

City of Belmont  
The Independent  
May 12, 1999

## NEWSMAKER

# Assisting in the city's finances

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Because she started her new position as Belmont's assistant finance director and controller just as the city began developing next fiscal year's budget,

Debra Ryan's first few months on the job have been busy.

"It's more challenging in that I have a lot more responsibilities," said Ryan, a San Francisco resident who hasn't had much opportunity to explore Belmont outside of city hall.

Though not entirely new to Belmont's city staff, Ryan was officially hired as a permanent city employee in March. She was recruited for the position, which was empty for some time, after working as a temporary consultant to the city since November 1998.

A graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara with a bachelor's degree in economics, Ryan is currently going through the review process necessary to become a certified public accountant in California.



Debra Ryan

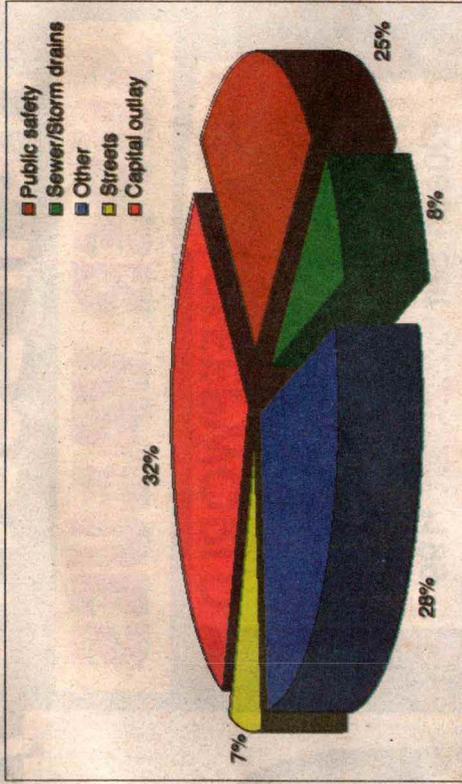
Before connecting with the city of Belmont, Ryan managed the Northern California office of Moreland and Associates, a firm that specializes in providing municipal finance and governmental accounting services to cities. Ryan's duties included marketing, recruiting and providing accounting services to a variety of Bay Area cities, including Fremont, San Rafael and Vallejo.

As the city's assistant finance director and controller, Ryan said she is responsible for, among other things, coordinating special projects for the city, the Belmont Redevelopment Agency and the South County Fire Authority.

In addition, the city's finance department has been testing computer software to prepare city operations for the year 2000, a job she that has kept her busy.

"I've been at a lot of different cities," she said, adding that she has moved numerous times for work and personal reasons after spending her high school years in Huntington Beach in southern California. "I really enjoy being able to use all of the information I have accumulated in all the different places."

# 1999-2000 budget



SOURCE: CITY OF BELMONT FINANCE DEPT.  
This graph represents where the money goes from the City of Belmont's fiscal year 1999-2000 budget.

## Belmont approves

### Capital improvements are high on list of priorities for the city

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Continuing to place high priority on capital improvement projects in the city, the Belmont City Council last week approved a budget with combined appropriations of \$50 million for fiscal year 1999-2000.

The budget, approved unanimously by the City Council at its June 22 meeting, estimates combined revenues for the year at \$45.2 million and expenditures, including capital projects, at \$50 million. Some \$3.6 million of the difference will

be made up through other financing sources, such as loans, and the balance through the use of funds that were set aside for specific future projects, according to City Manager Susan Westman.

A total of \$19.5 million has been earmarked for capital improvement projects, although the majority of that amount — \$12.7 million or 65 percent — will be consumed by funds necessary to complete Belmont's portion of the grade separation project.

"We're in good economic times

and we're able to do a number of things we wanted to accomplish," said Belmont Vice Mayor Terri Cook, who added that a combination of city staff assistance and clear presentation of the budget made for a relatively smooth discussion of the matter.

"I think we're going to have (much) to show for it with all the road improvements."

Among the projects accounted for in this year's capital improvement program is \$2.4 million toward city street improvements and \$136,000 toward the Direct Access Project, a joint venture with Redwood City to ease congestion near Island Park and Ralston

BUDGET: page 4A

## BUDGET: Capital improvement project

Continued from 1A

Avenue and Highway 101.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated projects, however, will be renovations to Belmont's civic center.

"I think the biggest plan this year is going forward with the city hall project," said Westman.

Some \$2.1 million will be allotted in the upcoming fiscal year to begin the project's \$4.5 million first phase, which involves seismic work, the creation of a new entrance way for the building and moving the Belmont Police from

their current station in Twin Pines Park to new quarters in city hall.

Westman added that the amount expected to be spent on new capital improvements in 1999-2000 is in line with the \$2 million estimated to be spent for infrastructure improvements this fiscal year. In contrast, during the 1997-1998 fiscal year, Westman recounted, the city spent only \$450,000 in infrastructure improvements.

In addition to funding a variety of new infrastructure improvement projects this year, the budget sets up a new fund to cover repairs to

storm damage areas and other emergency situations, an idea that resulted from dealing with mudslides and other damage in the city that resulted from El Nino.

"Last year with El Nino we suddenly needed to do a fair amount of work immediately," she explained.

#### General fund

The city expects some \$11.9 million in general fund revenues for 1999-2000, up slightly less than 4 percent this fiscal year. Expenditures are estimated at \$11.5

million, also up about 4 percent.

"We're tracking right along," said Westman. "The amount of expenditures is in proportion to the amount of revenue coming in."

Some 55 percent or \$6.5 million worth of general fund revenues accounted for in the new budget will come from sales, property and other taxes.

Included in general fund expenditures this year are \$5.7 million for public safety, \$2 million for parks and recreation, \$300,000 for engineering and \$3.5 million for general government operations.

June 30, 1999 - State expenditure

# CITY HALL: A seismic upgrade

Continued from 1A

include seismic work on the building, the creation of a new lobby area, landscaping, changes to parking lots around City Hall, moving police into facilities on the first and second floor of the building, and the reorienting the facility's driveway from its current Sixth Avenue location to one fronting Ralston Avenue — is estimated to cost approximately \$4.5 million, said Westman.

At the heart of the design included in the project's first phase is changes to an L-shaped section of the building, which is currently at the side of the facility but will become the building's new entrance, architects explained during the recent presentation.

"When you have a building that's sort of an L (shape) it wants to be a hinge. It wants to close on itself," explained C.J. Kamages, president and director of Ekona Architects. Kamages added that plans for the facility include creating a new lobby space within that section that will act as a wedge to prevent the building from buckling inward during an earthquake — a move he contends also will also open up the entrance to the building and make it more visitor friendly.

Part of the funding for the project's first phase will come from \$2.3 million garnered by the Belmont Redevelopment Agency and \$1 million will come from the Oracle Corporation, which forged an agreement with the city last

year to expand into Belmont.

