

City Council stalls plans for PJCC site

Officials take issue with size of project, parking and traffic

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Just when everything seemed to be rolling smoothly for Summerhill Homes, the developer's project for the Peninsula Jewish Community Center's site on Carlmont Drive ran into new obstacles last week on its way to approval.

At the May 8 City Council meeting, councilmembers put aside a motion to approve or deny the project, voting 5-0 instead to work with the developer to resolve issues with parking, traffic and the number of buildings proposed for the site.

Summerhill Homes has proposed 48 three-story homes for the current site of the Peninsula Jewish Community Center once it leaves for Foster City in 2002.

Thirty-six of the homes would be two-bedroom units, ranging from 1,408 to 1,581 square feet in size. The remaining 12 homes would be three bedrooms and be 2,096 square feet. The units would cost between \$500,000 to \$600,000 apiece.

"We don't need higher density on a 2.4-acre space at the cost of \$500,000," said Councilmember Pam Rianda. "If we have to have such a high density for this project, then we need something

we're deficient in, like rentals."

Rianda said that the Summerhill project, although a good one, was not what Belmont should try to strive for in terms of housing needs. She said Belmont needs more rental properties, not homes. "We've had several folks e-mail us [the council] about how high rents are because we're short on an inventory of rentals. I mean \$1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment is outrageous," Rianda said.

Mayor Eleanor Hahn was also concerned with the type of housing proposed on the site, stating it didn't serve the needs of many Belmont residents.

"About one-third of our community is made up of senior citizens, and they would like one-level houses to move into," Hahn said. "But we keep getting these three-level structures that are aimed for young people. We keep building new commercial developments, and then we build more housing because the young entrepreneurs need a place to stay. We need to look at what our current residents want."

Rianda felt that if the structures were going to be as large as Summerhill had proposed,

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then the number of units should be reduced to at least 40.

"I don't want to vote against this project, but this is the first time the council has seen it and some things haven't been addressed yet," said Rianda. "It's an excellent project and we want Summerhill in our town, but I hope they'll listen to some of our concerns."

Other concerns of the council dealt with the parking situation. Hahn said that while driving by the PJCC during the evenings, she noticed many cars still parked in the lot.

"There are about 16 or 17 residents' cars parked in the PJCC lot after hours, and once development goes up there, all those cars will be displaced and be forced to park on an already parking-cramped street," she said.

A resident of Carlmont Drive agreed and added that not only will an excessive amount of cars be forced to park on the street, but more residents would mean more cars in the morning and evening.

"We need to consider whether or not the new project will help or worsen the traffic conditions once it's built," said nearby property owner Milton King.

"If you poll about 400 or 500 residents on the street, they probably wouldn't complain about traffic from the PJCC because traffic happened around 9 or 10 (in the morning) when everyone was gone. But now there will be new residents who use the street at the same time as the rest of us and it will not alleviate traffic."

But Summerhill Homes Developer Manager Craig Chapman said the fact that the PJCC is moving will alleviate traffic a great deal.

"The PJCC has nearly 1,000 members," Chapman told the council. "There are just over 300 members who live here in Belmont. So, with the PJCC moving to Foster City, that means 700 members will no longer be coming into Belmont or onto Carlmont Drive, and traffic will be reduced by 77 percent."

But those numbers couldn't persuade most of the council. Only two councilmembers were in full support of the project and did not want to delay construction any further.

"I think this is a high-quality project in the way it's been prepared for the last two years," said Councilmember Paul Wright. "I've heard very little negative comments about the project, in fact 90 percent of it has been about the loss of the pool. But I

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THE INDEPENDENT SERVING SAN CARLOS AND BELMONT

COUNCIL: More input needed on subdivision

think Summerhill will step up to the plate and help pay for that loss."

Summerhill has promised to pay nearly \$1 million in mitigation fees, with \$300,000 going toward the cost of a new pool and the remaining \$700,000 going toward park and recreation fees.

"Summerhill came before us and got a blessing to go ahead with this project because it was good for the site, and now we want to delay it because we're unsure of what we want there," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "The developers, city staff and council have gone through a lot of time on this project and if we wanted

lower density, we should have said something when it first came before us."

Cook also said, "I know the loss of the pool has been an issue. But through Summerhill's contributions maybe we can locate another pool in the community — \$300,000 is well above and beyond the call of duty."

Vice Mayor Dave Warden suggested getting more community input, as he was concerned with the loss of land that is zoned as institutional. "Once housing is put there, we'll never tear it down, and we'll never put another institutional center there," Warden said.

