



BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

VOLUME 9 NO. 1

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 1986

BVHA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MEMO FROM THE BOARD

ELECTION UPDATE: Michael Bates was elected to the seat vacated by Dona Moberly. The Board in turn elected officers as indicated above. We thank Dona for her work and contributions to the Association and welcome Michael to the Board.

Service on the Board and direct participation in activities carries much responsibility, personal time and hard work. There is always a need for concerned involvement. The Valley needs your support whether it's in new/renewed membership, appearance at public meetings, speaking out on issues and, yes, serving on the Board! The pressure for amendments to the General Plan is growing. Through hard work we continue to be successful in our fights to uphold the General Plan and in advancing agricultural growth, but we are never safe. Please renew your membership, join if you aren't already a member and participate.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS UPDATE: 1) After years of frustration and disagreement, the blind intersection at Sonoma Mountain and Pressley roads has finally been eliminated. Kudos go to our persistence over the past year and to 1st District Supervisor Janet Nicholas for helping push this project through.

2) A new road safety improvement project is on County Public Works' drawing boards. Design plans and right-of-way acquisition are underway for construction of a new bridge across Matanzas Creek on Bennett Valley Road. The project plan includes a new bridge to the south of the existing bridge and a new roadway that will eliminate the dangerous curves on both sides of the bridge. The new, straightened roadway will rejoin the old road about 100 yards before it reaches the Pisenti property. No productive Ag land will be disturbed. Due to overriding safety considerations, the homeowners' Board supports this project. However, we do have concerns about such road improvements that will increase speed, make Bennett Valley more vulnerable as an artery to other parts of the County and invite more urban sprawl.

3) We hesitate to refer to the Bennett Valley Road-Yulupa intersection as a "safety improvement" although that was our understanding of the reason for the project. Upon completion it is obvious that the City of Santa Rosa envisions Yulupa Avenue as the principle artery into Bennett Valley rather than Bennett Valley Road. That concern aside, although it could be an ominous signal to Bennett Valley homeowners, the Board feels misled by the City because we thought they had agreed to provide a smooth, safe turning radius and an acceleration lane so that outbound Bennett Valley traffic (especially truck traffic) would not be seriously impeded. The intersection has become the bottleneck and safety hazard we argued it would be and thought we had been successful in changing the City's plan. We have appealed to the City for remedial action.

LAND USE ISSUES UPDATE: 1) Anthony & Anne Haas of Great Oak School, 6480 Sonoma Mountain Road, applied for a permit for a private school of 75 students. The Haas School has grown and operated without benefit of a permit. The County Planning Department determined the request was inconsistent with the General Plan and disapproved. The County Board of Zoning Adjustments turned down the Haas' appeal for a General Plan Amendment. We spoke in opposition to the amendment due to its inconsistency with existing and planned uses and the fact that such proposed amendments to the General Plan, regardless of their apparent benign results and good intentions, set precedents that erode the General Plan to irrelevancy. It is unknown at this time if the BZA determination will be appealed to the Supervisors.

2) Richard & Carmain Schweiger have filed to rezone their 13 acre parcel, 4714 Pressley Road, from a 15 acre density to a 5 acre minimum so they can qualify for a lot split. The Schweigers proposed a similar split in 1982 which was turned down by the County Planning Commissioners and the Board of Supervisors. The BVHA conducted a thorough study of the issue at the time and found numerous problems with the proposal. Besides conflicting with the B.V. Specific and the General Plans, the property was deemed to be severely unstable for development, marginal in water availability, have access limitations, a problem creek and opposing neighbors. We have written again in opposition.

3) In August 1985 the County Building Department discovered that a "Stop Work" order issued in November 1984 on an illegal dwelling construction on the Pisenti property, 4975 Bennett Valley Road, was being ignored and that construction had continued to the point that the two story structure was virtually complete. The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors denied an appeal by the Pisentis for a General Plan amendment to permit a third dwelling on the property. The Pisentis subsequently applied for and received a permit for a "second unit" with the proviso that the second unit conform with rules governing these units. Prior to the denial of the General Plan ammendment, the 2nd unit solution was discussed as a possible solution to abatement of the illegal structure. Unfortunately, due to a changeover of Homeowner officers, our mail with the notification of the Pisenti 2nd unit filing was reviewed too late for the BVHA Board to consider our position and take action. Considering the seriousness of sanctioning an illegally built structure under the pretext used to skirt General Plan land use controls, we will remain vigilant to assure that 2nd unit regulations are observed on this parcel.

The foregoing problem illustrates how tenuous controls are, how easily land use rules can be circumvented, and how much we need everyone's help. We urge you to be alert to proposed land use notices. There is no guarantee that we are aware of issues before it is too late for action. Please help.

Probably some of the most interesting history to us today is that of the early Bennett Valley settlers. The following is a little history lesson and quiz for us all. The information was gathered from past issues of the Bennett Valley VOICE with thanks to those individuals who have contributed their efforts in helping to document the history of the area. (The answers follow upside down.)

- 1) Bennett Valley was once part of a large land grant called _____ owned by _____.
- 2) The first family to settle in the valley were the _____ in the year _____.
- 3) The second family to settle here were The _____.
- 4) What Indian tribe was native to the area?
- 5) An Indian word pronounced ee-oo-loo-pa is known today as _____.
- 6) The first school in Bennett Valley was the _____ and was built in the year _____.
- 7) Who was the B.V. resident elected Assemblyman to represent Sonoma County in 1853 by the _____ Party?
- 8) Does Bennett Valley have a Cemetery?
- 9) B.V. had a _____ Office until _____ located in the blacksmith shop of Dana B. Bremner.
- 10) What mineral was discovered and mined on Taylor Mtn. beginning in 1877?

- 11) The B.V. Grange was formed in what year? It is the _____ Grange Hall in the _____ continuously in use as a Grange Hall.
- 12) The first B.V. Fire House was built in what year? _____ Who was the first fire chief? _____
- 13) By the 1880's there were 4,000 acres of _____ producing 486,000 gallons of _____. They were killed off by _____ at the turn of the century and farming was discouraged by _____ thru the _____.

THE BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

The VOICE is mailed quarterly to all members with the exception of this January issue which is distributed to all residents. Initial membership is \$5.00 for the 1st year, renewal is \$3.00 per year following. All residents and members are welcome at the monthly meetings held at the Firehouse on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM to voice their opinions and concerns on issues that arise. Hope to see you there.

ANSWERS . . . 1) Tulupa, General Vallejo; 2) James N. Bennett's; 1849; 3) Coleman; 4) Potomac; 5) Tulupa; 6) Strawberry School; 1857; 7) James N. Bennett, Settlers; 8) Yes; 9) Post, 1880; 10) Coal; 11) 1873, oldest, U.S.; 12) 1949, Bill Jacobs; 13) Vineyards/grapes, wine, Phylloxera, Prohibition, 1920's.

THE BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
1986 Membership Dues

Bennett Valley Homeowners Assoc., P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, California 95405

RENEWAL _____ \$3.00 NEW MEMBERSHIP _____ \$5.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Please make checks payable to Bennett Valley Homeowners Assoc., and send in by March 10, 1986.



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