

City Council  
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# Lot mergers anger canyon land owners

## City Council turns down 22 appeals to ordinance

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — San Juan Canyon property owners are fuming after the city forced the merger of lots in the area to protect the canyon's steep and unstable hillsides from development.

The lot merger ordinance combines adjoining parcels owned by one person into a single lot in an effort to preserve open space. Last week the Belmont City Council denied all but one appeal from 23 property owners who own undeveloped lots in the San Juan Canyon.

Land owners are irate with the city's decision — angered at what they call an infringement on their property rights. Only one home can be built per lot, so owners of several smaller lots cannot build multiple homes when their property is merged into a larger single lot.

South San Francisco resident Kenneth Hayes has owned property in the San Juan Canyon for 25 years, and had plans to develop his plots. But now that the city denied his appeal, he can't.

"I think it's wrong and unfair," he said. "I purchased these lots with the intention of giving them to my children so they could build homes on them. Now I can't even give them to my kids because it's just one big lot now."

San Bruno resident Betty Jo Byrne and her sisters have owned three lots in the canyon since 1987. They inherited the lots from their late father, who purchased them sometime in the 1950s.

Byrne said she appealed the merger, because she feels the city is harassing property owners.

"I don't think they give a hoot about what we say or do," Byrne said. "They're going to do what they do and ignore what the owners want to do with their properties. I think most of the other property owners feel the same way I do because a lot of them have the lots for ... different reasons."

Byrne said although she agreed with the idea of merging multiple adjacent lots, the way the city is going about it is wrong.

"Logically, it would make sense to merge the lots," she said. "But for the city to want to do this to all the property owners against their wishes is just wrong."

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However, city officials said they are not violating property owner's rights.

"We merged lots that were deemed substandard according to the city policy," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "But the property owners still have the same amount of property that they had before."

Cook added that voters gave the city permission four years ago to do something to preserve open space. This was one way to do it, she said.

"Four years ago there was a measure on the ballot that asked voters if they wanted City Council to look at ways of preserving open space, and more than 65 percent said 'yes,'" she said. "This was a tool we used to preserve open space. We are merely carrying out the desires of the community and following the city policies on zoning, grading and slope density."

Additionally, the city has a legal right to merge the lots under the California Subdivision Map Act, which said local government can combine private properties under certain conditions — such as slope, geology and access to emergency vehicles. Many of the merged lots are on very steep slopes and are

unsuitable for development.

"Some of these lots had slopes of 50, 60 and 80 percent," said Cook. "I mean some were practically cliffs and could not be accessed at all. Most of the land is undevelopable anyway, and it's unlikely that roads will ever be built there."

Another reason for the lot merger is to protect open space in the canyon and minimize traffic in that area. Roads and sewer systems in the area are falling apart, due to geological problems. The city wants to prevent future problems.

"I think there are environmentalists that care about the area and I think that there are people that believe a lot merger will reduce traffic," said resident Byrne. "But I think traffic reduction will be minimal."

Byrne wasn't sure if the issue is worth going to court. "We're between a rock and a hard place," she said. "Because no matter what we do, the city is gonna find a way around us and get their way."

Not all property owners in the canyon are upset with the city's decision.

Belmont residents David and Janet Madruga have owned two lots in the canyon for more than 25 years and said they knew the city would deny their appeal.



# LOTS: Council votes to merge parcels

"We thought we presented a good reason for not merging them," said David. "But we certainly understand their point of view. They just want to keep development at a minimum and protect some of the land there. It's the right thing to do for a lot of those lots because some are just too small to build on."

The Madrugas, whose lots are directly behind their house, bought the property in 1972 to keep the view in their backyard.

"Just before we bought it, a developer came along and wanted to build a road there, and another developer came along and wanted to build homes there," said Janet. "So for us it's very personal. We were hoping to give the lots to our children or future generations so they could do what they want with them."

There are 220 undeveloped lots in the San Juan Canyon with 40 owners. The other 17 owners who did not appeal to the city had their lots automatically merged.

The city voted not to merge one property owner's parcels because he had not been properly notified of the city's intent.

*Wes Bowers can be reached via e-mail at [wbowers@smindependent.com](mailto:wbowers@smindependent.com) or at 652-6764.*



# Belmont

## Property owners say it will drop land value

By T.S. Mills-Faraudo  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The City Council denied pleas to not merge lots in the San Juan Canyon Tuesday night, despite dozens of property owners' outcries that it will shrink the value of their land.

The council turned down eight of the 23 appeals against the new ordinance, which allows the city to merge lots deemed unsuitable to build on. The other 15 appeals will be heard at 7 p.m. today in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

The council also voted 4-1 to go forward with lot mergers on land where property owners didn't challenge the city. New Councilman Dave Bauer voted against the action without explaining why.

The outspoken audience appeared divided.

Many canyon landowners lambasted the council, accusing it of taking away their property rights.

The council's action definitely takes away their ability to build much. For example, Milbrae resident Julie Pun and her husband, who bought two lots in the canyon 20 years ago, once had the ability to build a 3,200-square-foot home. However, now her land is only good for 1,200 square feet of construction because of city building laws — maybe enough to build a garage, Pun pointed out.

Other property owners had similar stories.

Redding resident Gerry Kersten, who acquired two lots from his father-in-law, said he didn't feel the city gave enough information to these landowners about its plans.

"I think you should have made these people more aware of how this would have affected their property," Kersten said, adding that many property owners he talked to didn't understand what the lot mergers would mean.

But there were also dozens at the meeting sporting fluorescent green "Save the Canyon" stickers who spoke in favor of the mergers.

San Juan Canyon resident Jeff Marshall said he's concerned that additional roads built for developments would put more pressure on the fire department.

"I've talked to a firefighter who said they won't even come into the canyon if there's a fire,"

Marshall said, adding that the firefighter said San Juan Canyon's road access is similar to the Oakland hills.

City officials argue that the land wasn't very good for development to begin with, and merging lots avoids the potential for developers to build on geologically unstable ground.

The idea to merge these lots goes back to 1988, when the

City Council adopted the San Juan Hills Area Plan, which included a provision saying attempts would be made to combine lots on the steep subdivided terrain. City officials have said the area was carelessly subdivided when the community was first being developed in the 1920s.

The subdivided lots affected are near Alhambra Drive, Monte

Cresta Drive, San Ardo Way, Marburger Avenue, upper and lower Lock Avenue and Bartlett Way.

Several people suggested the city is opening itself up to lawsuits by taking this position again.

However, under the California Subdivision Map Act, the city has the legal right to merge lots. The law says local govern-

ments can combine private property under certain conditions. that many of the parcels are cliff-like.

Basically, these conditions deal with lot slope, geology, access to emergency vehicles and consistency with the city's General Plan.

Many of these lots have a slope of more than 30 percent, said Community Development Director Craig Ewing, adding

The upside for these property owners, Ewing said, is that the merging will reduce the sewer service and other fees by about \$167 per year.

You can reach staff writer T.S. Mills-Faraudo at 348-4338 or by e-mail at [tmills@angnewspapers.com](mailto:tmills@angnewspapers.com).

## City Council rejects pleas to halt San Juan lot merger

City Council  
San Mateo Co Times  
Dec 12, 2001



*City Council  
San Mateo Co Times  
Dec 8, 2001*

# Belmont council considers revamping freeway ramps

**City to hear comments on \$16.75 million project Tuesday**

**By T.S. Mills-Faraudo**  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The trip for an estimated 38,000 cars that head into Redwood Shores each day — many on their way to the shiny Oracle towers — may get a little easier if the cities of Belmont and Redwood Shores are successful in revamping freeway ramps in the area.

The Belmont City Council will hear public comments Tuesday night relating to the \$16.75 million freeway ramp project.

"The main problem right now is the merging of traffic, especially during peak hours," said Peter Vorametsanti, senior civil engineer for Redwood City. "People have to do a lot of weaving through traffic just to get to the proper place."

Plans include eliminating two of the loop off-ramps. Mo-

torists would instead get to Ralston Avenue by traveling up a ramp with stop lights.

"Right now, when they get off the loop, they have to weave all the way to the left lane if they want to turn at Oracle Parkway, which is where most of them want to turn because that's where all the parking garages are," said Duncan Jones, Belmont's city engineer.

In addition, a road to the Highway 101 north ramp will be built at Island Parkway and Ralston Avenue, making it easier for motorists to get on to that part of the freeway.

Jones is hoping they'll be able to start construction by this summer. But they're working on a tight deadline.

After they complete the environmental document for the project, the design still needs to be completed and they have to obtain permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the California Department of Fish and Game and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Part of the reason it needs the OK from so many agencies

is because it's in a wetlands area, Jones said. As a result, he said they'll have to move some of the wetlands before the project is done.

"I don't think anyone even knows those are wetlands because they basically became wetlands because they're drainage ditches," Jones said.

Both cities have some money set aside to pay for the project. They're also waiting to find out if they'll receive \$3.1 million from the federal government to contribute to construction.

But if everything doesn't fall into place next year, Jones said the project could be delayed until 2004. Vorametsanti estimates construction to take 18 to 24 months.

It will go to the Belmont City Council for final approval on Jan. 8, he said.

The meeting Tuesday will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center, 1223 Ralston Ave.

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# Belmont braces for hearings on canyon lots

## Landowners protest plan to merge San Juan Canyon lots

By T.S. Mills-Faraudo  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — A throng of San Juan Canyon property owners plans to fight the City Council tonight on a law it passed recently that they believe will shrink the value of their land.

The council passed an ordinance Oct. 9 that allows the city to merge subdivided lots in San Juan Canyon in the hope that it will reduce development in the area's steep terrain.

Now, 23 of the 39 property owners affected by the ordinance are appealing the ordinance.

In fact, so many people are challenging the law that the council had to schedule two nights to go through all the appeals. Some will be considered tonight at the regular 7:30 meeting and the rest will be heard at a special meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday. Both meetings will be at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center, 1223 Ralston Ave. In addition, the council is expected tonight to

approve the lot mergers that aren't being appealed.

