

Human Services Agency chief will retire in July

BY JOSH WEIN
Staff Writer

BELMONT—Imagine building a house for 13 years. In that time, despite quality blueprints and workmanship, calamity strikes. A floor caves in. A window cracks.

Now, imagine moving out of that house just months after the final repairs have been completed.

That's one way to think about Human Services Agency Director Maureen Borland's recent announcement that she'll be stepping down from her post in July. Borland's tenure was marked both by large strides in welfare reform and more recently by terrible tragedy. Still, most believe her impact on San Mateo County was positive.

"I think her legacy is that of strength and creativity. She was really on the cutting edge of welfare reform," said San

Mateo County Supervisor Jerry Hill. "She has a real ability to work with all departments."

That ability came out of necessity. When Borland arrived 13 years ago, the county's vast array of human services — from mental health care to housing assistance to job training — were spread out over at least five departments. Her initial task was to bring all those services under one roof and by all accounts it has been a success.

The agency's "no wrong door" policy is an example of that success. Now when a resident walks into any of the agency's 37 different sites, every agency service is available.

But the tragedy came in the form of a dead 8-month old foster child. Angelo Marinda died during an unsupervised visit with his biological father in 2002. The father, Ronnie Marinda has since been convicted on murder and abuse charges.

But Borland said she doesn't want to fixate on the last few

years as she looks back on her career with HSA.

"No agency is perfect," Borland said. "Were there things that could have been improved? Of course. Were these horrible things? Quite frankly, no."

Borland said she thinks communication has improved between her agency, the courts, the county counsel and the private defender's program since Marinda's death. An outside analyst agreed. Last July a report by consultant Charlene Chase indicated the agency has made significant progress.

Now that the ship has been righted, Borland said she felt it was time to step away and let someone else take charge. The county will likely conduct a nationwide search for her replacement and Borland said she would be available to oversee a smooth transition to her successor. After that, she plans to spend more time with her family.

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Human Rights Comm.
Relations
"HRC" Belmont

500 Watch Belmont

Rights Group Voted

By JOHN CURRY

Belmont will have a new Human Relations Commission in 30 days, but last night's emotional four-hour public hearing may not be the end of the matter.

The city council approved by a 3-2 vote the ordinance establishing the HRC, which will be the third such operating city group in the county, along with San Mateo and Daly City.

The crowd of nearly 500 people, all who could get into bulging city hall despite the heavy rain last night, was far and away the largest ever to attend a council meeting in this city of many crowd-drawing issues in the past.

Speaker after speaker for and against came to the rostrum and it became clear that the councilmen, one in particular but all five in general, may be putting their political futures on the line. But although obviously surprised at the public reaction to the HRC idea, they stuck to their previously indicated positions on the issue.

Councilman Joseph J. Zucca moved the ordinance adoption, Councilman Milton A. Tromborg second and they were joined in the majority vote by Mayor Morton L. Podolsky. Voting against it were Councilwoman Eve Sterry and Councilman Gerald F. Day.

Tromborg, who has reported receiving 31 phone calls in the past two months, said in seconding he hoped "the decision won't be politically," adding "If we are right or wrong, only you the electorate can decide. The question here is us, not black or white, but how to get along with people... The day we close the corridor and say we can't accept volunteer help will be a day I'll be sorry for."

Most of the calls, from both sides of the issue, were threatening or obscene, Tromborg has said, noting they had made threats of a political or business boycott.

Zucca noted that an unsigned mailout against HRC recently had said there were no problems in human relations in Bel-

mont but "for a city with no problems we certainly generated a lot of interest here tonight."

Podolsky said HRC's success will depend on how it's staffed and there were good points made on both sides. "If it doesn't work, nothing will be hurt here tonight," he went on.

Mrs. Sterry angrily called the ordinance "a phony document" because it contains no powers of subpoena, testimony under oath, professional staff or budget, as the county HRC has and so, in her view, it wouldn't work properly.

