



Bennett Valley
VOICE

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VOLUME 23 , NUMBER 7

Bennett Valley Homeowners Association (BVHA)

NOVEMBER, 2000

BVHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS' ELECTIONS

Enclosed you will find your ballot, with each candidate's brief biography, statement and thoughts on specific issues. With this VOICE you will also find the instructions for mailing in the ballot, as well as two envelopes. There are six candidates for the three positions on the BVHA Board of Directors, reflecting some different opinions about what methods are best to *"promote & preserve the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley"*. You want to be sure to vote for the three candidates who will best represent you in Bennett Valley. At the next BVHA Board of Directors meeting, on Wednesday, November 15th, at 7:30 pm, some if not all of the candidates will be in attendance. Each will be introduced at the beginning of the meeting and be available to talk to you after the meeting.

REPORT ON THE BENNETT VALLEY 2000
MEETING, 10/14/00

During the first half of the meeting there were five speakers who made presentations. John Blayney spoke for and Eric Koenigshofer spoke against the Rural Heritage Initiative (Measure I). They both seem to support limiting sprawl and conserving open space in Sonoma County but they had different opinions about whether or not the Rural Heritage Initiative was the way to obtain those goals. Next, Ron Collier, Fire Chief from Windsor, discussed Fire District

Funding. There was an enthusiastic response to his presentation. (See Page Seven for a summary.) The last two speakers were Don Tarpley, on Bennett Valley history, and Rob Gross, a consulting arborist, on "Sudden Oak Death". In the January issue of the VOICE there will be more detailed information provided on this "Sudden Oak Death", but meanwhile see Page Two for some quick references.

Bob Hasenick did an excellent job as facilitator for the Community Forum part of this meeting. Four of the issues identified as needing further action are listed below (in the order of importance, as voted on by the audience.) Also included are the names of BV residents who are on these committees.

- 1.) Increased funding, Bennett Valley Fire District - Michael Friedenber, Weldon Jackson & Frank LaCombe
- 2.) Increasing the sense of community and communication in Bennett Valley between all of the homeowners. - Gordon Endow, Bob Hasenick, & Phil Temko
- 3.) Concerns about water availability and conservation - Patty Gundry, Marty McDonough, John Votruba and ?
- 4.) Sonoma County Open Space - Michael Friedenber

Everyone who completed the Evaluation rated these meetings as being useful & interesting and asked that they be continued either once or twice a year. Attendance needs to be increased (63 people signed in). Is there a better time of year? We're looking for someone to be the Coordinator and Organizer the next Bennett Valley 2001. Do you know anyone who might be interested? Please let us know.

BENNETT VALLEY 2001 CALENDARS

by Judy Temko

First of all, special thanks to all the photographers whose submissions record some of the memorable scenes in our valley and to everyone: Now is the time to start shooting for next year's calendar. Our Bennett Valley 2001 Calendar will be off the press and ready by Tuesday November 7. To pick up a preordered calendar, or to buy one, come to the BV Fire Station on either Saturday, November 18, from 10 am to noon or on Saturday, December 2, from 10 am to noon. Balloons will be out to remind you. Calendars will also be sold at Long's (Yulupa), Ace Hardware and in front of Safeway on Saturday, December 9th, from 11 am to 1 pm. If none of these times work for you, call one of the friendly calendar committee members to arrange for a pick up time: Suzanne Dougherty, 542-1608...Lolly Mesches, 545-8684...Judy Temko, 544-0234.

BENNETT VALLEY ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP DAY

by Eve Boling

The fourth Bennett Valley Clean-up Day was held on a beautiful Saturday morning in late October. Twenty-six volunteers met at the Fire Station for coffee and donuts and then set out to pick up litter along Bennett Valley Road, Grange Road, Crane Canyon Road, and some of Sonoma Mountain Road.

Lee Babineau kindly volunteered to make a sign which BVHA used to remind residents of Clean-up Day. Jim Alfieri has again been an immense help in providing us with equipment. Suzanne Dougherty, Marilee Jensen, and Frank Nye volunteered the use of their trucks for picking up rubbish. A big thank you to all of them. Thank you also to Chief Reynolds and the Fire District for the use of the Fire Station as our base, and to Lucy Hanson and John Maitland of Sonoma County Public Works for their help.

