



## **Staff Report**

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### PROPOSED HOLIDAY BANNER PROGRAM FOR EL CAMINO REAL AND RALSTON AVENUE

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

#### **Summary**

The Belmont Chamber of Commerce is proposing a new (60) banner holiday banner program for the El Camino as well as Ralston Ave south of the Alameda. This proposed program has received an initial review by the Council's Chamber Subcommittee (Warden & Mathewson). Staff seeks direction from the City Council regarding:

- The concept of a sponsored holiday banner program (see policy section below)
- The issue of whether or not to expand the City sponsored temporary program to include other seasons/times of the year beyond the holiday season (see policy section below)
- The sample designs attached to this report
- The issue of amending the City code or utilizing the current language related to "street banners." (see policy section below)
- The issue of possibly referring the matter to either the Parks & Recreation Commission and/or the Planning Commission (any zoning code amendment would go to the Planning Commission)

If the City Council provides conceptual approval, then we suggest you refer the matter back to staff and the Chamber to develop the final program details and return to the City Council in October. *Assuming Council directs staff to develop new language for the City Code, the final proposal would include an amendment to the Belmont City Code specifically authorizing this temporary holiday banner program. This new code language would go to the City Planning Commission before returning to the City Council for final approval.*

The Council may wish to have the Parks & Recreation Commission review the final proposal before it returns to City Council for final approval. Implementation likely would be delayed until the 2006 Holiday season. In any case, it is not certain if all the approvals can be obtained in time to implement this temporary banner program in 2005. Implementation may have to wait until 2006.

**Background**

Attached to this report is a memorandum dated July 20, 2005 from Charmaine Hope to Interim City Manager Jack Crist. This memorandum suggests that as part of a new “Shop Belmont” campaign, the City and the Chamber partner in a new holiday banner program. The City of Belmont had a holiday wreath program in the past, but the wreaths became old and tattered and were discarded. The Wreaths were not sponsored by local businesses.

This new banner program proposed by the Chamber of Commerce, along El Camino and parts of Ralston, would include 60 holiday banners. Half, or 30, would be City paid banners and would be to City specifications. The other 30 would be sponsored by individual businesses, would be to City specifications and would discretely depict the name or logo of the sponsoring business along with a holiday theme. The City would define the size of the sponsorship lettering. The goal of the Chamber is to eventually expand the program to other seasons of the year. The initial program, however, would be limited to a banner program during the holiday season. A conceptual mockup is attached to this proposal to show the City Council what the banners might look like.

**Discussion**

As part of the “Shop Belmont” campaign, the Chamber of Commerce has done research. The Chamber proposes colorful seasonal banners be hung on light poles with a “Discover Belmont” logo imprinted. The initial program will be limited to the Holiday Season. The City Council Chamber Sub-Committee suggests the theme of these banners be “unique to Belmont.” In that regard the Council Sub-Committee suggests the theme that would reflect Belmont’s uniqueness could be reindeer, given the many deer that populate the City’s neighborhoods.

The Chamber has solicited preliminary bids from two banner vendors. Based on these bids, the Chamber proposes 30” X 94” banners at an estimated cost of \$ 383 per pole. This cost breaks down as follows:

❑ Customized digital banner.....	\$ 193
❑ Pole Hardware.....	130
❑ Installation and storage.....	<u>60</u>
Total Cost per pole	\$ 383

These costs may change slightly when final bids are received.

The question always comes up, “what do other cities do”? Staff surveyed a few cities. On the following page is what we found:

Banner Programs

City	Banners on El Camino Real?	Allow business names on banners?	Notes:
San Mateo	Only civic events or programs	No	Downtown San Mateo Association (merchants) purchases and installs December holiday banners.
San Carlos	No	No	
Redwood City		No	Limited response.
Palo Alto	Yes on the business itself	Yes	Limited to no more than two 45 day periods per year. Also, non-profits may have banners at El Camino Ballpark.
Menlo Park	No	No	
Atherton			No response.
Mountain View	Yes	No	Only non-profits and schools. Must be community related.
Fremont	N/A	Yes	Fremont Auto Mall sponsored banners, but many people thought this was a bad thing.

**Fiscal Impact**

Sixty (60) banners with hardware mounted are estimated to cost a total of \$22,980. The actual costs would be based on the final banner design. The City of Belmont is being asked to fund half the cost, estimated to be \$11,490. It is possible that this cost could be more or less depending on one time design/setup costs and/or the selected vendor grants quantity discounts. The \$11,490 would be included in the City contract with the Chamber. The currently budgeted amount for the Chamber contract is \$66,000.

**Policy Issues**

Off Site Signage-The threshold question for the City Council to consider is whether the City should allow up to 30 commercially sponsored holiday banners with company names discretely displayed on them (and 30 City sponsored holiday banners). Council is referred to the sample attachments for illustration.

There are several sections of the Belmont City code that speak to the issue of temporary signage and these sections are cited below. However, it is the City Attorney believes that the preferred course, should the Council wish to proceed with the program, would be to direct an amendment to the City zoning code to more appropriately address this specific type of holiday banner use. If the Council directs staff to proceed, staff would return to Council at either the October 11 or 25 meeting with a first reading of a proposed ordinance amendment specifically addressing and authorizing this temporary holiday banner program.

