

Belmont

joins

Sister City

International

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

Belmont recently joined the Sister City International organization to become sister cities with Ilmenau, a city in the former East Germany.

It all started in September 1996 when Belmont resident, Gus Lizano returned from a business trip in the area.

"He carried with him a request from Ilmenau Mayor Michael Seeber and a wealth of material about Ilmenau," said City Councilmember Nancy Levitt. "Mr. Lizano approached several members of the City Council about creating a sister city relationship with Ilmenau."

The City Council was very receptive to the idea and the process started to join the Sister Cities International organization.

"I've been to Europe 21 times and from what I've seen, Ilmenau looks very similar to Belmont," said Levitt. "Ilmenau like Belmont is located in the hills. Ilmenau also has a technical university similar to the College of Notre Dame."

Residents of Ilmenau were so impressed from what they heard about Belmont and its proximity to the Silicon Valley that they actually approached Belmont to join in a Sister City relationship with them.

"I had traveled to Ilmenau twice through my business dealings," said Lizano. "The similarities surprised me. Both cities have similar populations and typography and are active in the arts."

Lizano met with the Ilmenau's mayor and the city council, who encouraged him to ask the Belmont City Council when he returned about a partnership.

After several months of raising money to join the organization and go through the proper process,

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July 9, 1997

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SISTER: Cities share similarities

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the partnership is finally getting underway.

In June, Belmont finally received formal membership in the Sister Cities International.

This would be the first time that Belmont has had an international sister city. (Belmont had an informal relationship with Belmont, Mass.)

Membership in the Sister Cities International means increased tourism, new prospects for trade and commerce, youth and professional exchange programs, enriched and diversified cultural experiences, extended international assistance,

increased awareness and interest in foreign languages and an enhancement of learning experiences in schools through direct inter-school contacts.

Sister Cities International also has grant and scholarship programs which enable members to participate in people-to-people exchanges with sister cities all over the world.

Currently there are 1,200 U.S. cities and their 1,900 partners in 120 countries

worldwide in Sister Cities International.

It is unique because it links municipalities from the U.S. with foreign cities through official sister city agreements signed by the respective mayor of each city and ratified by the city council.

The Sister City International organization was founded in 1956 by Dwight D. Eisenhower and became a not-for-profit

organization in 1967 due to the growth and popularity of the organization.

To be official, a sister city relationship must have the complete support of the local authorities. Sister City International leads the national movement for local community development and volunteer action in the global arena.

"We are currently trying to fill positions by community volunteers for the Sister City Committee," said Levitt.

The first meeting of the Sister City Committee will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 30 in Suite 300A of the Belmont City Hall.

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*summary was given city
Enquirer Bulletin
July 5, 1997*

*Belmont Budget
Enquirer Bulletin
August 6, 1997*

August 6, 1997

Enquirer-Bulletin

Belmont poses 1997-98 budget

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

The Belmont City Council has begun work sessions for the proposed 1997-98 fiscal budget.

"The departure of the previous city manager and the subsequent hiring of an interim city manager has unavoidably delayed the regular budget process," said interim City Manager Bill Zaner in the proposed budgetary statement to the City Council. "Consequently, the proposed budget comes to the Council after the statutory deadline."

Of the priorities for Council consideration are an analysis of the Fire Protection District, the move to Moderate Income Housing fund, the enterprise fund and a loss from the Land Agency Formation Committee (LAFCo) decision on the Harbor Industrial Area.

"All in all, the budget looks terrific," said Councilmember Nancy Levitt. "It appears quite solvent."

Of more concern to the Council, however, is the historical trend being evidenced in the Fire District's expenditure pattern.

For the past six years, the district has consistently overpent its revenue, which has resulted in about \$300,000 to \$500,000 being transferred from reserves into its operating accounts annually.

"This proposed budget requires the use of approximately \$445,000 from the district reserve in order to pay for ongoing operations of the district," said Zaner. "The result is that the District fund balance is now dangerously low and given the trend, will be

exhausted in 1998-99."

Zaner recommended the Council and senior city staff give this issue priority in the coming year.

"We won't need to amend services," said Levitt. "We will just need to make some adjustments to the general fund to cover this."

Total funds available (on an all funds basis) in the proposed budget amount to \$41.2 million. This includes all reserves, carryover balances and transfers.