An additional \$1 million of the project's first phase is currently not funded, although city officials are looking at ways to come up with the money.

"What we're trying to look at is a phase-funded approach, with the idea that the Police Department is our first priority," said Westman during the project presentation in May.

Westman added recently that construction on the second phase of the project, which would include upgrades to department areas as well as improvements to spaces that tenants lease in the building — which could still be years in the making — would be dependent on when the funding is available.

City Council  
June 12, 1999



SPECIAL TO THE INDEPENDENT

Above and at bottom right, are artists renderings for the Belmont City Hall project that will include a seismic upgrade.

## A new look for city hall

### Belmont is working to improve, upgrade site

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Aiming to create an earthquake-safe, public-friendly civic center and a more spacious home for the city's police department, architects are creating the final plans for an estimated \$9.7 million, dual-phased upgrade of Belmont's City Hall.

The architects on the project, Ekona Architects of San Francisco, recently hosted a presentation on the project prior to a May 21 City Council meeting. While members of the architectural firm said they would begin work on final sketches for project in early July, Belmont City Manager Susan Westman estimated that the plans would likely go the city's Planning Commission for review in early fall, with construction on the first phase of the project beginning in June of next year.

"I think it's doing very nicely," said Belmont Mayor Coralin Feierbach of the project. "I'm really happy with what it is going to look like."

She added that although there are no current

provisions to create new council chambers in the upgraded Sixth Avenue facility, she thinks that getting the city's Police Department out of its cramped facilities in Twin Pines Park takes precedence.

"We're not suffering," she said of the council's current use of an auditorium at the Belmont Senior Center two times a month for meetings.

The first phase of the project — which will

**CITY HALL:** page 11A



Belmont City Hall  
The Independent  
June 15, 1999

# Belmont city staff may go electric

## Council seeks grant for electric vehicles from air quality district

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

The city of Belmont's staff may soon be tooling around town in futuristic electric cars, thanks to the City Council's approval last week of a resolution to seek a grant for the lease of the vehicles.

The council decided at its June 8 meeting to apply for a \$24,000 grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to acquire the environmentally friendly vehicles.

"(Air quality) is one of the biggest regional issues we have," said Sherwin Williams, Belmont's management analyst. He said the city encourages employees to carpool or take public transportation in an effort to help the environment.

Williams said, however, that newly available regional funding has piqued the curiosity of more than a few groups in the area. "There are several agencies interested in pursuing the grant," he said. "I'm assuming it's going to be pretty competitive. I'm just keeping my fingers crossed."

The funding would be used to lease three electric vehicles, which range in cost from \$45,000 to \$105,000, depending on the make. In addition, the city would also be able to install charging equipment that would be available for use by the public and various agencies on the Peninsula when their employees are attending meetings in Belmont.

The city is pursuing the alternative cars because several of the city-owned vehicles are old and need to be replaced. "We have some that need to be taken out of our fleet," Williams said, adding that the remainder of the money needed to acquire the vehicles would be taken from funds set aside to rejuvenate the pool of city-owned cars.

Williams added that city employees had a chance to test the electric cars through the state's Electric Vehicle Loan Program last March, when the city was loaned a Saturn and a Ford Ranger pickup truck for a 30-day period.

Employee response to the vehicles was positive, but the vehicles can only be driven a short distance before they need to be recharged. They will probably be used by city employees who travel primarily within city limits.

Gloria Purcell, a planning commission, environmentalist and active member of the Green Party, applauded the city's decision to pursue the clean air vehicles.

"I think it's a real step forward," she said, adding that she has also had an opportunity to test drive one of the vehicles. She cautioned that the vehicles are not the whole solution to the problem of air pollution and added that she would also like to see efforts made to boost the use of public transportation.

"I don't think we'll ever get rid of the single (occupant) car," she said.

July 7, 1999  
The Independent

# Trash rates on the rise for Belmont

Amy Yarbrough  
Reporter

Belmont residents will soon be paying higher trash collection rates, thanks to a 14 percent base rate increase and the cost of a new, mandatory recycling program.

Approved by the Belmont City Council on June 22, the 14 percent increase was enacted to compensate in part for revenues lost when the city of San Carlos annexed a portion of the Harbor industrial area in 1997.

In addition, the council approved a long-debated yard waste recycling program, which will mean that households will be

charged an additional 1.7 percent, or 21 cents for each yard cart, to cover the expenses of the new program.

"There have been annual rate reviews and the results of the reviews have shown that Belmont has not had a need for an increase over the last five years," explained John Devincenzi of Browning-Ferris Industries, the trash collector for the city.

But although the trash collection rate will increase for the first time since 1995, City Council members argued that the hike might be tough for some residents to take all at once.

"The reality is people will be pay-

ing a bill that's 15.7 percent higher..." said Belmont City Councilmember Pam Rianda. "Getting hit with 15.7 percent all at once is difficult maybe for some people, senior citizens in particular, to shoulder..."

"Maybe it's better to have a little bit all along rather than get hit with it all at once," added Vice Mayor Terri Cook.

The raise, which will be retroactive to April 1, will be reflected in the July 1 bill from BFI. Residents will now be paying about 39 cents per gallon, or roughly \$12.60 a month for a 32-gallon can.

Although San Carlos households pay about \$11.63 a month for a 32-

gallon can, city officials argue the rate increase isn't out of line with rates charged in other cities. Rates range from \$19.63 a month for households in Hillsborough to \$9.99 a month for households in Foster City.

Belmont resident Jim McLaughlin said the rate increase seems hefty considering the efforts of residents to reduce waste through recycling.

"I'm lucky if we get a couple of gallons a week and we used to fill a 32-gallon barrel before we became recyclers five or six years ago," he said. "I don't think we should be given a guilt trip

TRASH: page 10A

## TRASH: Rates on the rise for residents

Continued from 5A

because we're producing less revenue, nor do I think our rates should be increased that much."

### Yard Waste Recycling Program

The new yard waste recycling program, which is designed to help Belmont meet a state mandate that requires the recycling of 50 percent of waste by 2000, offers

households 96- or 32-gallon yard containers.

The mandatory program, which charges households regardless of whether they accept the containers, is designed to make it easier for residents to recycle their yard clippings, and to help satisfy California's AB 939 mandate. Cities that don't meet the requirement could face fines of up to

\$10,000 a day.

Spearheaded by the South Bayside Transfer Station Authority, a group of 10 peninsula cities and the unincorporated area of San Mateo County, the program had been approved by all of the jurisdictions in the SBTSA except Belmont.

The Belmont City Council has been looking at the program since

last fall, but did not approve because many residents expressed concerns about the difficult hauling and storing the 96-gallon containers.

It was later determined, though, that 32-gallon containers could also be used for the program. In addition, the council was waiting to determine the city's 1998 trash diversion rate, which was 49 percent.