Several landowners are traveling hundreds of miles to attend the meetings.

Gerry Kersten, 44, of Redding said Monday that he was planning to drive to Belmont to protect the two lots his wife, Carolyn, inherited from her father, from being merged.

In the past, he said he's thought about building a house on the property his father-in-law purchased about 40 years ago.

"This will really reduce our ability to build much there," said Kersten.

A fair compromise, he said, would be for the city to agree to transfer the square footage of the merged lots to another piece of land.

"They are exposing themselves to a lot of liability, and I'm hoping it doesn't come to that," Kersten said.

But the law may be on the city's side. The City Council recently appointed a committee which discovered that under the California Subdivision Map Act, local governments can merge private property under certain conditions.

First, the parcel can't conform to the minimum parcel size for that zone. The land

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**Jere Kersnar**

City Manager

must be undeveloped or developed with only an accessory structure.

And it must have one of these attributes: It has to be less than 5,000 square feet in area and not have been created in compliance with applicable laws. It must not meet current standards for sewage disposal or water supply nor conform to slope-stability standards. It must have no legal vehicle access for safety equipment. It has to be determined that development would create health or safety hazards. Or, there are inconsistencies with the general plan other than lot size or density standards.

City Manager Jere Kersnar said the council will look at all these conditions when they examine the appeals.

Kersnar predicts the appeals won't go through.

“There's only been one appeal that we granted so far, and that's because they hadn't been officially notified because there had been a change in ownership,” he said.

Betty Byrne, 55, of Los Altos, who owns three lots affected by the ordinance, said she doesn't think merging them is a bad idea — she just believes the city is going about it the wrong way.

“We would happily give them the open space if they would pay us for it,” said Byrne, who was born and raised in Belmont and acquired the land from her father.



# Belmont City Council rejects pleas to halt San Juan lot merger

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(COVER)



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The Independent  
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# Council reviews Ralston/101 project

## Public comment sought on EIR for improvements to interchange

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

**BELMONT** — Plans for a renovation of the Ralston Avenue and Highway 101 interchange have just one more roadblock to break through before construction begins.

At tonight's City Council meeting, the city will hold its first public hearing on the environmental impact report for the project. City officials say this is the final step before submitting plans to the state and getting the project underway.

The Ralston/101 Interchange project has been in development for years, with Belmont, Redwood City and Oracle Corporation collaborating to find an easier way for commuters to get in and out of the Belmont and Redwood Shores areas.

The idea is to reconfigure the on- and off-ramps at Ralston Avenue to make traffic flow smoother and eliminate the daily rush hour traffic backups along Highway 101.

"What the project does is wipe out a couple cloverleaves at the interchange," said Belmont City Manager Jere Kersnar. "It will be similar to the Hillsdale interchange, where once you come off 101 you'll come into a 'T' at Ralston. So people who come in the city will have to go through a signalized intersection."

Currently there is just one traffic light near the ramps at the Ralston and Oracle

Parkway intersection.

The current configuration forces motorists travelling in and out of town to weave around each other. The weaving causes heavy traffic build-up and turns what should be a smooth-flowing street into a parking lot.

"Because of the elimination of the weaving and the removal of two cloverleaves it should make the interchange easier," said Kersnar. "It will also reduce traffic on the interchange and make the traffic on 101 flow better so cars aren't backed up for miles each way."

Kersnar added that it would also make trips to the northeastern part of town easier.

Currently, motorists must merge into the Oracle traffic to get to Oracle Parkway and weave through to Island Parkway just to get to the northeast part of town. With a new signaled intersection, as motorists come off the freeway they can drive straight to Island Parkway.

"It's an advantage for Belmont because through this you'll be able to have direct access to the Northeast access," he said. "It will be easier to get to Autobahn Motors, the Sports Complex and the apartments nearby."

And the project will reduce traffic.

"This is a project we've been working on for a long time," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "It will greatly improve traffic and make it safer not

only for drivers, but for pedestrians too.

"Part of the bottleneck is traffic from Redwood Shores," said Cook. "You have residents trying to get in there in the evenings and then you also have the employees trying to get out and everybody ends up sitting in traffic for an hour."

Cook said that this project will be the future of highway access.

"The cloverleaf structure is a thing of the past," she said. "Any highway modifications you see anymore will be this direct access structure where you actually come to a stoplight. The cloverleaf makes things very unsafe because you have so many people coming in and out at the same time and weaving around."

Cook said she was glad that there are other organizations besides Belmont that want to alleviate the traffic situation.

The project is estimated to cost about \$13.5 million with about \$10 million coming from local funds from Oracle and the cities of Belmont and Redwood City.

Construction is scheduled to start in March 2002, said Mayor Dave Warden, and will be completed by July 2003.

"This is a thing where things have to get worse before they get better," he said. "We'll have to demolish the part of the interchange in order to put the new structure in, but once it's finished it will greatly alleviate traffic volume."

Wes Bowers can be reached via e-mail at [wbowers@smindependent.com](mailto:wbowers@smindependent.com) or at 652-6764 Ext. 6.



# New City Council wants a little bit of 'respect'

## First man in five years appointed to mayor, new members sworn in

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Last Thursday, as newly elected Mayor Dave Warden took office, he promised that the new City Council would bring positive change and newfound respect to Belmont.

"People always ask me 'what is it with Belmont?'" Warden said. "Everyone has this perception that people in town don't trust the council. The fact is turnover on city staff

and council has caused this perception, and the five of us have to work together. We are going to restore all the respect from the citizens of this town and I am absolutely committed to this task."

As Warden took over as mayor, former councilmembers Eleanor Hahn and Pam Rianda stepped down. Newly elected councilmembers Dave Bauer and George Metropulos took over the seats.

Warden predicted several

things the new council would get done to restore lost respect, including improving traffic, building a police station and a fire station.

"We need to do something with the police department and get our officers into better quarters," he said. "We also need to break ground on the new Fire Station 13, even if I have to go down there with a shovel myself and start digging."

The city has been waiting for a new police station for years. Just this past summer it was discovered that the city could not afford the \$8 million needed

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ERIN DAY

Vice Mayor Paul Wright swore in appointed Mayor Dave Warden on Nov. 29.

*City Council  
The Chamberlain  
Nov 8, 2001*



# CITY: Belmont council appoints Warden as new mayor

*Continued from 1A*

to remodel City Hall and move in the police because the cost of the project was underestimated.

And the reconstruction of Fire Station 13 on Hiller Street can't seem to get past the planning stages.

Warden also predicted that the city would get the Proposition 14 funds from the state to build its new library, and that the council and city will successfully preserve open space in town.

"Most importantly," he said. "We [the council] need to firmly establish trust with each other, city staff and our citizens. We need to get along with each other and I believe we can do that."

Outgoing councilmember and former mayor Hahn, who decided not to run after just one term on the council, said she believes the new council will do its best to serve the city with the help of City Manager Jere Kersnar.

"I feel comfortable leaving,"

she said. "When I first came on the council four years ago there was total chaos because I don't think the council at that time knew what its role was. But now Jere is here and I think council finally knows what its role is."

Sixteen-year councilmember Rianda also applauded Kersnar. "I think the most important moment in my 13 years with the City Council was bringing Jere to Belmont," she said. "He is innovative, intelligent and ardent, and will not stand by and let other cities take advantage of Belmont."

Rianda was also proud of the city's agreement with Oracle, which gave the city some funding for the City Hall project and the ball field at the sports complex.

Both Hahn and Rianda received standing ovations from the audience and council. But not as grand an ovation as new councilmembers Bauer and Metropulos.

"I want to thank Pam and Eleanor for their great years of

service and helping to make Belmont easy for the new council to run," Metropulos said. "Jere's a great captain of the ship and we have a great staff working with him. I look forward to working with all of them in the next four years and I pledge to do my best for Belmont."

Bauer echoed his enthusiasm for working with city staff and reinforced the fact that this is a council that the people chose.

"This is a change for Belmont that's going to work out great," Bauer said. "Everyone spoke out through their votes and hearts about the changes they wanted. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole election process and the people I met over the last few months have been wonderful. I can't wait to get started."

Incumbent Terri Cook, who was elected to her second term, said she hopes to do her best for the citizens.

"It seems that incumbents are a rare breed in Belmont," Cook said. "But I support the confidence of the voters and hope

that I can live up to their expectations. Everyone who has ever run knows that you can't do this job by yourself. And I'm certain that Paul and Dave will join me in welcoming George and Dave and that all of us can accomplish great things for Belmont."

As the night came to a close, the new council joined hands and raised them in triumph, as a symbol that it is already working on unity and trust.

"Let's be a united city and get rid of the divisiveness," said Warden. "We'll have the best-run city and be more proud of this city than any other city in the state."



NOVEMBER 6, 2001

THE INDEPENDENT SERVING BELMONT AND SAN CARLOS

# City considering view protection policy

## Residents would have to keep trees trimmed

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — City officials have begun reviewing a policy that would require residents to keep foliage on their property neatly trimmed so not to obstruct a neighbor's view from their home.

The ordinance comes on the heels of a recent Southern California court decision giving view protection laws validity.

"When I first got onto council I was interested in looking into something like this," said Mayor Eleanore Hahn. "Then I heard about this case in Rancho Palos Verdes earlier this year, and asked the city if we had anything like this and if they could look into it."

in a recent court case, a Rancho Palos Verdes man filed a complaint with the Second District California Court of Appeals about a view protection ordinance.

The ordinance prohibited residents of the town from significantly impairing a neighbor's view by allowing foliage to grow

in excess of a certain height.

The man was required to keep his trees trimmed so his neighbor would have a view of the ocean. The man claimed that the city was abusing its power by requiring residents to keep foliage trimmed.

However, the courts found that because the ordinance did not require the man to destroy his trees but simply trim them, his complaint was dismissed.

The case caught the attention of city officials, especially Mayor Hahn. She brought the idea to the City Council last month, and the Parks and Recreation Department and

City Attorney Jean Savaree are planning to look into it.

