

Flags raise concerns for councilmember

Charges fly over improper use of American symbol for business

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

American flags are flying high in Belmont, but some not so grandly, according to one city councilmember.

Dave Warden told fellow councilmembers he's concerned with a number of shabby flags flying or used for advertising purposes along Belmont's business corridor and wants to see if the city can do anything about it.

"I have seen flags tattered, left out in the rain, at night, falling apart, without any lighting, not hung properly [and] used for advertising," Warden said at last week's City Council meeting, after reading aloud a list of American flag protocol.

"Personally I think it's wrong and I'm just wondering if there's anything we can do about it as a city to have a little more respect for the flag," he said, adding that it's not his intent to target any one business.

The council came to a consensus to explore the matter further, hoping to find out for a future meeting if particular if any other cities enforce flag regulations.

The issue of advertising and the patriotic symbol has surfaced in a number of court cases, particularly regarding its use in articles of clothing. City Attorney Jean Savaree pointed out.

"There is specific government code section," Savaree added, "that indicates that in the State of California you can place some restrictions on use of the American flag for advertising."

Belmont already has a number of codes in place relating to business signage, from promotional banners to use of window space, but none deal in particular with use of the American flag, according to city officials.

Tradition dictates, though, that flags receive certain treatment.



SUSAN GARRISON

Judy's Flag City was the topic of discussion at a recent Belmont City Council meeting after Councilmember Dave Warden questioned the use of the American Flag for business and advertising.

a certain point it should be retired," said John Butterfield, who leads Boy Scout Troop 149 of Redwood City.

Butterfield said he frequently sees business and individuals flying worn out flags, and explained that Boy Scouts hold a special ceremony to burn and discard flags past their prime. Other traditional rules include taking down flags for the night or during rain.

Mayor Terri Cook said that while she didn't disagree with Councilmember Warden's reasoning she's worried the city might be entering a gray area.

"I would like to know what sort of constitutionality that we have to enforce this"

"I'm a little bit concerned about what constitutes advertising. I suspect that in some of the cases that [the city attorney] is talking about that's probably an issue that was raised," Cook added. "Because, is wearing the flag as an article of clothing advertising or is it an expression of free speech?"

One local business owner says she is not too worried about the issue and doesn't anticipate she'll have to remove the number of American flags she flies around the perimeter of her El Camino Real store anytime soon.

"I think it's a dead issue," said Judy Sheldon, who owns Judy's Flag City and

Belmont, which not only flies the flags but sells them.

The city has no right to regulate the use of the patriotic symbol or standards, the business owner contends. Such matters, she believes, are a state or federal issue.

"Where do you draw the line when it's advertising and not advertising?" she asked, adding that the American flags outside her business could just as easily be a show of her patriotism.

Businesses up and down El Camino Real display the flag, Sheldon said, some of which may have even bought them from her store.

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the
Tel. 2-8-000

City of Belmont
The Independent
Feb 16, 2000

More projects planned for the downtown

Office and retail space adds to new look in City of Belmont

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Belmont officials voiced concerns ranging from parking availability to building aesthetics last week after taking an early look at a new, three-story retail and office complex planned for the city's budding downtown.

Proponents say the project would tie into architecture of the nearby Village Center and other downtown redevelopment by replacing two older and less-than-ideal buildings between 873 and 883 Ralston Ave. with a more attractive, turn-of-the-century style structure.

"My partners and myself are delighted that downtown Belmont is finally developing — coming to fruition," said Dr. Adil Jadallah, one of the partners in the much-discussed project that was slated for additional design review by the city's Planning Commission earlier this week.

"Even though we have two buildings that are paid for, rented out ... we decided to go for a project that's a little bit bigger, more conforming to the present downtown," he said.

After reviewing the building concepts for the project at its meeting Feb. 8, the councilmembers said they were generally impressed with the design of the new building but concerned about its planned location on Emmett Street and whether or not it would

provide enough parking for downtown patrons.

"I like a lot of the aspects of this building. I think it's a pretty exciting design overall," said Mayor Terri Cook. Cook and several other councilmembers said though they didn't advocate plans to place the entrance of the building on Emmett Street because it wouldn't comply the city's downtown plan. The plan includes a document put together several years ago that encourages placing business frontage along Ralston Avenue.

"If the building were to be placed on Emmett it would really be the only one that would not have a frontage on Ralston," Cook said, adding that the city is also working to eliminate a street-side parking lot across the street at Walgreen's, filling out Ralston Avenue with new businesses. "It would feel odd to me to have that," she said.

Plans for the first story of the three-story complex — which is estimated to cost \$2.5 to \$3 million and is being designed by the same architect of the adjacent Village Center — consist of four tentative spaces for retail shops, divided by a mall with a skylight. The second floor would be set aside for office space and two residential units would be placed on the third floor. Developers also plan to create covered parking beneath an overhang from the

DOWNTOWN: Projects planned

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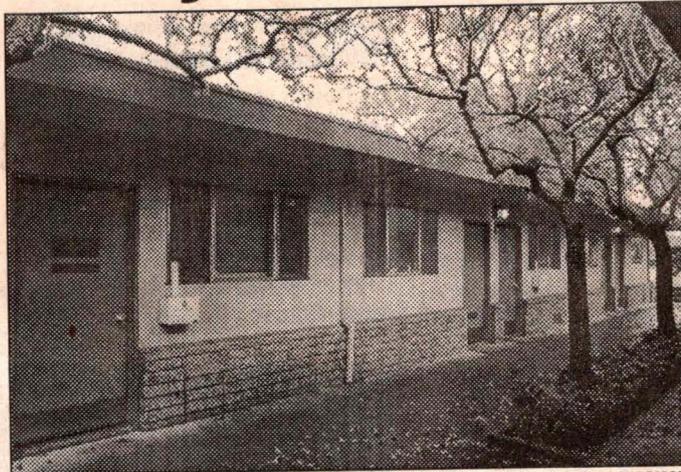
second floor at the back of the building.

Proponents say the front of the new building needs to face Emmett Street so that its retail stores can succeed financially by bringing in foot traffic.