"True, we're lacking in rental homes, but we're also

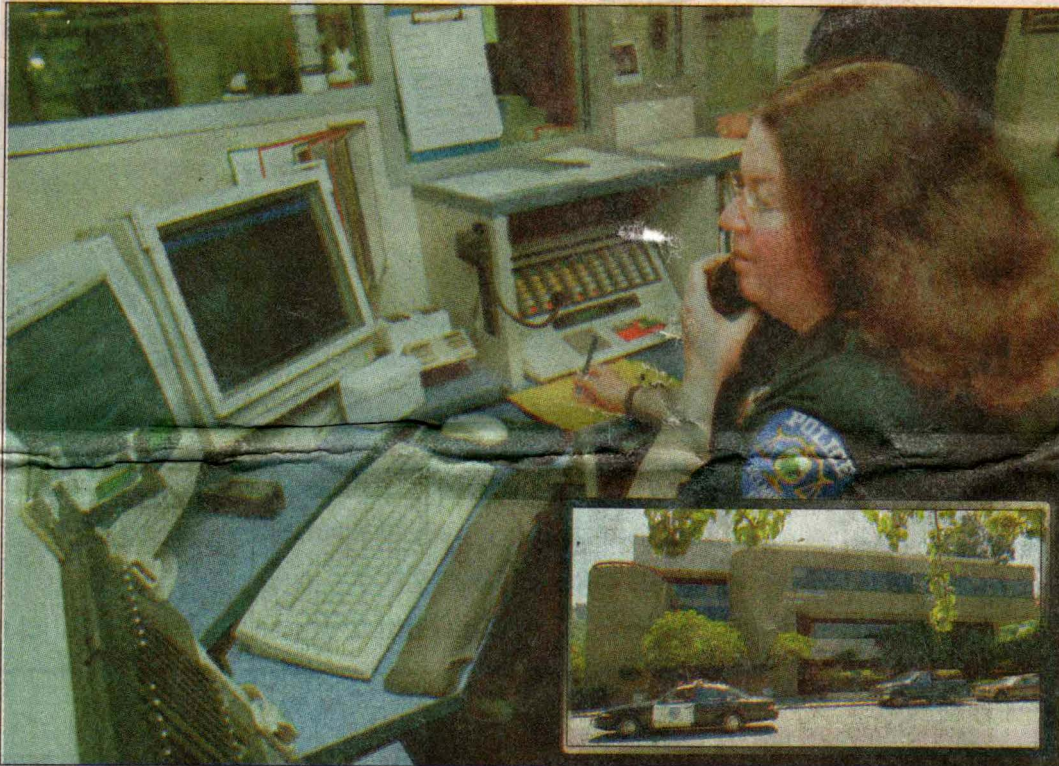
lacking in space for institutional centers, which is what this space is zoned for, and I don't think we should change that zoning," Warden said.

If Summerhill's plans are to go forward, the City Council must approve changing the site from its current zoning status of institutional to medium residential density. Warden would like the neighborhood to discuss whether or not they want more residential units there.

"I'd just like a little more feedback from people who live in the area," he said.

City officials don't know when Summerhill will come back before the council with revised plans, but believe it would not be before July.

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SUSAN CALDWELL

Belmont Police Department dispatcher Robin Mechura works in the police department's building behind City Hall on Sixth Street, which will be moved while the city's current City Hall, inset, is remodeled.

Bids for City Hall put on hold

Plans for new police, administrative office buildings not ready

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Two months after designs for a new City Hall were supposed to be drafted and ready for bidding, disappointed city officials are left empty-handed.

Today the city was supposed to start accepting bids from prospective contractors to begin retrofitting City Hall. But because architects have not been able to present plans, bidding most likely won't happen until later this year.

That's because the architect EKONA didn't turn in revised plans to the Department of Corrections to answer its concerns with the city's proposed police station on time, according to city officials.

"The architect cannot get plans out on the street at the moment, and it's probably much better to cancel the bidding and re-advertise at a much later date," Public Works Director John Curtis told the City Council last week. "We

think maybe we can start in July, but we have to go through another period of review and we just don't know how long that will take."

Drawings and sketches were not provided for the City Council at its May 8 meeting to put the project out to bid. In fact, the architect was not even present at last week's meeting.

"I am very, very angry," said Councilmember Pam Rianda. "The due date for these plans was March, and the architect does not have any plans ready nor is he even present. It's very irresponsible, unprofessional and I want to know why things are happening this way."

The city is in the midst of preparing to remodel and retrofit its City Hall on Sixth Street.

Plans for the project were originally approved last summer and a start date for construction had been tagged for May 8. But, the Department of Corrections found that minor adjustments needed to be made to the police station's prisoner holding area before continuing.

"There are all sorts of regulations regarding the holding area," said City Manager Jere

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Kersnar. "The Department of Corrections had

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concerns with the size of the individual holding spaces, building materials and views, among others."

City officials said now that plans have been resubmitted to the Bureau of Corrections, the approval process could take at least four weeks, and it is uncertain as to when those plans would be ready for public view and bidding.

Councilmember Terri Cook was concerned that the delay could cost the city more money since city services will temporarily move to the Lodge in Twin Pines Park when construction begins. Pushing back the start date for construction

'The due date for these plans was March, and the architect does not have any plans ready nor is he even present ... and I want to know why things are happening this way.'

Councilmember Pam Rianda

means the city may have to cancel events at the Lodge, which is normally rented out for community events.

"This could create a trickle effect, because staff has to move into the lodge when construction begins, and the lodge cannot be rented for public events so the city could lose some revenue in that area."

Because a start date is now undetermined, the projected completion date hangs in the balance.

New plans for the remodeled City Hall include a one-stop counter where residents can get answers to questions regarding permits or city government.