City Manager Jere Kersnar said he researched the Rancho Palos Verdes case and then looked into the city records for something similar.

"Rancho Palos Verdes passed this ordinance that required a person to keep the trees trimmed, so not to disrupt a neighbor's view," he said. "We looked into that here and found that we do not do that. We don't require residents to keep the trees trimmed to cater to a neighbor's view."

But what the city does have is a policy that helps neighbors

settle disputes regarding foliage and views, according to Parks and Recreation Director Karl Middlestadt. "It's not an ordinance and it doesn't require a resident to keep his foliage trimmed, but it does outline a process that neighbors can follow if they feel someone's foliage is obstructing a view," he said.

Middlestadt said that he would be presenting an updated policy to the Parks and Recreation Commission in early 2002. The updated policy might require a resident to keep trees trimmed, said Middlestadt.

City Council  
Nov 6, 2001  
The Independent



# City nears decision on civic center

Facility plans to  
materialize by  
March 2002

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — After pouring thousands of dollars into plans for a new City Hall and police station that never saw the light of day, frustrated city officials are starting from square one with two new proposals.

Assistant City Manager Dan Rich and Police Chief Greg Janke presented the City

Council with the two best options for proceeding on a new plan during a study session last week.

One option is to construct a small 3,000- to 5,000-square-foot building next to the existing City Hall. The building would be an emergency services center housing police dispatch, a small holding facility and police data and electronic equipment.

The second option would be to construct a new 15,000- to 17,000-square-foot police station somewhere on the City Hall campus. Both options could also house council

chambers, according to Janke.

"This new stand-alone police station would be a traditional facility that incorporates all police operations under one roof," he said. "If council finds it necessary to house chambers in either option, it could double as a police training or briefing room."

But before the city gets excited about the prospect of finally constructing a new facility, several steps must be taken, like determining cost and developing a site plan.

Additionally, it could be another two years before any new facility is completed and

ready for the Police Department. The city wants to go through step-by-step and not run into the problems it faced during the last project attempt.

"It is obviously critical that we don't misstep and that we do things methodically and make sure we do things right this time," Rich told the council. "Our next step is to have someone on board to develop a site plan and see which option is more viable."

Plans to remodel and retrofit City Hall for seismic standards and move the Police Department into the first and

second floors were approved in the summer of 2000.

The project was supposed to start last May, but one month before construction was to begin the project hit an obstacle.

Architectural designs for the process weren't finished on time, and weren't presented to city officials until late July.

After putting \$700,000 into the plans, the city was told that the cost of the entire project would be \$2 million more than the original estimate in 2000.

Fed up with spending money

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# CITY HALL: Project rethought

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and getting nowhere with a project that had already been delayed for 10 years, the City Council chose to halt the project and start from scratch.

Now city officials want to either build a small police facilities building or an entirely new police station and not bother with retrofitting City Hall.

To build the small police facilities building would cost the city about \$6.17 million, and to construct an entirely new police station would cost about \$8.33 million.

Although both estimates are higher than the \$5.6 million that was originally estimated a year ago, city officials believe that if they lease about 40 percent of City Hall they can generate enough revenue to cover some of the costs.

Vice Mayor Dave Warden was concerned with the idea of leasing out nearly half of the building to help pay for construction.

"I think that during this research process for the project you'll have to look at what

**'It is obviously critical that we don't mis-step and that we do things methodically and make sure we do things right this time'**

Dan Rich

other cities are doing in terms of leasing their City Halls," he said. "I don't mind leasing some space out, but I think that 40 percent is just too much."

Councilmember Pam Rianda also had a concern with leasing City Hall space, but said it could be the only alternative the city has left if it wants to proceed successfully.

"I think we should be as far away from leasing as possible," she said. "Because then you get into the issue of renewing and if a business leaves then you'd have to find another business to lease to.

"If the city does decide to lease some space in City Hall, then I'd suggest leasing to community groups or non-profit agencies," she added. "If you lease to retailers you've got advertising in the windows and it hurts the dignity of the building. It won't look like a City Hall."

But Councilmember-elect George Metropulos thinks leasing space in City Hall would definitely help if the city wants to get this project done.

"Both options are viable and possible, and we need to take a look at funding," he said. "Listening to the police it's clear that they would like a stand-alone station and it would be nice if money we get from leasing some empty offices in City Hall could pay for some or even all of the construction costs."

Rich hopes to have data presented to the council by March of 2002.

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# Pam Rianda ousted from City Council

## Voters choose incumbent Cook, newcomers Bauer, Metropulos

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Voters overwhelmingly ousted one of Belmont's longtime councilmembers, opting for two newcomers to city politics and an incumbent in the Nov. 6 election.

Three-term Councilmember Pam Rianda was dealt a blow Tuesday, mustering a mere 1,171 votes in comparison to the three victorious candidates who each came in with more than 3,000 votes.

George Metropulos walked away with 31 percent of the vote Tuesday, with Dave Bauer right on his tail at 29.6 percent and incumbent Terri Cook not far behind with 25 percent. A late entry, Libertarian candidate Linden Hsu, earned just 8 percent of the vote with 1,070.

"I think that Belmont as a city spoke volumes as to how and where they want their city's direction to go in the future, and it didn't include one of the incumbents," Bauer said. "This will be a council that no one has ever seen before in this town and I think it will be for the better. I hope we can be a model for others to follow."

Metropulos, Bauer and Cook earned the name "The Top Three" from friends, supporters and campaign staff. They ran with the same intention — to bring the council together and move forward on projects like

traffic flow, a new police station and a downtown with a "small-town image" and "a big-town feel."

Rianda, who was seeking her fourth term on council, had the same views as her opponents. But she still placed fourth at the polls with 9 percent of the vote. Rianda

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## BELMONT: Council election

*Continued from 1A*

said she thinks the community wanted a complete change of pace.

"It's always hard to compete against a slate of opponents," Rianda said. "But I wish everyone the best of luck and good fortune, and hope they can do a good job for the city."

Bauer, an insurance agent with a wife and three children, hopes to bring some change and a fresh perspective to the council and city.

He also wants to improve the council's reputation of not getting along.

Both Cook and Metropulos, who were born and raised in Belmont, said they were looking forward to a new council and bringing some positive change to the city.

"I'm overwhelmed, and I think a lot more people came out and voted than was expected this year," said Metropulos. "I already

know that there are five people committed to a common goal and we'll go into it determined to reach it and make things happen."

Cook said that the new council would immediately start working on achieving that common goal, which is to come together as a unified team.

"There have been a lot of people looking forward to having some changes," she said. "I look forward to having Dave and George on the council. We're going to do so much and it's not what we're going to do, but how we're going to do it."

"Although we've been moving forward as a council the feeling isn't there that we have been," she added. "I think the feeling now is that there's gonna be some positive change and the people have been waiting for it for a long time."

Hsu, although placing last at the polls, said he was

glad that many people went out and voted for him and said he may run for council again in the future.

"I guess voters wanted someone with a bigger resume," said Hsu, who has only been living in Belmont for two years.

"But I want everyone who supported me and voted for me to know that I will still be very active in local politics," Hsu said. "I might run for City Council again. And if I do, I don't know if it will be the next election or the following one. It all depends on what I'm doing and other things I might be working on at the time."

As for Rianda, she doesn't know if she'll run for a seat again. "It's hard to go back once you're gone," she said. "Ask me in a couple years and maybe I'll decide to."

The elected councilmembers will officially be seated at the Nov. 27 City Council meeting.



# City considering view protection policy

## Residents would have to keep trees trimmed

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — City officials have begun reviewing a policy that would require residents to keep foliage on their property neatly trimmed so not to obstruct a neighbor's view from their home.

The ordinance comes on the heels of a recent Southern California court decision giving view protection laws validity.

"When I first got onto council I was interested in looking into something like this," said Mayor Eleanore Hahn. "Then I heard about this case in Rancho Palos Verdes earlier this year, and asked the city if we had anything like this and if they could look into it."

In a recent court case, a Rancho Palos Verdes man filed a complaint with the Second District California Court of Appeals about a view protection ordinance.

The ordinance prohibited residents of the town from significantly impairing a neighbor's view by allowing foliage to grow

in excess of a certain height.

The man was required to keep his trees trimmed so his neighbor would have a view of the ocean. The man claimed that the city was abusing its power by requiring residents to keep foliage trimmed.

However, the courts found that because the ordinance did not require the man to destroy his trees but simply trim them, his complaint was dismissed.

The case caught the attention of city officials, especially Mayor Hahn. She brought the idea to the City Council last month, and the Parks and Recreation Department and

City Attorney Jean Savaree are planning to look into it.

City Manager Jere Kersnar said he researched the Rancho Palos Verdes case and then looked into the city records for something similar.

"Rancho Palos Verdes passed this ordinance that required a person to keep the trees trimmed, so not to disrupt a neighbor's view," he said. "We looked into that here and found that we do not do that. We don't require residents to keep the trees trimmed to cater to a neighbor's view."

But what the city does have is a policy that helps neighbors

settle disputes regarding foliage and views, according to Parks and Recreation Director Karl Middlestadt. "It's not an ordinance and it doesn't require a resident to keep his foliage trimmed, but it does outline a process that neighbors can follow if they feel someone's foliage is obstructing a view," he said.

Middlestadt said that he would be presenting an updated policy to the Parks and Recreation Commission in early 2002. The updated policy might require a resident to keep trees trimmed, said Middlestadt.

## The 'force' is with maintaining open space in city

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The city wants to increase the number of outdoor youth activities, but feels that many of its fields and parks are not up to par.

Vice Mayor Dave Warden and Councilmember Paul Wright recently suggested implementing a task force that would oversee the maintenance of some of the city's open space, parks and athletic fields.

The task force would not only look into acquiring pieces of land in open space and city parks that could potentially be developed, but would look into renovating various athletic and school fields.

"The primary purpose of this task force is to look at improving the multiple outdoor recreational needs of the community," said Wright. "And that's everything from open space and walking trails to sports playing fields for youth."

