



Bennett Valley Homeowners Association

P.O. BOX 2666, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95405

The following statements were requested by the Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association Board of Directors to present to the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District a side by side statement of issues regarding the upcoming Recall Election on July 16, 1985.

YES ON RECALL

We would like to thank the Homeowners Association for allowing us this opportunity to address issues in the Recall Election on July 16th.

1. Truck #423 is licensed, is fully insured, which helps to maintain lower home owner insurance premiums. The Fire Chief is not involved in an overt attempt to hide a stolen fire truck in Bennett Valley.
2. Truck #423 is mechanically safe and structurally suited to its purpose. This has been verified by experts. Phil Talamantes of International Trucks, and Dave Zedrick owner of a fleet of fuel trucks, both inspected and approved the fire truck. Any allegations of mechanical or structural problems against this truck or any other in the fleet are not based on sound educated judgement.
3. The original price for truck #423, approximately \$40,000 and necessary additional upgrades of approximately \$4,000 yielded a truck worth over \$100,000. The Monte Rio Fire District recently measured, inspected and took pictures of truck #423 so they could place an order for the same type of vehicle. Their estimated price tag is over \$100,000.
4. The Volunteer Firemen, Resident Firemen and Officers unanimously agree truck #423 should stay in the district.

Three Directors believe it is sound fiscal policy to go to court to force the return of a good, rebuilt, sound, approved truck, to spend tens of thousands of dollars more for a new truck, and to spend more of your dollars on court costs. Is this the leadership you want?

An interesting sideline to the fire truck issue is the current Board's attempt to "blame" purchasing the truck on Chief Ruhlman. The Chief was given authority to investigate and recommend, but the final responsibility rests solely with the Board. The Chief has made many recommendations to the Board over the years. Many have been approved and many have not.

Here is the "logic" of the current board majority: They are "blaming" the Chief for buying a piece of good equipment that he can't buy; or "blaming" him for recommending a good piece of equipment and saving the district over \$60,000.

NO ON RECALL

We thank the Homeowner's Association for this opportunity to present our goals and accomplishments during our tenure in office. The accomplishments are:

IMPROVED MEDICAL RESPONSE

Since over 80% of the emergency calls are medical and accident related we have enthusiastically supported the emergency medical technicians training program. Today we have six emergency medical technicians; at the time of our election the Fire Department had only one

UPGRADED "SLEEPER" PROGRAM

Since most of the emergency calls occur in the evenings and on weekends and we were experiencing a high turnover among the sleepers we have upgraded the "sleeper" program. The word "sleeper" was replaced with "resident fireman" together with incentives to become an emergency medical technician and promote longevity. Today, three of the four resident firemen are EMTs and have been with the Fire Department for over one year.

ENHANCED TRAINING BUDGET

In order to provide our resident firemen and volunteers with the most recent fire fighting techniques and emergency medical training beyond first aid and CPR we supported increasing the annual training budget from \$200 to \$2,000. Experts can now be retained for training drills, books purchased for loan to volunteers and advanced training for officers.

ESTABLISHED WRITTEN STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Volunteers have expressed that oral directions and instructions have been confusing and conflicting. To achieve our goal in providing the best fire and medical response to the residents and serve as a valuable aid to new volunteers we supported the adoption of standard operating procedures.

ESTABLISHED PURCHASING RULES AND REGULATIONS

Since we desire to attain the best equipment at best price we supported the adoption of purchasing rules which finally put the District in compliance with State Law.

When repair bills (over \$4,000) started to mount on the water tanker, we began to ask questions, made inquiries and

YES ON RECALL

5. Allegations that the fire district is in the control of a select few, a country club of longtime residents, is disproved by the over 650 legal signatures obtained on each petition. It is obvious that there is a majority of people in the Fire District who do not agree with the current Board since the recallers were only elected by a little over 300 votes.

6. We recently received a letter with rumors that if elected, the new board would give the Fire Chief a raise. The alleged \$12,000 increase is not in the fiscal budget and is not pending the result of the election. This was more smokescreening and added to the confusion by the No on Recall Committee; there has been NO salary increase for the Chief this year.

7. There have been recent personnel problems between the Fire Chief and the Resident Firemen. Personnel problems occur in all organizations, especially when the chain of command is interrupted as it has been by the recallers. The recallers have achieved their goal of placing a wedge between the Chief, Volunteers, Resident Firemen and Officers. Routine personnel problems are not handled by firing the manager, especially one with 19 years of experience.

Arbitration, meetings, etc. is the common sense way to defuse personnel dissatisfaction. The recallers are pulling out all stops in their attempts to fire the Chief. The question is not one of personalities, whether one finds working with Chief Ruhlman easy, or whether one agrees with him in all matters; but it is a question of human rights, fairness, honest dealings, of impartiality by a Board which has repeatedly shown its bias and prejudice in its continuing attacks against all this man has stood for in his 19 years of dedicated service as Fire Chief.

The morale of the volunteers is in sad shape and has been since the election of two of the present Directors. We want to see Bennett Valley Fire District returned to the efficient and well run organization that we were proud to call our OWN.

A special thanks to Ray and Lynn Kulp for their input.

BENNETT VALLEY YES ON RECALL COMMITTEE



**BENNETT VALLEY
HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**

NO ON RECALL

were not getting straight answers. After 19 months the District still does not have ownership and registration documents. Through an investigation we have learned that the truck has had six previous owners in New Jersey, Ohio and California and also that the odometer had been turned back. No brake, safety or performance checks were done. We will continue to protect your interests by supporting the authorities on the investigation into this serious matter.

Since becoming your elected representatives, we have volunteered our time to make improvements in the conduct and operation of your fire department. We receive no compensation. Volunteers and employees have brought to our attention the lack of equipment maintenance, lack of standard operating procedures, high turnover among sleepers, low morale among the volunteers and unlike our neighboring fire district no volunteer waiting list.

Despite resistance, we have accepted the responsibility and supported a Board policy with directives to better serve the residents. We have and will not compromise the fire and medical response to you, your family and your neighbor.

We ask for your continued support. For better fire and medical response, vote NO on the recall.

/s/Bruce Benson

/s/James Fatland

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce Benson".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James R. Fatland".

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