# The search is on for new skate park location

## Belmont Council discusses pros and cons of proposal

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Belmont city councilmembers put their heads together last week to crack what has become an ongoing city quandary: Finding a suitable location for a community skate park.

The leading force behind having a new skate park and scouting out its location has been Councilmember Pam Rianda. She told councilmembers at an Aug.

24 meeting that she had found several potential sites for the recreational space, including a spot near Ralston Middle School.

Rianda says she does not support locating the park on the congested El Camino Real, despite suggestions.

Some were concerned about the recent closure of San Mateo's temporary skate park near 42nd Avenue and El Camino Real and wanted more information as to what kinds of problem arose there before making any decisions.

"At this point in time I would like to have a report on the problems in San Mateo ... I feel like I need more information," said

Councilmember Eleanore Hahn. "I was supportive of it initially and then when I realized there were problems in San Mateo, I thought I'd wait and see how they solve those."

Jason Crouch, a skateboarder who worked with the City of San Mateo to get the park started, said that he asked the city to shut it down after it began to be misused. Crouch added that non-skater teens were using the park as a hangout and that problems like loitering and smoking arose.

"We all kind of feel we just tried some things and (they) did not work," Crouch said, adding that efforts were being made to reopen

and provide supervision at the park.

"It was all trial and error," he said, adding that he hopes the problems won't dissuade other communities like Belmont from starting similar ventures.

"Every city should have a skate park," he said, adding that although some may have believed that skateboarding was a fad, its longevity and popularity have proven it's here to stay.

Vice Mayor Terri Cook said that she was not as affected about the recent news at the San Mateo park, but said she would like effort focused on finding a location that can prove a permanent

home for the park.

"I'm not as concerned about some of the things that happened in San Mateo as far. I've spoken to actually some of the council people from San Mateo about this and the location ... being on El Camino. I don't think (it) was one of the problems so I'm not as concerned about locating the skate park on El Camino," she said.

During Belmont city budget discussions several months ago, the city council had agreed to set aside \$10,000 for design and \$70,000 for construction for the park, based on costs to build San Mateo's skate park.

SKATE PARK: page 10A

## SKATE PARK: Looking for prime spot

Continued from 1A

A driving force for having the park was a survey conducted last school year on after-school activities by a community task force, which consisted of city representatives and staff members from local schools.

Although not a formal study, surveys distributed to every fifth through eighth grader of both private and public schools in Belmont and Redwood Shores and their parents proved a strong impetus for the idea.

Many parents voiced support for supervised activities after school, but it was a great deal of the students that rallied for a skate park.

"I want us to look at a permanent location if we were going to do this."

Rianda added that despite the recent publicity about San Mateo's park, she would like to see efforts move forward because of the strong community's support for the space.

"Some people have suggested

that we should shy away from this issue," she said, adding that she also like to look into some of the successful skate parks in the East Bay and what makes them work.

"The survey that the school district did that was the number priority of students and families for kids was the skateboard park.

I really feel we have the obligation because it is in our budget and it is a need identified by the community."

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for the independent  
September 1999

# City council rejects new house size standard

## Prevention of oversize homes in San Juan Canyon behind decision

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

The Belmont City Council last week denied a home builder's appeal to build a home on Upper Lock Avenue that city officials contend would set a new size standard for the San Juan Canyon neighborhood.

The applicant, Carlos Aubain, asked the council to overturn a city Planning Commission vote rejecting his request for a floor area ratio exception, design review and grading plan approval, and a

permit to remove trees to build a new house at 3235 Upper Lock Avenue.

Reasoning that the project would require excessive grading and that the home's size would be incompatible with the neighborhood, the council voted 4-0 to uphold the planning commission. Councilmember Pam Rianda was absent.

"We're essentially denying the appeal. Perhaps he can come up with a better project that will work for everyone," said Vice

Mayor Terri Cook.

Opponents said the proposed 4,073-square-foot house would clash with the rest of the neighborhood, where houses range in size from 2,030 to 2,781 square feet. Building the home, according to city staff reports, would also require that 1,896 cubic yards of earth be removed from the hillside, an amount the planning commission considers excessive.

"In this situation, we actually would be setting a new high (in house size)," said Dan Vanderpriem, director of planning and community development. "It would be a matter of compatibility."

Javier Chavarria of JC

Engineering, representing Aubain, said he thinks the project is not clearly understood.

"We decided to file an appeal for the project because I believe that it has more merits than was actually seen," said Chavarria, who contends that plan creates a safer site, helping to stabilize the surrounding hillside.

"We're hearing that the main reason that the project was denied is the size of the property. We grant that it is a difficult lot," he said.

"Our conclusion is that the building, yes, may be a little bigger than some of the homes in the area. Nevertheless, it fits the site. A bigger lot presents a better latitude,

allows better landscaping and allows a better location for the house on the property."

According to city staff reports, neighbors expressed concerns about the height and size of the proposed house, and the potential grading impact on the lot at an earlier planning commission meeting.

While one neighbor questioned the lack of a sidewalk in Aubain's plans, neighbors did not speak out overwhelmingly against the project at the council meeting. One resident questioned the city's notification process.

"At that meeting it was a surprise because the planning commission

CANYON: page 5A

## CANYON: Size standard

Continued from 1A

did not give the required 10 days notice," said Chip Griffin, an Upper Lock resident who described the notification process as "askew" and added that his neighbors hadn't received notice.

"Consequently, I and my neighbors did not even have a chance to review the plans," Griffin said. "I think we got really polarized quickly in our neighborhood just because we thought somebody was trying to pull something over on us."

"I think that those of us who looked at the plans felt it was okay," he added. "...to do a comparison against very small single

lots against a double lot, which Mr. Aubain is building on, I think is not quite a fair comparison."

Vanderpriem admitted that some neighbors in the area were not notified directly, but that safeguards have since been put into place to eliminate the problem in the future.

"The noticing was not done as it should have been done and we have changed our procedures since then," he said.

city council July 21-1990

# City of Belmont is focus of local television show

## Documentary is part of series about Peninsula

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

San Mateo County television viewers are getting a glimpse into the goings-on of Belmont, thanks to a new public access show that offers weekly profiles of local cities.

The first program in the series, a magazine-style show called "@ Your Service," focuses on an emergency simulation exercise that

was held at the city's College of Notre Dame, but also touches on current issues in Belmont.

The segment on Belmont aired on Peninsula TV several times last week and will be shown two more times this week.

"The show each week will originate from a different city," explained Bob Marks, interim director of Peninsula TV, who acts as producer for the program. Segments are based on one central event in a community, but the program also offers interviews with local officials and views of city sites.

The 30-minute program will pro-

file the city of San Mateo, Redwood City and Brisbane in the coming weeks.