This proposed budget recommends the expenditure of \$22.7 million, leaving the remainder as fund balances in various funds. It also improves the unappropriated General Fund reserve slightly, from \$1.8 million to \$2.1 million.

All funds, with the exception of the co-sponsored Special Recreation Fund and the Storm Drainage Fund, show a positive fund balance at the close of the 1997-98 fiscal year.

The upcoming grade separation project, although a major project for the city, will not play a role in this proposed budget.

"The grade separation project, because it is a huge one-time project funded largely by outside agencies, tends to distort the true picture of Belmont's municipal finances," said Zaner. "That project has its own set of books and except for a contribution of \$1.4 million previously committed by the

Council, has no effect on this proposed budget."

The grade separation project has been "isolated" from the balance of the budget in order to avoid distorting the city's ongoing finances.

Belmont's financial commitment is limited to \$1.4 million at present. The city's portion of the project is now estimated to cost approximately \$54 million, but this figure is subject to receipt of actual bids on the construction of the work.

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Belmont City Councilmember

nally estimated cost of \$34 million and the current estimates is being sought," said Zaner in the budgetary statement. "Additional sources will be pursued during the next few months so that

all the funding will be committed prior to letting the project out to bid.

"A management plan has been devised and submitted to the state setting forth the manner in which Belmont and San Carlos will coordinate to assure the timely and economical completion of the project."

Revenues for the General Fund are estimated to be approximately \$8.7 million in 1997-98. Major sources of revenue include sales tax (\$2.6 million), property tax (\$1.0 million), transient occupancy tax (\$500,000).

"All these sources show an increase over the 1996-97 year,

reflecting the generally favorable local economy," said Zaner.

Budget analysts project the General Fund will account for approximately \$8.4 million in expenditures, the largest single fund in the budget, according to Zaner.

"This is an increase of only \$265,000 over 1996-97 attributable largely to implementation of the second-year salary schedule previously approved by the Council," said Zaner. "Also the addition of 3.5 new employees."

Some significant changes and recommendations in the General Fund of the proposed budget include upgrading the personnel analyst position to a human resources director, the addition of an administrative assistant position to form a new human resources department, establishment of a separate account for municipal elections, discontinuance of the annual transfer to the Workers Compensation Fund and substantial increases in retirement rates from the State Retirement System.

Financial assistance to civic organizations requesting funds for the first time have not been included in this proposed budget. A separate listing of all organizations and their requests will be provided to the Council for consideration.

Aside from the above items, the General Fund is proposed to operate much the same as in the previous fiscal year, according to Zaner.

The recent decision by LAFCo to permit the annexation of a portion of the Harbor Industrial Area by San Carlos will result in a loss of about \$100,000 for the Belmont Fire District.

Propulsion & Bulletin
Engineer
Aug 20, 1987

Moratorium

defeated

ENVIRONMENT

Developers and Realtors breath sigh of relief

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

After conflict of interest allegations and a straw vote, the proposed moratorium on future developments in the San Juan Canyon was defeated, 3-1, at the Belmont City Council meeting Tuesday, Aug. 12.

"A moratorium is not the way to go about to save the canyon," said Councilmember Nancy Levitt. "The city could ultimately lose open space by issuing the 45-day moratorium because it would establish a hostile relationship with property owners whom the city may approach to obtain the land for open space."

Three councilmembers — Coralin Feierbach, Pam Rianda and Adele Della Santina — officially stepped down from the vote after they were notified by the Fair Political Practices Committee that they were possibly in a conflict of interest.

The three drew straws to see which two would vote, since, according to city officials, being able to vote takes precedence over any conflict in order to allow city business to continue.

"We drew straws and I drew the shortest straw so I had to abstain from the vote," said Feierbach.

"For a moratorium you need four members to vote and so Adele and Pam were able to vote after drawing straws."

But some have questioned how city officials can vote if they are found to be in a conflict of interest on an issue.

The possible conflict of interest arose out of the location of the residences of Rianda and Feierbach and the business dealings of the Della Santina.

Rianda and Feierbach own property in the area and Della Santina is a real estate agent with property in escrow in the area, according to city officials.

The law states that a conflict of interest exists if: 1) property located within a 300-2,500 foot radius of the property which is the subject of the decision is materially affected if it's fair market value is increased or decreased by \$10,000; or, 2) the decision would affect the zoning, annexation, sale, lease, actual or permitted use of taxes or fees imposed on real property in which the official has an interest of \$1,000 or more.