Wright added, "There is an interest and need in outdoor activities here in Belmont and we hope this task force reaches as many needs in the community as possible."

Tentatively named the Green Task Force, Wright and Warden both said that the program is currently in the exploratory stage and the main goal right now is to look at what funding is available to implement it.

"What I see this task force doing initially is identifying sources of funding," Wright

said. "I don't know if its ultimate goal would be to initiate some sort of bond measure. At some point in time there may be some sort of bond or measure to cover expenses, but we do have other resources to fund this."

"When the Library Task Force was started, they knew at the outset that they were going to need a bond," Wright continued. "They also went out for funds before they knew that money was available from the state and Proposition 14. But I don't think that will be the case here. We do have the resources and we just have to find out what and where they are."

Warden pointed to the Summerhill project at the Peninsula Jewish Community Center site as one funding source for the task force.

Summerhill Homes plans to build some 48 townhouses at that site, after the PJCC moves to its new site in Foster City.

"The Summerhill group is also giving us \$1 million in return for the loss of the PJCC site," Warden said. "They're also giving about \$700,000 to \$800,000 in park and recreation fees as well, so we've got at least \$1.8 million that can be used."

"It's not as though we want to tax people," he added. "We need to first look at how much we can spend, how much money we have and what other sources for funds are out there, be it grants or donations or

something of that nature."

Warden said the next step is for an athletic field subcommittee to decide on the task force's policy and where to go with it.

Wright, who is on the subcommittee, said there is a possibility of presenting an initiative sometime in the future, but the idea must be presented to the City Council first.

"We want to explore what funding options we have for a broader set of specific needs with the potential of introducing a possible initiative to the voters at some point in the future," he said. "Then we'll bring the idea to the council and see if there's a realistic option to go forward at this point."

## the parks

*City Council  
by the Independent  
Nov 10, 2001*



# Council cuts meeting short to honor dead

## Meeting lasts just 10 minutes in wake of last Tuesday's tragedy

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The meeting room at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center usually seats about 70 audience members for its City Council and Planning Commission meetings.

But after last week's events in New York, the room was only set up to hold 24, as councilmembers cut short last week's meeting in honor of the Americans who perished in last Tuesday's terrorist attack.

"On behalf of our fellow Americans that have suffered today we will have a shortened meeting tonight," Mayor Eleanor Hahn said at the start of the council meeting. "It is a time to be at home with our families and collect our thoughts regarding the tragedy that has happened."

Because the meeting was abbreviated, the council only adopted its consent calendar and had one public hearing on a resolution authorizing the city manager to apply for a \$9,163 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Program.

"For the last five years, the U.S. Department of Justice has made grants available to local law enforcement departments all over the country," said Belmont Police Chief Greg Janke. "This year it's Belmont's turn. We'll be receiving the \$9,163 along with a required \$1,118 in matching funds the city is to provide."

"The grant will help the department purchase DARE cards, new bicycle patrol equipment, SWAT equipment, vehicle trunk organizers and an amplified sound system for the DARE program," he continued.

The sound system would be used by the DARE program and Police Department for community presentations at schools and community centers.

Last week the council was also to hear a report on the status of the City Hall remodel/retrofit project.

It had been reported at an Aug. 14 meeting that bids from architects came in \$2 million higher than the city originally anticipated, and the council was expected to hear what steps the city was taking to get the project underway.

But now, that topic won't be discussed until the Sept. 25 meeting, along with a discussion about the possibility of residential shuttles and a resolution supporting the San Mateo Community College District Facilities Improvement Bond in the Nov. 6 election.

City Manager Jere Kersnar said that Tuesday's shortened meeting would not cause the city to put more issues than needed on future agendas.

"The idea here is to get ourselves back on track," he said. "We'll do what we can to adjust the next agenda. There are a number of things we can possibly move to future agendas so they're balanced out."

While some agencies chose to cancel their next meetings, Kersnar said the city chose to merely shorten theirs to keep things running.

"We just wanted get some business out of the way and not load ourselves up," he said. "We just wanted to keep business operating."

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# City explores reasons

## Past and present councilmembers don't agree on cause

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — City staff expected to have started a project that would put them and the Police Department in the same building by now.

But when bids for construction costs came in last month, hope for the merger slowly faded.

"The architects from EKONA told us that all retrofitting was going to cost somewhere around \$5 million," said Vice Mayor Dave Warden. "No one

expected that it was going to be close to \$8 million. When we had the bid openings a couple months ago there was just dead silence. We opened the first envelope and saw how much was bid. We thought that was going to be the only one that was really high. Then we opened the second envelope and that one was higher, and the next one was and the next one after that."

In the wake of another failed attempt to move the Police Department out of its insufficient quarters, the council and city staff is searching for an answer to the question — what went wrong this time?

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Continued from 1A

After spending \$700,000 for consultants and architectural designs, councilmembers are calling for better project management and seeking answers from staff members.

Councilmember Pam Rianda doesn't want to place the blame on anyone, but stressed that all the data and information should have been thoroughly examined by city staff when the idea for the project first arose.

"Usually in the process there are milestones that need to be addressed, like cost and the amount of work that was needed to be done," she said. "We're not going to point fingers at anyone, but someone should have been looking at those things early on in the process."

Rianda added that when the city hired someone to estimate the cost for the project in the mid-'90s, not all the proper information was presented so the city could get a concise estimate.

"When the consultant first did an estimate, they did not have about 50 percent of the information needed to give a full estimate," she said. "Now I think the goal is to find out why didn't the person who was managing the project do his entire job, and staff is currently looking into that right now."

### The original plan

When the city first got estimates from consultants last summer, they were expecting the project to cost about \$5 million, an estimate reported to the city by the EKONA firm.

But when city officials opened the door for architects to bid on the project, the lowest estimate came in at \$8 million.

Last summer the council approved plans to move the Police Department into the first two floors of the City Hall and then retrofit the building to meet seismic standards. Construction was expected to begin last May.

But architectural designs had not been completed by the March due-date, which pushed

the date for accepting bids back four months.

In fact, at the April 12 council meeting when designs were to be presented, the architects didn't even attend the meeting to explain the delay, leaving the council empty-handed and unsure of what step to take.

When plans were finally finished in July, the county's Department of Corrections did not approve the design of the prisoner holding facilities and required plans to be redone.

After a quick revision, plans were finally ready, but then architects bid \$2 million higher than originally expected and the city did not have the extra money to foot the bill.

### Not the first time

This is not the first time that plans to retrofit City Hall have hit a brick wall, according to Rianda.

"When I first came onto the council back in 1989, I was on a committee to find a new City Hall before we moved into 1070 Sixth Street," she said. "And at that time we were told that the least expensive design would cost about \$19 million, and that's just a plain old rectangular building. Of course, we didn't have enough money and decided to scrap that idea."

"Before we finally moved into the creekside building [1070 Sixth Ave.] we thought we could purchase the building at market value and do a seismic retrofit," she added. "But after we moved in we were told we didn't have enough money and the building didn't need to be upgraded anyway."

Rianda said the council was unhappy with the seismic conditions of the building and wanted to retrofit in 1996.

Former councilmember Coralin Feierbach said the city should not have moved into the building in the first place because it wasn't designed for city government offices.

"That building is poorly designed and was wrong for the city to move into to begin with," she said. "It's an office building, and not designed to

house city offices. But staff at the time wanted to move out of the Fifth Avenue [space] because it was falling apart and was moldy and very old. What the city should have done is taken the building piece-by-piece and remodel it."

Instead, the city was forced to consider work on the new building since it was seismically unsafe and the police needed to move into it. But when the city bid the project out to Group Four, a design-build firm, "the designs were awful and they were shelved," Feierbach said.

But Adele Della Santina, another former councilmember, said the idea was scrapped because the city didn't like the design-build firm.

"We were all set and ready to go about four years ago, and the idea to retrofit was voted down 3-2 because some councilmembers were skeptical of design-build companies," said Della Santina. "I thought it was the way to go because it would have been less expensive to the city and the taxpayer. Now it's cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars and still nothing has moved forward."

Eventually, the city chose EKONA to create the plans, which the city planned to bid out to a contractor.

Feierbach said EKONA was chosen because their original estimate was \$10,000 lower than Group Four.

Unfortunately for the city, the cost kept getting higher as time went on.

"There's been a lot of steps to get this project started," said Feierbach. "And you can say it's this person's fault and it's that person's fault, but there really isn't anyone to place the blame on. It's just that the city went with architects from EKONA and it took forever to get plans and designs from them and the cost kept going up and up."

### The city staff's perspective

Vice Mayor Dave Warden said the whole process was misjudged from the start.

"I think the whole concept of

(over)



# for failed civic center

## Police desperate to move from decaying Twin Pines facility

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Leaking roofs, the lack of a holding facility and small storage space are just a few of the features in the Belmont police station that frustrate its officers and staff.

Their current station is very small compared to other police stations in the county, with four patrol officers crammed into a 10-by-12-foot office and available storage space for equipment decreasing each day.

During the rainy season, buckets are placed in nearly every room and on top of equipment to catch the water that drips in from the rooftops.

"The major reason we need a new facility is all the leaks in the roof right over our 911 unit," said Sgt. Don Mattes. "We'll literally place buckets in the hall and over the 911 [electronics] to catch the water so it doesn't damage any equipment."

There is no holding place for juveniles detained by officers, and fans must be kept running in the 10-by-14-foot computer rooms just to keep the air circulating.

POLICE: page 10A

## POLICE: Department needs new

## facilities

After a year of waiting for the City Council to deliver plans to move the Police Department into a better building, the project was ditched when bids came in over-budget. Now the City Council must decide how to get the police into a better facility, a promise that has been made since the police moved into its current station in 1978.

"This project has been started a number of times and there are two other sets of plans floating around somewhere," Mattes said. "And the going thing any more around here is just to hold our breath and see what happens. But I think this time plans will finally go forward."

The department moved into the building in Twin Pines Park, expecting its stay to be only temporary. In 1983 the department was told a new facility would be built in two years, and was told the same thing in 1985.

