

Minutes of Special Meeting of March 2, 2009 (Commission Interviews)

CALL TO ORDER 6:41 P.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Dickenson, Lieberman Wozniak, Braunstein

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: None

Staff Present: Deputy City Clerk Aguilar

Public/Council Comments

Councilmember Dickenson stated the Council dinner budget has doubled to approximately \$8,000 the past year. Councilmember Lieberman noted that there have been more closed sessions in the past year. Councilmember Dickenson stated he will follow-up with the City Manager's office to determine the reason for the increase.

Interview Candidates for City Commissions

Anna Wheeler (Parks and Recreation Youth) stated that she has grown up in Belmont. She would like to make Belmont a nice place for her two younger sisters. She spends time at Barrett Community Center and noticed that there is a lot of graffiti there and she would like to see it removed. She also stated that she has gotten information that youths are smoking and drinking in the parks. She would like to bring awareness to them regarding the consequences of this behavior. She discussed her participation in the Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (DARE) program and the valuable lessons she learned. She would like to see more recreational and afterschool activities that teach sports to youth, like swimming. She is comfortable with interacting with adults. She is currently on the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). She would solicit input from her peers by using Twitter, mySpace and Facebook as well as email and texting.

Margo Cheechov (Parks and Recreation, Incumbent) stated that she would like to remain on the Commission and see the projects at Semeria Park and Davey Glen Park completed. She has concerns regarding parking at Davey Glen as it is difficult. She wants to make it safe to get to the park by establishing pedestrian crossings. She stated that the current Commission is balanced and interacts well. She believes she adds value to the Commission by stimulating discussion during meetings. She wants to see the Open Space Master Plan updated. She stated that one meeting per month is adequate, but that extra meetings may be necessary when the Commission is working on big projects or issues. She expressed a desire to see more activities at the Senior Center and for it to be more than merely a gathering place for senior "cliques". She suggested having a greeter at the door to orient new participants of the services and activities that are available. She discussed her involvement with the Twin Pines Park Fence subcommittee. She described the decision-making process and what an interesting experience it was for her. She is pleased that there has been such positive response regarding the new fence.

Terry Greiner (Parks and Recreation) stated that he has never attended a Parks and Recreation

meeting, but has reviewed some of the past meeting minutes. He would like to provide the City with the highest quality parks and facilities. He discussed his employment working for the City of Los Altos as a civil engineer. He believes he can provide a different perspective having worked for other government agencies. He stated that Belmont playing fields are not up to par with cities in the south bay. He would like to see a new gymnasium built in Belmont for indoor sports. He would also like to see several bocce ball courts. He lives very close to Barrett Community Center and if a new or upgraded facility is planned for that location, he suggests developing a Master Plan reflecting a 10-15-20 year vision. He stated that he has roots in Belmont and visited Water Dog Lake often when he was growing up. He values the biking, hiking and walking paths there. He stated that he is a very good listener, is comfortable with speaking in public and is a team player. When group members have differences of opinion, it is good to list pros and cons for everyone to see so they may have a clearer picture of the points and concerns of others.

Aaron Rudger (Parks and Recreation) stated that he has never attended a Parks and Recreation meeting, but he has reviewed the minutes on-line. He has lived in Belmont 15 years and has three young children. He currently coaches soccer. He would bring the youth perspective to the Commission. He is a proponent of artificial turf as it cuts down on water consumption and the use of pesticides. He stated that lighted fields also create greater access for residents. He believes Belmont's strength is the diversity of its parks and recreational programs, but stated that more programs are needed for youths. He stated that the Barrett Community Center could possibly be a developed as a youth center. He would like to participate in developing the Open Space Master Plan. He believes that Belmont's parks and open space can attract those from outside the community and provide economic opportunities for the City. By highlighting what Belmont has to offer, people would come to enjoy the amenities and hopefully spend some money in the City at the same time.

Kayla Wright (Parks and Recreation Youth) stated she would like to help make decisions for the City and represent her peers. She would like to see a place for teens to hang out with adult supervision and activities. She stated that if a teen center was created, in order to increase participation schools and youth would need to be informed that it is available. She does not believe serving on the Commission will interfere with her school work. She was not influenced by her mother to apply for the Commission. Instead, she feels it is her obligation to help the community. She was involved with gymnastics for ten years, but did not continue due to injuries. She is comfortable interacting with adults and expressing her opinion. She discussed how she respectfully asks questions in school when she does not agree with some of the assignments given to her class.