Day, like most opponents, was critical of the motives of the HRC backers, saying understanding between racial and community groups should be taught in the home, church and school. "If we don't we've failed and no amount of brainwashing will make believers of those we failed," he stated. He said he saw it all as a delegation of authority the council shouldn't make.

A motion by Day to have the council act as HRC, with a consulting ad hoc committee and to refer any problems to the county HRC was defeated 3-2 by the same lineups.

Ted Kanner, 2945 Monte Cresta Drive and a leader of the HRC push since last summer, told the council early in the hearing the HRC would be volunteer and would need no staff or budget. The group might have "incidentals," but the purse strings for any spending would be held by the council.

Frank Spadarella of Daly City, county HRC chairman, told the council there had been no specific complaints from Belmont to his eight-month-old organization yet but should there be there would be "essentially no duplication of effort." County HRC staff and facilities would be available to the city HRC, which would be useful for "preliminary work," he went on.

Most emotional of the arguments popped up suddenly toward the end when Brian Patrick, 1905 Arbor Avenue and a student at Serra High School, pointed out the "need" for youth involvement in HRC. "We want to help but we can't do it alone," he said, whereupon Mrs. Sterry in reply began to recite some of the Hine Report, the original consultant report upon which the county HRC was based.

Midway through, Father John Daley, pastor of Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd walked to the rostrum, took Patrick by the shoulder and shouted at Mrs. Sterry "He's asking for help and you're not hearing him! Listen to him!" A large contingent of teen-agers, lounging on the floor, sprang to their feet with loud applause. Podolsky gavelled for order and the public hearing soon closed.

Mrs. Mary Margaret Scott, 2121 Coronet Boulevard, one of the leading HRC opponents, at meeting's end asked and was told that a ballot referendum on the matter would require a petition signed by ten per cent of the registered voters of the last election. "We'll get it," she said.

A move to have the matter voted on by the general electorate was put aside by the council and was opposed by backers who felt it may be defeated by persons "thinking more of their property values than human values," as one speaker put it.

The Belmont Heights Civic Improvement Association's 158 members had voted to ask for the election. "We feel we don't have enough information yet," President Charles R. Ellsbury said.

The council put over most of last night's 40-item agenda to an adjourned meeting next Tuesday, February 4. Method of HRC member selection probably also will come up then, Podolsky thought.

Foes of HRC To Seek a Vote

By KEN ROWE
Tribune Staff Writer

Opponents of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) established by the Belmont City Council Monday night were marshalling forces today to draw up a petition to place the matter on a referendum ballot.

The opposing group, according to an informed source, will have at its nucleus a number of the people who constituted the hard core of the 35-member Belmont Taxpayers Information Committee.

A member of the Information Committee, which peti-

tioned against the HRC formation and mailed a leaflet termed "scurrilous" by HRC proponents, said today that a second, larger group is being formed to rid Belmont of the infant commission through a referendum.

The spokesman said more than 1,000 Belmont residents, not all of them registered voters, signed their names to "tear-off" slips on the mailer, indicating their support of its sentiments.

To get the HRC rescinded by the council, or force a referendum, the opposition will have to gather more than 1,157 signatures, 10 per cent of currently registered Belmont voters, a somewhat larger number than the 11,564 who voted in the last general election.

The opposition group, according to the spokesman, believes the HRC matter should be "tabled" until a "chronic problem" in Belmont human relations is proved. Meanwhile, scattered allegations of discrimination could be referred to the San Mateo County HRC, the spokesman said, "that's what we're playing for."

The council, if presented with a certified petition, could rescind its action, call a special election, or put the question on the next municipal election ballot in 1970, according the City Clerk James McLaughlin. The referendum may not be attached as a rider to other elections, such as the school board election April 15, he said.

McLaughlin said the petition signatures would have to be filed within a 30-day period which started with the council action Monday. The city clerk then has another 30 days to certify the signatures and present the petition for council action.

