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# Treasury up for grabs in Belmont

BY ALAN SISSENWEIN  
Staff Reporter

After 17 years in office, Belmont City Treasurer Jean Zucca is stepping down, and two candidates are vying for her position.

"I'm getting pretty old," said Zucca, 69, with a laugh.

Zucca said she is retiring from the office so she will have the time to tour the United States with her husband.

During her tenure as city treasurer, Zucca's main duty has been to invest the Belmont's surplus funds.

Once monthly, she makes a written report to the finance commission, and each year she submits a investment policy to the city council for its approval.

Zucca said she rarely attends council or finance commission meetings.

For the past few years, Zucca has invested most of the city's spare money in the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF). The fund, which currently pays 5.91 percent interest, is much like a checking account. The city can deposit and withdraw monies without penalty.

This year's candidates, Deputy City Treasurer Robert Blake and Howard Mason, both agree that they would largely carry on Zucca's policy of investing in LAIF and make no drastic changes in the city's investment portfolio.

But while they are in agreement on this policy, the two differ on what the scope of the treasurer's role should be.

Mason, the chief financial officer for a San Francisco real estate investment firm for 25 years, wants the city treasurer to take a more active role in overseeing the city's financial workings.

A member of the Finance Commission since 1978, Mason said he wants to continue to regularly attend its meetings as a treasurer to engender close cooperation.

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# TREASURER: Two run for office

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"Communications need to be improved," Mason said.

He said he would like to review the city and redevelopment agency budgets with the commission to ensure that the city's revenues and expenditures are in balance.

"I see the role as a support for the city council," he said.

Mason regards the biggest financial challenge facing the city to be the ensuring that the \$59 million Ralston Avenue grade separation project is completed on budget and on time.

Mason noted that the project, which has been expanded to include crossings at Harbor Boulevard and Holly Street in San Carlos, is the most expensive public improvement in the city's history.

He said he will closely question the city staff to make sure

their budgetary reasoning is sound.

"I'll get in there and ask questions and probe," he said.

Mason added that both his professional experience and finance commission experience examining budgets give him a strong background for city treasurer.

By contrast, Blake said he sees the city treasurer's role in its traditional light.

"Its worked for years and years, and if it ain't broke, don't fix it," he said with a laugh.

Nonetheless, Blake added that he would be willing to attend finance commission meetings regularly if it was necessary to do the treasurer's job properly.

A neighbor and friend of Zucca's, Blake said she brought him in as deputy city treasurer almost two years ago to learn

the ropes of the job.

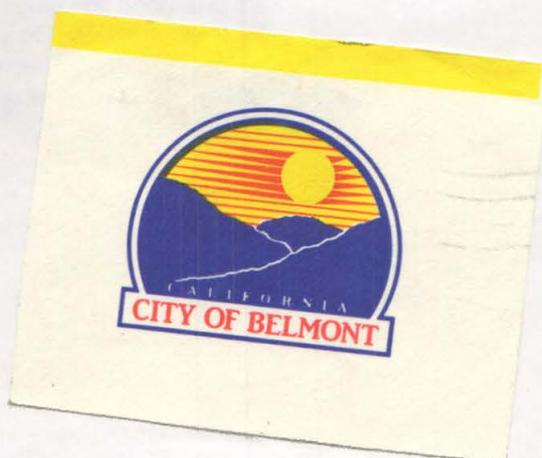
"It was kind of an apprenticeship," he said. "I though it was the best way to learn how to become city treasurer."

Aside from his experience as deputy city treasurer, Blake noted that he has had experience managing a departmental budget during his 33-year career with Varian Associates. For 20 years, he was also an assistant professor teaching Contemporary American Business at the College of San Mateo.

Blake, who retired four years ago, said his experience as deputy city treasurer is his first taste of local public life although he has lived in Belmont for 25 years.

Until he retired, Blake said he was tied up by his career and weekend work in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

"Now that I'm retired, it's the time to do some things for the city," he said.