"We had two professional opinions from developers. Both said the building should be on Emmett not on Ralston," said Jadallah, who added that he and his partner Dr. William Jordan hope to make the project attractive to retail tenants in order to recover building costs.

The multi-level parking garage planned for the Walgreen's block across the street should help to bring shoppers to the area, Councilmember Dave Warden pointed out.

"I think you've done a pretty good job to try to make it look nice," he said. "I think it's [currently] too big of a hole in a very



SUSAN GARRISON

major thoroughfare."

City officials said developers should explore shared parking arrangements with surrounding businesses, and Councilmember Pam Rianda pointed out that parking at the back of the building on Ralston Avenue might increase congestion from shoppers looking

for parking along the busy street.

"I am very concerned about the parking and that's the reason why I'd like to have the parking on Emmett," she said. "We have all the parking from [the Village Center], we have all of your parking, and it's all going to funnel through one little tiny opening."

Doctors' offices on the 800 block of Ralston Avenue in Belmont are slated for the next round of changes in the downtown area.

Group forms to slow traffic speeders

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Belmont residents may soon have the opportunity to put the reins on speeders, joyriders and shortcut opportunists, thanks to a new group forming to look at traffic solutions throughout the city.

City officials are requesting applications from residents interested in becoming part of a new "traffic calming" task force, established to look at various ways to slow traffic and make Belmont's problem streets safer.

"The ideal mix could be a representative or two from every neighborhood in the city," said Duncan Jones, the new assistant city engineer for Belmont, who is charged with working with task force members, who will meet once a month throughout the duration of the six-month effort.

After members are given basic introductions to various options available for improving traffic, Jones said the group will most likely look for potential solutions in problem neighborhoods near Hastings and Chula Vista drives.

"They've got some cut-through traffic [and] speeders," he explained, adding measures that are available to slow traffic include roundabouts and medians. Some of Belmont's steep, narrow and curvy streets in the hills, which Jones said should ideally deter speeding just by their difficult nature, may prove more challenging areas to tackle.

Despite frequent comments and complaints from Belmont residents about traffic and speeding, city officials say they've had some difficulty assembling a group, that will eventually present its

findings to the City Council. The city is currently targeting neighborhood associations to cull members, but is opening the group to anyone with an interest in pedestrian, bicycle, and other traffic safety issues.

In addition to targeting neighborhoods' traffic problems, the group will also look at ways to increase safety around Belmont's schools. Among other things, the city is looking to collaborate with school officials to improve street crossings and sidewalks for students, thereby creating suggested safe routes for kids to walk to school.

"We're in the process of applying for grants for that and we'll be applying for more in September," Jones said. "Kids go the way they want to go but you try to give them a safe way."

Elaine Farmer, president of the Central Neighborhood Association — an organization covering the area west of El Camino Real bordered by Ralston Avenue and Alameda De Las Pulgas — said she doesn't personally tackle evening commute traffic in the city. A number of neighborhood residents, though, are concerned about the condition of streets and about drivers parking in restricted areas, she said.

"Some people talking about speeding up Davey Glen [Road] Farmer said, adding that neighbors have scheduled a meeting to talk about the street's traffic problems.

Anyone interested in joining the task force should send a letter outlining their areas of interest, goals and reasons for joining the group to Duncan Jones, Assistant City Engineer, City of Belmont, Public Works Department, 1070 Sixth Ave., Suite 306, Belmont CA 94002. Interested residents can also submit a letter via e-mail to djones@ci.belmont.ca.us.

Responses must be received no later than Friday, Feb. 25. The first task force meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m., Thursday, March 2 at Belmont City Hall, 1070 Sixth Ave., Suite 101.

Planning Commission
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Feb 9, 2000

Belmont Vista project passes hurdle

Stop-work order lifted on problem plagued project

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Belmont's Planning Commission last week approved the latest set of changes for a senior residence near downtown, bringing to a close several months of dispute and lifting a stop work order that had been slapped on the project.

"I want to commend the applicant and the architect for putting together a package that we could look at. I think the con-

sensus on the commission is we got what we asked for," said Planning Commission Chair Kenn Parsons at a meeting Feb. 2. The commission had said at a previous meeting that they were confused due to the multitude of drawings and changes to the project.

Approved in December 1998, the Belmont Vista residential facility at 900 Sixth Ave. drew fire from the city shortly after grading began this October. City officials said they started seeing unapproved changes surfacing in the project plans and in initial construction that should have been brought to the city's attention.

At the heart of the earlier modifications, officials say, was the elimination of one of three retaining walls approved for the steep hillside below the project. An elevator from the facility to Sixth Avenue was also struck from developed plans by the project architects, Hardison, Komatsu, Ivelich and Tucker of San Francisco, according to city officials.

A partial stop-work order to prohibit laying of the building's foundation was placed on the project more than a month ago, which marked the second time the city had put a halt to project construction.

Commissioners

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stressed that the elevator should remain part of the project to give residents of the facility access to downtown.

Last week the commission granted the project's applicant, Mary Lou South, who also operates the adjacent Belmont Convalescent Hospital with her sister Ann Parsons, permission to alter the approved plans to allow for two retaining walls provided there is extensive landscaping.

While initial plans called for an elevator connecting to a tunnel entrance below the facility, the group approved plans for an elevator tower, to be built on the exterior of the upper retaining wall. According to officials, elements, such as the new landscaping, will be decided on at a future meeting, potentially in March.

Despite all the exterior changes, the facility itself will remain pretty much the same, according to Dan Vanderpriem, planning and community development director for the city.

"The finished floor elevation of the building has not changed in any way and the height of the building accordingly has not changed in any way because the overall structure is the same," said Vanderpriem.

Commissioner Tom Peirona was concerned about the location of where the elevator would let out, reasoning that if it let out near the sidewalk it might be abused by passersby.

"I'd like it to be recessed so you don't just have a plain elevator on the street," said Peirona, before being assured by the project's architect that it would be recessed. "One you have rain, two you have people walking by pressing buttons just to be kids and everything. I don't want it to be a homeless shelter there for somebody to sleep [in]."

"I'm concerned that anybody would even infer that we had homeless people in Belmont," Tom Diridon, president of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce joked. Diridon was one of a number of speakers who expressed support at the meeting for the project continuing.