Wise Course in Belmont's Unhappy Dispute

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The long-standing dissension over zoning of the "Pullman Estate" property at the corner of Ralston avenue and the Alameda de las Pulgas in the city of Belmont is more than an unfortunate civic wrangle. The protracted dispute has generated more heat than light and it has been a stumbling block in the path of peaceful progress for that city.

It has pitted a considerable segment of the householders against their city government, and a part of the city government against the householders. By any index this is a wasteful contest of cross-purposes and has a stultifying effect upon the city as a whole.

The merits or demerits of the zoning dispute have long since been outweighed by the bitterness on both sides and this, too, is more than unfortunate. The issue of residential versus commercial land usage is a fundamental problem in most Peninsula cities. It is a problem, however, that many of these cities have solved by either compromise or a period of "cooling off" during which time the problem sometimes solves itself.

It cannot be solved by shouting matches or by unalterable stubbornness.

With respect to the referendum vote scheduled for April 11, so that the electorate can rule on the dispute, it would appear that the wisest course under the circumstances will be for the voters to reject the zoning ordinance by voting "No."

This, at least, will clear the air without altering the status quo of the disputed corner.

The record shows that on May 24, 1960, a previous referendum election, which in principle was on the same issue, resulted in a two-to-one vote by Belmont citizens against allowing commercial zoning of the disputed corner.

The council was thus under mandate of the voters to preserve the residential character of the corner.

Plainly, the council has erred by, in less than a year, attempting to disregard the verdict of the voters. Apart from the essentials of the dispute, it is deserving of a rebuke for attempting to thwart the will of the citizenry. That rebuke can be administered by a "No" vote on April 11.

It is obvious, however, that this will not finally settle the contention. Neither Belmont, nor any other city of growing size and importance, can face a future of government by referendum. Such a course is an invitation to municipal bankruptcy as well as civic chaos.

If the council is defeated in the coming referendum, and it may be repeated that this is the way to preserve the status quo, it will then be the solemn duty of the citizens who have been so active in this campaign to be magnanimous and to approach the council in the humble spirit of good citizens to offer their services and their co-operation in reaching a reasonable and workable method of solving the problem that has plagued their city.

This must be done. There are thousands of other citizens in the city of Belmont who cannot have their local government forever hamstrung by an interminable dispute that concerns one single portion of the city.

The way for Belmont to forge ahead and attain its rightful growth and progress is to use this referendum intelligently for its best purpose, and then to seek a unity and harmony among the citizens and their city government to the best advantage of all concerned.

Belmont Rights Group a Vote Away

San Mateo County will have its fourth Human Relations Commission (HRC) if an ordinance introduced in Belmont is approved on Nov. 25.

San Carlos councilmen approved the formation of a Human Relations Commission on Oct. 10. San Mateo County and the City of San Mateo also have HRC's.

Belmont's nine-member commission, approved in principle by the councilmen last July, could become a reality at the council's next regular meeting. The members could be appointed by February of next year, in time to make any necessary budget request. There is no appropriation in the proposed ordinance now under consideration.

Councilman Gerald F. (Ged) Day, who cast the lone vote against the ordinance Tuesday, indicated he felt the county commission could handle human relations problems in Belmont.

Under the new ordinance, the HRC would:

- Attempt to foster respect and understanding between racial, religious and ethnic groups in the city.

- Investigate, possibly with subpoena powers, and attempt to solve problems of tension or conflict between the groups.

- Conduct educational programs in the human relations field, enlisting the help of various groups.

- Make recommendations to the city council and submit an annual report.

A great deal of the HRC's activity is expected to be in the area of housing problems.

April 15, '69

Belmont

HRC

Stalls

It's all up to the backers of a Human Relations Commission in Belmont now to come up with something new. The city council last night adopted an ordinance officially repealing the ill-fated HRC ordinance that raised a typhoon of turmoil in the city this winter, although even now not without argument.