Finally, thank you to the following volunteers (hope I didn't miss anyone) who gave up a morning, lugged large trash bags, dodged poison oak, and slid down ditches to beautify our community:

*Lee Babineau Norm & Eve Boling
Corine Bollinger Lois Brown Vickie Brown
Jennifer & Katie Combs Craig Cousins
Michael Cronin Chris Wills Nancy Dell'Ergo
Suzanne Dougherty Gordon Endow
Mark Feinberg Mike & Patty Hickey
Marilee Jensen Terri Lockwood Frank Nye
David Phillips Ron & Judy Simpson
Dave, Sandy & Deborah Sandine*

BENNETT VALLEY TIDBITS

●**SUDDEN OAK DEATH (SOD)** - Two good web sites for receiving up-to-date information about SOD follow:

- 1.) <http://himalaya.cnr.berkeley.edu/oaks/TN26OAKDEATHbw.pdf>
- 2.) Suddenoakdeath.org

You can expect more detailed information about this distressing problem in the January VOICE.

●**STOLEN MAIL** - Deborah Haarstaad reports that there has been some recent problem with stolen mail on Sonoma Mountain Rd. and Jamison Rd. In rural areas this problem has been on the increase lately, as criminals have found it "profitable" to steal credit card #'s and checks from the more isolated mailboxes. This mail theft happens in the daytime, but is even more of a risk at night, when mail is left in the box. The best solution seems to be leaving a padlock in the mail box for the postal courier to use to lock the box after delivering your mail.

●**SONOMA CO. PUBLIC WORKS**

→ **GRANGE ROAD BRIDGE** - Levi Gurule, Senior Engineer, reports that Sonoma County is now trying to reach an agreement with their consultant to do the detailed specific plans for the proposed bridge, to be built in two phases to avoid road closure. It is through the completion of these plans that it can be determined what easements, construction or otherwise, will be proposed on the surrounding private property as well as how many oak trees may need to be removed. The work on the new bridge may now occur beginning in the Spring of 2002 or 2003, depending on when these plans are completed and what other problems arise.

→ **ROAD MAINTENANCE** - John Maitland, Division Manager for Road Maintenance, was able to have one of the County's "Litter Crews" do the "Bennett Valley Roadside Clean-up" in the more precarious parts of Bennett Valley Road (from just past Woodside, under the oak trees up to Enterprise Road).

Sonoma County Public Works has recently been re-paving this same part of Bennett Valley Road and using some temporary yellow paint down the middle of the road which is very reflective -- a real advantage on this narrow, winding part of the road. BVHA is planning to write another letter to the Dept. of Public Works to try to get better permanent pavement markers placed on this narrow winding part of Bennett Valley Road, down to Warm Springs Road, similar to what the City of Santa Rosa used when they recently repaved Bennett Valley Road within the city limits.

●**SONOMA COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CODE**

UPDATE Sonoma County is embarking on a long-term program of integrating all of the County's development regulation into a single code. The first phase will be an update of the zoning code and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) ordinance. If you're interested in being notified of the workshops for public input on these changes, please contact Kathi Jacobs at Sonoma Co. Permit & Resource Management Dept. (PRMD), (707) 565-1934, 2550 Ventura Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

**BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' BALLOT, November, 2000
BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS**

To qualify as a BVHA voting member, you must hold recorded title to any real property located within the unincorporated area of the Bennett Valley Study Area. BVHA Membership for this election is also conditioned upon payment of the annual dues of \$15 by November 1st, 2000. Any single owner of one or more parcels or multiple owners of one or more parcels in Bennett Valley are entitled to one membership in BVHA. Each membership shall be entitled to one (1) vote.

After you have read the information prepared by each candidate, place a check mark on the line next to the names of no more than three of the candidates. When you have marked the ballot accordingly, fold the ballot (pages 3, 4, 5, & 6) and place it in the smallest unmarked envelope. Seal the envelope and then slip it into the larger addressed envelope, with your return address and postage on it. Unless you're planning to bring the ballot to the BVHA Board meeting at the BV Fire Station on December 20th, by 7:30 pm, you need to be sure the ballot is received at the P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405 by December 20th. Your ballot will be disqualified if you mark more than three candidates, do not have the ballot placed in the envelopes as described above, or your ballot has not been received by December 20th, at the Post Office Box or at the December Board meeting by 7:30pm.

If you have any questions about your membership status, or if there is a change in your name and/or address, please be sure to call the BVHA membership chair, Lois Brown, at 578-0708. If you have any questions about the boundaries of the Bennett Valley Study Area, you may call us to request a map or contact Greg Carr or other staff of Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) who are familiar with the Bennett Valley Study Area.

VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN THREE OF THESE SIX CANDIDATES

- 1.) _____ James K. Cobb, Attorney/Mediator
- 2.) _____ Michael L. Cronin, Financial Advisor; Chairman, Common Ground Committee
- 3.) _____ Gordon I. Endow, Business Attorney
- 4.) _____ Marilee Jensen, Incumbent, Retired Administrator
- 5.) _____ Leanore Mesches, Incumbent, Professional Counselor/Consultant
- 6.) _____ Marilyn Stocks, Incumbent, Retired School Teacher

EACH CANDIDATE'S STATEMENTS

The candidates were asked by the BVHA Nominating Committee to present the following information: "Each candidate...must have a strong commitment to "promoting and preserving the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley", as evidenced by a statement to be included with each candidate's request for nomination. As part of or in support of the statement the candidate may also include a brief bio..." "During the Community Forum portion of the Bennett Valley 2000, the following were identified as the most important issues facing Bennett Valley in the next few years. As Candidates in the upcoming BVHA Board Election, you have the opportunity to give your thoughts on these issues. Please limit your answers to 100 words for each item..."

COMMUNITY FORUM ISSUES

- I.) What role should the BVHA Board take to help increase funding to the Bennett Valley Fire Department?
- II.) How can the BVHA Board broaden its efforts in increasing the sense of community and communication between the BVHA and ALL homeowners in the Valley?
- III.) Water seems to be a growing concern among some Homeowners in Bennett Valley. What steps might the BVHA Board take to determine whether or not this is a problem?

Each of the six candidates' responses follow:

1.) James K. Cobb

OCCUPATION: Attorney - Mediator, Law and Mediation Offices of James K. Cobb, 250 D Street, Suite 200, Santa Rosa, CA, 95404

EDUCATION: BA, Sonoma State University, 1974

J.D., Empire School of Law, 1987

AFFILIATIONS: Sonoma Co. Bar Association

Board of Directors, Sonoma County Bar Association, 1995-1998

Board of Directors - SCAYD 1997-present

Board of Directors - Legal Services Foundation 1993-present

LICENSES: State Bar of California, #144455

California State Contractor, #412163

STATEMENT OF INTENT

I am a Sonoma County resident of 27 years and a resident property owner of Bennett Valley since 1986. As an attorney, my law practice specializes in litigation and mediation of construction, real property and land use issues. As a resident of Bennett Valley, I am committed to promoting and preserving the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley as well as respecting individual property and privacy rights. I am a current voting member of BVHA and desire to serve on the Board of Directors of BVHA. I currently serve on the Board of Directors

of SCAYD (Sonoma Advocates For Youth Development) as well as Sonoma County Legal Services Foundation, both non-profit organizations promoting youth programs and low cost legal services respectively.

RESPONSES TO THE COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading, slightly modified from original.)

- I.) The BVHA Board can facilitate improved funding to the Bennett Valley Fire Department through informative presentations at public functions (such as Bennett Valley 2000) as well offering and providing the Bennett Valley Fire Department column space for articles in the VOICE. The Board may also conduct polls regarding the general attitude and feasibility of increased property tax assessments through the electoral process.
- II.) The BVHA and its requisite Board of Directors can most effectively broaden the "sense of community and communication" amongst the property owners by adopting a "mission statement" which on the one hand will promote and preserve the rural character of the valley while on the other hand respecting the individual diversity, privacy and property rights of individual property owners. This is best accomplished by a Board without political itinerary or selective agenda which concentrates on the dissemination of information and educating property owners of all aspects of living in the valley, understanding the inevitability of change.
- III.) Fresh water is a global concern as a result of overpopulation. Consequently, the claim of "water issues" commonly appears in opposition and response to change or diverse use within an area such as Bennett Valley. Whether the quantity and quality of water is a "problem" in Bennett Valley is a difficult scientific question of fact which is beyond the expertise of determination from a board of directors of a homeowners association. The Board can certainly seek, and should seek, to provide information from experts in the area to educate and explain the water conditions experienced in the valley through presentations at forums such as Bennett Valley 2000.

2. Michael L. Cronin

I would like to be considered as one of your board members for the Bennett Valley Homeowner Assoc.

We have owned our home in Bennett Valley since Feb. of 1997. Like most all of the residents, I am interested in preserving the rural residential character and natural environment of the valley.

I would like to bring a sense of fairness in dealing with the needs and wants of each neighborhood and resident, new and old alike; owners who use their land for agriculture pursuits, horse property, open space or their home.

No one group should have the only say in our Valley. I hope to be a voice of reason when representing the residents of Bennett Valley.

I would appreciate your vote. Thank you.

RESPONSES TO THE COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading, slightly modified from original.)