"We'll get to everyone eventually," said Anne LeClair, director of the San Mateo Chamber of Commerce, who also acts as host for the program and interviews guests. She said the city segments filmed so far have gone smoothly and that acting as host of the show has proven an easy way to get to know local officials.

"It's fun because in a situation like that you really get to talk to (people)," she said, adding that suggestions for future shows keep coming in.

The show focusing on Belmont highlights an emergency tactical exercise that was held last May to help prepare area law enforcement and emergency crews for a potential terrorist attack or other emergency crisis.

The exercise involved a total of 175 police, fire and medical personnel from throughout the county, as well as college personnel helping to unravel a tense hostage situation. Local students volunteered to play hostages and victims wounded in the simulated attack while a handful of Marines volunteered to play gunman and attempted to foil the efforts of law

enforcement groups in the county.

In addition, the segment features an interview with the Belmont Mayor Coralin Feierbach, views of Belmont's Twin Pines Park and a discussion with Sheriff Don Horsley following the emergency simulation.

Marks said that while the recent exercise provided prime subject matter for the first show, the city has also been a strong supporter of public television. "Belmont has had a major role in taking local television to this point," he said.

The show will be presented July 13 and 14 at 7 p.m. on cable channel 8.

July 14, 1994  
The Sante Peninsula

*City Council  
The Independent  
Sept 8, 1989*

# Improvements on the way for Barrett Community Center

**By Amy Yarbrough**  
Staff Reporter

Belmont's City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission teamed up last week, discussing a game plan for balancing improvements to the Barrett Community Center with other possible city facility renovations.

Originally leased after the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District closed Barrett School in the mid-1980s, the 1835 Belburn Drive facility was purchased by the city in the early 1990s and is now home to the 1870 Gallery & Studios, teen room, city day care center and multi-use room among other facilities.

Some of buildings at the old school are around 50 years old and the Parks and Recreation Commission has been looking at improving the center for several years.

Many commissioners and councilmembers agreed at the Aug. 31 meeting that the aging facility needed some kind of facelift and many of its components such as the teen room no longer seem to meet community needs.

Park and Recreation Commissioner Margo Cheechov

suggested that the city pretty much start from scratch to tailor the center to Belmont's needs.

"We were given this site to use and we made due ... and nothing is really what it should be," she said. "Basically ... tear it down and get what you want," Cheechov said.

"The reason that school was closed was basically (because) it was falling apart," she said, adding that the condition of the buildings haven't improved much but the center is still very much in use.

With other projects such as a possible expansion of the city's library on the table, City Manager Susan Westman suggested that the city put together a group of residents, commission and councilmembers, to discuss needs and priorities. Westman added that several residents had approached her, one who was adamant about the library issue and another about the need for a city pool.

"When you're in my place because there is no clear plan outlined for the community it's difficult to know which way to go," Westman said.

"The reality is if the city of

Belmont is going to do some of these larger projects ... we probably are going to have to look at involving the community and asking them if they are going to fund some of these programs and activities."

The majority of the meeting other participants, agreed with Westman, joking that the group assembled should be called "the quality of life taskforce."

They pointed out that the city needed to do some long term strategizing, particularly so there would not be building of facilities such as auditoriums and performance spaces that are duplicates to ones planned at local schools which could be shared by the community.

"If you come up with ... what you want to do and how much it's going to cost, people are going to either say yes or no to that," said Vice Mayor Terri Cook.

"But I think you have to get a general idea of what is it that people want. We as a council can't decide it, you as a park and (recreation) commission can't decide that, the planning commission can't decide that all on their own."

# Belmont floats new housing program

## Police officers may benefit from city's financial assistance proposal

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

In an effort to both reduce crime and retain police department staff, the Belmont City Council is examining a new program that provides financial assistance for local police officers hoping to make a home in the city.

The city council looked over the rules for the program at the Belmont Redevelopment Agency meeting of Sept. 14, but wanted some additional information. The issue was slated for a second

review at the agency's meeting Sept. 27.

If approved, the program will be the first of its kind in San Mateo County, according to city officials.

"If someone owns a home here in Belmont there's more incentive to stay," explained the city's Management Analyst Sherwin Williams, who said that having officers living in the neighborhoods they serve could deter crime and provide added assurance for neighbors.

The new endeavor was made possible

by recent legislation and is aimed particularly at reducing the turnover rate of new officers at the Belmont Police Department, according to Williams.

"This is the first time we've targeted something specifically to the police officers," he said.

The current rules recommended for the program dictate that up to 100 percent of the down payment for a police officer's principal residence may be provided by the redevelopment agency. The down payment, however, cannot exceed 20 percent of the purchase price of the home. The officer must reside in that residence and work for the city police department for 10 years to reap the full benefits of the pro-

gram.

If an officer ceases their employment with the department within the 10-year period, they are obligated to repay the redevelopment agency a prorated amount of the down payment.

In order to establish the program, the Redevelopment Agency had to determine an area in the city where crime is 10 percent greater than the per capita crime rate in the county.

An area that was configured to meet the qualifications was a section below Old County Road and west of O'Neill Avenue. Officers will have to purchase homes within that area in order to qualify.

According to city staff reports,

the costs of training, salary during cadet school, equipment, and the salaries for the trainee in the field and the field training officer amount to approximately \$89,000 in costs to the city. Belmont could cut down on these training costs, city officials contend, if more new officers were encouraged to stay with the city.

Belmont's Commander Larry Riche says he doesn't consider the turnover rate at the city's police department to be abnormally high, but rather that it occurs in cycles.

"It's probably the combination of personnel salary and the cost of living," he said, adding that when

LOANS: page 4A

## LOANS: Program proposed

Continued from 1A

officers leave it's typically because they are very skilled and attractive to other employers. "These people who are leaving are leaving for all the right reasons," he said.

Ideally, the down payment program would help to entice good officers from out of the area to work in Belmont by giving the department added appeal, he said.

"What we want to do is become competitive....," Riche said, "To attract the best people."

While Belmont seems to be the first city in the county looking at adopting this program, other area cities have also made efforts to

provide affordable housing incentives for public service employees.

San Carlos, for example, is currently offering police, teachers, and firefighters first priority to lease apartments in the city's new Laurel Theater apartments.

Redwood City's Housing and Human Concerns Committee has also been discussing the possibility of affordable housing programs for certain service occupations, according to Debbi Jones-Thomas, Housing Coordinator for Redwood City. Though the idea is in its preliminary stages, Jones-Thomas said that the city redevelopment monies and budget reserves could potentially be used.

*Belmont City Council  
Sept 29, 1988*

City Council  
San Mateo Co Times  
Sept. 21, 1999

# Belmont heeds call for real downtown



By Jessica M. Scully  
STAFF WRITER

**BELMONT** — A downtown for Belmont is starting to look like more than just a dream, with a new shopping center expected to open in about a month and officials trying to fund other pieces of the puzzle.