City of Belmont  
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# Goats booted from the Belmont

## City ordinance does not allow four-legged weed trimmers

By Amy Yarbrough  
Staff Reporter

Utilizing a little-known city ordinance, Belmont officials recently evicted a hooved and voracious group of out-of-towners. Because keeping livestock within city limits violates a local ordinance, city officials demanded several weeks ago that a local neighborhood association round-up some 100 goats grazing on brush in their area and get them out of the Belmont hills. The goats were utilized by a firm

hired by The Knolls — a group of approximately 74 townhouses near Fox Elementary School — to clear out brush in a wooded area in their neighborhood. Though the animals were contained by an electrified fence and supervised by a goat herder, city code limits the number of livestock that can be kept on a particular piece of property and requires that individuals obtain a permit for larger numbers of the animals, according to Belmont officials. "I think (the ordinance is) really

obscure," said former Councilmember Nancy Levitt and currently secretary for the neighborhood association. She added that Belmont, like many other cities, still has codes on the books that deal with issues when the area was rural, but that have not been updated to reflect current times. A section of the Belmont city code sets a minimum lot size of one acre in order to keep two goats, according to Tyra Harrington, the city's code enforcement officer who was charged with telling the group to remove the animals. Harrington said she never

hills  
area

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# GOATS: City limit

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thought her job would require confronting residents over a herd of goats. "My position is really a grab bag position," she said. Levitt said the animals were only there for a ten-day period, and said the neighborhood group was looking for a way to safely clear overgrown brush on a steep hillside near several properties, which was ripe with poison oak and may have presented a fire hazard. The animals, reputed for the strong stomachs, were an ecological choice, she said. "They were moved every day. They (were) quite safe, quite controlled," she added. "We didn't know that there was not a permit or that one (was) required." However, Public Works Director John Curtis said that beyond violating the city ordinance, he worries about the condition of the hillside. The goats may have eaten away too much of the shrubbery in the area that is weak and shale-like, he said, causing it to become unstable. "I think it caused potential problems," said Curtis, adding that the goats were "just eating the heck

out of the hillside" and that the city had recently done considerable work in the area to repair damage done by El Niño. Levitt said she received no complaints from residents about either seeing or hearing the unusual visitors to the neighborhood, and that she would like to see the city code changed to accommodate use of the animals. "It's not a big deal, she said. "If there's some way to be environmentally friendly, let's work at it."



A city ordinance limiting the amount of livestock allowed per resident prompted the removal of about 100 goats that were being used by residents in The Knolls to remove overgrowth of brush from the hillside.

CITY OF BELMONT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
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# Belmont should start 'visioning' process, city manager says

By T.S. Mills-Farauto  
STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Belmont is at a crossroads and it needs a vision, new City Manager Jere Kersnar told the City Council at a special meeting Tuesday night.

Kersnar, who was hired in August, gave council members a list of 29 recommendations that could change the face of Belmont. Some of the suggestions include delaying all projects until the city comes up with a vision, improving council-staff relations and making staff training a priority.

With a management consulting background, Kersnar said this was a project he wanted to do to ground himself in the community. He based his recommendations on the history of the community; his observations and citizen's opinions.

The keystone of Kersnar's recommendations is that the city embark on a "visioning" process before it goes forward with any more projects.

He explained that the city is going through the redevelopment stage of its evolution and economic forces are conflicting with citizens' desires.

"We should take the time to make sure the paths we choose are the ones we want," Kersnar said.

Based on his observations, he said he believes the community does have a vision that is widely shared — it just hasn't been articulated.

Kersnar said he's not suggesting the city produce a thick document but rather a few words that define this vision.

Once a vision has been developed, Kersnar suggests the downtown plans be re-examined.

He said that when the Redevelopment Agency's and city's plans for the downtown area were approved, neither took into consideration that the grade-separation project would be completed. In light of that completion, Kersnar said they should look at the possibility of including the other side of the tracks in the plan.

"When the tracks were at grade, connecting that part of town was not a choice," he said. "But

now you can safely walk and drive under the tracks, so maybe we should look at a way of knitting that part of the community into the plan."

In addition, Kersnar recommended that the general plan update wait until a vision statement is finished. As part of the update, he said residential neighborhood plans, a traffic management study and open space community strategy should be completed.

He suggested the city also continue to deal with the problem of turnover within departments.

"Turnover is debilitating. The general feeling I've gotten from staff is there's no incentive to be aggressive, and I know it's related to turnover," he said.

Kersnar advised that a project status report system be retained to improve the communication between the Council and staff.

"We are already taking steps to improve relations," he said.

Better staff training is also one of Kersnar's priorities.

"We've done a crummy job of customer service training," Kersnar said.

He noted that applicants for building permits usually have to go to several people in different departments. Kersnar said he wants this to be simplified.

For the most part, the council was impressed with Kersnar's report. They accepted it with the understanding that most of the recommendations will have to receive the Council's approval before they can be implemented.

"For the first time in a long time I feel like we have a captain," Councilwoman Pam Rianda said.

Some of the council members were concerned with Kersnar's request to put everything on hold until they come up with a vision.

"I agree with 80 to 90 percent of what we have here," Councilman Dave Warden said. "I am a little bit concerned about putting everything on hold. I would rather we parallel this with everything else and keep moving forward."

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