- I.) (Increased funding, Bennett Valley Fire Dept.) The need for an increase of revenue for our fire district seems to be real. Double check with the district to see if they would like the BVHA to help make residents aware of the need and put a committee together to see if taxes should be raised or if a fundraiser would be a better alternative.
- II.) (Sense of Community and Communication) This is a most important area:
- 1) All VOICE newsletters should be received by all residents; members and non-members alike.
 - 2) Communicate accurately in the VOICE the minutes and the tone of the monthly board meeting.
 - 3) Go back to an open forum at the board meetings so that if an issue is brought to a monthly board meeting it could be acted on rather than delayed until the following month.
 - 4) Continue to make residents and members welcome at the board meetings, encourage phone calls to board members, participation in community events and possibly expand B.V. 2000 to twice a year.
- III.) (Bennett Valley Water concerns) I have been going to B.V.H.A. board meetings for 3 years, as well as the three B.V. 2000 community forum meetings. The board has been very open and encouraged much dialog on this concern. Committees have been formed from the first two B.V. 2000 meetings. The big concern seems to be agriculture use (vineyards). The findings have been positive for our area. The information that I have on this subject indicates that vineyards have not caused a water problem. Well water and surface water concerns should continue to be researched and monitored.

3. Gordon J. Endow

My wife and I have lived in Sonoma County for over twelve years. We moved to Bennett Valley about five years ago because of its natural beauty, spaciousness, and bucolic setting. It is one of the most beautiful places in the world to live, and I would like to help keep it that way.

I fell in love with our place on Pressley Road because of our neighbors. I believe that one of the joys of living in Bennett Valley is that its rural character actually allows and encourages us to get to know one another better, to rely on upon another, and to rally together on local issues.

Over the past few years, however, an ugly rift has grown within the valley. It is not due to a struggle between preservationists and developers, because there really is no strong pro-growth sentiment among the residents. Instead, it seems to be due to a lack of communication, and a perception that important decisions were being imposed from "on high".

I am running for a Board seat in order to try to restore feelings of inclusiveness--of community--for the entire valley. I think that one way to engender trust and community is for the Board to be more representative of Bennett Valley as a whole. It is composed now almost entirely of residents of common-interest developments--namely, Bennett Ridge and Hidden Acres--who are subject to restrictions that do not apply to other Bennett Valley residents.

RESPONSES TO THE COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading, added to original.)

I.) (Sense of Community and Communication) I also think that the Board should make greater efforts to communicate with all of the residents of the valley. I endorse developing a BVHA website with e-mail and chat-room capabilities. For those without Internet access, in addition to the regular mailings of the Voice, we should have postings at the Fire Department and possibly at local stores, as well as include listings of Community Events in the local newspaper.

I think that the Board needs to earn back the trust of people it has alienated. It should make its Articles of Incorporation and its Bylaws available upon request. It should follow its own Bylaws rather than ignore them by appointing non-residents to the Board. It should amend the Bylaws to provide for general membership meetings, and to require a vote of the members to amend the Bylaws. (Currently, the Board can amend the Bylaws in anyway it wants, without a vote of the members.)

II.) (Increased funding, Bennett Valley Fire Dept.) At the same time that we open lines of communication, we also need to address our community's special needs and concerns. One of the most important issues certainly is funding of and support for the BV Fire Protection District. I think that the BVHA Board should work with the Fire Chief to inform and educate all of the residents not only of the special needs and constraints of the Fire Department, but of all the benefits it provides to each one of us. One of the first things we should do is determine whether enough people would support raising the amount of the special assessment. If so, that would go a long way to achieving this goal.

III.) Another important concern is water. The Board's role at least initially should be to facilitate gathering and disseminating information about the geology of the area, its aquifer and watershed (replenishment), and water uses and the environmental impacts of such uses.

I have been on the Common Ground Committee since shortly after its inception. I think that the Board should be the common ground, working for all of the people of Bennett Valley.

4. Marilee Jensen

I. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

- Bachelor's Degree, Univ. of Calif. at Los Angeles, 1964; Master's Degree, Univ. of Calif. at Berkeley, 1972
- Thirty years full-time employment, Solano County, Marin County, Sacramento County, Contra Costa County & State of California; various positions including Social Worker, Child Development Consultant, Licensing Supervisor, and Child Care Ombudsman. Written comments from the Community Care Licensing Office Manager, at the time of my retirement, in Nov. '94, "(We) have observed your exemplary performance, your professional skills and a high energy output that has set a standard for the rest of us to aspire to."
- Board of Directors, Bennett Valley School District, 1982 - 1986, one year as President
- President, Bennett Ridge Community Association, 1996 to present.
- Co-leader, Conserve Our Rural Environment, successful local effort to modify plans for Grange Road Bridge, 97-98.
- Coordinator, Bennett Valley 2000 Community Forum, 1999 & 2000
- Currently Vice-President, Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (one year)
- Currently Editor, VOICE newsletter, Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (one year)
- Bennett Valley Common Ground Committee participant, January, 2000 to present
- Receive agenda for and attend Bennett Valley Fire Protection District Board meetings on a monthly basis.

