

**PENINSULA INSIDER**

Mark Simon

**San Francisco Chronicle**

**Belmont's Manager Quits Post**

Assistant then resigns after being passed over

Belmont City Manager **Damon Edwards**, on the job for barely three years, has resigned amid rumors he was pushed out by his City Council.

And Assistant City Manager **Sandy Salerno**, miffed that the council would not make her interim city manager, submitted her resignation yesterday afternoon.

Belmont Mayor **Gary Harris** issued a statement yesterday indicating Edwards "resigned over the weekend," although Edwards said his resignation is pending negotiation of a severance package.

Salerno was to be acting city manager until the city found an interim city manager to serve on a long-term basis. Meanwhile, the city would launch a search for a permanent replacement for Edwards.

City officials said Salerno told them she was insulted that the council would not make her interim city manager.

By midday yesterday, she had resigned, effective in two weeks.

"We believe Sandy is an extremely valued, loyal employee and we're very disappointed to have her leave," said Harris, who said he did not try to talk Salerno out of resigning.

Salerno could not be reached for comment.

Harris said the council, scheduled to meet last night, would ask another city department head to be acting city manager.

"We're going to have to get together tonight and start to sort it out," Harris said.

**THE OFFICIAL LINE:** Edwards' resignation was "for personal reasons," said Harris.

Harris refused to say more and Edwards said only that his resignation followed a closed-door City Council session on Saturday.

"I wasn't in there. They didn't talk to me about that. . . . I don't particularly want to know what they said," Edwards said. "The official line is that I'm resigning for personal reasons."

Insiders say Edwards was pushed out, however, having lost a war of attrition with City Council members who were unhappy with his leadership.

Sources say some council members have been critical of Edwards for months, initiating hours of closed-door council sessions during the summer to raise questions about his tenure.

Harris was the only Belmont council member who could be reached for comment yesterday.

**THE BIG PROJECT:** Sources say the differences between Edwards and the council came to a head when they objected to his management of the project to build an underpass at Ralston Avenue to route

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**BELMONT**

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traffic under the CalTrain tracks.

The Ralston project is a \$34 million chunk of a \$58 million project to build rail overcrossings in San Carlos and Belmont.

But Belmont's project has been plagued with problems — it's behind schedule, had cost overruns and required major plan revisions.

Harris declined specific comment on whether the problems with the Ralston project were a factor in Edwards' departure.

"The Ralston project is the single largest project undertaken, or that will be undertaken, in Belmont," Harris said. "Issues associated with financing are, of course, of critical importance to the council."

Salerno, a 10-year veteran of Belmont's government, was finance director as well as assistant city manager.

The two departures leave the city without a chief executive or department head overseeing spending on its biggest project.

Mark Simon writes from The Chronicle's Peninsula Bureau; he can be reached at (415) 961-2499, by fax machine at (415) 961-5023, or by e-mail at msimon@sfgate.com.

# S.F. Spillover Fills Mid-Peninsula Hotels

San Mateo County's hotel occupancy rate is at its highest in a decade, largely because there is so much hotel business in San Francisco and Silicon Valley that it's spilling into the mid-Peninsula.

Smith Travel Research, a national hotel and tourism survey firm, reports that for 1996, San Mateo County's hotel occupancy rate reached 80.3 percent at the hotels surrounding San Francisco International Airport, the principal location of hotels in the county.

That's up from 77.7 percent in 1995.

The county's Restaurant and Hotel Association also reported a peak in the average daily rate charged for a hotel room in the county — \$89.94, up from \$78.87 in 1995.

The increase in demand is due

## PENINSULA INSIDER

Mark Simon

to a "compression of demand in hotel space from San Francisco and Silicon Valley," said **Marc Chapdelaine**, president and chief executive of the San Mateo County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In other words, people who would rather book a hotel room in San Francisco or Silicon Valley for a convention, tourism or a business trip, are being forced into San Mateo County.