"As you can guess I'm delighted with the direction that you're going and I'm hoping that it could be done expeditiously," he said.

Parsons added that all of the discussions may have translated into a more appealing project.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2000

Walgreen's plaza plan moves ahead

Merchants to play integral role in project's success

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

City officials, residents and business owners recently offered guidance and voiced concerns ranging from future parking issues to a property owner's level of control in a redevelopment scheme for one of Belmont's key downtown business blocks.

The city will soon ask developers to submit proposals for revamping the commercial area, which is bordered by El Camino Real, Ralston Avenue, Hill Street and Sixth Avenue and is home to apartments, Walgreen's and other businesses. City officials have also invited the block's merchants and property owners to take part in the project by fixing up their sites.

"What's kind of unique is that we're proposing ... a panel to review those final proposals," the city's Economic Development Coordinator, Julie Woepke, explained to councilmembers, planning commissioners and about 20 residents and business owners at public hearing Jan. 25. The group, Woepke added, could include members of the planning and finance commissions, city staff and representatives from the business community at-large.

As the project moves further along, owners of the block's subject properties will be able to submit proposals so they can become financially involved in the redevelopment plan, Woepke explained, or pursue their own individual remodels.

The current scheme for the block — part of the overall downtown beautification effort — replaces an existing 10-unit apartment building with approximately 18 above-street residential units, the construction of a two-level public parking garage and demolishing the existing Walgreen's plaza.

City officials have said the building, which faces Ralston Avenue and is leased by the drug store and several other tenants, is unattractive — in part because of its position set far from the street. Under the proposal, the anchor store could be relocated to the edge on El Camino Real and additional stores could be added along Ralston Avenue.

Councilmember Pam Rianda said she wasn't sure how the well the planned residential units would fit

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with the commercial revitalization elements of the project.

"I guess I was one of those folks who wanted higher density housing on the old [Fifth Avenue] City Hall site so that we could reserve maximum retail development in the downtown area," Rianda said. "I'm not so sure that I like the housing in the middle of the retail area rather on the fringes of the [redevelopment area]."

Planning Commissioner Jon Phillips said downtown apartments less than a block from the city's new train station would in fact prove ideal for commuters who trade cars for public transit.

"I know a lot of folks that I work with who are interested in living in these types of units because its fairly self-contained," he said. "It's close to transit corridors and close to Safeway."

The current scheme had been discussed for some time, but Woepke stressed the city is not necessarily tethered to the proposal.

"We're using this development scheme as a guideline," she said. "However, we're still opening the doors to look at other types of projects such as a cinema, unique restaurants or another retailer,

provided there's an economic justification and the support of the whole community."

"There could be a use that we didn't think about [with] the Planning Commission and the downtown task force that could be very valuable at this point in time," she added.

City officials said they wouldn't be able to break down the exact cost or how much would come from each potential funding source until the project moves further along, partly because some funds allocated for low to moderate housing could be applied to the new apartments. However, a figure based on earlier discussions estimated the project to cost approximately \$7.7 million, a good portion of which could come from monies the city gained through recent bond refinancing.

"It's our hope that we can develop the project in sufficient detail so that during the budget time ... we'll [have an idea of] the scope of the project and see the costs," said Finance Director Thomas Fil.

Residents and business owners brought up concerns about landscaping and parking, while one of the owners of an office building on the block said she wanted assurances that interested property own-

play key role

ers would have an active role in the process.

"We appreciate being a part of the downtown renovations," said property owner Joanne Wong-Lam, who was concerned after councilmembers asked city staff about the issue of eminent domain, a process whereby a city can acquire or take a property for a public purpose by compensating the property owner. "Our concern certainly as property owners is sensing from tonight's meeting [that] it seems as if we're heading off in a different direction.

"I just want to be assured that ... it's a fair and just process to really work with the property owners," she said. "That it's something we will not be railroad into — a plan

we can't subscribe to because of loss of control."

Planning and Community Development Director Dan Vanderprien pointed out that it was still early in the process and assured that agreements would be shaped with property owners as the project solidifies.

"I think at the outset everyone realized that there were some property owners who were willing to put some of their own money in to help redevelop the downtown," he said. "Though it may sound finite at the time, this isn't at this stage. It becomes finite after the council says, 'OK, these are the people we're going to talk to seriously, negotiate, and put together a package.'"

Council meetings to be televised

Belmont officials working to air twice-monthly meetings

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Belmont ordinances, public hearings and project reviews may all soon become plot lines for prime time, couch-side viewing.

The city is joining the ranks of nearby communities, such as Redwood City and San Mateo, by preparing to begin televising the city's twice monthly Tuesday evening council meetings on local public access.

Supporters hope that giving residents the chance to see their city council in action from the comfort of their own living rooms — with live airings that could potentially begin around the end of March — will boost public participation in local government.

"I see it as a ... benefit to the community — a positive way to get information out," said Belmont Vice Mayor Eleanore Hahn, who pointed out that time-strapped residents and other people not able to attend council meetings might not have the chance either to review council meeting minutes.

Hahn said many people hear about city council decisions in a "roundabout" way and the televised meetings would allow Belmont viewers to experience first hand the discussions that led to councilmembers' votes.

"We've been wanting to do it for a while now, it has just kind of been on the backburner," she added.

Belmont plans to contract with Mid-Peninsula Access Corporation, a group that has worked on broadcasts with several other San Mateo County cities, to broadcast its meetings at the cost of approximately \$849 for a three-hour session. The fee would be for use of the equipment and paying MPAC staff.

While the city has yet to determine exactly when the meetings will begin airing, they will be shown on Channel 8, the home of Peninsula TV, which will soon move to channel 26.

Sherwin Williams, Belmont's management analyst, added that as part of the city's contract with AT&T Cable Television, the company was slated last week to install a fiber optic connection to allow broadcasting from council chambers at Twin Pines Park. One meeting will be aired, though, before the city staff brings councilmembers a contract with MPAC for consideration.

Williams said he's spoken to employees with other cities who said they've had positive experiences broadcasting their meetings but had run into some technical difficulties.