At its July 28 meeting, the City Council voted, 4-1, to place an advisory measure on the November ballot, which, if passed, would allow the council to develop a financial plan to protect San Juan Canyon.

"This is just asking the voters if they want the city to develop a

MORATORIUM: Voted down

Continued from 1A

plan to save the canyon," said Feierbach in a previous interview. "I would like to see the canyon saved for open space and public park use."

But the one thing the council is in agreement on is that it is in favor of open space and saving the canyon. Exactly how it should go about this is the question.

Some councilmembers argued that several developers have been "eyeing" the canyon and without a moratorium, developers could apply for parcels of land and then later face opposition causing the city to face possible lawsuits from potential developers.

"There are no bulldozers

poised at the top of the hill," said Mayor Gary Harris. "There are no present applications for development in the canyon at this time. With the construction ban in Belmont during the winter, the odds are that even if a developer is interested, nothing could start until next spring."

Harris agreed that a moratorium was not needed and not the way to go about acquiring open space.

At the meeting, however, many property owners and developers raised concerns that the moratorium would lower their property values and could result in a lawsuit against the city.

"If nothing is going on (with potential develop^{ers}) then why

were so many developers and realtors at the meeting arguing against the moratorium," said Feierbach. "If a developer invests money in applying for land in the canyon and residents later fight that possible development, then the developer could sue for money spent on applying."

Without any impending developments in the canyon, this issue is pretty much done until November.

"It is hard when you have such a diverse feeling on development among councilmembers," said Feierbach. "There may be a change (on the council) in November and hopefully people will be elected who are more sensitive to the people's needs."

Belmont finally passes budget

GOVERNMENT

Small amendments made by staff

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

Belmont finally has a fiscal plan for 1997-98, which comes well after the deadline for most San Mateo County municipalities.

"The reason for the delay was major staff changes over the last year including the city manager position and public works director along with other staff," said interim City Manager Bill Zaner. "The depart-

ture of the previous city manager and the subsequent hiring of an interim city manager has unavoidably delayed the regular budget process.

"Consequently, the proposed budget comes to the council after the statutory deadline."

Priorities for council consideration were an analysis of the Fire Protection District, the Low to Moderate Income Housing fund, the enterprise fund and a loss from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) decision on the Harbor Industrial Area.

The only major amendments to the budget from the original proposed plan were in the Belmont Fire Protection District,

which had an expenditure decrease for a reallocation of charges for technology services of \$96,850.

Other amendments to the budget included revenue increases in the General Fund of \$50,000 for property tax and \$195,000 for sales tax; expenditure increases in contributions to civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Library and Center for Domestic Violence, Parks and Recreation and the Planning Department.

Some significant changes and recommendations in the General Fund of the budget include upgrading the personnel analyst position to a human resources director, the addition of an administra-

tive assistant position to form a new human resources department, establishment of a separate account for municipal elections, discontinuance of the annual transfer to the Workers Compensation Fund and substantial increases in retirement rates from the State Retirement System.

"All these sources show an increase over the 1996-97 year, reflecting the generally favorable local economy," said Zaner.

Aside from the above items, the General Fund is proposed to operate much the same as in the previous fiscal year, according to Zaner.

Two programs, day care and Kollage

See **BUDGET**, page 13A

*Belmont City Council
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Sept 3, 1997*

BUDGET: Minor amendments

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School, were granted an increase in expenditures with the promise of an increase in revenue.

According to Zaner, both will have an increase of approximately \$7,000 with expected revenue to be the same.

All funds, with the exception of the co-sponsored Special Recreation Fund and the Storm Drainage Fund, show a positive balance at the close of the 1997-98 fiscal year.

The upcoming grade separation, although a major project for the city, will not play a role in this budget.

"The grade-separation project, because it is a huge one-time project funded largely by outside agencies, tends to distort the true picture of Belmont's municipal finances," said Zaner. "That project has its 'own' set of books and except for a contribution of \$1.4 million previously

committed by the council, has no effect on this proposed budget."

That project has been "isolated" from the balance of the budget in order to avoid distorting the city's ongoing finances.

Belmont's financial commitment is limited to \$1.4 million at present. The city's portion of the project is now estimated to cost approximately \$54 million, but this figure is subject to receipt of actual bids on the construction of the work.