Mike Crusick (Parks and Recreation) stated that he has read of some of the Parks and Recreation minutes on-line. He is a father of two young boys and is a sports enthusiast. He played baseball growing up. His primary interest is in the playing fields. He supports the use of artificial turf as it is a green alternative. He suggested soliciting corporate support for maintenance of the playing fields. His previously career was in technical public relations.

Kristen Mercer (Planning, Incumbent) has been on the Planning Commission for three years. If she could change anything about the Commission she stated that she would like to clarify definitions in the building code and zoning ordinance. She indicated that many of the definitions are subject to interpretation. There are many loopholes in the Code that have resulted in projects being approved. She would like to see the plans for downtown commence. She stated that many ideas stay in the planning stage and never go forward. She stated that a vision for the downtown area must be established and the City should enlist the services of a consultant to draw in the types of businesses the City wants to see. She explained that businesses are apprehensive about coming to Belmont because of the lack of vision. There are no reports or statistics to show potential businesses what type foot traffic or clientele to expect if they establish a business in the City. She expressed her frustration with on-going planning, but no action. The Commission is limited to approving or disapproving projects. She stated she is capable and willing to do more and would like to be involved in the downtown plan decision making.

Jeffrey Hyman (Finance) has lived in Belmont for six years. He would like to use his skills to be of service to the City. His background is in economics and transportation. He described his past employment with the Santa Cruz County Metro Transit District. He is not a finance expert but when presented with issues he asks a lot of questions and thinks critically about them. He would bring a fresh perspective to the Commission. His strength would be to synthesize information and present it in a digestible format. He is also experienced with teaching complex legal and business topics.

Norm Land (Parks and Recreation) is a 38-year resident of Belmont. Over the years he has been involved with establishing the Park People, coaching sports and the Belmont Park Boosters. When his children grew up he took a break from community involvement. He supported the establishment of the Barrett Community Center. It is his interest in the potential enhancement of Barrett as well as improving activities at the Senior Center that have motivated him to get involved in the community again. He would like to see activities that appeal to residents between 50-60 years old, those who are approaching retirement age but who lead active lives. He would like to take advantage of the Senior Center himself if more activities were offered. He believes that parks and open spaces are vital during tough economic times, as people tend to travel less but are still looking for recreational opportunities.

Don McKenzie (Planning, Incumbent) has been on the Planning Commission for three years. He stated that he balances the Commission. If he could change anything on the Commission it may be to decrease the number of Commissioners. He stated that during a period when there were absences by several commissioners, more was accomplished during the meetings. He noted that the current commission functions well together. When asked to describe a difficult project he mentioned the recent cell tower project. He is very interested in the Downtown Plan, but more particularly wants to see action. He believes Sixth Avenue should play a bigger part in the downtown plan. He noted that because it is a short and wide street, it would be most conducive for foot traffic. He stated that centering downtown around Sixth Avenue would provide exposure and connectivity to Twin Pines Park. He suggested getting Safeway and Wells Fargo bank involved and building an underground

parking garage at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Ralston Avenue.

Eric Hartnett (Planning) described his background as a real estate attorney. He has a colleague who currently is on the Foster City Planning Commission and has expressed what a positive experience it has been for him, this got him motivated him to apply for the Belmont Planning Commission. He supports open space and does not necessarily want to see more dense housing built. He stated that he has travelled abroad and enjoys seeing parks and open areas in the center of town. He enjoys the amenities that Belmont has available. He noted that few people he knows in his age group are particularly attracted to Belmont as a destination for leisure or social gathering. He would like to see a vibrant downtown that is walkable. He discussed what factors might make a business successful in Belmont. He stated that he works for a small lifestyle firm and his work schedule will allow him time to devote time to the Planning Commission. He has watched archives of Planning Commission meetings on-line.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 9:32 P.M.

**Pamela Aguilar
Deputy City Clerk**

Meeting Tape Recorded but not Videotaped
Audio Recording 721