"Let's not kid ourselves," Chapdelaine said. "They're not here by choice. They're here because it's

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# INSIDER: Belmont Dust Settles

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the only room available."

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, for example, recently held its annual convention at Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, but members of the academy booked hotel rooms as far south as Foster City.

"Either the rooms aren't available or the rooms available are price-prohibitive," Chapdelaine said.

San Mateo County is benefiting from being wedged between the world's top tourism destination and the booming economy of Silicon Valley, both of which are bringing droves of people to the area, he said.

But Chapdelaine warned that the county's hotel market "can turn very quickly. Neither San Francisco nor San Jose is fighting for our business. If their business contracts, the first place they'll come looking is our customers."

**LAST MAN STANDING:** When the dust settled in Belmont Tuesday night, the City Council picked **Dan Vanderpriem**, the city's community development director, as its acting city manager.

The job fell to Vanderpriem after City Manager **Damon Edwards**

was pushed into resigning on Monday. Assistant City Manager **Sandy Salerno** was to be named acting city manager, but she submitted her resignation Tuesday after the council decided not to make her interim city manager.

In the studied thinking that dominated Belmont's decision-making processes, the acting city manager is to serve for a short time, while an interim city manager is chosen. The interim city manager is to serve while the council goes through a re-evaluation of the city manager job description and then hires somebody.

When Salerno was offered only the acting city manager position, "I evaluated that in terms of my well-being and decided to pursue another option."

Salerno insisted she was not miffed at being passed over, but realized it was a good time to retire from the city and see what might come along.

"I want to stand still for a few months and let the winds pass over me," she said.

Mark Simon writes from The Chronicle's Peninsula Bureau; he can be reached at (415) 961-2499, by fax at (415) 961-5023, or by e-mail at [msimon@sfgate.com](mailto:msimon@sfgate.com).

# Zaner interim manager

BY JENNIFER NAPIER-PEARCE  
Staff Reporter

Bill Zaner, former city manager of Palo Alto, accepted an offer last Friday to serve as Belmont's interim city manager, according to Mayor Gary Harris.

He will assume the post Wednesday after the City Council signs his contract at Tuesday's council meeting. Harris expects Zaner to stay on the job four to six months until a permanent city manager is named.

Zaner replaces Dan Vanderprie, the city's community development director who has been serving as acting city manager after former City Manager Damon Edwards and former Assistant City Manager-Finance Director Sandy Salerno abruptly resigned Feb. 25.

Zaner, 59, worked in San Leandro, Union City and retired as city manager of Palo Alto after 13 years in 1992. Since then, he has filled interim city manager posts in Atherton, Morgan Hill and most recently Half Moon Bay.

Zaner seemed optimistic about his new assignment.

Putting together the city budget, assessing city needs and helping find a new city manager are top priorities, Zaner said.

## What's truth in Belmont?

### Editor:

It would appear that the mayor of Belmont spoke prematurely in his Camelot-like talk to the Belmont Chamber of Commerce. Unfortunately, the following has happened since then.

### To wit:

City manager quits.

Assistant city manager quits.

Another city department head (unknown as yet) to take over. (In the not-too-distant past, another city department head assumed the CM's post with disastrous results.)

The underpass at Ralston Avenue is behind schedule and has cost overruns which have required major plan revisions.

The onus of this fiasco-to-be has been placed on the shoulders of the departing city manager.

The city is "without a chief executive or department head overseeing spending on its biggest project."

The situation appears chaotic! There is more!

At the council meeting of Feb. 25, circa 100 citizens spoke to the council over the firing of a police officer, with 10 years experience, by the police chief for picayune reasons. The outpouring of support was warmth for the soul.

One supporter said racist

remarks had been written on the officer's locker.

The former officer, said many, is an outstanding family man, a person of integrity and compassion who doesn't consider being a policeman a job but as a service. In other words, an employee sorely needed.