In 1998, when the city was interested in retrofitting City Hall, officials came up with a plan to move the Police Department into the building at 1070 Sixth St. But those plans fell through recently when the city learned it couldn't afford to proceed.

Police Chief Greg Janke, although he's new to the city, knows the importance and urgency of having a better facility.

"This facility kind of looks like a police department," he said. "But it's not intended to be one."

It's too small for us. It's poorly designed, but we've rearranged furniture and equipment and have tried to keep it relatively clean."

Although he is frustrated with the current facility size, Janke is confident that the city will do all it can to move the department into better quarters.

"I think we're one of the top-rated forces, but we're not in a very good representative facility," he said. "But the city's doing the best they can and I think they will make a solid and resolute decision on what direction to take."

Officer Dan DeSchmidt said that there are many embarrassing elements to the police department that need fixing, such as handicapped access.

"We have no handicapped access in our parking lot or lobby," said DeSchmidt. "We've

had people in wheelchairs come to report crimes and they can't come in so we have to take their reports out in the parking lot."

DeSchmidt added that it's not really the lack of space that's troublesome, just the poor quality of the facility.

"The facilities here are embarrassing," he said. "Members of the community come here for help and it's embarrassing having all the exposed equipment out and having such small bathrooms for them. It just keeps us from being as professional as we could be."

DeSchmidt added that there is a lack of holding space for people they detain, especially for juveniles.

"We also don't have a holding area for juveniles," he said. "Sometimes we have to put them in our offices if there aren't any adults in the holding area. The laws for holding juveniles are different from

the laws for holding adults."

The city is currently examining whether to construct an emergency building or tear down the existing police station and build a bigger, better one.

If the city decides to build a new facility, officials would most likely build the new station on the site of the current one.

Whichever option the council chooses, it could be another two years before construction is started.

retrofitting an entire building was grossly underestimated," he said. "I don't know who the 'they' is, but when the idea first came up they didn't know how much it was going to cost."

City Manager Jere Kersnar has said that the main reason for the underestimate and overbidding was foundation and electrical work, along with the need to keep city services operational during the construction process.

"It's just that the foundation work was more expensive than was originally thought," he said. "The foundation is essentially the heart of the project, and trying to lay a foundation down underneath an existing building is much more expensive than we thought."

"We also wanted to keep some city offices operational while construction was going on," he added. "And it complicates things for electrical contractors while they're trying to work because they can't shut off the power and water because employees can't work without it on."

Councilmember Paul Wright believes that no one is at fault for the delay.

"This is one of those classical situations where people make decisions with their best intentions and get so far down the line with a set goal, that when they step back they realize maybe this wasn't the best decision," he said.

"I guess it was two councils go that the council made their best decision with the information they had at the time," he added. "But then at different points in the process, assumptions were made that the city couldn't afford it like they could 10 years ago, and even with all the money in the world we still wouldn't be able to afford it."

"I think it was just a set of decisions that led us in a certain direction," he said. "And

was only when the process led us so high in cost that we couldn't go in that particular direction."

But the members of the Belmont Police Department hope that their troubles will finally be history when the city decides what kind of facility it wants to build for the department later this month.



*City Council  
The Independent  
Oct 20, 01*

# City approves bike bridge plans

## Construction scheduled to start in 2003

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The Belmont Sports Complex should be connected to the rest of Belmont by 2003, if all goes well and the city gets the funding it needs to move forward.

The City Council approved final designs for the Highway 101 pedestrian and bike bridge at recently, but Assistant City Engineer Duncan Jones said that construction is still about two years away.

City officials said the next step is to await Caltrans' approval of both the bridge design and the approaches to the bridge. The city is also waiting for an \$800,000 grant from the state.

The project is estimated to cost \$2.5 million, with \$1.6 million coming from outside sources like the Safe Routes to School program and the Governor's Transportation Improvement Program, among others. The city has also pledged \$100,000 to the project.

The City Council approval comes just one month after the Planning Commission suggested that Jones and architectural firm TY Lin International make some minor adjustments to the design.

Suggestions included adding plants or trees to the bridge to make it more appealing to pedestrians and bicyclists, and making the chain-link fence on the bridge stand straight.

Jones and architects from the San Diego-based TY Lin International had proposed that the fence stand at a slight outward angle to give those who cross the bridge the feeling of flying.

The idea of incorporating trees and plants on the bridge were dropped because of the extra cost and maintenance that would be involved.

"I'm very pleased with the whole process as well as the design," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "The process we've used with community outreach — talking to the residents and especially the kids — has really given us the opportunity to broaden our horizons when it comes to designing ideas.

"I was talking with Duncan and the architects after the meeting and they said they had a real fun time working with the community and the kids," she added. "They told me that the kids came up with designs that even they had never thought of."

Children from all over the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District suggested 150 different designs, including aquatic, forest and sports themes, as well as putting Taco Bell or McDonald's

restaurants at either end of the bridge.

Jones and the architects focused more on a wooded and aquatic theme. They combined the two ideas and came up with a sleek-looking bridge of concrete that will be built just north of the Ralston Avenue and Highway 101 interchanges.

"I've been pleased with progress we've made and hopefully we can keep moving forward and get the funding we need to make it work," said Cook. "We wanted something that was inviting and pleasing to people, not just residents but commuters. And the architects have worked hard to do that."

Along with a bridge built over Highway 101, the city will also create bike paths and bikeways along Old County Road and Masonic Way.

The city will also be installing traffic calming devices like extra curbs and more lighting at various intersections along the bike route.

"I think it's a great design," said Councilmember Pam Rianda. "Duncan and the architects went through a great community process in getting input from residents and moving forward. I can't wait to get it built."

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City Council  
of the Independent  
Oct 10, 2001

# Council scraps original City Hall project

## Plans changed after spending nearly \$750,000

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — It could be another two years until the Police Department is moved into better quarters.

City Council last week decided by a 5-0 vote not to continue with the original plan of remodeling City Hall, but instead to look into the idea of building some sort of stand-alone police facility.

That means that the city must hire a new architectural firm to create new designs, go through the design review process and look for bids from contractors again.

The original plan — one year and \$700,000 in the making — was to move the Police Department into the first and second floors of the existing City Hall at 1070 Sixth Avenue and retrofit the building to withstand a major earthquake.

But after more than a year of designing suitable plans and learning that the cost for such a project was \$2 million high-

er than expected, the council had to reconsider.

The council was faced with four options last week. And it chose to build either an emergency services building for the Police Department or build an entirely new police station somewhere in the city.

Other options were to continue with the original set of plans and somehow come up with another \$2 million to cover the \$7.8 million cost, or reject the original plans and start over from scratch.

"You should only accept plan A [the original project] if you

CITY HALL: page 3A

## CITY HALL: Police need new facility

Continued from 1A

think you can find the \$2 million and you think that there are no other viable options to take," City Manager Jere Kersnar told the council. "But city staff thinks that there are other viable options."

Kersnar explained that a new emergency services building, which would house dispatch, data and electronic equipment, a holding area and an emergency operations center, would cost about \$6.17 million.

To build an entirely new police station would cost about \$8.33 million.

Although both options are higher than the original \$5.6 million estimation for the first set of plans, Kersnar said that revenue from rental space could cover some of the additional costs.

The city is considering renting out the bottom floor of its current City Hall on Sixth Street for retail uses in an effort to pay for the construction at the police station.

"Because both options require moving people out of their existing space, we can then create more office space," Kersnar explained. "The additional revenue

would offset the costs and both projects could be achieved with existing funding."

He added that while both options are viable, the last one would be better for the city in the long run.

"Building an emergency services building is less risky, but building a new station is more preferable in terms of long-term use," he said.

Detective Michael Speak expressed the need for a new station as president of the Belmont Police Officers Association.

"In 1983 we were told we were going to have a new police facility in two years," he said. "And five years later we were told the same thing, and a couple years later we were told the same thing again."

He also pointed out conditions in the existing station merit a new facility.

"We have a heating problem in the winter and plumbing problems in the summer," he said. "It's not uncommon to see buckets with plastic bags to catch water leaking from the ceiling. We don't believe it's too much to ask for a decent workplace. With proper planning we can have a building we can all be happy with."

Kersnar said it could be as long as two years before construction starts because the city would have to come up with new

plans and determine where to put the new building.

Four sites were considered for the project, including the old City Hall site, the Barrett Community Center on Belburn Drive, the Walgreens block at the corner of Ralston and El Camino and the existing police station site at Twin Pines Park.

Parks and Recreation Commissioner George Kranen was concerned with building an entirely new facility on the current site.

"The entrance sign on Ralston says 'Twin Pines Park,' not 'Twin Pines Office Park' or 'Twin Pines Office Center,'" he said. "I'm concerned about ruining the entrance with a huge bunker-like building that's out of place and not consistent with the other buildings."

Hahn said that although the original plans hadn't turned out as expected, she was willing to move forward with the city's new idea.

"We haven't had much luck with estimates lately and I'm a little scared," she said. "But I'm willing to take a chance on this and see if we can do this."

The council will vote Oct. 23 on new plans for the police facility.



# City considers ways to reduce traffic

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Drivers on Ralston Avenue could see some changes in road conditions soon if the City Council implements traffic relief measures.

Traffic data presented to the council last month showed that approximately 30 to 33 percent of traffic on Ralston Avenue was passing through and using Ralston Avenue as a shortcut between Interstate 280 and Highway 101. Results were collected after consultants Kimley-Horn and Associates recorded the license plates of white cars over a two-day period during rush-hour traffic.

Now the council must soon decide if it is possible to reduce the percentage of cars just passing through Belmont.

"I do think there's a remediation we could do," said Vice Mayor Dave Warden. "I'd like to see what possibilities we have, what the cost of those would be and what impact it could have on the residents."

Some remediation ideas are to add more stoplights along Ralston Avenue to deter drivers from using the route as a shortcut or changing the timing on existing lights to improve the flow of traffic.

