



BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

VOLUME 5 Number 2

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

April, 1982

MEMO FROM THE BOARD

BVHA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1981-82

We've had a good response in new and renewed memberships for 1982. We welcome each of you and invite your participation. As a reminder, the board of directors meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the fire station at 7:30 p.m. Members are invited to attend any and all meetings.

President	Tamara Boulton
Vice-President	Nancy Batson
Secretary/Treasurer	Barbara Maberry
Ted Chamberlain	Max Moberly
Bill Jacobs	Paul Mowbray
Sam Mitchell	Warren Watkins

Pressley Road & Sonoma Mountain Road Intersection: We forwarded the response to our survey regarding your preferences for intersection improvement to the Road Dept. as well as Supervisor Bob Adams. The overwhelming choice was Sketch B--the alignment where Sonoma Mountain Road is a through road and Pressley T's into it. (This was the plan supported by the BVHA Board) The Road Department plans to do the required paper work this year with realignment work to begin in 1983. Your input was invaluable and we appreciate your taking time to respond.

In the same vein, we were asked to check on what improvements were being planned for the Bennett Valley Road area on either side of Matanzas Creek Bridge. According to the Road Dept., they plan to widen the bridge and adjust the curves on either end of the bridge. However since plans are in the earliest stage, little information is available. We were promised plans as soon as they are formulated.

Two items of concern have been acted upon by the Board in recent months:

(1) 7129 Bennett Valley Road--This is a proposal to split the old Foppiano property into 3 parcels. (It abuts the western boundary of Bennett Ridge) Board members have visited the site several times and met with the surveyor and engineer working on the project. Of particular concern to the Board is the stability of the very steep, open slope and the potentially serious and detrimental effects that a wide, deep road cut (west-east) across its entirety could have on the slope's stability. A new Negative Declaration will be issued shortly with a hearing scheduled before PRAC (Project Review and Advisory Committee) approximately 15 days after posting/publishing the notice.

(2) Fire District Boundary Changes-- this concerns the withdrawal of approximately the lower half of Pressley Road (and 3 parcels on Petaluma Hill Road) from the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District for inclusion in the Penngrove Fire Protection District. Your board of directors sent a letter asking for denial of this request because the change did not appear to improve the quality of fire protection already afforded the residents on Pressley but it would have a significant adverse impact on the quality of fire protection afforded all Bennett Valley residents due to the loss of current and even greater future revenue. We feel it is extremely important that BVHA members contact the county supervisors either by letter or phone, and advise them of your concerns.

Address: Supervisor _____, County of Sonoma
575 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95401

Telephone: 527-2241

Although this newsletter was ready for the printers, we rearranged it to include an article about the fire district boundary situation so that particulars would be available in this important matter.

FIRE DISTRICT FACES LOSS

LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) OK's transfer of 1/2 of Pressley Road and a portion of Petaluma Hill Road from Bennett Valley Fire Protection District to Penngrove Fire Protection District. Board of Supervisors to make final decision

Background Information: Pressley Road residents George and Clifford Orr filed a request with LAFCO to change the boundaries of the fire districts of Penngrove and Bennett Valley whereby the area on Pressley Road from Orr Ranch Road south, as well as 3 ranches on Petaluma Hill Road, would be removed from the Bennett Valley Fire District and included in the Penngrove Fire District. The reorganization encompasses 840 acres with the area of most development on Pressley Road.

The report from Administrative Assistant, James Moore, brought out the mileage differential, time differential, manning differential and tax base differential. Penngrove's substation on Lichau Road which is not manned full time is 1 mile closer to a central spot than Bennett Valley's main station, but is only 30 sec. closer due to the severe grade Penngrove must negotiate. Penngrove's main station is 9 min. away and Bennett Valley's is 5 min. via rescue truck. The report also points out that because of Bennett Valley's small size, the change would have a significant negative impact on its fire protection program. Bennett Valley's tax base loss would be twice as large as the gain derived by Penngrove. Due to Penngrove's larger size, the increase would be relatively insignificant. The report determined there was no clear advantage to most homeowners and recommended against the change. A recommendation was included to consider the Petaluma Hill Road residents separately.