The first floor will hold the police department's traffic division, DARE program, juvenile offices and the crime lab. The second floor will be home to police administration, records and the chief's office. There will also be a fitness center and locker rooms.

City Hall's third floor will hold city government offices, public works and the planning department.

Total cost of the renovation is estimated to be \$6,233,513.

Funding will come from a \$1 million loan from Oracle, a \$2,230,360 Redevelopment Agency bond from 1994 and

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City Council to approve 2001 budget

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The City Council will be approving the budget for fiscal year 2001-02 on June 26, continuing to place high priority on redevelopment projects even though the downtown development plan — one of the biggest projects the city has been considering this year — has been postponed indefinitely.

The proposed budget this year estimates total revenue to be at about \$38 million, slightly lower than last year's total revenue of \$39.1 million.

However, total city expenditures are estimated to be at \$57 million, and the difference between the two figures will be covered by additional funds and the city's capital improvement project.

Some \$14.5 million will come from the city's general fund, with \$8 million of that figure coming from sales and property taxes.

"The main difference between revenues and expenditures will be covered by the capital improvement project," said city

Finance Director Thomas Fil. "Generally governments accumulate funds over the years to help complete a number of projects that are planned, and we've been setting aside a fund reserve to help cover the difference."

Projects in the city's capital improvement project include the City Hall remodel/retrofit and the reconstruction of Fire Station 14.

Last year the city embarked on a long-range financial forecast and identified a potential \$500,000 deficit. City staff immediately began efforts to reduce that figure, and fortunately revenue growth from property taxes has been strong enough to do that.

"I'm happy to report that the budget is balanced," Fil told the council. "Last year when we did our long-term projection, we estimated a \$500,000 target correction gap and through improved revenue fixtures we've been able to close part of that gap."

City officials have proposed spending \$21.6 million on capital improvement projects, with \$7.6 million going toward the Los Costanos Redevelopment Project Area.

The Los Costanos Redevelopment Project Area is the city's formal name for the flat neighborhoods of Belmont, which are primarily commercial and residential areas. Expenditures in this area will go toward future projects.

An estimated \$5.4 million is designated for the police facility/City Hall seismic retrofit and remodeling project, and \$2.3 million will be going toward the Fire Station 14 project.

Other expenditures include \$6.4 million for public safety, \$2.4 million for culture and recreation and \$4.3 million for general government operations.

Many proposed expenditures for the coming fiscal year are very similar to last year's figures.

Last year \$6 million went to public safety, \$2.3 million went to recreation and parks, and \$3.9 million was used for government operations.

"I'm very pleased to see that the budget is balanced," said Mayor Eleanor Hahn. "And city staff has done an excellent job in doing so."

Topics to include a park impact fee, skate park and open-space trails

By T.S. Mills-Farauto
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The Parks and Recreation Commission needs advice and the City Council will be giving it Wednesday night at a joint meeting to prioritize projects such as the fate of the Barrett Community Center and a proposed skateboard park.

The Council has made it a tradition to meet with commissions each year to give them direction on where to go with projects.

"The meeting is not meant to go into great depth on these issues," said Director of Parks and Recreation Karl Mittelstadt. The council will just give the advice on how they should proceed."

Issues to be discussed include the possibility of a park impact fee for in-fill development, a skateboard park, the future of the police station after staff is relocated, open-space trails, youth representation on the commission, and a master plan for the Barrett Community Center.

Currently, the center is rented out for art studios and day-care use, and the adjacent field is used for soccer practice.

"I think there's money allocated in the next budget to do a study to find out how much it would cost to make it a teen center or build a swimming pool," Mayor Eleanore Hahn said. "It's a prime site for a youth center."

Hahn doesn't think a bond measure should be used to pay for redeveloping the center.

"I think we should do some ~~and raising~~ instead of always asking the taxpayers," she said.

But Vice Mayor Dave Warden isn't sure if a study should be done at all.

"We don't have any money to complement a plan, so why are we going to spend money on a study?" Warden said. "I think we should do a study if there's going to be a tangible result."

Both Hahn and Warden said

"I think there's money allocated in the next budget to do a study to find out how much it would cost to make it a teen center or build a swimming pool. It's (the Barrett Community Center) a prime site for a youth center."

Eleanore Hahn

Belmont Mayor

they don't think any more time should be spent trying to pursue a skateboard park.

The commission has discussed the idea for several years but has had no luck finding a location.

"I think we've exhausted all efforts," Hahn said.

Warden agreed.

"We've been giving that a lot of lip service and we haven't done squat," he said.

They will also talk about the possibility of imposing park-impact fees on developers who build on vacant lots. Right now, only developers who build in new subdivisions have to pay the \$15,000 per unit fee.

"The impacts are the same, so the commission is considering making all developers pay," Mittelstadt said.

The future of the police station once staff moves to City Hall will also be discussed at the meeting.

"The question here is whether we want to expand the meadow where concerts are held behind the police station or if we want to put another building there," Hahn said. "I think we'll put another building there."

The commission also wants direction regarding adding open-space trails in the San Juan Hills as well as the possibility of having youth representation on the commission.