"I'd like to know if that's good or bad in relation to other communities before we



ERIN DAY

A line of cars crossed the intersection of Ralston Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas in Belmont, one of the areas surveyed in a traffic study initiated by the city.

move forward and decide what to do," said Councilmember Terri Cook.

Both Assistant City Engineer Duncan Jones and City Planner Craig Ewing said that comparing results with other communities would be hard to do since no other city in the county has done traffic studies in recent months.

Ewing suggested looking at what percentage of through traffic would be considered good by city standards.

"It's difficult to compare," he said. "But what we might talk about is if we have 33 percent of through traffic, how much reduction do we need to do in order to have a good traffic flow."

Councilmember Pam Rianda said that something needs to be done about the traffic immediately before Ralston gets so bad that it turns into a parking lot.

"There is a very high amount of frustration from residents who aren't able to get out onto Ralston in the morning, be it from Old County Road, Chula Vista or those who live on Ralston," she said. "We as a council have to decide what to do. If we make traffic unpleasant for a short time, some who choose Ralston to just pass through will choose to go another way so those who live here will be able to get

**'We as a council have to decide what to do. If we make traffic unpleasant for a short time, some who choose Ralston to just pass through will choose to go another way so those who live here will be able to get on Ralston.'**

Councilmember Pam Rianda

on Ralston."

City Manager Jere Kersnar said finding a solution to the traffic problem won't be easy.

"What we could do is figure out options and determine results," he said. "We'll bring options and policy to the council at a future meeting. We know that this is a big issue for residents and the council, but it won't be solved one meeting or even three."

Wes Bowers can be reached via e-mail at [wbowers@smindependent.com](mailto:wbowers@smindependent.com) or at 652-6766.



SUSAN CALDWELL

Under the city's original plans to retrofit the building, the Planning Department would have undergone changes along with the rest of City Hall.



## Belmont

### Council to decide fate of police department remodel

The City Council is scheduled to vote tonight on the fate of the city hall/police facility remodel after receiving bids over what was budgeted.

The lowest bid the city received to revamp city hall to move police officials into the facility was \$7,845,000, more than half of what was anticipated the project would cost.

The city will be looking at other options now, including building a stand-alone police facility. The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center, 1223 Ralston Ave.

## Belmont

### Council OKs ordinance to merge lots

The City Council passed an ordinance Tuesday night that would allow the city to merge subdivided lots in the San Juan Canyon in hopes that it will reduce the amount of development on the area's steep terrain.

The ordinance was introduced by the council last August.

The idea goes back to 1988, when the City Council adopted the San Juan Hills Area Plan, which included a provision that said attempts would be made to merge lots on sheer terrain that were subdivided.

City officials hope that by joining subdivided lots, it will avoid potential for developers to build on geologically unstable land.

None of the lots affected by this ordinance are on existing streets.

The City Council recently appointed a committee and hired a consultant to study the issue further.

What they discovered is that under the California Subdivision Map Act, local governments can merge private property under certain conditions.

### Council OKs design for pedestrian bridge

The City Council approved a conceptual design for the proposed Highway 101 bicycle/pedestrian bridge at its meeting Tuesday night.

The proposed plans include a conventional-style bridge with some unusual elements. For example, plans show the fencing to look like rolling hills and waves. In addition, the fencing may have different colored mesh.

The city has \$1.7 million earmarked for the \$2.5 million project. City officials have applied for grants to come up with

the rest of the money.

If all goes as planned, construction will begin in the spring of 2003 and will take about 15 months to complete.

BELMONT CITY COUNCIL  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
SEPT. 2 & OCT. 11, 2001



Belmont  
The Independent  
Aug 7, 2001

AUGUST 7, 2001

THE INDEPENDENT SERVING BELMONT AND SAN CARLOS

# R.C., Belmont to pay for U.S. 101 work

## Caltrans review delays cities' project timetable

By Kathy Schrenk  
Independent Newspapers

REDWOOD CITY — In an effort to get the Ralston/Marine Parkway interchange improvement built faster, Belmont and Redwood Shores decided to pay for the project themselves — instead of waiting for Caltrans to find funding. But that doesn't seem to be helping them start the project any sooner.

By now, the cities had hoped construction would be well underway to relieve traffic from the overburdened interchange. Instead, all the two cities have is the funding and a project on paper.

The hold-up is a wait for Caltrans approval, since the interchange is state property.

But because the agency is understaffed and the project is low on its priority list, construction on the interchange still awaits Caltrans approval, meaning construction won't start until the last quarter of 2002 — at the earliest.

The southern San Mateo County portion of Highway 101 will be experiencing lots of roadwork in the next few years. But not all of it will be paid for by the California Transportation Department.

This is "a painfully long process," said John Curtis, Belmont's public works director. He said the plans were submitted to Caltrans for review a month ago — and some projects have taken as long as six months to get approved.

Redwood City Civil Engineer Peter Vorametsanti agreed. "We can't even get an estimated time and that's been a big, big problem for us," he said. "It could happen tomorrow, it could happen a year from now."

The cities' aim with the project is to make the interchange more efficient and allow direct access to Island Parkway from Highway 101. Currently the interchange is a full cloverleaf, and the plan calls for making it a partial cloverleaf. This means the ramps exiting the freeway will end at signal lights and the ramps entering the freeway will be loops.

The partial cloverleaf has "a much larger capacity to deal with traffic," said Vorametsanti. "A lot of interchanges are going to this."

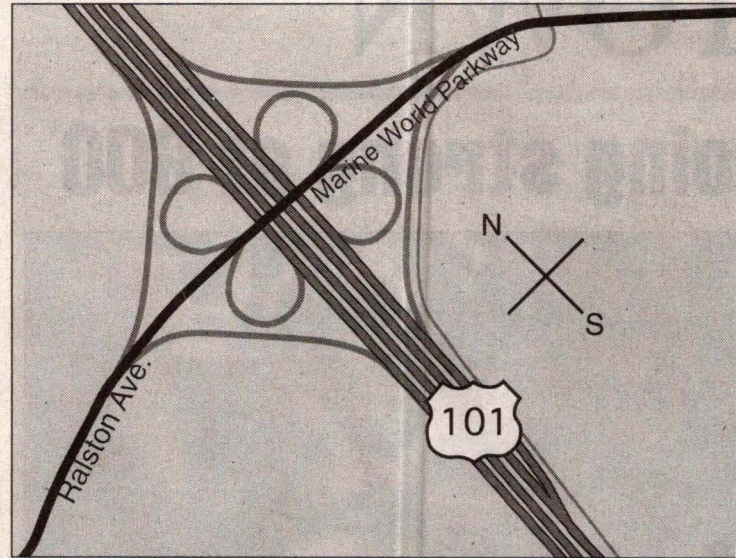
Caltrans Project Engineer Romy Acob said the agency is reviewing the cities' plans right now. "It's still a state facility so they have to comply with our standards," he said.

The cities hope to have plans completed and the project ready to go out to bid by next spring, with construction finished in 2003. And Acob said Caltrans expects to help the cities keep to that schedule. "We'd like to have that happen," he said.

The total cost of the Ralston interchange project is \$15 million, which the two cities are splitting in half.

The project will help relieve traffic in the southern part of the county in addition to a current Caltrans project to add auxiliary lanes between exits from Ralston Avenue to Hillsdale Boulevard. The auxiliary lanes project is funded by Caltrans. Next year, Caltrans will begin adding lanes from Ralston Avenue to Marsh Road.

The Ralston interchange arrangement, in which the cities are paying for a project on state-owned land, is not entirely unusual, said Vorametsanti. San Mateo is funding ongoing work on the Hillsdale Boulevard interchange, he said. And Daly City is paying for the widening of John Daly



The Ralston Avenue/Marine Parkway interchange clogs up everyday as workers try to merge onto Highway 101.

Boulevard, according to Acob.

"It's occurring more and more," said Vorametsanti.

The cities are going this route because Caltrans has major projects, such as the Devil's

Slide tunnel and Route 92 passing lanes that are higher on its priority list.

Kathy Schrenk can be reached at 652-6754.



# Ten homes proposed for Agape Center site

## Council says too many units

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Another developer team has come to Belmont with the intention to develop homes in San Juan Canyon, but the council doesn't share their vision.

James Chu and Tony Ponterio, of the Burlingame-based LTI Engineers, presented the idea of building 10 single-family homes on a 3.4-acre site to the City Council dur-

ing a study session last week. The homes would be built where the Agape Renewal Center, a cluster of church buildings, currently stands.

"We've had a community meeting at the site and got a lot of feedback from people in the area," Ponterio told the council. "And before we submit our site plan we'd like to hear comments and feedback from you."

Although many members of the audience, as well as Councilmembers Dave Warden and Pam Rianda, wore green "Save the Canyon"

stickers to show their support of protecting the site from development, some other residents expressed support of building the homes.

"Sounds great to me," said Andrew Williams, who lives on Bishop Road. "This will make the neighborhood more secure for children and neighbors, as well as increase our house values."

Nearby residents and members of the San Juan Canyon Preservation Trust disagreed, bringing up concerns of density, safety and the

**HOMES:** page 5A



ERIN DAY

LTI Engineers wants to place 10 homes on the 3.4 acre Agape Renewal property just off Bishop Road.

## HOMES: Development sparks debate over open space

Continued from 1A

neighborhood sewer system.

"The sewer system is at its full capacity and an additional load would paralyze the system," said Rana Ahmadi, who lives directly across the street from the site. "Driveways on such a steep slope would be dangerous to cars entering and exiting the street and the streets are very narrow. If this project is approved, hauling construction materials should be addressed."

Bishop Road resident Al Bullock also expressed concern about the infrastructure, as well as the condition of the

streets.

"There have been problems with soil erosions, and the street is falling apart up there," he said. "There's one house up there with a pump on it that's actually pushing sewage down Bishop Road, because the sewer system has been backed up since Agape was put there. The infrastructure is the most important thing, not housing."

City Planner Carlos de Melo said because of the site's steep grade, a maximum of seven homes could be built, but that number was too high for the council.