"Additional funds to make up the shortfall between the originally estimated cost of \$34 million and the current estimates is being sought," said Zaner in the budgetary statement. "Additional sources will be pursued during the next few months so that all the funding will be committed prior to letting the project out to bid.

"A management plan has been devised and submitted to the

state setting forth the manner in which Belmont and San Carlos will coordinate to assure the timely and economical completion of the project."

With the San Juan Canyon initiative coming up in November, some councilmembers are wondering if enough funds have been allocated should the voters decide a financial plan be developed.

Councilmember Nancy Levitt raised concerns about the monies in the Open Space Fund of \$8,000 and the Measure E item on the November ballot.

"We still do not know how much it will cost to fund this study if passed and have not accounted for funds if the cost is more than \$8,000," said Levitt.

But city staff explained it was hard to come up with an estimate at this time for the study and would look into the matter further.

Belmont returns benefits to retirees

CITY

Certain group to gain former funding

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

In a controversial move, the Belmont City Council voted 4-1 to grant medical coverage benefits for spouses of city retirees who have claimed they had that benefit once and it was taken away.

The group affected is approximately 10-12 retirees, most of whom are retired police officers.

The council voted to return benefits that

were claimed lost by retirees who retired prior to 1995.

The lone dissenting vote came from Councilmember Nancy Levitt, who argued the council was breaking the law by giving preferred or special benefits to one group.

"Nothing was taken away from them," said Levitt. "The city still pays full benefits for the city retiree."

The city stopped paying the premiums in January 1995, claiming it was under no obligation to pay benefits to the spouses and said the payments made earlier to insure spouses were overpayments.

"Currently all active and retired city employees receive equal contributions to

health plans," said interim City Manager Bill Zaner. "Under the Method of Understanding (MOU) of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), the city agrees to pay for retiree benefits only. This does not apply to dependents."

Zaner, in a detailed explanation to the council and residents at the Aug. 26 council meeting, said he went back 15 years in records and, to be fair, the city should apply those same principles.

"The system prior to 1995 was that the city agreed to contribute up to \$400 a month to active employees," said Zaner. "Hence, the city must agree to contribute the same amount of up to \$400 a month to city retirees. Under the MOU,

employees and retirees receive the amounts whether they were single

"So for those who had dependents or spouses, they could use a portion of that money toward those dependents. For those that did not have a spouse or dependent, they had a surplus. They could use the money any way they wanted, the city didn't care whether the funds were spent on the employee or the spouse."

According to Zaner's findings, the contribution was made irrespective of dependents and no city officials challenged the differential.

"In 1995, the system switched," said

See **RETIREES**, page 12A

*City Council
Inquirer Bulletin
Sept 10, 1997*

RETIREES: Funds restored

Continued from 1A

Zaner. "The city lowered its health contribution for active employees and provided active employees with a new benefit (the flexible benefit plan). But under the MOU, the city must contribute an equal amount to the retirees as to the current employees. But is also still required to pay the full cost of the retiree only health costs."

Zaner explained he couldn't find a justification for the city to make this kind of expenditure and give extra funds to the spouses of the retirees.

"The city attorney and myself recommended to the council to not take this action," said Zaner. "I feel that by the city making a decision for one group, that the

council will be faced with a demand for the same treatment from people who retired after 1995."

But whether they were overpayments, councilmembers felt that an injustice was done by taking

**"These payments
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- Jim McLaughlin

Retired city clerk

the funds away.

"Two bodies fell down here," said Mayor Gary Harris. "The bargaining units representing the employees and retirees fell down

and the council who was not served by its staff at the time. Resulting in the retirees falling through the cracks."

Harris along with other councilmembers seemed to vote on emotion and conscious.

"The retirees really took it in the shorts here," said Councilmember Pam Rianda. "We (the Council) were given false information by staff."

Zaner added that PERS has never mandated a city to pay for the spouses of retirees.

"I know the council feels an interest to do what's just," said Jim McLaughlin, a retired city clerk in Belmont. "These payments were made to us and we feel in all justice they belong to us."

*City Council
San Mateo Co Times
Sept 25, 1997*

Belmont gives up plans for downtown assessment

By Tyler Cunningham
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The City Council has abandoned plans to create an assessment district to pay for new sidewalks, trees, street lamps and a parking lot downtown.

The unanimous decision left city officials wondering how to pay for all the improvements.