As the meeting rumors were circulating that the city cannot come up with the funds to complete the Ralston Avenue project and that the city recently paid a judgment against itself of \$500,000 in a harassment case.

Rumors are deadly! They can ruin reputations of the innocent. They can only be expunged by the truth. "Truth is always truth, untruth always untruth, this is what matters, this is right desire." Words of The Buddha.

It seems to me that the major responsibility of a newspaper is to ferret out the truth which sets us all free. Can you be of help?

**Robert H. Fitzgerald**  
Former Mayor and City  
Councilman  
Belmont

CITY COUNCIL

ENQUIRER. BULLETIN MARCH 12-1997

March 18 1997

# Welcome Bill Zaner

Welcome aboard, Bill Zaner. Let us be among the first to extend a friendly greeting upon your arrival in Belmont as interim city manager.

Zaner comes to Belmont after serving as city manager for 13 years in Palo Alto.

We know of Zaner's record in Palo Alto, his achievements and his reputation. The Belmont City Council did well to choose someone familiar with the area, who has the reputation for being able to tackle the job, albeit on a short-term basis.

What Zaner can do is set goals and objectives for Belmont. One of the problems that he can help resolve is the revolving door that has seen many top flight administrators leave for other jobs. The question is why do they leave and how can the city keep good people employed?

Another question for Zaner to tackle and one we have been concerned with for a long time is defining the role of the city council. Where does the council's job end and where does the city manager's job begin? Is there a built-in conflict in Belmont that does not exist in neighboring cities to the north and south where Arne Croce in San Mateo and Mike Garvey in San Carlos have been successful in working with their respective councils?

Zaner's experience and his success should be an important bridge for the council to follow, because Zaner will only be in Belmont for six months or so. In November, three seats will be filled on the council. We would encourage citizens, those interested in serving the city, to step forward and declare for office.

Hopefully, the appointment of a new city manager can await the election of the incoming council. While that would extend Zaner's term a few months, we believe it would be worthwhile to have the new city council with a majority of seats up for grabs in November, make that important decision.

Meantime, the city's challenges remain for Zaner to charter as he keeps tabs of the Ralston Avenue and Harbor Road grade separations, making certain the project proceeds on budget and on deadline. The Harbor Industrial Area will come before a mediator shortly, another important issue that will need to be resolved.

It is our hope that when Bill Zaner's interim term has ended, the council will have a better idea of what it will take to make Belmont's city government stable and responsible. We would hope that morale will soar, goals will be achieved and the council will work harmoniously with the city manager and his staff.

March 1997

# Belmont weathering turnover

By Tyler Cunningham  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The new interim city manager said Monday that a cursory review of the city's government shows very little wrong.

Bill Zaner assumed the city manager's post after a recent shakeup at City Hall, in which City Manager Damon Edwards resigned and Finance Director/Assistant City Manager Sandy Salerno retired, only days apart.

"There's no crisis here," Zaner said. "There's been some instability over the past couple of months, but we have a professional group of people here that know what they're doing."

The city has either interim employees or vacancies at the head of four departments: city manager, finance director/assistant city manager, public works director and fire chief.

One of Zaner's tasks will be filling some or all of those positions. He said Monday that the city will hire a consulting firm to find a permanent city manager. He also said he plans to hire an interim finance director as soon as possible. He added he's reluctant to combine that position with that of assistant city manager. He plans to ap-



MONICA M. DAVEY — Staff

**Bill Zaner, Belmont's interim city manager, settles into his office.**

point a permanent public works director. However, he is still mulling appointment of a new fire chief of the South County Fire Authority, which serves both San Carlos and Belmont. Any appointments to that position would need to be a joint decision.

Zaner also plans to conduct a thorough report on efficiency at Belmont City Hall.

Meanwhile, morale at City Hall is

high. Zaner said: "I think people naturally get a little nervous when the boss leaves."