Councilman Gerald F. Day complained that "I still think this will come back to plague us. If these people want to do something they should inform the community and they'll get support." He and Councilwoman Eve Sterry reiterated their preference for a referendum measure on the April, 1970, ballot on creation of an HRC.

The "plague" Day referred to was a promise of HRC backers that they would continue to study the matter and would like to talk with the council about it sometime, although in a statement two weeks ago in The Times they didn't say when or along what lines.

Day and Mrs. Sterry opposed the HRC all the way through its adoption in January and supported anti-HRC petitioners who got twice as many signatures as needed to suspend it a month later. The referendum for next April was called but the council changed its mind two weeks ago and introduced the repeal.

It's becoming fairly obvious that HRC backers are going to have to try a different tack than the volunteer nine-member unpaid commission that was incorporated in the HRC ordinance.

Opponents criticized its possible lack of effectiveness because of a lack of budget and subpoena power, then circulated the petition with the argument that it would have to ask for tax money to operate and the city didn't really need it that badly, if at all, and taxes are high enough already.

With that to operate from, backers also must do what they can to prevent the issue from becoming a political football in next year's municipal election, a move the repeal hopefully will

On some points they may have to give. James Forrest, executive director of the county Human Relations Commission, sort of a clearing house to the various city groups formed recently, told The Times that volunteer groups haven't been too successful.

An HRC is a central location for problems to be brought and the key is availability, which means a full-time paid director at least, he said. "You have to

Burton in proceedings there.

have people who are knowledgeable in the field and they must have time to do the job," he went on.

'No Fuzzy-Wuzzies':

Belmont Searching For HRC Members

By KEN ROWE
Tribune Staff Writer

"They have sown the seeds of fear . . . and they are growing fast," Belmont Mayor Morton Podolsky said last night of alleged rumor-mongers attempting to kill the city's infant Human Relations Commission (HRC).

Podolsky pressed at last night's council meeting for approval of his plans to ascertain if possible appointees would be willing to serve as commissioners, if the HRC "becomes fact."

The vote was 3 to 2 in favor of authorizing Mayor Podolsky to sound out possible appointees on their willingness to serve if appointed. He said he would talk with members of

the Belmont Section, Belmont-San Carlos-Redwood City Real Estate Board; the Belmont Ministerial Association; businessmen in the harbor industrial area; and the Belmont League of Women Voters, about possible appointees.

Voting in favor were Podolsky, Milton Tromborg and Joseph Zucca. Mrs. Eve Sterry and Gerald Day were in opposition.

Tromborg noted a "petition for a referendum election on the HRC may come in three days, and would nullify the mayor's action."

Councilwoman Eve Sterry said possible appointees to the HRC and the groups they represent would be "compromised" and "set up as targets" if the council acted be-

fore the new HRC ordinance goes into effect in three days.

She said if a referendum move against the HRC was successful, it should be on a level of principle, avoiding what might be interpreted as a personal defeat for possible commissioners.

Councilman Day asked the mayor, "What is the urgency of this?"

Podolsky replied, ". . . the emergency of fear. They have sown the seeds of fear and with the rains they are growing fast. In a couple of weeks they will not double, but will go to the fourth power.

"I was hoping this could be done in a tactful way," Podolsky said. He said he has heard "ugly rumors" in the past couple of weeks about who is behind the HRC and who is going to control it. Podolsky said the rumors stated Communists, Black Panthers, and even the Arabs and Zionists are behind this."

Podolsky said he wanted the council to demonstrate to the citizens that "We are not going to import fuzzy-wuzzies from Africa, we are going to use stable people, our neighbors" as HRC members.

Councilman Tromborg said of the alleged rumor spreaders ". . ."

Mrs. Sterry exclaimed, "If this city council has no more character . . . than to shy from every fear and shadow, I want no part of it!"

Tromborg replied to Mrs. Sterry, "You're fearful of this body (the HRC). It's obvious."