"Everyone wants a pedestrian-friendly, small-town atmosphere downtown," said Mayor Gary Harris. "If you want that, we need to find a way to pay for these improvements. So far we've spent time and energy dancing around the issue and haven't solved anything."

The assessment district was created in February 1995, and would have asked 16 property owners in the downtown area (roughly bordered by Emmett, Sixth and O'Neill avenues and El Camino Real) to pay for the improvements.

The city abandoned the district after Michael Lindeburg, one of the district's property owners, sued, claiming the city was charging local business owners an exorbitant amount.

Lindeburg lost the action early this year, but during that time the price of construction had increased sharply, making the district un-

feasible. The city would have needed to establish another district to raise \$450,494 more than the original price, then convince two-thirds of the property owners there to vote for it.

Now that the city has decided to abandon the downtown district, they are responsible for legal fees expended in forming the district, legal fees for the Lindeburg lawsuit and the engineering costs to define the various improvements and some of the costs of projects.

Part of that money will be reimbursed by Safeway, which helped to build a public parking lot on the block south of the store.

The city's decision to abandon the assessment district means that the parking lot will become Safeway's property in 20 years, Harris said. Until then, it remains public property.

The council will now have to find other ways of funding the downtown improvements, Harris said. Many of the street and road improvements could be funded through the city's existing street maintenance program, he said.

Other projects, such as the burying of electrical and phone wires underground, may take longer to fund.

Retirees are awarded pay back

Numerous requests for same benefits

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

The Belmont City Council opened a Pandora's box on retiree benefits. Now it's trying to close it.

After the council voted 4-1 to grant medical coverage benefits to spouses of retired city employees who claimed they had that

benefit at one time, letters have poured in from other individuals and groups who also want the benefit.

One of these groups is the Police Officers Association, which is comprised of current and retired employees who want the same benefits.

"We are opening up the city to an incredible amount of lawsuits," said Councilwoman Adele Della Santina at the Sept. 23 council meeting. "We are exposing the city to a tremendous liability."

The group that was affected is approximately 10-12 retirees, most of whom are retired police officers.

The council voted to return benefits that were claimed lost by workers who retired prior to 1995, which totaled \$15,100.

Councilwoman Nancy Levitt continued to question why the city was not extending this benefit to all retirees and current employees.

"Nothing was taken away from them," said Levitt. "The city still pays full benefits for the city

retiree. We made things even and now we are making them uneven."

The city stopped paying the premiums in January 1995, claiming it was under no obligation to pay benefits to the spouses and said the payments made earlier to insure spouses were overpayments.

"Currently all active and retired city employees receive equal contributions to health plans," said interim City Manager Bill Zaner. "Under the Method of Understanding (MOU) of the

Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), the city agrees to pay for retiree benefits only. This does not apply to dependents."

But after the council's decision, it will apply to a certain group of dependents.

"The system prior to 1995 was that the city agreed to contribute up to \$400 a month to active employees," said Zaner. "Hence, the city must agree to contribute the same amount of up to \$400 a month to city retirees. Under the MOU, the

See RETIREES, page 10A

Enquirer-Bulletin

October 8, 1997

RETIREES: A Pandora's box opened?

Continued from 1A

employees and retirees receive the same amounts whether they were single or not.

"So for those who had dependents or spouses, they could use a portion of that money toward those dependents. For those that did not have a spouse or dependent, they had a surplus. They could use the money any way they wanted, the city didn't care whether the funds were spent

on the employee or the spouse."

According to Zaner's findings, the contribution was made irrespective of dependents and no city officials challenged the differential.

"In 1995, the system switched," said Zaner. "The city lowered its health contribution for active employees and provided active employees with a new benefit (the flexible benefit plan). But under the MOU, the city must

contribute an equal amount to the retirees as to the current employees. But is also still required to pay the full cost of the retiree-only health costs."

Zaner explained that he couldn't find a justification for the city to make this kind of an expenditure and give extra funds to the spouses of the retirees.

Zaner added that PERS has never mandated a city pay for the spouses of retirees. If the council were

to give this benefit to all city employees, added to the benefits of \$15,100 given to the group that retired prior to 1995, the total would be approximately \$60,000.

The council, in an effort to halt further claims, passed a resolution to meet with a labor relations specialist in closed session on any impending lawsuits and to come to some resolution on those who have retired after 1995.