Zaner, 60, served as city manager of Palo Alto for 13 years, and of Union City for 8 years. Since then, he's served as interim city manager for Half Moon Bay and Atherton. He will receive \$75 per hour for the period of March 12 and Sept. 12. After that, his contract can be renewed on a weekly basis.

# Zaner to bring fresh outlook to Belmont

BY JENNIFER NAPIER-PEARCE  
Staff Reporter

Although Bill Zaner has managed cities for more than 20 years, his most valuable asset as Belmont's interim city manager may be a fresh perspective.

"Obviously, in a period of six months the things you can do are limited, but any organization can use a look from the outside, and I hope to provide part of that," Zaner said.

Zaner, 59, officially took over as interim city manager March 12 after the City Council signed his contract March 11. Since his retirement as city manager of Palo Alto in 1992, he has worked in similar fill-in positions around the Bay Area.

Mayor Gary Harris said Zaner's extensive experience will help him understand Belmont's needs quickly and allow him to hit the ground running.

"He's handled cities with extremely diverse [councils and with a variety of issues, including major capital projects and resurgent downtowns," Harris said.

"Belmont is fortunate to obtain the services of a person with the varied experience of Mr. Zaner on such short notice."

The hasty departures of former City Manager Damon Edwards and Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Sandy Salerno last month sent Belmont officials scrambling to find a temporary replacement. Dan Vanderpriem, director of community and economic



Bill Zaner

development and 11-year Belmont city veteran, filled the personnel gap for several weeks until Zaner was hired.

"I personally believe and I'm sure the Council will all corroborate that Dan has done a stellar job of pinch-hitting during a difficult time and we're pleased and proud of his time and efforts," Harris said.

Zaner emerged as the favorite after the council interviewed three candidates from Range Riders, a pool of retired city managers from around the Bay Area, two weeks ago in a closed session. Zaner agreed to fill the position at \$75 per hour (excluding City Council meetings) with no benefits until Sept. 12, 1997, and on a week-by-week basis if the city needs him longer.

Putting together the city budget, assessing city needs and helping find a new city manager are top priorities,

Zaner said. He will also participate in the mediation meetings with San Carlos over the Harbor Industrial Area and will work closely with the council to fill top management vacancies, including city manager, assistant city manager/finance director, public works director and South County fire chief, according to Mayor Harris.

During his 13-year tenure as city manager of Palo Alto, he oversaw 950 full-time employees and organized the finance and information resources departments. For eight years prior to that, Zaner was city manager of Union City where he instituted programs in housing rehabilitation, a day care center and city bus system.

Since 1992, he has filled interim city manager posts in Atherton, Morgan Hill and most recently Half Moon Bay.

Both Zaner and Harris seem optimistic about the new assignment.

"My initial impressions [of Belmont] are all very positive," Zaner said. "The budget documents and general plans appear to be very organized."

"He has a good leadership presence and I feel he will continue to build a team environment," Harris said. "He's a people person."

Zaner earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in 1963 and a master's of public administration from California State University at Hayward in 1971. He is the father of three and lives in Palo Alto with his wife, Geri Cross.

# Belmont deal sealed

March 19 1997

## CITY HALL

### Edwards' resignation remains secret

BY JENNIFER NAPIER-PEARCE  
Staff Reporter

Damon Edwards and Belmont officials will never disclose the specific reasons behind the former city manager's abrupt resignation, according to a settlement agreement reached March 11.

Edwards, who left Belmont's chief post for "personal reasons" Feb. 28, and the city officially sealed the confidentiality deal after the City Council approved his separation package in closed session following their regular council meeting last week.

"The parties agree that no further public statement will be made regarding the resignation," the document reads.

The settlement also states Edwards will continue to receive a full paycheck until November, insurance money and the dollar equivalent of vacation and leave time. The city also agreed to roll back the interest rate on a home loan Edwards received from the city.

Edwards' salary at the time he left was \$110,176, meaning he will continue to collect about \$9,181 per month through November. The current salary

reflects a pay raise the council gave him after a grueling 21-hour appraisal in July 1996.