"When we checked into it we found out they had some technical problems with getting a good picture," he said, adding that other cities transmission problems lead Belmont officials to pursue a fiber

TV: Belmont meetings to air

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optic wiring, which can provide a clearer picture than the more traditional coaxial cable.

Despite some glitches with sound and picture quality, Redwood City Mayor Ira Ruskin said council meeting broadcasts in his city have received positive nods from the community and are "a must for open government."

"It's been extremely well received," he said of the city's decision to broadcast their city council meetings, which began airing about a year ago. "I think

it's probably the most well received city operation that we've ever done," Ruskin added. "Every citizen that has talked to me about [the broadcasts] really loves the idea of being able to watch council meetings at home."

Belmont councilmember Dave Warden said he also supports broadcasting council meetings because "it's important for people to see what goes on." Watching a meeting at home, though, is no substitute for the interactivity of actually attending the public forums, Warden stressed. Warden said he also had some concerns that, at least initially, speakers who want to address the council on an issue might shy away from making comments on camera. People might use the broadcast as simply an opportunity to get on TV, he said.

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City Council
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Feb 19, 2000

Library, grade separation top mayor's list

State of City address at chamber unveils 'blueprint for success'

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Delivering the annual "State of the City" address last week, Belmont Mayor Terri Cook unveiled what she called the city's "blueprint for success" — priorities ranging from a new library and retrofitted City Hall to completion of long-awaited train overpasses above El Camino Real.

Speaking before a breakfast-time audience at the Belmont Chamber of Commerce-sponsored event at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center Feb. 10, Cook tossed about trivia about Belmont's early days with what she regards as some not-so-trivial accomplishments currently underway in the city.

"Wow, no wonder we're all so tired," Cook said after outlining a number of city projects she said are made possible by a positive economic outlook for the city. "Seems like there's a lot of ambitious stuff going on in Belmont."

Foremost on everyone's mind, the mayor said, is completion later this year of the city's portion of the collaborative "grade separation" effort with San Carlos. Construction of overpasses to eliminate street level train crossings at Ralston Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and San Carlos' Holly Street, have meant longtime detours for drivers along El Camino Real, but the effort is already paying off,

according to Cook.

"We have so many compliments on our wonderful [new] train station. Not only does it look good but it's very functional," she said, quizzing the audience as to the start date of the project (1992) and the total price tag (\$95 million).

"After the grade separation is completed we'll be able to focus on plaza improvements including opportunities for public art display," Cook added, commending Belmont's public works director for his efforts on the project. "And those who said it couldn't be done, John Curtis, this one's for you."

Pinpointing funding sources and getting underway with designing a new city library fitting residents' growing needs are other priorities high on the mayor's list.

"The library task force has been working for over a year on the recommendation for a new library in Belmont," said Cook, who represents the City Council on the library committee, made up of members-at-large and representatives from various city commissions and Belmont's Friends of the Library.

"The consensus in the community is the present library is very much undersized for Belmont and lacks the space, constrains the staff from bringing library services into the 21st century," she added.

While Cook said the city may have to pursue a local bond

BELMONT: Public participation important

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measure to pay for the new facility, which is estimated to cost around \$11 million, Proposition 14 on the March 2000 ballot offers opportunities to pick up some funding from the state. If passed, the proposition would offer \$350 million in bond money to fund California public library construction and renovations.

Cook also stressed the importance of the community's participation to help update Belmont's General Plan — a document that outlines the city's policy on land use, transportation and goals for neighborhoods, among other elements, and hasn't been revised in full for 15 years.

"In order for this to be successful we need to have a good cross section of the community including residents, commissioners, business people and other stakeholders," she said. "The general plan update will help us shape what we envision for Belmont over the

next ten years."

A number of efforts are also underway to beautify Belmont's downtown and bolster civic pride, Cook said, making note at the recent event of efforts to redesign buildings at the Walgreen's block near Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real, a project which could include a new multilevel parking garage.

Cook asked residents to be patient as the work gets underway to revamp and retrofit City Hall on Sixth Avenue.

"The council is just in the process of approving conceptual design and retrofit engineering work which begins soon," she said. "During construction there will be some interruption of regular City Hall schedule that will affect all departments' flexibility. Hopefully everyone will understand ... while we improve the environment for our police department and other staff offices, thereby making City Hall

more user friendly."

Personally, Cook said she is committing herself to helping forge a stronger relationship between the City Council and Carlmont High School. The school recently completed new classrooms and other new facilities, which Cook called a "great facelift to the school," and will soon be rehabilitating existing facilities.

One of Cook's goals is helping school officials to bring a more positive community image to the high school, which is partnering with Redwood City's Cañada College to bring college courses to the campus next fall.

"Out in the community there's a very positive sense of 'good things are happening,'" Cook said several days following the State of the City address, adding that she's excited to have projects like the grade separation come to fruition during her year as mayor. "For so long a time [there] was so much that was stagnant."

City Council
San Mateo Co Times
March 15, 2000

Belmont to decide number of animals allowed in homes

By Jessica M. Scully
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Some local residents are worried that a proposed change to a city law could effectively end some local 4-H programs.

The City Council will decide today whether to limit the number of birds or small livestock, such as chickens, ducks, or rabbits, to a total of three per household.

The law that is in effect now dates back to 1988, according to a city staff report. It says that permits are required to keep certain animals within city limits. However, animal control no longer oversees the permits, meaning that more animals could be at a residence than is prudent, according to the report.

The law is being re-examined because of a complaint received by code enforcement, according to the report.

But some members of Belmont's 4-H group say that by limiting the number of animals allowed at each home, city officials would be effectively making it impossible for local children who raise birds, rabbits or other animals to compete against their out-of-city peers in 4-H animal showmanship contests.

The children need a certain number of animals as a pool to come up with the right qualities for a show-quality animal, said Kristin Mercer, assistant community leader of the Belmont 4-H club.

"If you go down and buy yourself three chickens, you can't tell if they're going to have the show qualities you're looking for," Mercer said.

Councilmember Dave Warden said he didn't know why the number had been limited to three.

Warden, who as a youngster raised rabbits in 4-H, said he

was concerned about the limit. Residents may have up to four dogs, four cats or a total mix of dogs and cats that equals four, he said, but residents would only be able to have a total of three livestock animals of different species.

