

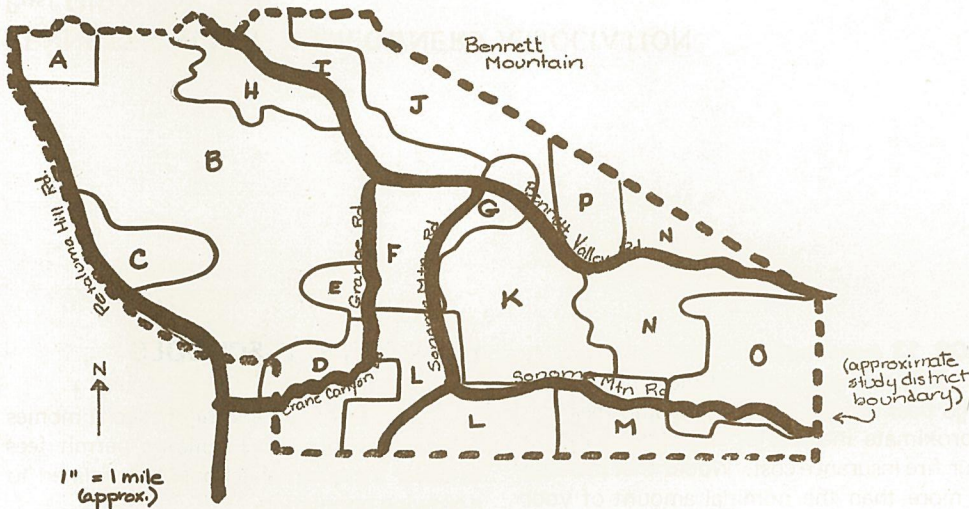


# BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

MAY, 1978



Proposed Land Use\*

\*Not parcel-specific; Subject to changes.

| Area | Proposed Density | Area | Proposed Density |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| A    | 20 Acre Minimum  | I    | 30 Acre Minimum  |
| B    | 60               | J    | 60               |
| C    | 15               | K    | 30               |
| D    | 15               | L    | 15               |
| E    | 5                | M    | 60               |
| F    | 5                | N    | 30               |
| G    | 5                | O    | 30               |
| H    | 10               | P    | 5                |

For a complete analysis see "Analysis of B. V. Study Area by Subareas" dated 5-16-78 at the County Planning Department.

## COUNTY PROPOSES PLAN FOR BENNETT VALLEY

On May 16, Carol Whitmire of the Sonoma County Planning Department revealed a proposal for minimum lot sizes and densities for Bennett Valley. The presentation was part of the work being done on the Bennett Valley Special Study as a result of meetings with the citizens advisory committee and interviews with residents in general.

As the county was directed by the committee, the proposed land use map reflects the basic goals of "maintaining a rural character" by "assuring low density" and protecting "a feeling of open space." During the presentation, discussion became heated when several in the audience felt the proposal was too restrictive with regard to minimum sizes while others felt in certain areas it is not restrictive enough. (See map.) The general opinion, however, seemed to favor the "cluster" approach to land development by indicating that density zoning allowed for more flexibility than minimum size zoning. Other community impacts such as on schools, roads, fire and police protection will be discussed in the written report compiled by the county planning department.

The next step in the special study process allows for at least two public hearings. None have been scheduled yet but will tentatively start this summer. All property owners in the study district will be notified at least 10 days prior to the first meeting.

In the meantime, Ms. Whitmire welcomes any and all citizens to write or call her to air their concerns. You can reach her at 2555 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, 95404 or 527-2412. Or you can contact any of the members of the advisory committee (refer to the March VOICE).

**Editor's Note:** In the March VOICE you were invited to "jot down your ideas and concerns and mail them to the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association return address. We will see that your responses get into the appropriate hands." To date we have received none! If this means you are in contact with the county or advisory committee direct — great. If it means you don't care until it's your ox being gored, now is the time to join others of similar persuasion and devise an alternate plan to the county's proposal.

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## LAST ISSUE OF THE VOICE

If you aren't a member of the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association, now is the time to join to continue receiving the VOICE. Our numbers have grown tremendously but the production costs are prohibitive unless we mail only to the membership. For example, the last issue found its way to about 1000 Bennett Valley property owners at a cost of approximately \$200.00. We simply can't continue as much as we realize the importance of communication.

If you want to be on the communication line, simply join the Homeowners Association by sending \$5.00 to the return address on this newsletter. Your name will be added to the roster which we will publish in the next issue.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GRANGE!

Bennett Valley Grange will celebrate its birthday on Sunday, June 4 when they have the 105th annual chicken barbeque at the Grange Hall, Grange Road. Serving will start at noon and the menu will consist of one-half chicken, beans, French bread, coleslaw and coffee. Milk for the kids, soft drinks and beer will also be available.

Dinner will cost \$3.00 for adults and \$1.50 for children 5 to 10 years old. The Committee for Womens Activities will have a sweet tooth booth and a needlework table.

Al Lafranconi and Cleve Duerson are co-chairmen for the picnic.