City officials are examining the possibility of refinancing the city's debt at a lower rate. That could raise as much as \$10 million, Finance Director Thomas

Fil said.

Near the top of the city's wish list for that money is renovation of an aging shopping block at the junction of Ralston Avenue at El Camino Real, known to many as the Walgreen's block.

The city has no core downtown, just a few central blocks around Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real which hold City Hall and Twin Pines Park, a Safeway store, Peet's Coffee and Tea and several other shops.

But recent developments

could start to change that. City officials expect that when Belmont Village Center opens, many more people will be coming to its new stores.

New developments at Emmett House, a historical building located off Ralston Avenue, could add to the area's popularity. Though the building's future was once uncertain, it will now be leased to the College of Notre Dame to be used as an alumni

Please see **Belmont**, NEWS-9

## Belmont: Walgreen's block nears end of its economic life

Continued from NEWS-1

services building.

But the Walgreen's block "is reaching the end of its economic life," Planning Director Dan Vanderprie said.

The block includes a Walgreen drug store, Belmont Hardware, a Blockbuster Video and several other retailers.

### Razed building

A redevelopment scenario approved by the Planning Commission would raze all the buildings on the block.

A new, 8,000-square-foot hardware store, a 23,000-square-foot retail building, two additional retail buildings along Ralston Avenue, a public plaza, 18 to 24 residential or live-work units, and a two-level parking garage would replace it.

The the Blockbuster facade, which some residents have said is unsightly, would be remodeled.

Redeveloping the block would cost about \$8 million, though some of the costs could be recouped from the developer, Fil said. That would leave about \$2 million for other projects, he said.

One of those projects could be to improve parts of Old County Road. Remodeling building facades, completing sidewalks, increasing parking and generally beautifying the street are some options.

But they are options that some business owners on the street question.

Many of the stores on the street are car repair or construction shops, less delicate or gentrified than one might like in a new downtown but necessary, argued Kelly Udovch, one of the owners of Rose Heating and Air Conditioning.

"My only concern really would be, if they get a little carried away with the improvements," Udovch said.

### Old County Road

"Then they push the little guy like me out, the reason being they want to have more Starbucks and things of that nature," she said.

Other business owners feel they have already been burned by the joint Belmont and San Carlos project to raise the train tracks above El Camino Real. Ralston Avenue, which has been

under construction for several months, will be closed entirely later in the fall for six months to finish the project.

"I wish they'd (city officials) get Ralston Avenue done before they're thinking about anything else," said Joan Guest, owner of Guest Grooming.

### Oracle

Whether the debt will be refinanced and what could be done with the money is still far from finalized, city officials caution.

It's also not entirely risk-free. City officials are counting on nearby Oracle Corp. to complete a major building project, according to a staff report.

"There is always some risk with everything, but the risk for this kind of bond financing is minimal," City Manager Susan Westman said.

*What's next? The city will hold a meeting on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in conference room 101 in City Hall to discuss the bond financing and ways the money could be used.*

*For more information, call the city clerk at 595-7413.*

City of Belmont  
The Independent  
Sept 22, 1999

## Debate brews over construction wages

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

The city of Belmont and a San Mateo County-based labor organization are engaged in a dispute with the developer of the soon-to-be completed Belmont Village Center about whether workers building the retail development have been paid wages in accordance with city policy.

Talks have focused on whether the city's most recent and stronger prevailing wage policy, which was approved a month following the signing of the development agreement between the city and Sausalito-based Innisfree Companies, or a previous policy

applies to the development.

Prevailing wages are based partly on the cost of living and what other workers in a particular trade are making, according to city officials.

"There's a requirement that any development agreement have a provision inserted in it that requires that prevailing wages be paid," City Attorney Jean Savaree said of the city's most recent policy at a public meeting which was then followed by a closed session to discuss potential litigation and property issues Sept. 14.

The city's prevailing wage policy was created in 1990 and amended in 1994 and again in 1998.

"There's a different way in which this new resolution is set up," she said. "The new resolution adopted in 1998 is a resolution for the redevelopment area." Savaree added that the 1994 policy left it up to workers who felt they were not being paid prevailing wages to go forward themselves and file an action to collect the wages.

"Under (the city's) new policy there are additional enforcement mechanisms," she said, adding that both she and the city's redevelopment attorney have concurred that the 1998 policy applies because it was passed

**WAGES:** page 2A

## WAGES: Debate brews

Continued from 1A

before the necessary building permits were obtained.

The issue of the workers' wages was brought to the city's attention by the Foster City based Trades Council. A representative for the labor organization had not returned calls at press time.

The city has sent a letter to Innisfree Companies asking to obtain payroll records for some of the workers who have been involved in building the shopping center thus far.

The city, which has formed a subcommittee to look into this issue, plans to determine the monetary difference between the amount paid to workers and prevailing wages.

This amount will have to be met in order to issue a certificate of occupancy for the buildings, according to city staff reports.

"Prevailing wages are required to be paid on any project in the redevelopment area that receives a subsidy, whether its public funds or some (sort) of in-kind contribution from the redevelopment agency in an amount that exceeds \$100,000," said City Manager Susan Westman. She added that this also applies to improvements made for tenants

which move in within one year after certificate of occupancy for the project has been issued.

"I'm not here to debate prevailing wage pro or con," said Dave Irmer, head of Innisfree Companies, who spoke at the recent public meeting. "This is potential litigation so there's no reason for debate other than to suggest that I signed a development agreement on May 13 (1998)," said Irmer, who added that the contract was ratified again that month without a prevailing wage provision.

When his company signed a contract to develop Redwood City's Sequoia Station, he said there was a provision for prevailing wage. But the situation in Belmont is different because when Irmer signed the development agreement, the prevailing wage policy had not been amended to reflect the city's stronger enforcement capabilities.

"So I was a little confused when I was put on notice that prevailing wage must be paid," Irmer said, adding that the Belmont Village Center is now 80 percent completed. "We want to address the issue and bring the (Belmont Village Center) project to completion."

# Sketches of City Hall plan unveiled

## Belmont planners begin task of reviewing project

By Amy Yarurough  
Staff Reporter

Belmont officials are learning that building a sturdier City Hall is a delicate matter.

The city's Planning Commission last week reviewed a number of architectural sketches for a dual-phased \$9.7 million retrofit and upgrade of the Sixth Avenue civic facility, which will create a new building entrance and roomier quarters for the Police Department.

Commissioners were concerned that the entrance - planned as an addition away from the old entrance and between an L-shaped wing at the side of the building - mesh well with the existing facility and the surrounding Twin Pines Park. Officials also stressed that the plaza planned for the front of the building needs to meet public needs.