City Council Enquirer Bulletin Oct 5 1997

Enquirer-Bulletin

INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1997

PHONE: (650) 367-9834

Retirees are awarded pay back

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*Belmont City Council
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RETIREES: A Pandora's box opened?

Continued from 1A

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City Council
Enquirer Bulletin
Nov 5, 1997

ECONOMY

Council approves relaxed sign ordinance

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

The Belmont City Council relaxed sign requirements last week for certain businesses along Harbor, El Camino and Old County Road as part of a program to bring some much-needed relief to merchants suffering from the grade separation project.

"Hopefully this is a start to helping the businesses out," Belmont Councilmember Adele Della Santina stated in an earlier interview with the Enquirer-Bulletin. "The grade separation project has gone on longer than had been anticipated. With the closure of Harbor, accessibility has become even more difficult to businesses in that area."

The situation has gotten so bad that in some cases, businesses suffered a 50 percent loss in revenue or have even closed.

The city is planning to relax the ordinance that regulates the size, location and type of signs that businesses can display, according to Interim City Manager Bill Zaner.

"The current sign ordinance permits, or in some cases, prohibits the use of banners by businesses in Belmont," said Zaner. "The resolution passed by the City Council would allow banners or frame signs to be displayed for

businesses in a designated area that are being affected by the grade separation project."

According to Zaner, the year-long program will include businesses along Harbor that have been closed since the beginning of the grade separation project.

Some areas of El Camino will also be affected.

"Basically, the relaxed sign ordinance would apply to only those businesses directly affected by the grade separation project," said Zaner.

The relaxed ordinance would help businesses hidden by the construction to make their presence more known.

"It will give them an opportunity to enhance signage so people driving by can find them easier," said Della Santina. "It will also help remind people they are still there and help to provide easier access to the businesses."

In an effort to help alleviate the problem, the Chamber of Commerce has teamed up with merchants and city officials to form a task force to help the ailing businesses.

The Business Impact Task Force (BITS) held its first meeting Oct. 2, with approximately 12-20 businesses attending.

The organization was formed as a result of the number of calls the chamber received from businesses hurt by the grade separation.

"Our goal is to try to find positive ways to change these circumstances," said Linda Wright,

See **BUSINESSES**, page 14A

BUSINESSES: Help is on the way

Continued from 1A

president of the Chamber of Commerce. "Two City Council members, Adele Della Santina and Pam Rianda, attended along with the Director of Public Works John Curtis and Police Chief Jim Goulart.

"It was nice because when an issue came up at the meeting, a representative from that city department was right there to answer questions."

Wright said two major concerns were brought up at the meeting: the need for more frequent communication between the city and businesses on the grade separation and the possibility of opening up Harbor during breaks in construction.

"A request was made to the San Mateo County Transportation Authority on the opening of Harbor," said Wright. "We must wait and see if that is possible or not."

Wright said the cost may be

high to open Harbor, but added the cost to the city for lost businesses is greater.

All businesses are invited to attend the BITS meetings, not just chamber members.

Some of the ideas that came from the first BITS meeting — aside from relaxing the sign ordinance — included publishing a map or chart in a Belmont newsletter showing how and where to get to those businesses, more frequent updates on the project, parking in the rear of stores that have lost curbside parking, having Samtrans refrain from picking up 49er fans on over-parked El Camino, a downtown block party twice a year, and weekly or bi-weekly BITS meetings.

"In our communication with the Chamber of Commerce," said Zaner, "we feel that those businesses need any help we can give them."

Capital Improvement
Projects
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INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS

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Road improvements part of proposed

TRANSPORTATION

Program may bring streets up to standard

BY AMY BELL
Staff Editor

Road repairs took center stage last week as the City Council concluded the first phase of reviewing the city's proposed capital improvement projects (CIP) budget for the current fiscal year.

The CIP budget addresses some of the most prevalent items the city needs to tackle in the immediate future, including a new police and fire station and civic center location.

The City Council and staff are reviewing needs in areas such as streets, roads, parks, drainage systems and civic facilities.

"The total cost for the proposed capital improvement project budget is \$8 million," said Interim City Manager Bill Zaner. "The budget looks at the current year and four years ahead. It is a rolling five-year plan for the city."

The City Council focused on street and highway improvements at its first budget review session on Oct. 28.

"The council discussed which streets should have reconstruction and resurfacing work done first," said Zaner. "The streets in Belmont have gradually deteriorated over a seven- to 10-year time period. This is a result of a lack of revenue in the city."