# BENNETT VALLEY VOICES



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BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

## PROP. 13 AND BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION

J. D. Ruhlman - Chief B.V.F.P.D.

Home and property owners should be aware of the impact Prop. 13, the Jarvis/Gann initiative, can have on Bennett Valley Fire Dept. My intent is to present facts, not scare tactics.

I think a property owner's vote should depend on where his investment is. Those property owners with a greater percent of value in their land should vote for Prop. 13. Those with the most value in improvements should think twice before they vote.

Ninety-five percent or more of the fire district's funds come from property tax, therefore we expect a 60 to 70% cut in funds. With the fire district's insurance taking about 25% of last year's budget, we would have 5 to 15% left for all other expenses.

There are those who say that the state will bail us out if Prop. 13 passes, but, Governor Brown says not to look to the state as a "Sugar Daddy". If the state did come up with the money it would still be your tax money in a different form and you would have lost local control. If the money is handed down by the state you can bet they'll also tell us how to spend it.

Take schools for example. As the State and Federal governments have gained control in the local schools the costs have gone up, such as the costs in the State or Federally mandated school lunch programs. School costs around the state have about doubled in the last 10 years, while enrollment has decreased. Inflation cannot account for all of this.

With the fire department operating on 5 to 15% of the present budget, it should be obvious that it will have to go back to an all volunteer department and curtail any service that is not required by law. This would probably eliminate First Aid calls and any other calls not for an actual fire.

Prop. 13 deals with the property tax costs of local government. It should be noted that in addition to homeowner tax costs of fire protection, there are homeowner insurance costs as well.

Insurance premiums are set, for the most part, by the Insurance Services Office ratings (previously the Pacific Fire Rating Bureau). Bennett Valley is presently Class 8

## PROP. 13 (continued)

by I.S.O. rating but would most likely have to go back to Class 9. This would mean an approximate increase of from 35 to 45% in your fire insurance cost. Would that increase be more than the nominal amount of your tax bill that goes toward fire protection?

If you lost your house by fire because of lack of fire protection you may get enough insurance to rebuild but under Prop. 13 it would most likely be reassessed at today's inflated new value. The Jarvis/Gann initiative was not written for the homeowner that is protected by a fire district (as opposed to city fire departments with vastly different funding sources). Think about it.

## BENNETT VALLEY GRANGE

Perhaps you have wondered what the Grange is. It is a national fraternal organization, properly called Patrons of Husbandry, formed in 1867 for the social, economic and legislative betterment of the farmer. Today, although the Grange is strongest in rural areas, many members are not farmers.

In May 1873, some farmers in Bennett Valley decided to form a Grange. Following the organizational meeting the charter was granted by the State Grange and Bennett Valley Grange became the 16th in the state. The first Sunday in June of that year, the families of the Grange met for a picnic. This custom has continued uninterrupted every year since then. This June they will celebrate their 105th annual picnic.

The Grange Hall was dedicated in December 1873. Redwood lumber was hauled from Coleman Valley, with construction labor provided by the men while the women furnished food. The total cost of the one-room building was \$287. Since then a dining room, kitchen, Junior Grange room and restrooms have been added. Meetings are still held in the original building. Members are proud that the Grange Hall is the oldest Grange hall in the U. S. continuously in use as a Grange hall.

A business meeting is held on the first Friday of each month and a potluck dinner followed by a program on the third Friday.

Many residents of the Valley come to Grange public affairs. Perhaps you would like to share in Grange activities. If you would like more information please call Cora Darling at 544-8044 or Ruth Swanson at 546-0729.

## FEES FOR B. V. SCHOOLS

"Impact fees" are those special monies collected with normal building permit fees to cover incremental school costs related to a growing population.

Logically, one might assume that more homes and people would generate sufficient property tax revenues to cover any increase in school costs. In the long run they do, but a lag of about 2 years from ground-breaking (on a new home) to actual receipt of tax revenues by Bennett Valley School District creates a temporary shortfall which necessitates the collection of "impact fees" to cover immediate increases in costs.

A hypothetical subdivision will add .75 children per household to the school population according to historical and statistical measures. The school board calculates that each additional student in the district requires an outlay of \$375, almost all of which is used to purchase or lease temporary classrooms to house the growing school population.

The burden of proving an impact situation is on the school board, and previously paid impact fees are refundable if impact cannot be proven. A group of builders and the school board are currently engaged in litigation over the collection of these fees. During the term of these legal proceedings the county has ceased transferring the fees to the school district for their use. Until an injunction is lifted, the district is forced to operate under the additional hardship of not being able to use funds which have already been collected, and continue to be collected, but not distributed.

One school board member told us that there is no personal animosity towards the builders, that resorting to the courts to resolve this sort of dispute is the only proper approach. Both sides have valid points and real problems with respect to the collection of impact fees.

Bennett Valley now has an enrollment (K through 6) of 838 students; if all subdivision and single family dwelling permit applications currently under consideration are granted, the school population will quickly grow to approximately 1500. This sort of growth will continue to compound the fiscal problems of the district until sound longterm solutions are found.