The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

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Belmont council to advise commission on park projects

city council
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Plans for new fire station move forward

Council to look at designs for future building

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The newly revised plans for Fire Station 14, located at 601 Masonic Way and 911 Granada St., will finally be presented to the City Council this summer, despite nearby residents' concerns about the building's look.

The new station will replace the currently vacant station at 911 Granada Street, as well as replacing an adjacent vacant apartment complex at 601 Granada to accommodate construction.

The replacement of the fire station is part of South County Fire Authority's master program to replace its antiquated facilities.

The Planning Commission voted 5-0 — with Commissioner Gloria Purcell abstaining — in favor of revised designs for the station that were originally presented to the commission in October.

At that time, commissioners wanted more traffic studies conducted, were concerned with the building's entrance being on both Granada Street and Ralston Avenue and the size of the structure.

Under revised plans, the building's only entrance will be on Ralston Avenue, Granada Street will be turned into a one-way street and the build-

ing was reduced from 9,205 square feet to 9,166 square feet.

But some residents took issue with the changes. In particular, small changes in the building structure.

Resident Denny Lawhern, president of the nearby Sterling Downs Neighborhood Association, was concerned with structural changes made that have the garage portion of the building shorter than the main structure — making it look like two buildings.

"I'm up here in support of this project, and it has been a long, drawn-out process," he told the Planning Commission at last week's meeting. "But we [the neighborhood association] were supportive of the first design presented in October."

Lawhern was also concerned with plans to turn Granada Street into a one-way street. He said that although it would reduce traffic conditions on that street, it would worsen traffic on the other three that border the station — Ralston Avenue, Masonic way and Old County Road.

"I'm also concerned with designing this building around the encroachment on Granada," he said. "This will impact what happens on other corners. I'd really like to see this project move on, but this is just not a good design."

Commissioner Gloria Purcell, speaking as a concerned resident because she lives in the vicinity of the project, agreed that the site was not a good

one, but there was no other alternative.

"Speaking as a neighbor, this site is not an adequate one, but the city and South County Fire could not find another one," she said. "I recognize what Denny says, but there is no viable alternative for this project."

Other than Commissioner Purcell's comments as a resident, other planning commissioners had few concerns or comments on the project.

"I think the chief knows what his business is and is moving forward with this project as he sees fit," Commissioner Warren Gibson said.

The new structure includes a single-story apparatus bay on the ground floor, which will house one front-line ambulance, one reserve aerial ladder truck, and one front-line pumper vehicle.

The new building also includes an office area, training and fitness rooms, restrooms and storage areas on the ground floor.

Plans go before City Council later this summer.

Belmont places downtown's fate on hold for now

City to reconcile vision with definition of downtown

By DEVONA WALKER
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

A marathon meeting of need occurred in Belmont last night as the modest township revealed its annual budget and nonprofits came to beckon at the door step for their share of precious discretionary funds in the city's budget — some 20 agencies were present at the four-hour meeting to vocalize their need for financial support.

But perhaps more importantly for the citizenry of Belmont was the city's decision to temporarily halt its downtown redevelopment efforts — even with a three-year expiration date hanging over the \$7 million remaining in redevelopment funds.

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Words were exchanged between Hahn and the campaigners, and at one point during the altercation the Belmont Police Department was even called to intervene.

"I went inside and told them they couldn't be there, but they didn't seem to want to listen to me," Hahn said. "Later, I went to police station and asked an officer to accompany me and he didn't really want to do anything. Without naming all the names, I will just say it just got a little verbally confrontational. The city has a grant agreement with chamber that prohibits them from engaging in any political activities. But

to participate in," Hahn said. "We really don't have any control now over what they do with the money we give them, which isn't the best way to conduct business. I know other cities are going to a contract-per-service basis with their chambers, and I think that's the way to go."

Several community groups serving the mid-Peninsula also received funds from Belmont, including the Shelter Network, which was given \$10,000 to continue providing services for homeless populations in the area.

"Belmont's been really great to us. A lot of cities in the county when we go to them and say we are serving families and people who are living in your town, they have been very supportive," said Shelter Network Development Director John Panzer. "What's different about Shelter Network is that we are looking to create

I'm not going to hold the Chamber responsible for that."

At Belmont's Tuesday City Council meeting, Chamber President-Elect Brad Clore asked the City Council for forgiveness and apologized for the confrontation.

But this may be the last time the group will be able to ask for blanket dollar figures from the city, as Councilmember Pam Rianda expressed her intent to change the manner in which the group receives funds from the city. At present, the group is supported by the city with overall dollar figures, but city officials say that next year they will go to funding the chamber on a contract-for-services-rendered basis.

"This would eliminate the confusion over why we give them money and what the money is for. We would pay them for services we want them

a permanent solution. So what's nice with a town like Belmont is that they realize that if they fund us, we are not putting a band aid on the situation."

But out of the all the groups that received funds, there were those who walked away empty-handed — among the have-nots was the Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District.

"The school district should not be coming to the city and ask us to pay for their capital projects. I was offended, to tell you the truth," Hahn said.

The school district asked the City Council for \$50,000 to build a gymnasium. But according to Hahn, the funds that were allocated were intended for nonprofits and community agencies, not school districts with funding sources.