"I don't know that it's fair to let people have four dogs and only three rabbits," Warden said. "I think three rabbits make a lot less noise and mess than four dogs do."

4-H Club members plan to voice their concerns at the meeting.

"If every city enacted this ordinance, you could basically shut down the small animal portion of the county fair," Mercer said.

What's Next? The council meets at 7:30 p.m. tonight in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center at 1223 Ralston Ave. For more information call the City Clerk at 595-7413.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: April 4, 2000

To: Susan Westman, City Manager

From: Sherwin Williams, Asst. to the City Manager *Sherwin Williams*

RE: Resignation

I am formally resigning my position with the City of Belmont effective April 21, 2000. I have accepted a position in the private sector. I would like to thank you for the leadership that you have provided me during your tenure as the City Manager in Belmont. I am most pleased to have worked for a City Manager who was so focused on providing outstanding service to the community that we serve.

I would also like to thank you for making the City of Belmont a pleasant place to work although things have been made most difficult as they possibly could be for you. I have never met anyone who could handle the adverse conditions that have been placed upon you. It is clear to me that you have sheltered City staff from unnecessary and malicious behavior. You have done this without letting it sway you from being professional and managing the affairs of the City the way that they should be managed.

Once again, I thank you for the leadership, dedication and sincerity that you have provided me. I also might add that I have talked to a significant number of Belmont City staff and they have all expressed how sad that they have been since you have provided your resignation.

cc: Maribeth Kushon, Human Resources Director

City Council
The Independent
March 5, 2000



SUSAN CALDWELL

What's your sign?



Belmont street signs undergo identity crisis

Belmont officials have committed to replacing street signs throughout the city with a new design. The city's public works department plans to bring a number of design options before the city council at an upcoming meeting.

Above: Sam Todd, Rick Locke and John Curtis of Belmont's Public Works hold up some samples of proposed sign redesigns for Belmont.

At left: the city's recently purchased sign making equipment

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Feb 16, 2000

Group forms to slow traffic speeders

Amy Yarbrough
Reporter

Belmont residents may soon have the opportunity to put the reins on speeders, joyriders and short-cut opportunists, thanks to a new group forming to look at traffic solutions throughout the city. City officials are requesting applications from residents interested in becoming part of a new "traffic calming" task force, established to look at various ways to slow traffic and make Belmont's problem streets safer. The ideal mix could be a representative or two from every neighborhood in the city," said Duncan Jones, the new assistant city engineer for Belmont, who is charged with working with task force members, who will meet once a month throughout the duration of the six-month effort.

After members are given basic introductions to various options available for improving traffic, Jones said the group will most likely look for potential solutions in problem neighborhoods near Hastings and Chula Vista drives. "They've got some cut-through traffic [and] speeders," he explained, adding measures that are available to slow traffic include roundabouts and medians. Some of Belmont's steep, narrow and curvy streets in the hills, which Jones said should ideally deter speeding just by their difficult nature, may prove more challenging areas to tackle. Despite frequent comments and complaints from Belmont residents about traffic and speeding, city officials say they've had some difficulty assembling a group, that will eventually present its

findings to the City Council. The city is currently targeting neighborhood associations to cull members, but is opening the group to anyone with an interest in pedestrian, bicycle, and other traffic safety issues. In addition to targeting neighborhoods' traffic problems, the group will also look at ways to increase safety around Belmont schools. Among other things, the city is looking to collaborate with school officials to improve street crossings and sidewalks for students, thereby creating suggested safe routes for kids to walk to school. "We're in the process of applying for grants for that and we'll be applying for more in September," Jones said. "Kids go the way they want to go but you try to give them a safe way."

Elaine Farmer, president of the Central Neighborhood Association — an organization covering an area west of El Camino Real bordered by Ralston Avenue and Alameda De Las Pulgas — said she doesn't personally tackle early evening commute traffic in the city. A number of neighborhood residents, though, are concerned about the condition of streets and about drivers parking in restricted areas, she said. "Some people talking about speeding up Davey Glen [Road]," Farmer said, adding that neighbors have scheduled a meeting to talk about the street's traffic problems. Anyone interested in joining the task force should send a letter outlining their areas of interest, goals and reasons joining the group to Duncan Jones, Assistant City Engineer, City of Belmont, Public Works Department, 1070 Sixth Ave., Suite 306, Belmont CA 94002. Interested residents can also submit a letter via e-mail to djones@ci.belmont.ca.us. Responses must be received no later than Friday, Feb. 25. The first task force meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m., Thursday, March 2 at Belmont City Hall, 1070 Sixth Ave., Suite 101.

Commission selections criticized

Park and Rec appointees bump long-time members

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

The Belmont City Council suffered a scathing attack last Tuesday as several city commissioners accused some Councilmembers of letting their personal agendas direct their voting for recent commission appointments.

Councilmembers re-appointed incumbents to terms for the city's Planning and Arts commissions on March 14. But the appointment of three new members to the city's Park and Recreation Commission, replacing three longtime volunteers in the process, sparked the most controversy and prompted the resignation of another commissioner, Mike Davis.

"Four former commissioners with about a hundred years of experience and wealth of expertise to the commission are gone," said Park and Recreation Commissioner George Metropulos at the City Council Meeting on March 28, which also saw the resignation of City Manager Susan Westman.

"I can only conclude that some councilmembers were voting for personal reasons, that again is unacceptable to me," added Metropulos, who, along with the Arts Commissioner Judi Allen spoke at the meeting. Metropulos said the voting seemed "orchestrated" and that the council seemed to want to put term limits solely on Park and Recreation Commissioners. "You're supposed to be representing 25,000 people, not voting for your personal issues."

Gloria Purcell, Tom Peirona and Elizabeth Wiecha were re-appointed to fill three-year terms of the Planning Commission, and Madeline Peterson appointed to fill a two-year spot with the group, during the recent voting. After three rounds of balloting though, Joan Dentler, Margo Cheechov and Judy King were replaced on the Park and Recreation Commission with Stephen Singer, Walter Shjeflo and Mike Dutto for three, three-year terms.

Singer and Dutto received a majority of the votes after the first round, the second round failed to receive a majority and in the third round, Shjeflo received votes from three councilmembers and the appointment.