"I don't want to see us take a mediocre building and put a nice feature on it and make it look like a strange building ...," said Planning Commissioner Dave Warden at the group's meeting Oct. 19.

Warden, who admitted he isn't all that fond of the exterior of the current structure, added, "I'd rather see the building look at least consistent and we can accept it the way it is."

Project architects, Ekona Architecture of San Francisco, have explained that the city's new entryway will act as a wedge to settle the seismically unstable L-shaped building wing, preventing it from buckling in an earthquake.

Other elements of the project's first phase - estimated to cost \$4.5 million - include a new lobby area, landscaping, changes to parking lots around City Hall, and moving the police from current cramped facilities in Twin Pines to the first and second floor of the building.

While the project plans also alter elements inside the three-story structure, the commission was shown variations of a columnar front entrance to the building and several options for the landscaped plaza, and asked for input.

Commissioner Gloria Purcell worried that the new entryway might turn the building into a looming presence in the park and that stately columns might make City Hall "stick out like a sore thumb" compared to other architecture in the city.

"I'm looking at all your versions and they don't begin

Oct 21, 1999

# CITY HALL: Sketches

Continued from 1A

to address my priorities for this building or for Twin Pines Park," she said. "This is already the biggest building in the park ... and I don't think that it needs to get any bigger. The priority I have is to minimize this building because it's mere presence is going to be huge already."

Although architects presented the option of a driveway drop off zone near the entrance, commissioners thought it wouldn't be heavily used, and instead supported additional plaza landscaping, public areas for benches, and if funds allow, a central feature like a water fountain.

Several of the commissioners agreed that any additions to the building should continue to keep its design relatively simple.

Planning Commission Chair Kenn Parsons pointed out that current plans for the new front of the civic facility didn't seem to offer many

amenities for pedestrians.

"For this plaza, there's no walking access or sidewalks to get you there from either Ralston or from Sixth, and I think that needs to be incorporated into the design," said Parsons. "We're trying to encourage people to walk around our downtown and use our downtown. If our own employees have to walk through a parking lot to get out to the rest of the town, that doesn't make any sense."

Architects and city staff will incorporate commissioners' comments into updated plans, according to Sherwin Williams, management analyst for the city. Williams added that the commission will hold a public hearing on the plan at a future meeting, eventually forwarding its recommendations to the city council for review.

"I think (the architects) got a general sense of where the commission wanted to go," he said.

City Council  
The Independent  
Oct 20, 1999

# Belmont eyes potential bond bounty

## \$8 million in funds could benefit roads, downtown

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Belmont's City Council and staff last week fleshed out a list of projects that could be funded with some \$8 million in bonds its Redevelopment Agency is looking to sell.

At a meeting Oct. 12, the City Council honed the list of projects to include various roadway improvements, the reconstruction of the downtown Walgreens block and a new parking garage, as well as improvements to a neighborhood park and upgrades to the Sterling Downs neighborhood east of El Camino Real.

While councilmembers said they'd like to include the project to rebuild the city's small library - estimated at upwards of \$7.1 million - on the list, officials said that bond advisers would have to be consulted before it could be added.

"What's going to have to happen is we are going to have to prioritize (the projects)," said Finance Director Thomas Fil, who explained that the list is non-binding and would be used as a guideline for investors interested in purchasing the bonds. The total project costs far exceed the actual bond amount.

"I think the list is very thorough," said Vice Mayor Terri Cook, adding that some of the items on the list are ongoing projects from previous bond issues.

City officials thought it would be easier to make a broad wish list rather than to add projects later, she said. Councilmembers, for example, included a pedestrian bridge as a potential project for bond funding, but didn't want to be specific about where it would be located.

The council will have the opportunity to officially authorize the issuance of bonds at its meeting on Oct. 26, Fil said. The bonds would be sold sometime in November, after which the council would review the individual project requests and make modifications to the annual budget.

The city could also gain some additional redevelopment funding - estimated at \$3.4 million - through the refinancing of a land note the city holds. The City Hall remodel, council chambers, and street upgrades have been targeted as potential uses for the funds. The money could also be used to repay a \$495,000 loan from the Belmont Fire Protection District.

BONDS: page 2A

# BONDS:

Continued from 1A

Denny Lawhern, vice president of the Sterling Downs Neighborhood Association, said he is happy that various endeavors to rectify blighted conditions along Old County Road were included as potential recipients of the funds.

Some of the neighborhood improvements were identified in 1984 when the city's Redevelopment Agency was formed, but little has been done, Lawhern pointed out.

The city has designated facade improvements, landscaping and sidewalk work along Old County as possible recipients of the funds.

"I feel that businesses along Old County Road are just as vital as

# Funding

downtown," Lawhern said.

Although there has been much talk about improving the appearance of the downtown business

# for various projects

area, Lawhern said he will continue to stress that attention needs to be paid to Old County Road. Moving utilities underground, a potential

project estimated at a total of \$2.5 million, would be an important step in improving the appearance of the commercial area, he said.

Election - 1999  
The Independent  
Oct 30, 1999

# Candidates field final questions

## Youth concerns, downtown are among hot topics in Belmont

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Belmont's candidates for City Council were given one last chance to bat at the issues Thursday at a neighborhood-association-sponsored forum.

Residents pitched questions — ranging from the community's need for youth activities and ways of attracting business to the candidates' visions for the city in the next century — at Mayor Coraline Feierbach, businessman Paul Wright and Planning Commissioner Dave Warden. The three candidates are vying for two four-year seats on the council.

The forum was moderated by a League of Women Voters representative and attended by about 60 members of various neighborhood associations. The first question was asked by a resident who wanted to hear each candidates' vision of Belmont in the year 2010.

"Our community facilities would be dramatically different," said Paul Wright, adding that Belmont would have a new larger library and a community-and-youth center adequate for the city's growing youth population.

Wright said he wants to bring a voice for business and families with young children to the council. Wright is the Executive Vice-President, Chief Executive Officer and equity owner of JM Perry Corporation, a Palo Alto-based management training and con-

sulting group.

"I've been struck by the number of young couples in this community who don't feel that Belmont is a kid-friendly town," he added, pointing to a lack of good play parks and to city sports fields in disrepair.

Coraline Feierbach, a computer programmer and former planning commissioner running for her second term on City Council, sees a future Belmont with a downtown residents can be proud of.

"I'd like to see the downtown fully developed [and] I'd like to see more open space," said Feierbach, adding that she'd work to see that the Belmont business district is expanded along El Camino Real to the city's borders with San Mateo and San Carlos.

Candidate Dave Warden, born and raised in Belmont and Planning Commissioner since 1998, shares similar goals for downtown improvement and would also like to see Old County Road take on small retail shops like San Carlos' Laurel Street.

"In 10 years we're going to see small shops appearing along Old County Road. I think we're going to have a real downtown," he said. Warden believes his planning experience makes him a good candidate for council and wants to ensure building facades are upgraded to share a consistent architectural theme.