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*City Council
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Council, Chamber resolve dispute

BY DEVONA WALKER
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Belmont's City Council and Chamber of Commerce apparently have buried the hatchet, or at least the councilmembers appeared willing to put bad feelings behind them and approve \$35,000 for the group to continue providing services to the city.

The fallout between Mayor Eleanor Hahn and the Chamber arose after the group was found to be using its facilities to run the "Yes on Measure B" campaign. Measure B was a parcel tax initiative that would have provided funds for capital improvements to the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District.

The initiative failed, winning a clear majority of the electorate but falling short of the two-thirds vote necessary to win.

Four of Belmont's five councilmembers, including Hahn, endorsed Measure B.

But Hahn said that despite her own personal support of the measure it was out of line for the Belmont Chamber of Commerce to run a campaign out of its facilities.

Noticing the campaign signs on the lawn of the Chamber building, Hahn says she went inside to tell the campaigners they were not allowed to be there. A contractual agreement between the Chamber and the city prohibits the former from formally endorsing and taking part in political activities.

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"I caution you to move very carefully, the future of the community is at stake," said City Manager Jerry Kersner of the city's existing downtown redevelopment efforts. According to Kersner, the city needs to reconcile the inherent contradictions between what it is planning for downtown and the reality of what a downtown really is.

Kersner told the City Council as well as the community that if they indeed are trying to build a downtown area, then current plans as they exist will not get the job done.

"A downtown area can be many things, but it is always pedestrian first — not second," said Kersner of the priorities to consider when planning for a downtown.

Kersner explained that the thoroughfare of El Camino Real that at present divides the two neighborhood centers, which the city has been planning as a focal point of its redevelopment area, is inherently inconclusive with the definition of a downtown.

"But there's no law that you have to build a downtown," he said. "You are building a neighborhood commercial area not a downtown — it's more like Carlmont Village instead of down-

town San Mateo. And there's nothing wrong with that. I just think we should make sure before we go ahead."

Kersner recommended that the city reexamine its intentions as it relates to the downtown corridor and either revise its plans or at least change its goals.

The response from the council was mixed.

Vice Mayor David Warden said the existing plan was fine — it had involved many hours from the Planning Commission, the input of the community and the insight of the current as well as former councils.

"Perhaps it needs a little polishing but I feel pretty comfortable with it," Warden said. "My feeling with this is that we are a little bit hung up on defining it."

Councilmember Pam Rianda echoed Warden's remarks.

"When I think of downtown I'm thinking of a geographical place," as opposed to a definition. But Rianda also alluded that perhaps the City Council, by the way of ordering a future focus group to discuss the downtown specific plan take a cafeteria approach to redeveloping the area and take parts of what exist in Belmont pieces of the existing Belmont Specific Plan and combine that with elements from Kersner's idea of downtown.

Essentially Kersner detailed an area that would be mixed use in nature, providing residential as

well as commercial development. It would be pedestrian friendly, meaning all thoroughfares would either circumvent the area or terminate at downtown. He also specified that it would be made up of projects with higher height and density zoning ordinances than other areas of the city.

"A downtown is supposed to be crowded," Kersner explained.

One councilmember, at least, seemed to agree.

"[Kersner's presentation] points out poignantly the contradictions that are out there. There's the sense that if we go through with the plans that it will improve the city and clean up this blight but I'm not sure that is the case," said Councilmember Paul Wright, cautioning his colleagues to take heed of the city manager's recommendations and reexamine the entire downtown specific plan. "The most widely used identifier for what a downtown is — is a place that you have a sense of community. We don't have that now and we won't have it with our current plans."

Outlined in the city's redevelopment plans are several large commercial projects that in the words of Kersner will be contributing to neighborhood centers, such as small strip-style mall developments of grocery stores that anchor communities.

Although the City Council did defer making any recommendations on further redeveloping

downtown until looking at it more closely at a future study session, no one seemed too inclined to let a hard-and-fast definition of downtown define redevelopment efforts.

"Take a look at what the city manager has to say. He's got some good points," said Denny Lawhern, a Belmont community member and former planning commissioner. "But reach out to the community and make sure they know you are planning to make such a big change to their village center."

The council, however, did approve a five-year implementation plan for the Los Costanos Redevelopment Project Area — which largely involves capital improvements, a housing element and a street maintenance projects. This is only a small piece of the overall \$21.6 million worth of improvements the city will have to under over the next five year, which will ultimately include a \$6 million reconstruction of City Hall.

But the city tabled making any recommendations on the redeveloping the Block Four area — which is located on the northwest side of El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue where Walgreens is currently located. In addition, the City Council deferred discussing what it plans to do with Emmett House, a historical structure that will eventually need to be moved, refurbished or demolished to prevent any further blight to the downtown corridor.

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July 3, 2001*

Summerhill proposal gets rubber stamp

City Council finally approves plans for 52 units on PJCC site

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — It has taken more than 18 months for the City Council to approve their project, but Summerhill Homes officials can finally get their plans for the current site of the Peninsula Jewish Community Center underway.

The council voted 4-1 at last week's meeting to approve the plans for 52 townhouses on the site after the PJCC leaves for Foster City.