COMMISSION: page 5A

City Council
The Independent
April 5, 2000

COMMISSION:

Continued from 1A

Councilmember Paul Wright explained he looked at applicants' passion and ideas for the position. Dave Warden said early last week that his voting was based on applicants' qualifications and that he saw nothing wrong with wanting to get new members on the commission.

"You could see that people voted very differently," said Warden, who, like Wright, voted for the commission newcomers and one incumbent during the rounds. "On the other hand, there were a lot of strong applicants that applied."

Councilmember Pam Rianda, who, along with Vice Mayor Eleanore Hahn, didn't vote for any of the incumbents for the commission, said it was a "painful" choice and that recent attempts had been made to "soil" her reputation because of it.

"I have been a coward for the past three appointment cycles — not wanting to hurt my friends' feelings," she said, reading from a letter she wrote to the replaced commissioners. "I did not want to have to select one over the other. When faced this time with three energetic, excellent applicants I knew I didn't have to choose."

Dentler, however, believed some councilmembers had other motivations.

"It was personal and political and for whatever reason they wanted us out," the six-year commissioner said. "The new blood thing just kills me. You don't take three hard working people and knock them off."

Former Park and Recreation Commission member Mike Davis said he resigned "to highlight a poor decision on the part of the council."

"I'm extremely disappointed the three ladies didn't get re-appointed without a clear-cut reason (why)," said Davis.

Hahn raised the issue of term limits for commissioners, providing information from the cities of San Mateo, San Carlos, South San Francisco and Burlingame.

Council criticized

Terri Cook was the only councilmember who voted for all three of the incumbents, and said she's opposed to term limits but would be willing to discuss the issue at a future meeting.

"Basically I felt that all the incumbents have worked very hard and have done a good job and there was no reason to replace them," she said Thursday of her vote.

Since there's a lot of consternation in the community about this, I think it would behoove us to do something as a group and come to some kind of a consensus," she said.

While there are currently no limits to the terms commissioners can serve in the city, several councilmembers say a "gentlemen's agreement" recommends two terms on the council. Mayor

City Council
The Independents
April 1, 2000

Separation celebration



Belmont officials and residents celebrated on March 25 the re-opening of Ralston Avenue and the near end to years of the project to raise train tracks above El Camino Real. From left: Councilmember Paul Wright, City Manager Susan Westman, Mayor Terri Cook, councilmembers Dave Warden, and Pam Rianda, Belmont Chamber of Commerce President Tom Diridon and Director of Public Works John Curtis.

New Belmont parking lot in the works

Help for downtown fender-to-fender crunch

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Belmont shoppers and restaurant patrons frustrated by trolling for parking spaces downtown may soon have a little respite.

Acting as the city's Redevelopment Agency, councilmembers recently voted to reserve a small city-owned lot on Sixth Avenue for 19 public parking spaces, rather than develop it into retail or office space. The unanimously approved plan would set aside funds in Belmont's upcoming budget for the lot, which will cost \$58,000.

Officials and business owners have been warning that the crunch for downtown parking may only worsen with a number of development projects already in the works for the area.

"When the Redevelopment Agency was first put into place many years ago, the city's real need was more parking. Now all these years later that still has not been resolved," said Willetta Steventon, who owns a number of commercial buildings downtown. She urged councilmembers at the April 11 meeting to reserve the space at 1085 Sixth Ave. for cars — not additional shops.

"The pinch downtown is really getting worse everyday," she said, explaining that other business people in the area have also complained to her about the problem, which has been exacerbated by the opening of new shops near Ralston Avenue and El Camino Real.

"No commercial area can be viable and successful without easy access to adequate parking," Steventon added.

A developer was interested in building a two-story building with a first floor of retail space, a second story of office space and 35 parking spaces on the vacant site, but councilmembers reasoned the city wasn't yet ready to take that kind of step.

"We're going to be losing significant parking," said Vice Mayor Eleanore Hahn, pointing out that both a planned retrofit of city hall and redevelopment of the "Walgreen's block," — bordered by El Camino Real, Ralston Avenue, Hill Street and Sixth Avenue — could shave more parking spaces in the area.

"I think it's premature to go out for proposals on this site myself," she said, adding that parking could be a

PARKING: Plans for city parking lot

Continued from 1A

"fallback" for the space, at least until development and parking issues for the area are worked out. Mayor Terri Cook agreed that something should be done with the site, even if it's a temporary solution.

"I think this may allow some flexibility and give some immediate use of a piece of dirt, which is what it is right now," she said. "And once we see what happens downtown we can get a idea of what may be better uses, rather than jump into something now."

The decision to create parking on the site was preceded by months of discussion between city officials and area business owners about a beautification effort downtown.

Around the end of last year, city officials asked surrounding property owners if they would consider using the vacant city lot to

expand the businesses on their sites. But only the owner of a nearby gas station came forward with an idea. Councilmembers weren't interested in that proposal.

The city is also inviting property owners to take part in the Walgreen's block revitalization, which involves demolishing a plaza leased by the Walgreen's drug store and several other tenants, relocating store space closer to the street and constructing a two-level public parking garage.

Belmont resident and Arts Commissioner Judi Allen encouraged the city to help area businesses, particularly because they are working with the city to improve downtown. As evidence of the pinch for parking, Allen recounted her experience with an unfriendly security guard when she parked in a reserved parking lot while visiting another business.

"Immediately we do need some parking downtown to serve the businesses we have been encouraging to pretty up for us," she said. "We need to support them so they can support us."

Belmont's plans rev up for Ralston traffic study

East to west, morning, noon and night, what's really going on

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

With months of road construction finishing up on Belmont's stretch of El Camino Real, some councilmembers say they are now interested in considering an end-to-end traffic study of one of the city's arterial streets.

The Belmont Council asked city staff to come back at a future meeting with information and a cost estimate for a study of Ralston Avenue from its western end near Christian Drive to its eastern side

near U.S. Highway 101. The requested survey is the latest in a string of efforts to analyze traffic on the heavily traveled street.

