

# NewsJournal

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**'BEHAVE LIKE ADULTS'**

NEWS JOURNAL

## Chairwoman: Panel needs guidelines

BY ELIZABETH MARIE HIMCHAK

Rancho Bernardo Planning Board's new chairwoman is calling for revising the group's bylaws and mission, in addition



DENLINGER

District B, is the chairwoman through March. She is filling the remaining term of Ellen Willis, who resigned as chairwoman and board member on Nov. 25 due to her battle with cancer.

"I can't think of a better example of someone who dedicated herself to the community," said Denlinger, who was the board's vice chairwoman

since March and board member since 2006. "These are tough shoes to fill."

George Leitner, who said he does not intend to seek re-election to the board when his term expires in March, was elected vice chairman. No District D residents presented themselves for appointment to Willis' remaining board term, which expires in March.

Though Denlinger might only have four months in office, she said at the board's Dec. 8 meeting, "As the new leader, I want some new guidelines and we need to start respecting each other."

She reminded the 13 members present that "we have a responsibility to the city and to our constituents, should behave like adults, and we need to get involved and (each) be an active member."

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## PLANNERS

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Denlinger said she wants to improve communication between the board and residents by revamping the board's website and posting its agenda at community centers.

The board's bylaws, updated last year so they would closely reflect a recommended outline provided by the city, "require a solid look over the upcoming year," she said, explaining "there is so much ambiguity."

Denlinger said she wants the board to expand its scope and format.

"Rancho Bernardo is not a booming, building community," she said. "Maybe this board does not need to meet every month if there are (no) time sensitive matters."

She also said the board has "some tremendous opportunities we don't always take advantage of ... like being more proactive and looking for opportunities where we can provide assistance."

She said perhaps the board does not need to limit itself to land-use matters, but explore other issues "that are to the overall benefit of the community and residents."

The meeting included an extensive discussion about the board's election in March, when at least half of its 20 elected seats will be on the ballot.

This was the first year the board held its election alone. For many years it was held with the Rancho Bernardo Community and Recreation councils' elections. Last year, the others moved

their elections to June in an attempt to increase candidate and voter participation, which did not happen.

The planning board, which saw an increase in voter turnout and contested seats, is required by the city to hold a March election.

"The entire election process needs to be overhauled," Denlinger said.

Citing difficulty in staffing nine voting locations for four hours, Eugenia Contratto, the new election chairwoman, said she wants two staffed locations on election day, such as the library or outside grocery stores.

There was no objection over revising the candidate form or \$300 election budget. At issue was continuing to provide staffed polling at Casa de las Campanas (District A) and Remington Club (District E). All districts have polling at community centers. For District A it is Westwood Club and E is Seven Oaks Community Center. According to board member Robin Kaufman, Casa and Remington residents do not have access to either.

Historically, Casa has contributed a majority of votes, especially when its residents are candidates, but Remington Club has few to no voters. Overall, less than 1 percent of all eligible Rancho Bernardans vote in community elections, even after the introduction of absentee ballots a few years ago.

Much of the controversy seemed to be based on confusion. Contratto said while Casa and Remington residents would no longer have a polling place on election day, they would have absentee ballots at each facility for 21 days prior to the election.