DEBATE: page 8A

## DEBATE: Belmont candidates

Continued from 1A

Youth issues were also a topic of discussion.

Warden explained he has first-hand experience because he grew up in Belmont.

"For 18 years I was a youth here and I had a pretty good time here," he said. "I do somewhat disagree with the idea that we have a kid-unfriendly town. I think we have a kid-friendly town. I think we could make it a kid-friendlier town."

Warden supports increasing outdoor youth activities, and said he learned to swim at a community pool when he was a child. That pool, Warden said, is no longer there.

A better relationship with both the elementary and high school districts is the key to making Belmont a better place for youth, according to Wright, a father of three school-age daughters.

"One reason I think the relationship with the schools is so important is because I believe that we as a community need to do more partnering with the schools."

Wright said the amount of vacant land in the city is diminishing and the city would benefit from setting up a community-use facility with the school district, much like Redwood City did with a youth and multi-purpose facility at Sandpiper Elementary School in Redwood Shores.

Feierbach said she understands youth issues because she raised her daughter in Belmont and supports setting up task forces to ask residents what types of community facilities they want and whether more money should be spent on youth.

"Right now we're spending \$350,000 a year on our playing fields. There are also senior citizens and there are also other groups that want a slice of the pie," she said. "So we have to be careful in the way that we distribute our money."

Planning Commission  
The Independent  
Nov. 27, 1999

# Green party candidate runs

## Belmont planning commissioner puts her hat in the political ring

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

It's not easy being green — politically that is.

But Belmont's Gloria Purcell won't let a lack of name recognition for the Green Party stop her run for the 21st Assembly district.

A Planning Commissioner in Belmont, Purcell, 57, said she turned in papers last month to run for the office, in part because she wants to give alternative political parties a stronger voice and because she wanted to be actively

involved in lawmaking in the state.

"I started asking people if they would run for office — people I respected," said Purcell, who became involved in politics as a founding member of the Green Party of California in 1989. She added that many people complain about the quality of candidates, though few do anything about it. "And nobody wanted to run for office."

The 32-year Belmont resident and public transit advocate, who is

gearing up for the March primary, wants to give voters more choices through "preference voting," an idea supported by her party that allows voters to choose more than one candidate on the ballot in order of preference.

"The advantage to alternative parties is we feel we will get a lot more votes," said Purcell, who added that under the system voters would could vote with their conscious and not worry about taking away votes from other candidates they favor. "We think it's a big step forward for democracy."



Gloria Purcell

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1999

## for Assembly

Purcell's challengers for the seat — which represents a district spanning from Belmont to Santa Clara, bay to coast — in the November 2000 election are S. Joseph (Joe) Simitian, a Democrat from Palo Alto, and former Foster City Mayor Deborah Wilder, a Republican. Assemblyman Ted Lempert (D) will have to step down from the seat because of term limits.

Purcell, who has done volunteer work for the assemblyman in the past, said the fact that Lempert won't be running in next year's election makes her more optimistic about the prospects of her success as a third-party candidate.

"There's no incumbent and that's

about as good [of a] chance as a Green Party candidate could have," she said.

If elected, Purcell would contribute to some significant recent strides made by the party in California. Last year Audie Bock was elected as a Green Party member to the State Assembly, representing the Oakland area, and Arcata's City Council became the first legislative body in the country to have a Green Party majority in 1996.

Purcell, who has run for Belmont City Council several times, was born and raised on the Peninsula and worked in the San Mateo County Library system for 19 years

GREEN: page 3A

## GREEN: Gloria Purcell

Continued from 1A

before retiring in 1995. Purcell believes she is well grounded in the history of local issues because of the many years she has lived in the area.

Like her fellow party members Purcell stresses the necessity of supporting local economics. Also a member of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority Citizen Advisory Committee, she said that if elected, she'd like to get the peo-

ple more involved in tackling what has become for many a "number one irritation" — traffic.

"I would like to see a lot of public forums [held] on the subject of BART, Caltrain and light rail," she said.

She said she also would like to pursue local projects to tackle the environmental effects that population growth has contributed to the area, such as urban creek renewal.

Davey Glen  
The Independent  
Dec 1, 1999

## Davey Glen project still in limbo

by Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

After seven years and a number of abandoned proposals, a Foster City developer has revised plans for a residential portion of a contentious mixed-use project near Davey Glen and El Camino Real and is in the process of presenting them to Belmont's Planning Commission.

Developers expressed interest in dividing the property to build homes on a 7.3-acre parcel at 1 Davey Glen and a new office building on a 1.8-acre parcel at 400-490 El Camino Real. Planning commissioners, however, looked over only the revamped residential portion of the project at their meeting Nov.

The current proposal by Regis Homes of Foster City — scaled down in density from previous plans — calls for the construction of 8 townhouses, 14 detached single-family units and the relocation of a historical house on the property to the east of its current location. The project will be brought back a second time — tentatively Dec. 21 — because of

suggestions and concerns raised by commissioners during the project's preliminary design review.

"It's a very difficult piece of property to develop," explained Planning Commissioner Jon Phillips, adding that part of the parcel is steep and that it also has a number of trees. Though Phillips didn't attend the recent meeting, he said he has reviewed the most recent plans and discussed the project with fellow commissioners, who had concerns about the placement of the units on the property.

Denny Lawhern of the Belmont Historical Society said he hadn't attended the recent Planning Commission meeting but that over the years his group has followed the project and looked out for the property's historic Ross House, the property owner's residence.

"The property owner is well aware of the historical society's intent [to preserve] that house," he said.

The City Council saw a presentation on the Davey Glen project Dec. 8, but the last time it

DAVEY GLEN: page 4A

## DAVEY GLEN:

Continued from 2A

actually acted on the project was in May, 1998. At the time developers proposed a 50-unit townhouse development and a 30,000 square-foot office building for the property. The City Council brought up a number of concerns and voted to send the commercial part of the project back to the Planning Commission.

Though she said she hadn't seen the project for some time, Councilmember Pam Rianda said that number of residential units proposed have long been an issue with the project.

"The density was too high," she said.

The property's owner, Dr. Gene Lee, said he had no prediction as to the outcome of the latest plans and admitted he is "very bitter" about the long process he's been through in order to build on his property.

"I have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars. I've got the full support of my neighbors but yet that doesn't mean much," Lee said, explaining that his Davey Glen neighbors have been very supportive of his project in the past — as evidenced by 40 support letters he has received.

Lee bought the property with the intent of developing 120-units, for which he said the property is zoned.

In 1992, though, a preliminary design review application proposed 86 to 103 units. The application was closed and resubmitted for 86 units in March 1994 and shrank to 83 units in April 1995. Another project for 56 townhouses was submitted in July 1996. By September 1997, a 50-unit townhouse project was under discussion.