Councilmember Dave Warden, who asked that the item be placed on the council's agenda, said it was essential that the whole street — rather than just sections of it — be looked at to identify traffic problems and solutions. This information could be used by the committee being assembled to update Belmont's general plan. It could also contribute to a blueprint for

city planning and development.

"There's a perception in the community that there is a vast amount of a.m. and p.m. traffic on Ralston Avenue which results from the Oracle campus and the Island Park businesses, and I personally don't know if this is true or not, he said.

"Unless we actually gauge how much traffic is coming from 92 all the way down Ralston, we're not going to actually understand the issue of how much traffic the city is generating, and how much traffic is coming from the outside and traveling all the way through Belmont."

Almost a year ago, the city commissioned a study which evaluated a number of options to improve

traffic safety and slow traffic on a mid-section of the street from El Camino Real to Alameda de las Pulgas.

The study was the first major analysis of the street since the 1970s, but city officials and residents thought it lacked input from neighbors in the area. While many of the participants in forums held to discuss the study shared their traffic frustrations about the street, they could not agree on a solution. Some wanted devices like stop signs, while others were wary of impeding the flow of traffic on the street and thought the entire street should be looked at.

With the grade separation project to build train overpasses above El

Camino Real nearing completion and traffic detours removed, Mayor Terri Cook agreed that it might be logical to study the street.

"I know one of the reasons that we put this off is because of the grade separation. Now that is done and the timing is right," said Cook. She added she would like to see whether commuters were just using the street to pass through Belmont and access the freeways, or whether drivers were stopping off to patronize businesses in the city.

"We want to know where they're going, where they are coming from and also where they might be stopping in the meantime," she said.

*city council
the third president
the April 26, 2008*

Market comes to Belmont this Sunday

Farmers Market premieres with entertainment for all ages

By Kurtis Alexander
Staff Reporter

Harvest moon comes early this year in Belmont. Tomorrow morning, June 4, farmers from across the state will cart their spring crop to Belmont to kick off a weekly farmers' market downtown.

Fresh-picked strawberries from Watsonville, the last harvest of Hollister cherries, artichokes and broccoli from Castroville, and Chinese long beans from the San Joaquin Valley are among the goods that 34 producers will offer.

"I look forward to baby green lettuce and vine-ripened tomatoes," said Michelle Speert of Belmont. She is excited about buying fresh produce in town, rather than relying on trips to the farmers' market in San Mateo.

The savory spread of fruits and vegetables arrives in Belmont tomorrow, not only as a result of hard work on California farms, but also because of more than a year of organizational toil here in Belmont.

Last fall, community members and the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association, an organization that runs 20 farmers' markets in the Bay Area, held a test market in Belmont to gauge local interest.

"There was a strong show of support," said Joan Dentler, executive director of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce. Over 500 shoppers

attended, and positive feedback came from e-mail and hundreds of surveys, Dentler said.

So the organizers sought a more permanent farmers' market in Belmont, seeking a suitable location and lining up sources for start-up costs.

This April, the city negotiated a lease with the Joint Powers Board, a multi-county board that oversees Caltrain, to use the Belmont Caltrain station parking lot on the 1300 block of El Camino.

When the San Francisco Giants have Sunday home games, the market will be moved to the City Hall parking lot, so commuting baseball fans can use the Caltrain lot.

In April, Belmont City Council also approved a \$20,000 payment to the Pacific Coast Farmer's Market Association to run the market for a six-month period. The City believes the expense will promote business downtown.

"A venue like this [the farmer's market] brings people a purpose to go to the downtown area," said Julie Woepke, former economic development coordinator for Belmont.

"It's really good for the downtown area," Woepke said. "After or before the market, people are stopping in coffee shops, stopping at the local florists, or stopping and picking up their dry cleaning."

FARMERS: page 4A

FARMERS: Market early

Continued from 1A

Fresh produce is not the only draw at the Belmont Farmers' Market. A variety of gourmet foods will be showcased, including homemade breads, cheese pastries, and wild king salmon from Half Moon Bay.

Kenn Parsons of Belmont said that fresh flowers are at the top of his shopping list. "I like to have fresh flowers in my house all the time."

Beyond the commercial exchange, the Belmont Farmers'

Market will feature live music, street entertainers and Mr. Carrot for the kids with his sidekick Earthworm Willy.

"This is a source of excitement in our community," said Julie Woepke. "We will see people of all walks of life, neighbors seeing neighbors they haven't seen in a while and people being active in the community."

The Belmont Farmers' Market will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. tomorrow, June 4, and every Sunday through Thanksgiving.

City Council
San Mateo Co Times
June 3, 2000

Belmont City Council
The Independent
April 5, 2000

Commission selections criticized

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COMMISSION: page 5A

COMMISSION:

Continued from 1A

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City Council
San Mateo Co. Times
May 11, 2000

Belmont settles on

By Teresa Mills-Faraudo
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The City Council voted 4-1 Tuesday for a law that will allow residents to have 20 adult livestock on their property, easing worries from local 4-H Club members that they wouldn't be able to continue programs.

The council was originally thinking about curbing the number of small livestock to three. According to 4-H mem-

bers, this would have made it impossible for local children who raise birds, rabbits or other animals, to compete against their out-of-city peers in 4-H animal showmanship contests. Small livestock include such animals as chickens, ducks and rabbits.

Kristin Mercer, assistant community leader of the Belmont 4-H club, is pleased with the council's decision.

"They listened to all of our reasoning and all of our experi-

ence and input," Mercer said, regarding recommendations 4-H club members submitted to the city.

She said the ordinance will provide the animal control needed and supply increased protection for neighbors of people raising livestock. "It's a win-win situation," Mercer said.

But Council member Pam Rianda, who voted against the ordinance, is concerned about not stating a limit on how many baby livestock people can have.

20 animals

"I support the whole thing, except I still have a problem with the number because it doesn't specify how many juvenile livestock people can have," she said.

The old code for the city didn't give a restriction on the number of livestock people could have. The new law also addresses sanitation, noise, odor, and location of the animals. For example, livestock owners are now required to clean a coop, cage, stable, or

whatever housing their animals are in, at least once a week.

Council member Dave Warden said the law is a fair compromise. "If there's an odor coming from someone's yard from their livestock, we can now have a code enforcement officer go there and issue a citation or talk to the people about their livestock," Warden said.