Last May, the council had decided to postpone approving the proposed 48 townhouses because of concerns regarding density, affordability and the loss of the pool. Summerhill would have paid the city \$500,000 toward the cost of a new pool, under the delayed plan.

But now, along with building 52 townhouses, Summerhill will pay \$1 million toward a new pool and other park and recreation fees.

In the past 18 months, Summerhill has presented four other options for the site. These options included building 46 units and paying just \$200,000 for the new pool; building 52 units with no money for a pool, or 48 units and no money for a pool.

The fourth option was the last proposal Summerhill had submitted to council on May 8.

Councilmember Pam Rianda

then submitted her own proposal for the site, arguing that none of Summerhill's alternatives were acceptable.

Rianda proposed a maximum of 60 units be built with nine of them set aside for below market rate. Those nine would be given first priority to city and school district employees.

She also suggested that the units could be built with money from the redevelopment agency's funds.

"We need to look at every opportunity to put affordable housing into our projects," she said. "I've listened to other agencies about the importance of housing, and affordable housing is important. I don't think it's part of this project."

Summerhill Development Manager Craig Champion was not happy with Rianda's proposal, explaining that it did not reflect feedback he received from the community.

"This is not what we've been hearing from the rest of the community," he told the council. "We've continually heard to bring our density down, and it seems like every time we come up to present our proposals there's something different that needs to be examined."

Other councilmembers did not agree with Rianda's proposal either, citing that the city could not use redevelopment funds for the project.

PROPOSAL: Summerhill Homes

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"Throughout this process I heard many concerns expressed by planning commissioners and residents about density, street parking and the loss of the pool," said Councilmember Terri Cook. "But I didn't hear anyone talk about affordable housing, and this area is not appropriate to use redevelopment agency funds."

Vice Mayor Dave Warden added that redevelopment funds were only to be used for the downtown area, and that affordable housing should be built near transit.

Some residents urged the council to keep the site open to the community because of the pool that would be lost once Summerhill finishes construction.

"I look at the whole facility as

an asset to the community," said Belmont resident Greg Menzel. "I don't want to see it turned into a development. I'd like to keep the pool for the community. Carlmont [High School] and Barrett [Community Center] aren't good alternatives."

Suggestions were made at previous City Council and Planning Commission meetings to use Carlmont High School's pool temporarily until a new pool could be built. It was also suggested at a joint meeting between the council and the Parks and Recreation commission to build a permanent pool at the Barrett Community Center on Ralston Avenue.

"The JCC is a good place for a community pool and I hate to see it get lost," Menzel continued. "I'm usually not opposed to developments, but I can't see losing this."

Another resident said that a community pool would benefit the youth.

"This community has a lot of youth, and young people need a pool," said David Swinney. "If you want to build a development here that's fine, but we need a site where we can have a community pool."

Other residents urged the council to move ahead because the PJCC will move no matter how the property will be used.

"The JCC is moving, and that is a fact," said Dave Bauer. "I would really like to see the council move ahead, because these plans are well done and really thought out."

"The JCC needs to move no matter who buys the site," said the JCC's Lee Manus-McNutt. "This project is thought out and good for the Carlmont neighborhood."

City Council
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City Council candidates file for seats

So far two newcomers show interest in November election

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — City Hall announced last week that the bid for three City Council seats is officially open, with four candidates already throwing their hats in the ring.

Two newcomers to the council have filed to run in the Nov. 6 election against incumbents Pam Rianda and Terri Cook. Mayor Eleanor Hahn, whose term ends this year, hasn't decided if she'll run again.

Hahn said, "There are a couple of things going on right now that may help me make up my mind before the deadline to file."

Dave Bauer is one challenger seeking a first term on the council. His community involvement stems from a stint as president of the Belmont Heights Civic Improvement Association and four years as a Belmont Rotary Board member.

"I'm anxious to work well with the other councilmembers and do whatever's best for the town in a reasonable manner," he said. "We have the potential to make a fantastic council that will take us into the future and I hope it will give us a more positive image than we've had in the past."

Bauer said he has been ask-

ing former councilmembers for advice.

"I've been talking to people who have done this before and listening to their guidance," he said. "I like our little town. It's a neat place to live and I'm anxious to earn a seat on the council and add some common sense and rational thinking."

Another newcomer to the council race is Park and Recreation Commissioner George Metropulos.

"Yes, it is 101 percent official that I am running," Metropulos said from his vacation in Alaska.

Rumors that he would be running for a seat had been circulating for more than a couple of months, but Metropulos has kept tight-lipped until recently.

It was also rumored that David Braunstein, the co-chair of the Belmont Library Task Force, was interested in running.

"I was interested, but that was months ago," Braunstein said. "Right now my focus is on the library, it's much more important at the moment, but maybe I'll run in a future election."

Incumbents Cook and Rianda have already filed to run in the election.

Cook, an administrative assistant with the San Carlos

not be reached for comment. Nomination papers and related documents are currently available in the City Clerk's office at 1070 Sixth Ave. The deadline for submitting nomination papers is Friday, Aug. 10 at 5 p.m. If an incumbent does not file by that time, the submission date will be pushed to Wednesday, Aug. 15. Any Belmont resident who is 18 years of age or older, a registered voter and not disqualified by the state's constitution from holding a civil office is eligible to be elected.