In addition to his salary, Edwards will receive a lump sum of \$3,644.46 to finance medical and dental coverage for himself and his family through the COBRA plan. He will also cash in accrued vacation and leave time and 25 percent of his sick time.

As of March 1, the city agreed to adjust the interest rate on Edwards' home loan to the rate when he purchased it and he has six months to repay the city the full amount of the loan. He also gets to keep a city fax machine and laptop computer until March 24.

The document did not list the specific amounts of the loan, interest rates or amount of accrued leave time, and attorneys representing Edwards and Belmont—Michael Rains and Jean Savaree, respectively—could not be reached for clarification.

In exchange for the compensation, Edwards said he would prepare status reports on the projects he oversaw, and the city agreed to toe the official line in future job references.

Edwards committed to provide written reports to the city on all major projects by March 21, including summaries of the projects, staff assigned to the

See SETTLEMENT, page 9A

## SETTLEMENT: Done deal

March 18 1997

Continued from 1A

projects, outstanding issues and recommendations on how to proceed.

"If contacted for information by prospective employees, City shall disclose that Edwards was the City Manager and that he resigned February 28, 1997. The City shall also provide his

salary at the time of resignation," the agreement reads.

Edwards, 44, was hired as city manager Dec. 8, 1993. Prior to his service in Belmont, he was city manager in Ridgecrest, Calif. for seven years and King City in Monterey County for four years.

In previous statements, Edwards said his time in Belmont was well-spent.

"We've met some wonderful people in Belmont, dedicated and hard-working," he said. "People have been very supportive and I have nothing but admiration for the citizens of Belmont."

March 1997

# Belmont's big mistake

The city of Belmont's timing is all wrong. In the middle of its dispute with San Carlos over annexation of the Harbor Industrial Area, and the biggest, most costly project in its history, the grade crossing separation at Ralston, the council has chosen to accept the resignation of its city manager, Damon Edwards.

For those who have observed the activities of Belmont during Damon Edwards' three years of service, the only shortcoming we saw was the unwillingness of some on the City Council to support his efforts. Edwards was honest, efficient and more than competent.

During his tenure, he faced strong opposition from Councilwoman Pam Rianda. There were many accusations that did not come from Edwards, but from others on the council, that Rianda was trying to micro-manage the city manager's job.

When Edwards was last evaluated, the sessions continued over at least 20 hours of meetings by the council. When it was over, Edwards received a substantial raise and it was known that three council people strongly supported him in his job. The three were Gary Harris, Adele Della Santina and Nancy Levitt. The opposition came from Pam Rianda and Coraline Fierbach.

That was about six months ago. Edwards was due for another evaluation on Tuesday of last week. City manager evaluations are conducted behind closed doors and usually take a maximum of a few hours. In Belmont that has not been the case; they have been long, drawn-out battles that hardly resemble the workings of responsible elected officials.

Before the Tuesday evaluation could be held, Mayor Gary Harris let it be known that he would no longer support Damon Edwards for

city manager. He gave no reason for his sudden change of heart, no cause was given for his decision to abandon the city manager and align himself with Rianda and Fierbach.

With Harris no longer supporting Edwards, councilwomen Adele Della Santina and Nancy Levitt joined Harris and deserted the city manager. The council moved the meeting to Saturday informing Edwards that his resignation was requested. Edwards signalled his desire to have his attorney negotiate with the city's attorney for a satisfactory separation package. The package will include a confidentiality agreement so that the council can save face and avoid a possible law suit and Edwards will get the money he deserves in the face of a council majority which would rather play politics than uphold the best interests of Belmont.

Mayor Harris likes to say the council is more in tune today than it has been in a long time. That may be true since the council voted unanimously to ask for Edwards' resignation. But the citizen of Belmont cannot help but wonder what goes on in its city government. It can't help but split the community widely apart, even as Mayor Harris says in his state of the city speech that "Belmont aims to be the best of the Bay."

