

# Residents attack

Enquirer - Bulletin 5-29-96

## Belmont survey

BY ALAN SISENWEIN

Staff Reporter

A survey designed to gauge the opinions of Belmont city employees is drawing fire from many residents and some councilmembers.

"It's the job of the people to evaluate the City Council," said former City Clerk Jim McLaughlin. "Most of the staff don't even live in the city."

Released earlier this month, the survey contains harsh criticism of both the Council and City Manager Damon Edwards.

Three respondents specifically name Councilmember Pam Rianda as a major source of discord, unnecessarily interfering with staff.

The report also quotes the respondents, identifying the quote by department rather than by name.

One quoted respondent accuses Rianda of being a liar, while another charges that Edwards behaves like a dictator.

Many, however, say the quotes and department categorizations violate the anonymity promised to the employees, who should not be evaluating council members in the first place.

In a small town like Belmont where people's political views are well known, resident Denny Lawhern said it would be easy to match a quote to the name of a person in a governmental department.

"It wasn't very anonymous," said resident Hartley Laughead,

who agreed that direct quotes should not have been included.

Rianda also believed that employees could be identified by their choice of words.

"This is a heck of a way to show how we value our employees," said Rianda, who added that some may now be worried about their job security.

"The survey puts people jobs and reputations in jeopardy."

# Survey raps Belmont officials

BY ALAN SISENWEIN  
Staff Reporter

Some Belmont municipal employees regard the City Council and city manager as major hindrances to their job performance, according to the findings of a recent survey.

Last week, Mayor Nancy Levitt announced the findings of a survey designed to gauge the feelings and opinions of city employees as means to improve the city's organization.

Out of more than 120 city employees, 60 answered the 59-question survey, including upper-level staff and city councilmembers.

While 19 respondents said their co-workers made their jobs pleasurable and 10 others enjoyed working in a small,

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# SURVEY: Not a pretty picture

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"family-like" atmosphere, 11 people criticized the five-member Council and City Manager Damon Edwards for making their jobs difficult.

Some respondents said there was a lack of direction from the city's top management and legislators.

Three surveys singled out Councilmember Pam Rianda for unduly interfering with staff.

"She fails to tell the truth and lets her personal agenda transcend the good of the city," one respondent wrote.

In an interview, Rianda said the person who wrote this was less than truthful.

"That statement shows the lack of ethics and morals of whoever wrote that," she said. "It's cheap to throw accusations like that."

Rianda said the comments about her interfering with city government are nothing she has not heard before from upper echelon staff, and that she is sure the statements condemning her emanate from three high-ranking city officials.

Questioning the staff policies is part of her job, Rianda said.

"The people of Belmont did not elect a rubber stamp," she said, adding that many staff members have called her to voice support following the survey's release.

One respondent charged Edwards with deriding employees and councilmembers in public.

Another accused top city management of destroying morale.

"The city manager needs to act more as a team player rather than a dictator," wrote one respondent. "I feel that people walk on egg shells around him and that is a shame."

In response to the survey, Edwards said he could not recollect any such behavior on his part.

He added that while the survey indicates problems in the city government, it will take further investigation to define their nature and solve them.

Levitt, however, said the survey indicates a lack of clear communication which must be bridged.

She said that councilmembers frequently speak to staff members outside meetings, and their different perspectives cloud staff direction.

"It's like having five bosses," Levitt said.

In a parallel vein, Councilmember Adele Della Santina said the Council often discusses matters in its meetings which are best brought up at committee meetings.

By questioning small details at the Council level, Della Santina said the staff gets mixed messages from the legislators.

Councilmember Coraline Feierbach noted that total harmony is to be found only where councils approve all staff recommendations without scrutiny. Because there are five different perspectives on the Council, disagreement is inevitable.

Feierbach suggested that the city manager could smooth matters by taking a greater leadership role.

"He could try to get the best out of every councilmember but that's not happening," she said.

## Belmont Residents Respond to Community Survey

The City of Belmont has completed a first of its kind survey of residents in an effort to determine community attitudes, desires and concerns. In this report we will cover the highlights of the community survey. The survey, completed earlier this year, focused on City Government including Public Works, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Police and Fire Departments.

The majority of respondents have lived in Belmont for six or more years; almost 90% of them have lived here for more than three years. More than half of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54 with a third being over 55 and the rest under 34. The vast majority of households had between two and four persons living in them, own two or more cars and are generally pleased with the quality of life in Belmont.

The survey was conducted by phone, and represents a sample of the attitudes of approximately 18% of the city population. Completed surveys were received from all of our cities' neighborhoods. Cipriani, Carlmont and Country Club were the most responsive neighborhoods.