As part of the proposed CIP budget, the Roads 2000 program will entail bringing all the roads in Belmont up to standards at one time.

"This program would be a major attempt to fix all the roads that need repair all at once," said Zaner. "Then the city would use gas tax funds to maintain the roads once they are repaired."

According to Zaner, roads have deteriorated because the level of maintenance has not kept up with the need.

"Without the Roads 2000 program, the city won't be able to catch up and will stay behind on road repair," said Zaner. "The roads will continue to deteriorate and the cost to fix them will

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CIP budget

increase year by year."

The basic premise is that the city needs to pay now to be able to save later, according to Zaner.

There are approximately 15 major streets that are in need of work, Zaner added.

The Roads 2000 program would cost an estimated \$12 million for that program alone, which is more than the total of the proposed CIP budget. Therefore, the funds would have to be provided through a bond or taxed on a pay-as-you-go basis, according to Belmont Mayor Gary Harris.

See CIP, page 11A

CIP: Budget plan proposed

Continued from 1A

Belmont cannot use sales tax revenue because that money is needed for other projects the city is working on, according to Zaner.

"The Roads 2000 program must get voter approval because the city does not have the money to fund it and will have to borrow the money to do the project," said Harris. "Some of the roads are in such bad shape that the city may use general fund money to fix them now. In the CIP plan, Talbryn Drive and Hillman Avenue are in need of immediate repair."

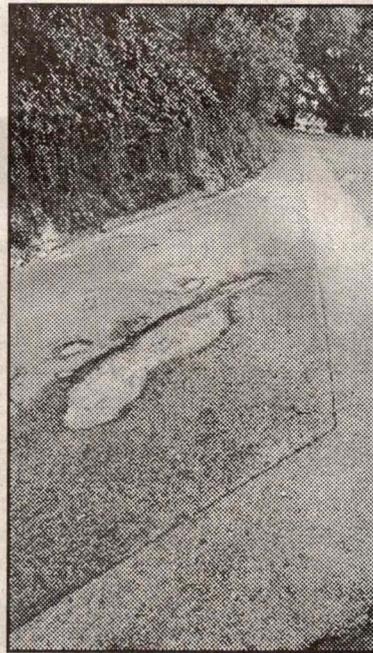
The City Council has seen the plan and requested that city

staff develop a financing plan to see how funds would reach Belmont and exactly how the process would work.

"If the city decides to use bond money for the project, the pay back would be over a period of about 20 years with interest," said Zaner. "The council cannot borrow the money without voter approval."

In the next few weeks, the City Council will be looking at parks, storm drainage and civic buildings in the proposed CIP budget.

(Right) Rough road: *This picture of Talbryn Drive in Belmont shows major pot hole problems that would be the focus of immediate repair in the proposed CIP budget.*



SUSAN GARRISON/EB

City Council 1997
Pam Rianda

Good luck to the new mayors

We congratulate the new mayors of San Carlos and Belmont, Mike King and Pam Rianda.

While mayors are supposed to be ceremonial in both cities, with no more authority and powers than the council, that is not really true. The mayor runs the council meetings and in that capacity carries some weight.

The mayor also may have some authority in setting council meeting agendas and working closely with the city manager. That gives the mayor an entree to city staff that may be more direct than that of the council.

King has his sights clearly set on his priorities: making certain the grade separation in phase B goes smoothly with a minimum of cost overruns, keeping tabs on construction of the library, maintaining government outlays in line with revenues, providing improvements in the new Harbor Industrial Area and generally keeping the city moving forward.

The San Carlos mayor can count on the support of his council. They have worked together for years with a minimum of conflict, sharing the same goals and objectives.

City Manager Mike Garvey is a team player who has an excellent rapport not only with the council, but with staff and the community.

In Belmont, Mayor Pam Rianda spoke in her

acceptance speech of rebuilding and moving forward, citing a multitude of opportunities. She said that the council plans to deal with issues that have real meaning and worth.

She announced that the new council will thoroughly study the issues before charting the course of the community's future, never forgetting whom they serve.

We could not agree more with those objectives. But we also believe that the council must lead and inform the citizens of Belmont so that they understand the issues and the problems that face the city.

We expect the council to be more informed on issues than the average citizen, which does not mean we want the views of the council forced on the community.