"I'm supportive of constructing single-family homes, and I agree with some of the concerns about density," said Councilmember Paul Wright. "I don't know if three to five homes is good, but there should definitely be less than seven."

Eric Dentler, the newly-elected president of the San Juan Canyon Preservation Trust, urged the council to prohibit the development.

"Open space is good for home values," Dentler said. "Adding more homes is a direct hit on public works and the infrastructure. When

developers start bearing down, we'd like you to take a proactive approach to looking at these plans."

Mayor Eleanor Hahn supported the idea of capping growth.

"I've always been a proponent of low density although I haven't been very successful with some projects we've been presented with," she said. "But if we want to keep construction at a minimum I will be a strong advocate."

Chu and Ponterio said they are willing to work with the city in addressing all concerns.

"We don't have a problem with revising the plan or working with the Planning Department," Chu said. "We just wanted to hear your concerns and get some feedback."

The pair's next step will be to work with city planners and then bring a detailed site analysis with floor and grading plans to the Belmont Planning Commission.

very concerned  
the independent  
Aug. 21, 2001



# Council to look at City Hall options tonight

## Remodel project stalled by lack of funds, overbidding

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The City Council, tired of pushing plans to redesign City Hall further down the road, will examine a handful of options to get the ball rolling after more than a year of waiting.

Plans originally approved last summer slated construction to begin by May 8. But the project hit several roadblocks this year, including a redesign of police facilities proposed for the new building, a lack

of presentable designs and lack of funds for construction.

At the Aug. 18 council meeting, bids for the project came in higher than originally expected at \$2 million. The city has already spent an estimated \$700,000 on consultants and architectural designs for the project.

Now the city must decide to either keep moving forward with the original plans or scrap plans to remodel all of City Hall and just build a new police station.

"We'll be giving council four options," said City Manager Jere Kersnar. "One is to accept the bids as they are and somehow come up with the extra money."

He said that extra money could come from the redevelopment fund or the

city's general fund.

But money from the redevelopment fund could only be used for the Police Department's facilities and buildings, and if money were to be taken from the general fund the city would have to pay it back and be in debt for years.

"The second option is to reject the bids and start the bidding process all over," he added. "However, our analysts have said that the numbers wouldn't change much. The third would be to reject the bids and change the project to build a stand-alone police services building, or the fourth option is to reject the bids, reconceptualize our plans and just build a new Police Department building.

"Of the four, we're recommending the

third and fourth options," he said. "A decision doesn't have to be made now, but it has to be made soon. We can do the third and fourth options with the funds we currently have."

Kersnar said that if the city were to take the third option the police services building would not include the entire police department, just the dispatch department, emergency services and similar departments.

If the city were to choose the fourth option, he added, the only reasonable place for a new police building would be somewhere on the Twin Pines campus.

Kersnar said that bids came to the city higher than expected over the summer

**COUNCIL:** page 3A

## COUNCIL: Project stalled by lack of funding

Continued from 1A

for a number of reasons.

"As near as we can tell the foundation work was more expensive than was expected," he said. "We also wanted to stay in the building while construction was going on and it complicates things for contractors and building facilities. They can't work around us, and while we're in the building they can't just shut off the power and water."

Offices like Public Works and Community Development were to be relocated somewhere in the building while construction was going on, but for

the city to afford any type of remodel, those departments would have to be moved out of the building.

"If we have to move them out of the building we have to put them somewhere," Kersnar said. "But right now there is no place to put them."

Other city departments like Kersnar's office, the city clerk, finance and human resources were to be moved to the nearby Lodge building.

When the council makes its decision tonight, Kersnar said the city is still uncertain when construction will finally begin.

"We don't know when the start date

would be," he said. "But every day that we delay, the cost goes up just a little."

Vice Mayor Dave Warden said he was very unhappy with the way the project had gone.

"I think the whole process is inefficient," he said. "I understand there's a lot of blame that's been levied on the architect and I think that's the case. I'm personally and extremely disappointed with the level of service we received from our consultants. Several years ago we thought that it was cheaper to move the police and city offices into one building, and now it turns out that's not the case."

city council  
the first president  
Sept 25, 2001



# Belmont explores

## Officials take cost, locations under consideration

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — To give the citizens of Belmont a better look at the residents running for a seat on the council, the city is considering televising a candidates forum.

The forum is the one opportunity during the election where candidates can publicly express their platforms, background and reasons for seeking a seat on the council.

Councilmember Dave Warden, who suggested the idea, said televising the event would give the candidates more exposure and give Belmont residents better insight.

"I thought that since we've recently begun to televise our council meetings, it would be good to televise a candidates forum," he said. "We could pick a night to do it, have the League of Women Voters or another group to moderate the whole thing and just keep politics out of it."

Although Warden himself is not running for a seat this year, he said he wanted to televise the forum for the benefit of the candidates who are running — incumbents Pam Rianda and Terri Cook and newcomers Linden Hsu,

George Metropulos and Dave Bauer.

Mayor Eleanor Hahn, although in support of the idea, said that the city should not have to cover the cost or put it together.

"I'd like to know if there is some sort of charge for televising this," she said. "And if so, I don't think the city should be involved. Maybe some of the homeowners' associations could do it. But I'd also like to know if it's appropriate and legal for the city to do it, if it has to."

Attorney Greg Rubens, sitting in for Jean Savaree, said, "each year the Chamber of Commerce in San Carlos sponsors a candidates forum, and they cover the charge."

Cook had an idea that several groups could pitch in to cover the cost. "If there is a huge charge, maybe we could get the Chamber and the homeowners' associations to go in on it together," she said.

Belmont Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charmaine Hope said the chamber would be open to sponsoring the event if it were asked, but some things stand in the way.

"It depends on how much it would cost and when it would be," said Hope. "We wouldn't say no to it, but we'd like to know if the city even wants us involved, because we're not a political association and

*city experience  
The Independent  
August 25, 2001*



# televising candidate debates

should not get involved with political issues."

City Manager Jere Kersnar warned the council that because several other Peninsula cities could be televising their candidate forums too, local television could be tied up for the next couple months.

"You have to remember that many cities on the Peninsula are having elections as well," said Kersnar. "So it will be interesting to find out what community television will be doing in the next few months."

Rianda, who is a candidate in the November election, said the idea of televising a forum was a great way to get the word out about the candidates.

"I think it's an excellent idea," she said. "A lot of people can't get out to candidates night. You certainly wouldn't have any interchange between candidates by watching on television, but you can watch and listen and be given the chance to contact the candidates and express questions or concerns."

But Rianda was also concerned with the legality of the city paying for the forum.

"I'm just concerned with whether or not it's legal for the city to use taxpayers' money to pay for it," she said. "Right now our city attorney is looking into that, but if we

can do it I'm all for it."

Rianda added that at press time, many homeowners' associations were meeting to discuss whether they would sponsor or pay for the forum.

Council candidate Metropulos agreed that televising the forum was a great way to give Belmont citizens a look at how the political process works.

"I think that any opportunity to get as many people involved in the political process and becoming informed and aware of the candidates is great," he said. "It allows them to become educated about each of the candidates and where they stand."

At press time, city officials didn't know exactly how much televising a candidate's forum would cost or when it would take place. They believe, though, it could cost anywhere from \$300 to \$800, depending on where and when it's taped.

"There are different ways it could be done," said Assistant City Manager Dan Rich. "We could use the community center and have Impact videotape it, or we could go to the Peninsula-TV studio and tape it there. If we do a stand-alone night where nothing would come on TV before or after us, it would be about \$600 to \$800. But if we did it back to back with San Carlos, the cost

would be much lower. And doing it in the community center would be about \$400. But no solid decisions have been made yet."

City staff is currently researching costs and avail-

able times for the council, and will report back to them at an upcoming meeting.

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City Hall  
The Independent  
Aug 28, 01

# City Hall on hold

## Project put on back burner

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Frustration over the City Hall remodel project climbed to a new level after the City Council recently learned that plans have been once again delayed — this time over a cost of \$2 million.

The total cost of the project had been estimated at \$6,233,513. But because bids came in at about 40 percent higher, the total cost is expect-

ed to be \$8,726,918, according to Public Works Director John Curtis.

That means that plans to remodel and retrofit City Hall will be pushed back for an undetermined time.

The plan to remodel City Hall was approved last summer and construction had been tagged to begin on May 8 of this year.

But architects from the firm EKONA did not have plans ready by the proposed start date, so the city decided to hold off on accepting bids until Aug. 12.

CITY HALL: page 5A

# CITY HALL: Project on hold again

Continued from 1A

"We have received bids from developers for City Hall, but they all came in very high," Curtis told the City Council at its last meeting. "You have 60 days to make a final decision, and we would like to bring information back to you as to why the bids were so high."

City Manager Jere Kersnar said that the city also hopes to have something the council can approve by Sept. 9.

"This is more than just a finger-crossed hope that we can conceptualize this project," he said. "We hope to have a design and a cost established that's within our budget and the means to move forward."

City Councilmembers are still not pleased "I'm sure we all share the same frustration that the project hasn't begun," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "Waiting probably won't make anything cheaper, but I do support putting this project on hold."

Cook also pointed out that putting the project on hold may hurt the city financially. "Because we've put things in motion to have other departments relocate to the lodge building, the lodge now

**'We have received bids from developers for City Hall, but they all came in very high. You have 60 days to make a final decision, and we would like to bring information back to you as to why the bids were so high.'**

John Curtis,  
Public Works Director

won't be available for rental in the future when it was supposed to open after construction."

The city rents out the lodge building next to the Twin Pines Community Center by reservation. Now, anyone who had reservations for the lodge after the City Hall project was supposed to be finished will most likely lose them.

Councilmember Pam Rianda said that the long process reminded her of the

problems the city had with getting the grade separation project underway.

"We've been through this process for so long and now we get to what we think is the end only to find out we don't have enough money," she said. "This is almost like deja vu, like when we were doing the grade separation. We went out for bids, and it had to come back to the council because they were too high. So we had to go back and start all over from scratch."

Phase I of the project not only includes retrofitting City Hall for seismic earthquake standards, but also relocating the Police Department into the building.