If the law doesn't work the way it is now, it can always be changed, he said.

May 17, 2000
The Independent

Steep hill no obstacle

Council approves new home plans despite problems

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Despite some residents' fears that a house planned for a steep lot in their hilly neighborhood might invite a landslide, the Belmont City Council gave an OK last week to a large wall required in order for the developer to carve out a driveway for the property.

Approved May 9 by a 3-1 vote with one councilmember abstaining, the approval will allow the owner of the disputed vacant property - located at 3229 Upper Lock Avenue - to build a 10-foot-tall retaining wall to stabilize soil on what officials describe as a "difficult lot." Plans for the proposed 3,495-square-foot home were approved last year after several rounds of review by the planning commission.

The area, which is on the San Juan Canyon, was plagued by landslide problems brought on by rains two years ago, and several neighbors warned that the city allowed too much leeway in his project.

"Half our driveway went down the canyon a couple of years ago," said Michael McClelland, who lives at 3242 Upper Lock Ave. "It's been duly noted that that is a very active slide area from time to time. It make take 40 or 50 years in between but it does occur."

McClelland added that he wondered what recourse neighbors who have if the future house or soil from its lot slides down the

hill into surrounding homes.

But city officials pointed out that the time had already passed for neighbors to appeal plans for the home, and the large retaining wall would actually help the neighborhood. Studies conducted on the soil ruled out stability problems resulting from the project, according to officials.

"He would be adding to the stability of this area by putting the wall in," explained Public Works Director John Curtis. Although it's going to be steep and the wall is going to be very large, it's the only way he's going to (have) reasonable access to his property."

The property's owner, Carlos Aubain, stressed he had, if fact, taken all the necessary steps required by the city in order to build on the lot. He claimed to have been "persecuted" by some of his neighbors.

"I've been behind this project for more than two years," Aubain said. "I believe everything is in order - everything the city requires."

Although one councilmember asked city staff to bring back additional information on the project for discussion at a future meeting, Dave Warden said the owner should have a right to access his property and that he saw no need to delay the project further.

"I don't like this project and I don't like the wall and I know a lot of the planning commissioners didn't like it either," Warden said.

"It's an extremely difficult lot to build on. That's why there's no house there," the councilmember added. "The planning commission spent a long time with this house and I think they pretty much got it to the point where it was acceptable."

Belmont council ruling keeps critter keepers happy

Code amendment allows for limited backyard livestock

By Amy Yarbrough
Staff Reporter

Local 4-H'ers should be able to continue with their hare raising, and other residents may get their goats, thanks to recent amendments to Belmont's city codes.

After postponing a decision in March, the Belmont City Council last week approved a number of changes to the city's animal codes for keeping fowl and livestock. Because of the modifications, residents can now use goats to chomp

away unwanted brush for up to 30 days and critter raisers will be able to keep up to 20 small, adult animals.

"We always try and keep in mind that Belmont is not San Francisco and that people who live here have pets — and if their pet is a chicken, we don't want to discriminate..." said resident Kristin Mercer at the meeting April 25. Assistant Community Leader for the Belmont 4-H Club, Mercer had urged the council to focus on sanitation issues, not numbers of animals.

"We also want to keep in mind the true scope of this problem in the city, and the fact that animal complaints really are not a prob-

lem and we don't want to throw a huge bureaucracy where one is not needed," she said.

The ordinance — which dealt with chickens, similar fowl, rabbits and even monkeys — was brought before the council in March, after some residents alleged neighbors were keeping the animals under smelly and unsanitary conditions. City officials had said they were unsure about how to enforce city codes, which were outdated because San Mateo County's Division of Animal Control Services no longer handles permits for these animals, and suggested limiting the number households can keep to three.

Belmont 4-H'ers protested the

code changes at the March meeting, arguing the limitations would hurt their club, and that students need to have a variety of animals to choose to win prizes at county fairs, but have few options but to rear the animals in their backyards.

Since the initial meeting, members of the youth service club offered city officials suggestions on redrafting the ordinance, such as adding llamas and sheep to the codes. Club members said they supported requirements that hutches and coops be 20 feet away from the street and neighbors homes, but asked the city strike wording that required cages to be 20 feet away their own homes — a

requirement the council ultimately agreed was too restrictive for Belmont's small backyards.

Neighboring cities have a variety of ordinances in place that deal with raising animals within their city limits. Redwood City, for example, limits backyard barnyards to no more than three chickens, geese or similar fowl or rabbits, while San Carlos mandates residents have a permit for similar non-household pets.

Belmont residents, however, may also now also hear bleating on some of the city's overgrown hill-sides.

"There are citizens in Belmont who have indicated that once a

ANIMALS: page 2A

ANIMALS: Code changes

Continued from 1A

year they want to bring goats on to their properties, in appropriately fenced areas, so those goats can clear [vegetation]..." said Jean Savaree, Belmont's city attorney. Savaree explained the new codes would allow residents to keep the animals, fenced in, for up to one month per year. "It's my understanding that the goats are never on a property more than 30 days."

Belmont Public Works Director John Curtis even added a "shocking" amendment to the city's livestock and fowl ordinance.

Curtis suggested, after he and Belmont's city attorney went to look at a group of goats last year being kept on a piece of land in the city were zapped by an electric fence, that residents who keep the animals in electrified enclosures should have to put up warning signs.

Councilmember Pam Rianda admitted she had some concerns

about the segment written into the ordinance which allowed 20 adult animals, but wouldn't apply to hatchlings and baby mammals.

"I need someone to convince me that a blanket of a maximum of 20 would be OK. I certainly would not like to live next to 20 screeching monkeys or some of those other animals that we talked about," Rianda said, before ultimately being persuaded.

Mayor Terri Cook argued, however, that the numbers shouldn't be a problem and that outside limits needed to be set.

"Probably there [are] no circumstances under which more than 20 animals for anybody would ever need to be kept. So I'm pretty comfortable with the numbers and I would not like to see it restricted," Cook said at the recent meeting, asserting there was enough "meat in the enforcement," and setting off a chuckling audience.

*City Council (4-H's)
The Single President
May 3, 2000*