San Carlos.

More than 80 percent of the owners, representing more than 90 percent of the area's 225 acres, recently stated their preference to join the "City of

Meanwhile, San Carlos has been on the receiving end of annexation requests by the Harbor Industrial Area.

Annexing to San Carlos is the one avenue which the area believes could lead to the community's ensured unity. The HIA also believes the area will be better treated under the municipality of San Carlos.

The sphere of influence boundary line was originally established in 1972 under less than favorable circumstances, according to Jones.

"At the time, the two cities were actually considering merging.

"So this line was drawn up, and was not really taken seriously because it looked as if the harbor area would simply be annexed whole by this new, big city surrounding it," Jones said.

However, after merger negotiations fell through, the line remained. Jones hopes the study will finally take seriously the fate of his community, which has for so long been seen only as a revenue source.

"We are a community here, and we don't want to be split apart. Hopefully, LAFCO will consider this in their study."

Good Living," which would drastically change LAFCO's 1972 boundary line dividing the area roughly in half.

In addition, San Carlos is in the process of modifying its general plan to accommodate the industrial area's application. The city's Planning Commission

heard public testimony last week as part of the process.

Identity crisis

This is the latest chapter in a story which began in the 1950s when property owners in the