School District, was the top vote-getter when she was elected in 1997. She also served on the Planning Commission for three years prior to winning her council seat. Both Cook and Rianda could

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COUNCIL: Candidates file

CITY COUNCIL
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES
JULY 14, 2001

Belmont

Council OKs resolution opposing airport plan

The City Council unanimously approved a resolution addressed to the County Board of Supervisors Tuesday opposing the County's current master plan for the San Carlos Airport.

The resolution says there have been no accidents or incidents at the airport that have been attributed to the runway's length, therefore no safety stopways need to be paved as proposed.

It says that lengthening the runway will only result in greater volumes of air traffic and facilitate increased-weight aircraft at the airport.

The resolution also states that the city opposes any project that will increase noise around the community.

It also says the city opposes any increase in existing fuel storage as proposed in the master plan.

CITY COUNCIL
THE INDEPENDENT
JULY 21, 2001

OVER

City Council race starts to heat up

Four candidates vying for two open seats in November

By **Wes Bowers**
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — The Belmont City Council election is heating up as two first-time candidates say they are looking to bring unity, insight and common sense to the council.

This past Monday was the official opening date for filing to run in this November's City Council election. But only one of the four candidates who announced interest in running has filed so far. Terms for councilmembers Pam Rianda and Terri Cook and Mayor Eleanor Hahn expire this year.

Cook has announced her interest in running again, while two newcomers have also expressed plans to campaign for a spot on the governing body. Rianda has already filed for a seat.

One of those newcomers is Dave Bauer, whose background in community involvement includes two years as president of the Belmont Heights Civic Improvement Association and four years as a member of the Belmont Rotary Club.

Bauer, who works in the insurance sector, has been talking about running for the council for some time and hopes to "add some insight and common sense" to the council if he's elected come November. Bauer is a native of San Francisco who moved to Belmont in 1988. He has three kids.

The second challenger so far is Parks and Recreation

Commissioner George Metropulos, who is a third-grade teacher at Central Middle School. Metropulos was busy pushing the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District's Measure B for the first part of 2001, and he wanted to get that issue out of the way before he officially ran for a seat.

"It definitely will be interesting this November because we'll have more people than seats," Metropulos said. "I think this will give residents a chance to truly decide who to vote for. I think everyone who announced they are running is very qualified, and this is a camp of people looking for a change."

Metropulos has already begun working on his campaign statement for the race. He wants to help create more quality activities for youth and families, and improve community development for local businesses.

Metropulos pointed out that he isn't running against anyone, but running for the city and the people of Belmont. "I'm looking forward to the campaign and I plan on being very positive," he said. "I think the whole election will be positive. There might be several more people running come August and that will bring a variety of people to this race. It will be good for the entire community."

Rianda, the only candidate to file for the election so

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far, is seeking her fourth term on the council. "Both Dave and George are very active in the community," she said. "But because it's so early in the election, I haven't heard them talk about why they're running or what they stand for yet."

Rianda may not know this until the filing deadline on Aug. 10, when applying candidates also have to unveil their campaign statements.

Cook is seeking a second term on the council this November. The top vote-getter in 1997's election, Cook served as Belmont's mayor for one year of her term.

Cook works as an administrative assistant in the San Carlos School District, and served on Belmont's Planning Commission for three years.

"It's always an interesting election in Belmont, no matter who's running or who's not," she said.

Cook doesn't think that there are any particular issues

candidates will focus on this year, but said there are some she is interested in tackling if she's re-elected.

Some of those issues include building the new library, the Harbor Industrial Annexation and the Fire Station 14 and City Hall renovations.

"With the library, we're finally going to be finalizing conceptual design plans and writing an application for state funding, so we're excited about that," she said. "And right now we're in formal discussions with the HIA (Harbor Industrial Association) for annexation."

But Cook said that about six months ago, she was pretty adamant about not running again. She said during her one year as mayor she had taken the brunt on some issues, and it took a lot out of her.

The current discussion with the Harbor Industrial Association was one of the things that changed her mind, along with the outcome of the library bond and some support from residents.

"I had a lot of people coming up to me and asking if I was going to run again," she said. "And when I'd tell them I didn't think so, they'd say 'But you've done such a good job and you're good for Belmont.' So I took those comments into consideration — and decided to go ahead and run again."

As a member of the library task force, Cook said that she felt the community support after she helped push the library bond through.

Also on that library task force is Vice Mayor Dave Warden. Although his seat isn't up for bid until 2003, he also believes that this November's election will be very interesting.

"I think it's going to be a very serious election," he said. "You've got more people running than there are seats now, and every one of them is going to have to work very hard to secure one."

He agreed that all four of the current candidates are well-suited for the positions, but

thinks that a few more people will make bids for election before the Aug. 10 deadline.

"I don't know who I'm going to support right now," he said. "Both Terri and Pam have done a pretty good job on the council and we don't know if Eleanor's running yet. There may be five or six people that will actually be vying for these seats."