Mrs. Sterry observed that in Livermore, last week, a referendum was held concerning an HRC, and the HRC was defeated by "better than a 2-1 vote (5,880 to 2,590)." She said such a referendum drive is "well under way" in Belmont.

A spokesman for the Belmont Taxpayers' Information Committee, the core of opposition to the HRC, said today that the group's referendum petition drive against the HRC is winding up today. "We're making it like Flynn. We'll qualify," with the required number of petition signatures, the spokesman said.

"Each one (of the councilmen) went into office with fewer votes than we'll have signatures" on the anti-HRC petition, the spokesman said. The group is expected to deliver the petition to the city clerk within the next few days, possibly as soon as this afternoon.

If and when the city clerk receives the petition, it will signal a halt to formation of the HRC by the council. The clerk has 30 days in which to present the certified petition to the council. Then, the council may either rescind its action which established the HRC late last year, or put the matter to a referendum vote at the next general election. The referendum would affirm or overturn the council's action establishing the HRC.

The opposition spokesman said the group eliminated up to 10 per cent of the signatures it was collecting as invalid until leaders were "sure we had enough valid signatures to qualify."

Councilman Day said he wanted to explore qualification standards before exploring the matter of possible appointees. Mrs. Sterry agreed, saying it was "basic" that the council should "set standards first, not fit standards to appointees."

San Carlos councilmen last night unanimously approved an HRC, almost identical to the nine-member Belmont commission. There was little objection voiced.

Times 2-25-69

Belmont HRC

Bogs Down; Critics Move

Belmont's new Human Relations Commission going into operation is still just a possibility, its backers on the Belmont city council glumly acknowledged last night, but still voted to authorize Mayor Morton L. Podolsky to seek volunteers to work on it.

Podolsky, the swing vote in the 3-2 decision that created the

HRC January 27, suggested last night that each councilman nominate one person to the nine-member commission, with the other four to come one each from the Belmont section of the Redwood City-San Carlos-Belmont Board of Realtors, the Belmont Ministerial Association, the Harbor Industrial District and a League of Women Voters member acting as a private citizen.

By the same 3-2 vote, Podolsky was authorized to ask these four groups if they'd "be available to serve." With him were councilmen Joseph J. Zucca and Milton A. Tromborg and against were Councilman Gerald F. Day and Councilwoman Eve Sterry.

The ordinance creating the HRC becomes effective Thursday, 30 days after its adoption, but a promised anti-HRC petition has been circulated and its promoters say they have more than the required 10 per cent of the city's registered voters signed up to suspend the ordinance.

An announcement was expected this afternoon on this. The council, should such a petition come in, would by law have the option of rescinding its action or calling a referendum election.

Mrs. Sterry said such a measure lost at the polls in Livermore recently and urged waiting at least until the next meeting, when the petition is in. "To use names now would be like setting up targets," she said.

This is basically the same argument the petitioners have used to justify a semi-secret group called the Belmont Taxpayers Information Committee, which can be reached only through a post-office box and has used no names in its petition campaign.

"If it (a turndown at the polls) happened here it could be construed as being against appointees or groups," she went on.

This is the reason he brought this up now, Podolsky explained. "The merchants of fear have sown their seeds and their harvest is growing by leaps and bounds," he intoned. "We're not going to import fuzzy-wuzzies from Africa for this, we're going to use stable people—our neighbors. The city is divided and unless we take some positive action the schism will widen."

He also said he had heard "awful rumors" and called it "terrible." "They're saying the reds, Panthers, even Arabs and Zionists are behind this."

Day also wanted the matter put over, saying he wanted to "see a list of qualifications for the job and come up with some of my own." He and Mrs. Sterry noted there were none listed in the ordinance.

Tromborg answered that this never had been a problem with other city commissions and agreed there are fears in the city.

"We have people operating behind closed doors. These are the people I'm fearful of," he said.