It is unfortunate that the citizens of Belmont will never be told by their council what really went on behind closed doors. They will never be told why Harris switched sides or why Rianda has been out to get the city manager for the longest time. In a democracy, one would expect that the citizens would be told the truth so that they could hold those accountable for their actions.

# RESIGNATIONS: Belmont controversy

*Continued from 1A*

departure, Salerno said she was "surprised but not shocked." She would not say that Edwards' exit influenced the timing of her own, but she did admit her retirement came a few years earlier than expected.

"I'm at a point in my life to make a change," Salerno said. "It was a convergence of events and I'm retiring for professional and personal reasons...I made the decision with my family on Saturday [Feb. 22]." Her retirement will begin March 15.

Salerno, 50, served in Belmont for 11 years, first as finance director and later as assistant city manager.

"It's been an incredible

experience," Salerno said. "Working with the finance commission has been wonderful, the staff has been just super and I've enjoyed working with the citizens," Salerno said.

During her tenure, Salerno oversaw personnel, risk management, labor negotiations and economic development. She said she is particularly proud of her role in various development projects including Oral B, the Summerfield Suites, the Autobahn complex, the Safeway expansion and the city storm drainage system.

"I'm also proud of the city's "A" bond rating, which I worked

very hard to accomplish, and the city's overall financial stability," Salerno added. "But first in my mind is the development of the staff," she said.

Salerno previously worked on Wall Street and had been a writer for a mutual fund magazine in Europe, but has no immediate plans other than spending time with her parents in Florida.

The departures of Edwards and Salerno are the latest in a series of staff turnovers to affect the city in recent months. Public Works Director Peg Divine quit to take a position for the city and county

of San Francisco in December, and Fire Chief Chuck Lowden left about two months ago to become the city of Reno's fire chief. Salerno's assistant, Personnel Analyst Sylvia Portillo, announced last Thursday she was returning to a job in South San Francisco after only three months on the job, leaving Belmont without anyone to handle personnel issues.

But Salerno said her retirement should not trigger further exits.

"I'm retiring, not resigning," Salerno said. "There's nothing about my retiring that should precipitate anything else."

# Belmont's resignations

March 5, 1997  
Englewood - Bulletin

## CITY HALL

### City manager, finance manager leave void

**BY JENNIFER NAPIER-PEARCE**  
Staff Reporter

Belmont's top two civil servants stepped down in quick succession last week, the latest in a number of recent high level departures at City Hall.

City Manager Damon Edwards resigned from his post Feb. 22 after the City Council called a closed meeting to appraise his job performance. Two days later, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Sandy Salerno informed the City Council she would be taking early retirement, hours after she was designated to fill in temporarily for Edwards.

Originally, rumors surfaced that Salerno left because she had not been immediately designated as interim city manager.

Dan Vanderpriem, the city's director of community development, was named acting city manager effective Feb. 26 until the council selects an interim city manager. Following the interim appointment, the council will begin its search for a permanent replacement.

Officially, Mayor Gary Harris said Edwards resigned for personal reasons and said an annu-

ally was "purely coincidental."

"We wish Damon the best of luck and thank him for his dedicated service," Harris said.

Edwards, 44, declined to comment on the circumstances that led to his decision to leave, citing an agreement made with the City Council.

"I have not seen it, but I'm anticipating the confidentiality agreement will be part of the severance package and I don't want to breach that," he said.

Edwards had served as city manager for the past three years. Prior to his service in Belmont, he was city manager in Ridgecrest, Calif. for seven years and King City in Monterey County for four years.

Several sources said Edwards had undergone intense scrutiny during a 21-hour performance evaluation last summer and lasting personality conflicts with several council members may have contributed to his abrupt departure.

As he faces an uncertain future, Edwards looked back on his time in Belmont as well spent.

"We've met some wonderful people in Belmont - dedicated and hardworking. People have been very supportive and I have nothing but admiration for the citizens of Belmont," he said.