But if the problems are brought before the community and discussed intelligently, the citizens can forge a partnership with their council and move forward on those issues.

We see the civic center, new police station, Fire Station 14, street and road repair, Harbor Industrial Area reform and downtown economic development as priorities in the city. How the council takes on these issues and what solutions it offers are the key to Belmont's future.

Two new councilmembers, Eleanore Hahn and Terri Cook, can make an important contribution to the progress of these goals.

San Mateo County Times

THURSDAY December 4, 1997

Pam Rianda new mayor of Belmont

By Karen Heywood
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — The revamped City Council started building what is expected to be a new majority last week when it appointed Pam Rianda mayor of Belmont in its first official vote.

The voice of change was loud and clear, as the council voted 5-0 to make Rianda mayor and her political ally Coraline Feierbach vice mayor.

Her appointment was particularly indicative of the council's reorganization, as Rianda was chosen over former vice mayor Adele Della-Santina. Traditionally, the vice mayor has ascended to mayor.



Rianda

But Belmont City Clerk Kathy Kern said Rianda's appointment was a return to "the normal rotation" rather than a break in protocol.

Rianda was passed over last year for the vice mayor post in favor of Adele Della-Santina, despite Rianda's track record and tenure on the council, and an unofficial cycle, which indicated Rianda would be next in line.

The new mayor said she was confident her unanimous appointment reflected the council's "desire to get back to the way things are supposed to be — a desire to get back to respecting each other and working together in a cooperative fashion."

And Belmont residents hope this first sign of solidarity will mean a reprieve from the council infighting that many saw as petty and overly personal, with many council issues being decided by 3-2 votes.

"It's a good sign not only for the council, but for the city," Rianda said.

BELMONT CITY COUNCIL

Belmont voters throw out two incumbents

By Tyler Cunningham
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Voters tossed incumbents Gary Harris and Nancy Levitt off the Belmont City Council Tuesday, replacing them with newcomers Eleanore Hahn and Terri Cook.

Pam Rianda was the only incumbent voters returned to the council.

Cook received 2,467 votes, or 24.7 percent; Rianda received 2,230 votes, or 22.4 percent.

Hahn received 1,630 votes, or 16.3 percent; Levitt received 1,368 votes, or 13.7 percent; Harris received 1,-



Cook

or 5.9 percent.

The newcomers will dramatically shift the balance of power on the council, which has seen many heated debates and 3-2 votes during the past term, as Rianda and

015 votes, or 10.2 percent; Michael Berg received 673 votes, or 8.8 percent; and Jerry Chapman received 590 votes,

fellow incumbent Coralin Feierbach often voted contrary to the other incumbents. Cook is a friend and political ally of Rianda.

“The voters know what they want and don't want and they showed it tonight,” Rianda said. “Now we have a council that will not only hear what people have to say but they will listen. They will really value the input people give and make it part of the decision-making process.”

All three of the winners ran campaigns that emphasized the need for the City Council to be more responsive to the voters.

They all supported the idea of using city money to help preserve San Juan Canyon from overdevelopment, and Cook and Rianda have both supported building a small, village-type development on the downtown corner of El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue.

The winners will now take the reins on a town that has seen its share of controversy in the past few years, including a mass exodus from City Hall: dozens of employees, including several department heads, either quit or retired in the past two years.

SAN JUAN CANYON

Measure E passage keeps developers at bay

By Tyler Cunningham
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Developers should steer clear of San Juan Canyon, voters said Tuesday by overwhelmingly supporting Measure E.

The measure requires no action, but advises the City Council to develop a financial plan to purchase property in the canyon for open space and public park use.

With 3,786 votes cast in the citywide election, 2,557 voters, or 67.5 percent, voted for the measure and 1,229, or 32.5 percent, voted against it.

The 150-acre canyon, roughly bordered by Ralston Avenue to the south and by Sugarloaf Hill to the north, is Belmont's biggest open space. Much of the area is already subdivided and ready for as many as 240 homes there, Measure E supporters claim.

Two councilwomen who live in the

canyon, Pam Rianda — who was re-elected Tuesday — and Coralin Feierbach, raised the issue months ago when they noticed developers eyeing spots in the canyon. The scarcity of housing along the Peninsula has forced developers to the canyon, they claim, and it's the city's job to preserve its open space.

Feierbach says she's not sure how much it will cost to buy some of the canyon, but she agrees borrowing money is necessary.