In the LAFCO meeting on April 1, 1982, the Commission voted to allow the district boundary change. The vote was 3 in favor (Boyett, Domenicelli, Hopkins), 1 opposed (Supervisor Ernie Carpenter), and 1 abstain (Supervisor Bob Adams).

LAFCO's recommendation comes before the Board of Supervisors for a final decision soon. (No date is set as of 4/14/82 as the agenda is posted each Thursday afternoon for the following Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting)

Bennett Valley residents have a lot at stake. If you are concerned about the implications of the lost property tax base on the future quality of fire protection in Bennett Valley, the fire department feels it is imperative you communicate these concerns to each of the county supervisors! (See Memo. Board for address and telephone no.)

BENNETT VALLEY'S 4-H

The 4-H movement was begun in the United States in 1907 as a part of the school program. Reflective of the times, corn and canning became the first projects. The movement soon expanded into cotton, poultry, and pigs. Today, a 4-H group may have in excess of 20 offerings.

The first Bennett Valley 4-H was organized in 1945 by Mr. & Mrs. Orville Burnside, now

residing in Cloverdale. Charter members still in the area include Patty Walker, Ralph and Buddy Dexter, Barry Ableman, Vivian Mazzeta, and Bill Pisenti, Jr.

The 4-H motto is "To make the best better". Educational objectives are to assist youth from ages 9 to 19 in developing initiative, responsibility, leadership, service, and cooperation. Additionally, achievement of knowledge and skills, personal satisfaction, and career alternatives are explored.

Bennett Valley itself now has three 4-H groups, namely Bennett Valley, Rainbow Valley, and Clover. Apparently, the rural nature of our area has generated much interest here, and a waiting list to join the groups is common. Each member may select several projects ranging from animal raising and showing to gourmet cooking, fishing, leadership, arts & crafts, cake decorating, electricity, child care, camping, and cultural arts. These project alternatives are supervised and guided by adults with the young 4-H members doing most of the work and record keeping.

Besides their project work, 4-Hers are involved in community service activities such as caroling, decorating, and making favors at Christmas for local rest homes. Some groups recycle cans and other resources, provide Easter baskets and enter floats in the Rose Parade. Junior leaders and officers have traveled to the state legislature in Sacramento.

All groups need money to support themselves or worthy causes and fund-raisers are held annually. Most of us have attended a Dime-a-Dip feed, bake sale, or car wash. First aid kits and snow cones will be on sale this year. The main event each year is the very well attended Chicken-Que at the fairgrounds.

But all 4-H functions are not totally dedicated to projects, work, and service. Fun activities such as roller skating parties, picnics and snow trips occur periodically.

If you are interested in helping with the 4-H program or would like your children to join a group, feel free to contact a group leader or Harriet Polansky, the county 4-H youth advisor. Leader telephone numbers and meeting dates and times are given below.

Harriet Polansky, Farm Advisor's office-527-2681

Bennett Valley group: Ken Carr-544-3418 or Evelyn Gibson-546-0855. Meetings: monthly, 2nd Thursday, Grange Hall, 7 p.m. (50 members)
Rainbow Valley group: Joclyn Thompson-542-6289 or Maureen Drisko-544-7113. Meetings: monthly 1st Monday, Yulupa School, 7:30 p.m. (45 mem.)
Clover group: Val Hurley-584-9243. Meetings: monthly, 2nd Tuesday, Grange Hall or Yulupa School, 7 p.m. (60 members)

-Warren Watkins-

With all the rain we're having this year (my gauge has already recorded over 50 inches since July and it's raining as I type), it may seem inappropriate to think about fire or fire protection. The old-timers will tell you, however, that the potential for grass fires will be high this year. The prolonged and abundant rain, intermixed with bursts of sunshine, means lots of tall dry grass in late spring and summer.