A second policy question is whether the Council wishes to limit this action to the holiday season or broaden it to cover banners at other times of the year. If so, how many times per year? For example, the Council could authorize a set of City sponsored banners for each of the four “seasons”, winter, spring, summer and fall. Should the City Council wish the four seasons approach, then any amendment to the zoning ordinance should be broad enough to address City sponsored temporary seasonal banners at other times of the year.

Finally, the Council should consider directing staff to limit the banner program to specific placement position on the utility poles in accordance with City department of Public Works and Cal Trans criteria.

Current City ordinance authorities related to banners and offsite signage are as follows:

*23.8.4 Street Banners. The Director of Planning and Community Development or his or her designee may issue permits for the placement of banners over any public right-of-way if said banners are to be maintained in connection with a public event sponsored by the City or a non-profit organization. Said banners shall be exempt from the other requirements of this section and*

*23.8 TEMPORARY SIGNS - Temporary signs may be erected and maintained only in accordance with the provisions set forth below. Temporary signs may be placed only at the locations allowed for permanent signs. Temporary signs do not require a sign permit unless it is determined by the Building Official that a building permit or electrical permit is required.*

Other sections of the City code of relevance are:

*23.2.17 - Public Service Sign. Signs of a public or non-commercial nature, which shall include public transit service signs, utility information signs, public restroom or telephone signs, and trespassing signs. Signs which indicate scenic or historical points of interest and all signs or legal notices erected by a public officer in the performance of a public duty are public service signs. Off-site signs placed by a public agency for the purpose of guiding persons to emergency centers or places of public interest are also included.*

#### *23.7. PROHIBITED SIGNS*

*The following signs are hereby expressly prohibited (except as a temporary sign, as provided for in Section 23.8):*

*23.7.11 - Signs on Trees, Utility Poles or Benches (placards, posters, announcements or political signs posted or attached to any bench, pole, tree, or other living vegetation, or to any object in a public right-of-way).*

Review by the Planning Commission- The Planning Commission will review the proposed banner program ordinance amendment if Council directs staff to return in October with a proposed City code amendment. The Commission could also examine the issue of size limitation for the lettering of the sponsoring businesses on the sponsored banners

Review by the Parks & Recreation Commission- The City's Parks & Recreation Commission is charged with reviewing Art in Public Places. The Council may want to have the Commission review the banners from the standpoint of holiday artwork. If this is done, it is suggested Council authorize the Commission to give final approval at their October meeting so that the banners can be ordered in time for the 2005 holiday season.

Cal Trans Approval Required on a State Highway- Although the light poles are the property of the City of Belmont, Cal Trans controls banner installation on El Camino Real through an encroachment permit. They will not allow the commercial logos or any other advertising on banners. Therefore, the 30 sponsored banners could only be mounted on Ralston. CalTrans permits take several months to process, so unless CalTrans will expedite our application, we may not have the permits in time for the 2005 season. CalTrans requires local approval before they will consider approving the application for the encroachment permit.

Belmont Department of Public Works Review- The banners are an encroachment that the City/DPW can permit on Ralston, but the department will want to review for visibility, obstructions to trucks, wind load and pole placement. The Ralston poles will require special mounting brackets to prevent damage to the wood poles. The department will also review the banner specifications and mounting hardware before they are ordered to check wind loading, air space encroachment, mounting height and potential impact to the City poles.

### **Public Contact**

Staff has held discussions with the Belmont Chamber of Commerce. Staff has also discussed the matter in general with the Council Chamber Committee members Warden and Mathewson.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends the City Council give conceptual approval to a City Sponsored partnership with the Belmont Chamber of Commerce for a temporary holiday banner program. This temporary program would be for 60 holiday banners to be placed on El Camino and Ralston south of the Alameda. Thirty of these holiday banners would be sponsored by local businesses, and have the local business name discretely displayed on the banner.



Staff further recommends that the City Council provide direction regarding:

- Referral to City Commissions; and
- Other seasons beyond the holiday season; and
- The issue of amending the City code (recommended by staff)
- Sample alternative designs attached to this report

**Alternatives**

1. Approve the concept of a holiday banner program, but finance it entirely from City funds and reject the Chamber sponsorship concept
2. Table the matter until the City's financial condition improves.
3. Refer the matter to the Parks & Recreation Commission to develop alternative holiday banner concepts.

**Attachments**

- A. Resolution
- B. Chamber banner proposal
- C. PowerPoint Presentation of sample banners

Respectfully submitted,

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Jack R. Crist  
Interim City Manager

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELMONT  
ADOPTING PROPOSED HOLIDAY BANNER PROGRAM FOR EL CAMINO REAL AND  
RALSTON AVENUE

WHEREAS, the Chamber of Commerce is proposing a new (60) banner temporary holiday banner program for El Camino as well as Ralston Ave. south of the Alameda; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council would like to have some holiday decorations for the “Shop Belmont” campaign; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Belmont approves the concept and supports the jointly sponsored temporary banner program; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council is directing staff to finalize the proposal and return to Council for final approval; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Council is providing staff direction and selects as its preference sample \_\_\_\_\_.

\* \* \* \* \*

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Belmont at a regular meeting thereof held on September 13, 2005 by the following vote:

AYES, COUNCILMEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

NOES, COUNCILMEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

ABSTAIN, COUNCILMEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

ABSENT, COUNCILMEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK of the City of Belmont

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR of the City of Belmont