Of the timing of Edwards'

TUESDAY, March 11, 1997

SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES

## Belmont plans to hire ex-Palo Alto manager

By Tyler Cunningham  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Longtime Palo Alto City Manager Bill Zaner is expected to take over the vacant city manager post on an interim basis here tonight.

The City Council is expected to approve his contract at tonight's meeting.

Zaner, 60, served as Palo Alto's manager for 13 years, and Union City's for eight years. Since then, he's served as interim city manager for Half Moon Bay and Atherton.

Zaner has agreed to a contract that will pay him \$75 per hour between Wednesday and Sept. 12. Thereafter his contract can be renewed on a week-to-week basis.

The job opened up with the Feb. 22 resignation of Damon Edwards, pending the negotiation of a severance package. Some city officials speculated that Edwards was forced out by some City Council members who weren't satisfied with

Please see **Manager**, A-5

“He has the appearance of being the senior CEO. He took charge in the first five minutes of the interview.”

**Nancy Levitt**

Belmont  
councilwoman

## Manager: May be confirmed tonight

Continued from A-1

his performance, but no one has confirmed that.

Palo Alto officials praised Zaner's professionalism, his financial wizardry and his ability to handle political squabbling among council members.

"He was a true manager," said Palo Alto Councilman Gary Fazzino. "He never got caught up in the political battles. He put us in sound financial shape, and was a real leader."

Belmont Councilwoman Nancy Levitt said Zaner was impressive in his interview.

"He has the appearance of being the senior CEO," she said. "He took charge in the

first five minutes of the interview. He came in and explained things to us, told us what we needed."

Zaner will be charged with examining and critiquing Belmont's system of government. He will also participate in the city's mediation with San Carlos over the annexation of the Harbor Industrial Area.

"It's difficult to imagine a candidate with more direct relevant experience for Belmont," said Mayor Gary Harris.

Zaner will also assist the council in its search for a permanent replacement for Edwards and Assistant City Manager Sandy Salerno.

**CITY COUNCIL**

# City manager resigns

Belmont Mayor Gary Harris announced the resignation of City Manager Damon Edwards on Saturday. Harris said the city council was unanimous in accepting his resignation. Sandy Salerno, assistant city manager and finance director, will serve as acting city manager.

Edwards was appointed by the council in 1994, after serving as city manager in Ridgecrest for three years and in King City for five years. He is a graduate of Brigham Young University and lives in Belmont with his wife and five children.

He was the third city manager to serve since Ed

Everett left to take a position as the Redwood City city manager. Others in that position before Edwards were Rich Haffey and Sandy Salerno.

A city hall person who did not want to be identified said that Edwards was continually under fire from Councilwoman Pam Rianda and that if anything caused his resignation, that was it. Edwards was not available to answer questions because he vacated his office Monday morning. The council will meet on Tuesday evening and one of the topics for discussion will be finding a new city manager and deciding whether to have Sandy Salerno stay on as acting city manager.

# Belmont aims to be best of the Bay

## STATE OF THE CITY

### Economy, development to take priority

BY JENNIFER NAPIER-PEARCE  
Staff Reporter

Infrastructure improvements, redevelopment projects and continued economic growth will help make Belmont the optimal address in the Bay Area, Mayor Gary Harris said in his recent State of the City address.

Harris outlined the city's strategy for fulfilling these goals at the event held at the

Pine Brook Inn, 1015 Alameda de las Pulgas, on Feb. 19. About 80 people attended the annual luncheon sponsored by the Belmont Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout the one-hour speech, Harris emphasized Belmont's mission to be, by the year 2000, the single-most desirable community in the San Francisco Bay Area in which to live, work and do business.

"When we developed this mission it seemed like a big hairy audacious goal, but without it, we're not likely to achieve what we want," Harris said.

Harris listed several agenda items for the coming year aimed toward the goal, including improving Belmont roads, redeveloping various properties and resolving the dispute over the Harbor

Industrial Area.