Long-time valley residents remember when we didn't have any area fire protection. In fact, the first meeting to discuss local fire protection in Bennett Valley wasn't held until June 10, 1948 at the Grange (where else?). The meeting was chaired by valley cattleman Bill Pistenti and attended by many other familiar names. Among those active in the early fire planning included such personalities as Ernie and Phillip Guenza, Bill Carithers, Dwight Batesole, Bill Jacobs, Sam Mitchell, and George Crane. In reading over the well written minutes of the early meetings, taken by W. H. Armstrong, family names frequently appearing were Beck, Molinari, Babcock, Mow, Dexter, Walker, Beach, Dedekam, Cundiff, and Bottasso. Many of these people or their offspring are still living in the valley.

Well, the talk about fire protection got serious at the second meeting on June 16, 1948 when a secret ballot was taken of the 45 individuals attending to determine how much money could be initially raised. When \$1,435 was pledged, the fire district was born. The group took little time in selecting Bill Jacobs as its first chief along with three assistants, a secretary, treasurer, and five commissioners. One of the original assistant chiefs, Al La Franconi, remains active today!

Further meetings led to the purchase of the first fire truck, a used one ton 1942 International 4WD. The truck had a 200 gallon water tank and cost just \$1,700 (today, it costs \$80,000 for an 1800 gallon pumper). The license plate of this original truck is on display in the chief's office at the firehouse, and the original pump is still being used.

Continuing to move quickly in June, 1948 our first firemen held the first training session for volunteers. It was attended by 25 eager residents. Following the training that day, beer and sandwiches were served, a practice which is still observed, I am told.

As start-up expenses mounted, new sources of revenue were sought. The county agreed to contribute \$60/month to the district if Bennett Valley firemen would be on call during the dry summer to help out elsewhere

in the county if needed. The Bennett Valley 4-H also made a cash contribution. Additionally, Mel Potterman donated 10 gallons of gas for the fire truck, although there was some question whether the old ranch bridges could support the weight of a truck filled with gas, water, and fire tools.

The Powell ranch, near Farmer's Lane and Bennett Valley Road had the dubious honor of having the first fire in August, 1948. Quick response by the new firemen resulted in only a few scorched grape vines.

Other "firsts" include the first fire telephone at the Grange installed in November, 1948, and the first Fireman's Ball (complete with door prizes) on January 22, 1949. The first firehouse was built in March, 1949 in the middle of the valley on the Steele property along Sonoma Mountain Road. The site was made available under a long term "verbal" lease and is still used by the fire district for storage. Volunteers erected the metal building with \$574.56 worth of Mead-Clark materials.

Not unlike today's tax climate, the first attempt to assess valley residents for fire protection was vigorously opposed.

Jumping to more recent times, we became a bonafide fire district in 1964 when Fire Chief Ruhlman was appointed. Volunteers continued for another year or so when the chief was hired. At that time, a \$100,000 bond issue was passed to secure the present one acre site (purchased from assistant chief La Franconi for \$1,000), build the firehouse, and buy more fire equipment.

Today, the fire district employs a full time fire chief, an additional fireman during the summer, and "sleeper" students on weekends and nights. There are 30 volunteers on call also.

Over half of the approximately 100 calls responded to yearly involve matters such as automobile accidents, heart attacks, and other medical emergencies.

Unfortunately, the fire vehicles are aging. The pumper is of 1967 vintage, the tankers 1958 & 1962, the brush trucks 1956 and 1966, and the chief's car 1969. Only the rescue squad vehicle is new. Do we need to modernize?

Well, fire protection has come a long way since 1948. Gone are old fundraisers such as the Fireman's Ball, skeet shooting, and the annual picnic. Replacing these events are the highly successful semi-annual Sunday breakfasts begun about five years ago. The most recent feed was attended by 600 hungry residents. The Bennett Valley Fire Protection District appreciates this support.

-Warren Watkins-

The Bennett Valley Voice is published quarterly and distributed solely to the members of the Bennett Valley Homeowners Association with the exception of the January issue which is distributed throughout Bennett Valley.