"Dave and George have definitely been involved in the community and have done their share," he added. "And I have a feeling they know this community very well. We'll have to wait and see what happens."

To run for the Belmont City Council, applicants must be 18 years of age or older and a resident of Belmont. The deadline for filing papers with the city clerk is Aug. 10. However, if any incumbents do not file by the deadline, it is then extended until Aug. 15.

Wes Bowers can be reached via e-mail at wbowers@smindependent.com or at 652-6766.

CITY COUNCIL
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES
JULY 27, 2001

FRIDAY, July 27, 2001

Belmont's Rianda files for re-election

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

BELMONT — Long-time Councilwoman Pam Rianda, who has spent almost three terms on the Council and has been in the middle of several controversies, isn't throwing in the towel. She filed for re-election on Wednesday.

"It's good old community service," Rianda said. "I still believe I make a difference. I still do my homework. I still like going to meetings. And if the people want me, I'm willing to serve another term."

Some of the actions Rianda is specifically proud to have supported have been helping to secure land for a football field, raising the railroad tracks, and bringing quality employees to the city.

The special-education teacher, who has been a supporter of limited growth, last year survived attacks from unattributed mailers and a Web site demanding that she be recalled.

The unidentified individuals claimed she micro-managed city managers and wasted money.

Rianda hopes the City Council will start pushing developers to build more low- to moderate-income housing.

"Every time a project comes up, I'm going to stress low- to moderate-income housing," she said.



Rianda

Rianda has been mayor twice during her three terms.

Meanwhile, current Mayor Eleanore Hahn still hasn't picked up nomination papers.

"I'm going to wait until the last minute to decide," said Hahn, not wanting to comment any further as to why she's stalling.

Hahn, a real estate broker, is finishing her first term.

Councilwoman Terri Cook, who works for San Carlos School District, has picked up nomination papers but has not filed.

Newcomers George Metropulos, David Bauer and Linden Hsu have also picked up papers but have not yet filed.

Metropulos is a schoolteacher and Bauer sells insurance. Hsu is a member of the San Mateo County Libertarian Party.

Mayor Hahn chooses not to seek re-election

Says council too conflicted, needs time to herself

By Wes Bowers
Staff Reporter

BELMONT — Three seats are up for election on the Belmont City Council this November, yet only two incumbents will be running.

Citing frustration over the council's inability to get along, Mayor Eleanor Hahn has announced that she won't seek another term.

"I haven't been happy with some of the decisions we've made," she said. "It's getting to the point where I need some harmony, but you just can't have that if you're on a City Council and they argue a lot. I just don't think we've been

working well together like we should be."

Had Hahn re-filed and been re-elected this November, it would have been her second term on the council.

"For me right now, I need some more time for myself," she said. "I have family and friends all over the country, and I've had to say no to a lot of things because of this meeting and that meeting. And it's

been hard to turn them down because of that."

Hahn, a 15-year resident of Belmont, served on the water board — which is now known as the Mid-Peninsula Water District.

"Before I served on the council, I spent four years on the water board," she said. "So I figure I served the community for eight years, and it's just time for me to move on and let

someone else have a shot at it."

When asked if she would ever consider running in a future election, she said she didn't know.

"I haven't really thought about it," she said. "My 94-year-old mother still lives here in Belmont and I'll be around at least until she passes on, but she might live to be 100. She's the only family I have in the

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area and after that I might leave. Who knows how long I'll be around."

However, Hahn said that the bottom line is she is just tired. "Being a councilmember is not just going to council meetings. There are other meetings we have to go to, along with events and functions. I mean you get some personal rewards out of being on the council, but I'm just tired of going to so many meetings and functions."

Councilmember Pam Rianda said that not having Hahn on the council will give it a very different composition. "I think the citizens will miss someone who has been a real advocate for them," Rianda said. "She's always been available at all hours to hear their concerns and it will be a big loss. The community will definitely

miss her."

Rianda added that she too will miss Hahn's presence on the council. "I'll miss her terribly," she said. "I was actually hoping she'd run again. But when she was thinking long and hard about it, I knew that there was that strong possibility she wouldn't."

Challenger Dave Bauer said that Hahn's decision was a wise one on her part.

"She seemed decidedly unhappy during her time on the council, to me," he said. "I don't know if anyone else saw the same thing, but it was probably very taxing on her. I think it was a wise choice."

Bauer gave Hahn kudos for serving her entire term. "I have to give her credit for toughing it out. I think that others with a lesser constitution would have stepped down long ago, but she stuck

it out. She probably needs a bit of breathing room."

Former councilmember Coralin Feierbach said that Hahn merely did what she felt was right for herself. "People have to do what they want to do," Feierbach said. "If she feels that she doesn't want to be on the council anymore that's fine. It's a big decision whether you're going to run or not, and she's made hers."

Because Hahn did not file for re-election, at least one newcomer in this year's election will be voted onto the council.

Central Elementary teacher George Metropulos, insurance agent Dave Bauer and electrical design engineer Linden Hsu will all be vying for a seat. And if both councilmembers Terri Cook and Pam Rianda were not re-elected, the council would see three new faces this fall.

*Mayor Hahn - city council
The Independent
Aug 18 2001*