Once completed, residents will be able to find both city government and law enforcement in the same location.

Police department offices like DARE, the juvenile offices and the crime lab will be located on the first floor of City Hall, while the second floor will house police administration, records and the chief's office.

The third floor will be home to city government, council chambers, public works and the Finance Department.

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City of Belmont  
The Independent  
Aug 15, 01

# Meeting held to improve permit process

## Developers and homeowners express concern about service

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The city is taking measures to improve its permit process in response to homeowners and developers who complain it is too cumbersome and lengthy.

Last week, Craig Ewing, director of planning held a public meeting to gather input in an effort to improve customer service for those going through the permit process in the city.

"The City Council recognizes that the permit process in Belmont is in serious need of improvement," he said. "So city staff went out and hired a consultant who interviewed people that have applied for permits or have already gone through the process and will look at the situation from a third-party perspective."

Consultant Bob Beyer looked at three areas that needed improvement in the department — the application process, customer service and the legislative review process.

Some of those in attendance said that the application process was very frustrating because it takes the department a long time to get back to applicants with comments and concerns.

"I have to submit 15 sets of drawings to the department and wait 30 days for comments," said architect Jerry Chapman. "But I don't get a comment until the 29th day, which I think is a little late in the process."

"Then I have to submit 15 more drawings to another department and wait another 30 days. Then submit again. It

just keeps pushing my plans further down the road and expanding the time I have to wait to start."

Chapman said the city needs to develop a better process for letting applicants know the status of their permits. "There needs to be a process either by phone or Internet that lets us know where things stand," he said. "If plans are hung up somewhere, let us know where it is and how we could fix it."

Chapman said, "The staff seems to review plans 10 days prior to a commission meeting, and they call you just a couple days prior to it. But you can't expect developers who are working at other sites to run around and get some more things you've requested at the last minute."

Summerhill Homes Developer Craig Champion said a detailed checklist would help applicants be more organized when it's time to bring plans to the department's front counter.

"Having a checklist given to us when we apply would be very helpful," he said. "When you give us just a written run-down of what we need to present, it does not explain a whole lot in detail. A checklist with detailed steps of what to do would be much better and would avoid a lot of confusion."

Meeting attendees said that customer service was just a little bit better. While building and planning personnel at the front counter have been helpful, they said that a lot has been put on applicants.

"They want you to have all kinds of stuff together, but they shouldn't expect us to run

around blindly to get it," Chapman said. "But the service is 1,000 percent better than it was five years ago."

Homeowner Karen Shane said that when she spoke with someone at the front counter they were negative and told her she needed to do a lot more than what she had done, like telling her neighbors what she intended to do and if they were OK with it.

"The first person I talked to was very negative," she said. "But they did outsource me to someone and I was lucky enough to be placed on an agenda within a couple weeks."

"But on the building side of it, I got an approval for planning but a person in building needed a document I didn't have," Shane said. She told them the planning division had the papers and they could get it from them. "But they said they couldn't do it because it was a different department, even though they were sitting right next to that other person."

However, many attendees were pleased with the legisla-

tive review process, which sends the project through both the Planning Commission and City Council for approval.

"I got input from both the Planning Commission and City Council who suggested I go to the community and get their input," said Champion. "So we went through a number of neighborhood meetings and thought it was a very good and valuable process."

Beyer said it was definitely the right time for the Planning Department to undergo some changes, and assured those in attendance that their concerns would be taken into consideration in developing a better planning process.

"I think that people in the department are very committed to making a change and some areas definitely need help," he said. "The time is right for some change and we have many people that support that change."

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CITY COUNCIL  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIME  
AUGUST 29, 2001

# Belmont introduces plan to curb development

It would allow  
city to merge  
subdivided lots

By T.S. Mills-Faraudo  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The City Council introduced an ordinance Tuesday night that would allow the city to merge subdivided lots in the San Juan Canyon in the hope that it will reduce the amount of development on the area's steep terrain.

A public hearing on the ordinance is scheduled for Oct. 9.

"This land isn't very buildable to begin with," Councilman Dave Warden said in an interview. "And if they ever did build roads up there, this would reduce the amount of development."

The idea goes back to 1988, when the City Council adopted

the San Juan Hills Area Plan, which included a provision saying attempts would be made to merge lots on sheer terrain that were subdivided.

City officials hope that by joining subdivided lots, it will avoid potential for developers building on geologically unstable land.

The City Council recently appointed a committee and hired a consultant to study the issue further.

What they discovered is that under the California Subdivision Map Act, local governments can merge private property under certain conditions.

For example, the parcel can't conform to minimum parcel size of that zone. It must be undeveloped or developed with only an accessory structure. And it must have one of a number of attributes. It must be less than 5,000 square feet in

area and not have been created in compliance with applicable laws. It must not meet current standards for sewage disposal or water supply nor conform to slope stability standards. It must have no legal vehicle access for safety equipment. It must be determined that development would create health or safety hazards, or there are inconsistencies with the general plan other than lot size or density standards.

Streets where there is potential for lot mergers, according to city officials, include Alhambra Drive, Monte Cresta Drive, San Ardo Way, Marburger Avenue, upper and lower Lock Avenue and Bartlett Way.

About a dozen people from a group trying to save San Juan Canyon land were at the meeting. They wore "Save San Juan Canyon" stickers and encouraged others at the meeting,

including council members, to wear them.

Coralin Feierbach, former mayor and one of the leaders of this group, said it was about time the council introduced the ordinance.

"I think it's vital. I tried to do it when I was on the council," she said.

Community development director Craig Ewing said there are up to 200 lots that could be merged.

If the ordinance is adopted and lots are merged, owners of the property will have the right to appeal the union.

(OVER)



City Council  
The Independent  
Sept. 18, 2001

# Council cuts meeting short to honor dead

## Meeting lasts just 10 minutes in wake of last Tuesday's tragedy

By Wes Bowers  
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The meeting room at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center usually seats about 70 audience members for its City Council and Planning Commission meetings.

But after last week's events in New York, the room was only set up to hold 24, as councilmembers cut short last week's meeting in honor of the Americans who perished in last Tuesday's terrorist attack.

"On behalf of our fellow Americans that have suffered today we will have a shortened meeting tonight," Mayor Eleanor Hahn said at the start of the council meeting. "It is a time to be at home with our families and collect our thoughts regarding the tragedy that has happened."

Because the meeting was abbreviated, the council only adopted its consent calendar and had one public hearing on a resolution authorizing the city manager to apply for a \$9,163 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Program.

"For the last five years, the U.S. Department of Justice has made grants available to local law enforcement departments all over the country," said Belmont Police Chief Greg Janke. "This year it's Belmont's turn. We'll be receiving the \$9,163 along with a required \$1,118 in matching funds the city is to provide."

"The grant will help the department purchase DARE cards, new bicycle patrol equipment, SWAT equipment, vehicle trunk organizers and an amplified sound system for the DARE program," he continued.

The sound system would be used by the DARE program and Police Department for community presentations at schools and community centers.

Last week the council was also to hear a report on the status of the City Hall remodel/retrofit project.

It had been reported at an Aug. 14 meeting that bids from architects came in \$2 million higher than the city originally anticipated, and the council was expected to hear what steps the city was taking to get the project underway.

But now, that topic won't be discussed until the Sept. 25 meeting, along with a discussion about the possibility of residential shuttles and a resolution supporting the San Mateo Community College District Facilities Improvement Bond in the Nov. 6 election.

City Manager Jere Kersnar said that Tuesday's shortened meeting would not cause the city to put more issues than needed on future agendas.

"The idea here is to get ourselves back on track," he said. "We'll do what we can to adjust the next agenda. There are a number of things we can possibly move to future agendas so they're balanced out."

While some agencies chose to cancel their next meetings, Kersnar said the city chose to merely shorten theirs to keep things running.

"We just wanted get some business out of the way and not load ourselves up," he said. "We just wanted to keep business operating."

Wes Bowers can be reached via e-mail at [wbowers@smindependent.com](mailto:wbowers@smindependent.com) or at 652-6766.



## BELMONT CITY COUNCIL

		<u>Term Expires</u>
<b>Terri Cook, Mayor</b> 300 Davey Glen, #3402 Belmont, CA 94002	610-5716 (voice mail) 595-2790 (home) 637-2981 (fax) tcook@ci.belmont.ca.us	11/01
<b>Eleanore Hahn, <del>Vice</del> Mayor</b> PMB 81 2033 Ralston Ave. Belmont, CA 94002-1737	592-6615 (home) 610-5717 (voice mail) 810-2939 (Mobile phone) 631-5817 (fax) ehahn@ci.belmont.ca.us	11/01
<b>Pamela Rianda</b> <i>Buyon</i> 4217 Skymont Dr. Belmont, CA 94002	591-3810 (home) 638-8989 (pager) 508-2100 (fax) prianda@ci.belmont.ca.us	11/01
<b>David Warden</b> 2414 Casa Bona Ave. Belmont, CA 94002	593-3270 (home/work) 593-3269 (fax) warden@softessn.com	11/03
<b>Paul Wright</b> 910 South Road Belmont, CA 94002	637-1884 (home) 813-8944 (fax) 813-8949 ext. 317 (voicemail) paulwright@jmperry.com	11/03

The City Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month  
at 7:30 p.m. in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center,  
1223 Ralston Avenue, Belmont.





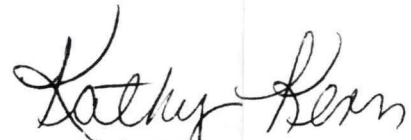
November 15, 2000

## CITY OF BELMONT

### REORGANIZATION OF CITY COUNCIL

At a Regular Meeting of the City Council, held on November 14, 2000, the Belmont City Council reorganized as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>TERM ENDS</u>
Eleanore Hahn, Mayor	11/01
Dave Warden, Vice Mayor	11/03
Paul Wright	11/03
Pamela Rianda	11/01
Terri Cook	11/01

  
Kathy Kern  
Belmont City Clerk

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