"Our biggest single focus is to successfully complete the grade separation project within budget and in a way that causes the least disruption to our businesses and residents," Harris said.

The grade separation project will raise the CalTrain track above existing road traffic to help alleviate congestion. He admitted Phase A of the project—excavating the existing road and laying the temporary "shoofly" track—is currently behind schedule and over budget. But he hoped the shortfall would be absorbed by savings from Phase B of the project as expected.

"The Council is watching very closely on this and is keeping the JPA (Joint Powers Authority which helps fund the project)

aware as well," Harris said.

He also touched on the general deterioration of the city's streets and his personal interest in completing Roads 2000, a study which will assess current city road conditions and recommend an improvement schedule. He said implementing the project will measurably add to property values throughout the city.

Harris also highlighted several upcoming development projects, including the expansion of the College of Notre Dame campus, the construction of three new Oracle towers in Belmont and the renovation of Fire Station 14.

Fire Station 14, at Hiller and Masonic avenues, is scheduled to be demolished

See **ECONOMY**, page 8A

*Continued from 1A*

and a larger facility built. A site has not been selected, but Harris said he suspects it will be near its current location to accommodate the growth near the Oracle high-rise buildings.

He also said the fate of the Emmett Store, or "Pink Building," will be determined this year.

"Whether it is economically feasible to move and refurbish the building, whether it should be moved and stored, or whether it should be demolished must be resolved within the next 12 to 15 months," Harris said.

Harris reported a number of disappointments during 1996, including a law suit over the downtown assessment district,

the loss of the fire chief to Reno, Nevada, and the ongoing dispute with San Carlos over the Harbor Industrial Area. San Carlos, Belmont and the HIA property owners are scheduled to enter professional mediation next month.

Overall, however, Harris said Belmont enjoyed a healthy economy last year, resulting in

Autobahn Motors on Shoreway Drive, the new Safeway on El Camino Real and 113 new housing starts.

"The shortage of usable office space and land in Silicon Valley pushes the high tech industries northward toward Belmont. This affects our industrial base and our property values - all good news," Harris said.

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# Top Belmont city officials leave suddenly

## Officials say hasty resignations are for personal reasons

By Karen de Sa  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Both the city manager and his assistant have suddenly left their posts here, for what officials maintain are personal and unrelated reasons.

The hasty resignation of City Manager Damon Edwards over the weekend was followed in rapid succession by Assistant City Manager Sandra Salerno's retirement announcement late Tuesday afternoon.

Edwards had been scheduled to receive his third annual review by the City Council on Tuesday, although Mayor Gary Harris maintained that was "purely coincidental."

Harris refused to confirm speculation that the council was unhappy with Ed-

“Sandy has been an extremely valued and loyal employee.”

Gary Harris  
Mayor

wards' work on the city's railroad overpass projects, although he did say those projects are the most vital part of the city manager's job.

Belmont's city manager must oversee a \$34 million portion of the regional project on Ralston Avenue and Harbor Boulevard. The construction project is the single largest in the city's history and is likely to be unparalleled in its future, Harris said.

"The ability to bring that home on budget and within an acceptable schedule is of highest priority," he said. "And the city manager knows that."

Nonetheless, Harris maintained that Edwards — city manager for three years — resigned for nonpolitical reasons. He can no longer be reached at City Hall.

The mayor and other City Council members also refused to elaborate on Edwards' motivations for leaving, although Harris said there was a special session held over the weekend to accept the resignation.

By Tuesday, a replacement for Edwards was being sought.

Salerno, who had been with the city for 10 years and was scheduled to serve as acting city manager for a brief period, announced what is considered to be early retirement on the same day. Harris speculated that Salerno might have expected an automatic appointment to a more permanent city manager post.

"Sandy has been an extremely valued and loyal employee," Harris said, adding that any city employee must go through the typical interview and evaluation process before receiving a top-level post such as city manager.