Lee contends that concessions

## Project pending

have been made in scaling down the project and that the reason it's taken so long is because city officials have followed their own desires for the project and

considered the wants of his neighbors.

"You know the Empire State building was planned and built in 13 months," he said.

City Council  
S.F. Chronicle  
Nov 13, 1999



**MARK SIMON**

## Short-Timers Take Junket To Florida

### Transit district receives little for \$4,600 outlay

**T**hree SamTrans officials — two transit district board members and the system's general manager — went to a transit conference in Florida a month ago.

Three weeks later, the general manager retired, as scheduled. A month later, one board member's term expired. And at the end of December, the other board member's term expires.

Why did three short-timers get sent to a conference that cost the public about \$4,600?

Because they could not be reached for comment, we are left to speculate.

And the speculation leads to an inescapable conclusion — it is a smallish amount of money, but they appear to have forgotten that it is not their money.

The conference was a meeting of the American Public Transit Association, and it was held from October 8-13 in Orlando.

SamTrans General Manager Gerry Haugh went, at a cost of \$2,255, including registration at the conference, airfare and hotels. Haugh had been SamTrans general manager for 18 years, a position from which he retired on November 1.

SamTrans board members Adele Della Santina and Denise de Ville also went.

Della Santina, a member of the Belmont City Council, was a representative of the county's cities on the SamTrans board. It cost \$1,400 to send her to the conference. Her last day on the SamTrans board was Wednesday. She also did not seek re-election to the Belmont City Council in last week's elections.

De Ville was appointed to the SamTrans board by virtue of her position as chief executive officer of the San Mateo County Economic Development Association, an organization that advocates for business before local government. It cost \$1,000 to send her to the conference.

She resigned her position on the Economic Development Association in September. De Ville's term on the SamTrans board expires in December. She may seek a reappointment, but if she does, it is unlikely she will be successful, said district insiders.

Haugh is a member of the board of directors of the American Public Transit Association, so you could argue that he had to go, although you would be hard-pressed to argue that the San Mateo County public benefited from his attendance.

As for the other two, well, it is hard to figure out how the public was served in any way by the attendance at the conference by two people whose service on the SamTrans board was due to expire shortly.

"The wrong board members went," said San Mateo County Supervisor Mike Nevin, a member of the SamTrans board asked about the conference attendees.

"I'm not an advocate of junkets. When people take these trips on behalf of the public, it has to be thoughtful. The people who are going should be representatives who will be around for a while," Nevin said.

Dec 2, 1989



**MARK SIMON**

# Transit Junket Tab Was \$36,200

## 19 people were sent to Florida conference

**I**t turns out a junket to Florida for three SamTrans officials — each of whom was leaving the district within weeks of the trip — was more of a group effort.

San Mateo County's bus district sent 12 other people to a transit conference in Orlando, and Caltrain sent four.

In all, 19 San Mateo County transit officials went to the American Public Transit Association's annual conference in October at a cost to the taxpaying public of \$36,200.

"The only reason to send that many people is climate, golf courses or Disney World," said one veteran transportation expert.

The junket by the three officials was disclosed here three weeks ago — SamTrans General Manager Gerald Haugh and board members Adele Della Santina and Denise de Ville went on the trip at a cost of

\$4,600.

Haugh was days away from retiring. Della Santina was days away from leaving the board, and de Ville is scheduled to leave the board at the end of the year.

What SamTrans official did not disclose at the time of that report was that they sent a crowd to the conference — a five-day affair in early October that included seminars and meetings on transit trends and an expo featuring the latest hardware from vendors and contractors.

Counting Haugh, Della Santina and de Ville, SamTrans spent \$29,424 to send 15 people to the conference, while Caltrain spent \$6,786 to send four.

Most of the officials were top and midlevel management involved in procurement of equipment and system planning, according to a SamTrans spokesman. Also on the trip was a SamTrans marketing official, there to pick up an award for the bus system's advertising program, and the regional winner of the annual bus "roadeo" competition, along with his spouse.

Conferences are dandy, but what local transit officials need more than seminars is money — the means to pay for the transit and transportation plans that are going to be necessary to ease traffic congestion.

And insiders say the transit conference in Florida was no place to hunt for federal financing for a train overhaul or a regional transportation system.

Belmont  
The Independent  
Dec 5, 1999

# Sale of bonds nets millions in revenue

## Belmont officials surprised, pleased with surplus funds

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

With an eye on downtown redevelopment and other city projects, the City of Belmont recently sold some \$24.4 million in bonds — a venture that generated nearly \$10.5 million in city spending money, more than \$400,000 in savings and surprised city officials.

The monies will be used in part to repay the principal and interest on \$11,185,000 in bonds issued in 1992 and 1994, a \$500,000 loan from the Belmont Fire Protection District, the cost of issuing the new bonds as well as a \$2.9 million note held by the city. Because the new bonds were sold at interest rates lower than the previous bonds, the city garnered about \$409,000 net in savings.

"We thought we were only going to save in the neighborhood of \$250,000," said Thomas Fil, the city's finance director, who said that a good local economy and the fact that the bonds were sold through a competitive bidding process led to the favorable outcome. Fil added that almost \$10.5 million is earmarked for downtown Belmont beautification projects and the savings generated through the bond refinancing will be shared with the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District with 40 percent going to schools.

Fil added that the city also gained a more attractive credit rating through the recent sale.

"This will help us when we sell bonds in the future," said Fil. "It's a positive view of Belmont in a whole by the rating institutions."

In coming months the City Council will have to whittle down and prioritize a list of potential projects it mapped out several months ago for the funding -including retrofitting city hall, rebuilding the Bay View Plaza on Ralston Avenue, street improvements and undergrounding utility lines on Old County Road.

In addition to the savings generated for the city, Belmont's new mayor, Terri Cook, said the downtown improvements selected by the city for funding should offer residents long-awaited relief.

"It's sat the way it's sat for so long and we're finally able to do something about it," she said.

While the construction of a new city library had been included as a potential project on the list, project planners doubt it will be eligible for the funds. Money

BONDS: page 4A

## BONDS: Revenue

Continued from 1A

generated from the bonds must be used in the city's redevelopment area. Cook said the task force assigned to look at options for a new library and the community at large have stressed the facility needs to be rebuilt outside of the downtown and at its current Alameda de las Pulgas site.

Cook, a council representative on the task force, said she personally would not recommend spending any of the redevelopment funds on the library because the project is considered a "big ticket item" and because there are many other smaller projects downtown in need of funding.

Linda Chiochios, branch manager of the Belmont Library, added that the library task force isn't really responsible for looking into funding for the new facility but that the city might look into a future bond measure or potential library funding from the state to rebuild the library.

Fil said the funding does offer library planners an option though.

"They now have something to consider that they didn't have before," he explained.