



BENNETT VALLEY VOICE

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BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 1987

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MEMO FROM THE BOARD

In the past months the BVHA Board has been the forum for a number of controversial, potentially divisive issues in Bennett Valley. Among these the most hotly debated has been the furor over the County's plan to replace the Matanzas Creek bridge on Bennett Valley Road. Valley residents have long recognized the tight, nearly blind curve on which the bridge is located as one of the most dangerous spots on the road. Safety being the overriding concern of the BVHA Board, it decided on a split vote last year not to oppose the County's plan to replace the old bridge with a wider structure, realigned so as to straighten out the curve. The Board was led to understand that the County's plan was predicated on adherence to a timetable which, if not met, would have jeopardized the project's funding. When we were told, in essence, take it or leave it, a majority decided that the public's safety demanded that we take it, in spite of the feelings of some members that we were being railroaded into accepting a project that would attract more and faster through traffic and ultimately require additional road realignments, which would attract more and faster traffic, and so on.

Since then, however, a lawsuit in which BVHA is not involved has alleged that the County's Environmental Determination on the bridge project was faulty. This suit has forced the County to abandon its original timetable, rendering that issue moot and in a sense taking away some of the pressure to either endorse the project whole-hog or give it up completely. The County's posture in response to the suit is that it will continue to pursue the project, to re-examine the Environmental Determination and, if necessary do a separate, focused EIR, which would presumably include consideration of alternatives to the proposal.

It appears that these processes may consume a number of years before any actual construction could begin: in the meantime

the old bridge, the old blind curves, and the old dangers would remain. At the February meeting the BVHA Board took a pragmatic position which is unlikely to satisfy either pro-bridge or anti-bridge zealots, but which we feel best addresses the issue of public safety, given the present situation. Since there is to be a significant delay before any construction can begin, we urged the County to take a number of "interim" measures to improve safety, including the removal of brush and dead trees to increase sight distance through the curves, and the installation of signs, reflectors and flashing lights to warn motorists to slow down. Regardless of whether or in what form the new bridge is built these measures are cheap, and will improve safety — perhaps even save lives — for a significant period of time. Our experience has shown that the political and financial wherewithall for major projects are transitory phenomena — slippery beasts, indeed. But even if the new bridge is postponed indefinitely, the measures we have recommended will still continue to be an improvement over the current situation.

The other controversial issue on which we recently commented was the application for a Use Permit for a new Nicholas Turkey Ranch on Crane Canyon Road. We strongly endorsed the application as consistent with our pro-agricultural policy, and as it would serve as a buffer against urban encroachment by the City of Rohnert Park. The Board did join the Design Review Committee in recommending that non-glare surfacing be required on the approximately nine acres of proposed roof area. A group of neighbors from the Inverness Road area appealed the BZA's approval of the project to the Board of Supervisors. BVHA Board members Bill Jacobs and Bill McIver carried our position to that hearing on Feb. 24, when the applicant apparently prevailed on a straw poll of the Supervisors. The Public Hearing was continued until March 17, however, pending receipt of a Waste Management Plan from the applicant.

DESIGN REVIEW VACANCIES

As of March 31, there will be two positions open on the Bennett Valley Design Review Committee. Many thanks to Paul Mowbray who is retiring. More specifically, an architect and engineer are needed. These are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Recommendations from the Homeowners Assoc. are considered influential. Please contact one of the BVHA board members or 1st district supervisor, Janet Nicholas or 2nd district supervisor Jim Harberson, at 527-2241

REPORT FROM BENNETT VALLEY FIRE DEPT.

February 4th the fire department received a call at 2:41 AM to respond to a house fire at 6360 Sonoma Mtn. Rd., the home of Russell Cundiff. They were on the scene at 2:48 AM and had been reached through 911.

The fire was contained to the basement, the kitchen and one upstairs room. It started in the basement due to faulty wiring. The home was built in 1925 and still had the original tube and wire electrical wiring with a single strand strung across the basement floor to a lamp. There were 6 people in the house including Mr. Cundiff. No one was hurt.

Fire Captain, Greg Martin, said it was a hard fire to fight as the home was built of the materials of its day, lath and plaster, the fire ballooned and spread. He said at one point a fire fighter ran back into the fire to only be able to rescue the tax forms and necessary medication for Mr. Cundiff, who is quite elderly.

Mutual aid was needed from many surrounding fire depts. 7,600 gallons of water was used to put the fire out. At one time there were 17 pieces of equipment on the scene. Water was also pumped from neighboring swimming pools as well as water tanks at Summit View.

By 8:00 AM fire department trucks were beginning to leave the scene. A hard nights work. The Red Cross put up the residents at a local hotel for the night and followed up with food and clothing the next day. Thankfully no one was hurt.

PETITION TO PUBLIC WORKS DEPT.

The following is the wording of a petition being circulated in an effort to have a dangerous road situation repaired. If you have not been contacted and wish to sign it, please call evenings 527-9349, Marilyn Franc.

"Petition to Sonoma County Public Works Department regarding repair of slide between 6471 and 6480 Sonoma Mountain Road.

"We, concerned residents of Sonoma Mtn. Rd. and Bennett Valley, request that the slide at the above location be repaired within this year 1987.

"The slide poses great loss of property and is life threatening to passengers in cars, trucks and farm equipment using the road daily. There is only 10 feet of passable road. The slide drops 50 feet below the road level. Indications that the slide is moving are evidenced by 4" wide cracks occurring and being black topped over by County road crews at least twice yearly. We fear this only adds to the weight and eventual possibility of a major slide.

"The hillsides in the immediate vicinity are highly unstable, where small slides usually get bigger. For example: Genjo-Gi (6367 Sonoma Mtn. Rd.) hillside and dam, immediately next door; Lange/Hamilton (5858 SMR) hillside; County road at O'Reillys (5763), all occurring during 1984-86.

"The road slide currently in question is a continuation of a slide which occurred in 1981 and was only partially repaired.

"If a major slide occurred here it could mean the loss of one of the oldest and best preserved homes in our area owned by the Bates (6471) at the top of the slide and at the bottom of the slide it could destroy the long-time residence and school of the Haas (6480) where children are present in the daytime.

"We feel, that before there is greater loss of life or property with the eventuality of law suits that the slide be repaired and the road made safe.

1987 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

Renewal membership fees have been raised to the same level as new membership fees this year - \$5.00 straight across. This is the first increase in years!!!

Being a BVHA member will help you keep up to date on issues and information in our Bennett Valley Study district regarding land use, road issues, general plan updates, and history of the area, by receiving the VOICE, our quarterly newsletter.

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 at hand.

FIREMEN'S BREAKFAST
SUNDAY
APRIL 12, 1987
7 A.M. to NOON
at the Firehouse

MEMBERSHIP DUES
THE BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
1987

RENEWAL _____ \$5.00
(Please Print)

NEW MEMBERSHIP _____ \$5.00

NAME _____ OCCUPATION _____

ADDRESS _____

Please make checks payable to Bennett Valley Homeowners Assoc., and send in by April 10, 1987. Send to: Bennett Valley Homeowners Assoc., P.O. Box 2666,