## Data Was Received from the Neighborhood Associations in the Following Proportions

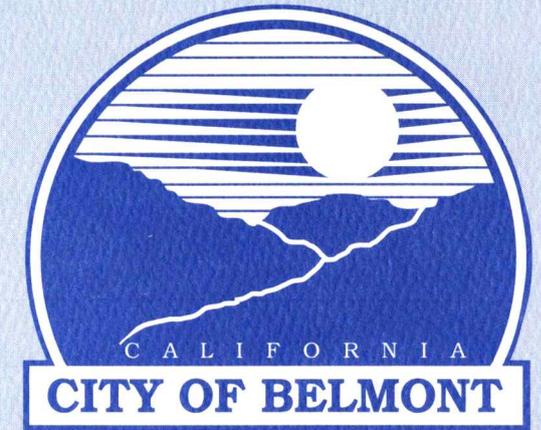
Plateau/Skymont	5%
Hallmark	8%
Cipriani	19%
Western Hills	1%
Country Club	13%
Central	5%
Chula Vista	2%
Sunnyslope	5%
East Belmont	3%
Sterling Downs	6%
Homeview	2%
Don't Know	17%

This brochure was created with participation from the citizens of Belmont in order for the city to provide better services to its people.

Approximately **18%** of the city population has responded to this survey. This proportion produces accurate city-wide information and is reflective of the entire community.

This brochure was produced by the City Manager's office of the City of Belmont. Survey data was gathered by Pin Point Research, Inc. Emeryville, CA

For more information call the Belmont City Manager's Office at 415-595-7408.



*Community Survey*

FINAL REPORT COMPLETED JANUARY 1996

## Parks and Recreation

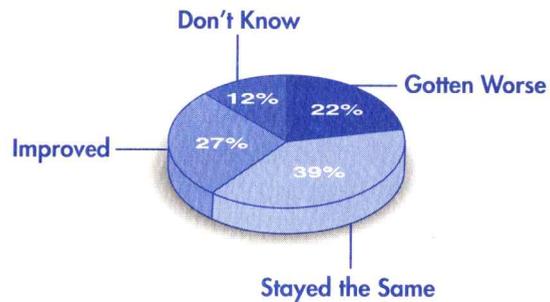
- Most important recreation classes
  - 34% said General
  - 16% said Senior programs
  - 11% said Teens
  - 11% said Sports programs
  - 11% said Young kids
- 62% favor funding through user fees

## City Government and Quality of Life in Belmont

- 66% of respondents felt that quality of life in Belmont improved or stayed the same over the last five years
- 85% of respondents felt that it was very important to stay abreast of the activities of City Government
- 54% wanted general information or such specific information as City Council agenda or minutes or the status of capital improvement projects

### Question 2

How would you evaluate the quality of this community over the last five years?

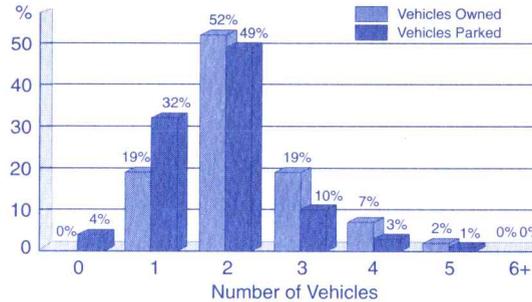


## City Services – Public Works

- Most important services
  - 44% said pavement maintenance
  - 32% said storm drain maintenance
- 69% felt that new curbs and gutters were important
- 71% of respondents have one or two cars kept in garage or driveway
- 67% of respondents felt that the city should prohibit on street parking in neighborhoods with narrow roads

### Questions 11 & 12

How many cars are owned by members of your household, and how many of these vehicles are usually parked in your garage or driveway?



## Belmont Police Department

- Best operating hours
  - 32% said 8 am to 5 pm, 5 days a week
  - 30% said 8 am to 5 pm, 7 days a week
- Police patrol options
  - 37% said maintain current patrols
  - 36% said focus on community meetings and problem-solving
  - 27% said foot and bike patrols
- Best way to interface with police
  - 50% said neighborhood watch programs
  - 25% said Homeowners Association and Chamber of Commerce
  - 24% said residents and merchant advisory groups
  - 80% said that police traffic enforcement should focus on speed and specific complaints

## Belmont Fire Department

- Should expand Life Support Services
  - Yes 74%
- Should consolidate fire service with other communities
  - Yes 55%
- Most important non-emergency fire service
  - 41% said weed clearing and hazard abatement
  - 31% said increased enforcement of fire codes

## Community Development/City Planning

- 70% felt that it is important to recruit new development
- 84% felt that it was very important to regulate commercial signs in the revitalization area
- 65% felt that views should be preserved by restraints on home size and height
- 61% felt that it was important to preserve historic structures
- Most important Community Development Service
  - 40% said zoning and property maintenance law
  - 28% said economic development

### Question 13

How important is it that the City recruits businesses for vacant sites compared to leaving the sites as is?

