

Peninsula News

19th anniversary in office

Belmont city clerk asks council for raise

By Phyllis Brown
Times Tribune staff

James McLaughlin today observes his 19th anniversary as Belmont's city clerk and he invited the City Council to help him celebrate by giving him a raise.

McLaughlin believes his salary is low compared with other local city clerks with fewer years on the job.

His \$2,903 monthly salary should go up by least another \$300 to \$500 a month, he said.

Beyond that, McLaughlin said the pay for the job is a measure of the respect given the office, and that means the pay should be increased.

McLaughlin, 63, has been a clerk longer than any other current clerk in the county.

He has been elected five times,

twice unopposed. His term in office expires in 1986.

"I owe it to the city clerk profession. There is an American tendency to judge the value of an office by the amount of money that is paid for it," McLaughlin said.

City clerks are underpaid and unappreciated, he said, because they sit quietly at council meetings and don't offer advice like other city staff members. He believes most councils take their clerks for granted.

"There is a tendency among cities to look at what other cities are paying their employees. I owe it to the ladies (other clerks in the county) to bring up the median," McLaughlin said.

McLaughlin made his invitation at Tuesday's council meeting.

"I have completed 19 years in office and I cordially invite you all to

celebrate this fact by giving me a raise," McLaughlin wrote in a memo to the council.

"Ask and you shall receive — sometimes, maybe," McLaughlin said later. "Do not ask and you shall always not receive, without a doubt."

The council responded to the request by telling McLaughlin it will consider his salary with that of other city employees in June during the annual budget review.

"The feeling was that the request was not appropriate at the time," Mayor William Hardwick said.

McLaughlin objected because City Manager Edward Everett in January received a 10 percent pay increase of more than \$400 after 13 months on the job.

Council members responded that they intend to review Everett's salary each year in January because he has a January hiring date.

McLaughlin said his salary ranks ninth among city clerks in the county.

The monthly salary for city clerks ranges from \$2,092 in Half Moon Bay to \$4,928 in Pacifica.

But Hardwick said McLaughlin's calculations include city clerks

who also serve as city managers. When those people are excluded from the list, McLaughlin's salary is close to the top, the mayor said.

McLaughlin also is unhappy that his salary is \$47 a month below the top of the salary range approved for him by the council last year.

Hardwick said he believes McLaughlin is paid as well as any local clerk.

"I think he probably is as well paid as anybody in the county for his position if you compare cities of similar population and similar size," Hardwick said.