II. STATEMENT I have an exceptionally strong commitment to "promoting and preserving the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley" as demonstrated by the last seven listings on my brief biography. I retired from full-time employment six years ago and for the last four years I have "volunteered" to spend hours each week on these different endeavors related to preserving Bennett Valley.

III. RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading, modified from original.)

I.) (Increased funding, Bennett Valley Fire Dept.) The BVHA Board should first be instrumental in educating the Bennett Valley residents about the funding problems at the BV Fire Station and possible solutions, such as personal donations, fund-raisers, State legislative changes and an increased special tax assessment, which would go almost entirely to the BV Fire Station. The Board should authorize financial donations from BVHA to the BV Fire District and encourage BV residents to do likewise. The Board can also help residents find ways to influence the State Legislature and the Governor to return District Fire Funding to what it once was.

II.) (Sense of Community and Communication) The BVHA Board should send their newsletter, the VOICE to all BV homeowners at least five times a year and include any item of current interest. The Board should also make a concerted effort to reach out to and encourage people with different opinions to express their views in the VOICE AND to increase attendance at such BV events as the BV Fire Community Day and the BVHA Community Forum, (Bennett Valley 2000). A BVHA web site and community bulletin board are other ways the Board can improve communication and the sense of community in Bennett Valley.

III.) The BVHA Bennett Valley 2000 meeting in 1998 resulted in a BV Water Committee. This committee identified two issues of concern, water availability and water quality. One consequence of these identified issues which the BVHA Board has been pursuing since 1998 is that the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District is in the process of forming the Matanzas Creek Watershed Group in Bennett Valley this winter, for the purpose of assessing water quality on a voluntary ongoing basis. The BVHA Board should also follow-up with the most recent BV Water Committee in re-reviewing information about water availability in Bennett Valley.

5. Leanore Mesches

I have lived in Bennett Valley for 28 years and prior to that in Holland Heights for 11 years. We moved to Bennett Valley when we found a home with land and trees and were drawn to the beautiful vistas and open space, the qualities we all want to preserve. I was elected to the board 3 years ago and have served as a corresponding secretary, worked on committees: Bennett Valley 2000, Calendar Committee, and chaired the Open Space Section for Bennett Valley 2000. I am past president of the Sonoma County Council of Community Services, past Board Member of Brush Creek Family Services. I have been a licensed counselor/therapist for thirty years. These experiences qualify me to be re-elected. We are in difficult times in Bennett Valley with some neighbors pitted against each other, unable to find common ground on which to agree to solve some problems. I believe I can work with all members of BVHA to work toward win/win solutions.

RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading, added to original.)

I.) As for the role of the BVHA Board in helping the Fire Department increase funding: I would support the efforts of any group who would study the issues and work together with them to increase financial resources.

II.) (Sense of Community and Communication) Some of our residents feel isolated and don't know how to work with each other to increase the sense of community. I believe that helping neighborhood associations develop is one positive step that can be taken and I would be willing to do that. From my perspective, the attitude that is helpful is "Since we're neighbors, let's be friends."

III.) Of all the issues we face in the valley, one of the most difficult is water distribution, allocation, and use priorities. Interpersonal behavior and goals also effect these concerns and can be worked out with time, patience, and cooperation among the parties. At this point we can consult the appropriate water agencies which have the information. The first questions to be asked: "Is there truly a problem? How serious is it? and What can be done without changing the geology of Bennett Valley which is not an option?"

6. Marilyn Stocks

My interest in serving as a director of BVHA is rooted in my deep concern for the preservation of the beauty and character of Bennett Valley. I have lived in the valley for 28 years and have actively worked in various capacities for the protection of the valley during much of this time, and have been an enthusiastic supporter of the Bennett Valley Area Plan.

RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY FORUM "ISSUES" (Editor's heading added to original.)

I would like to share some of my thoughts regarding these concerns with you.

I.) Fire District Funding Our fire department is an incredibly valuable resource and I am anxious to support a plan that would be in the best interest of the valley to improve the financial stability of the fire department. I will be very willing to work with the directors of the fire district in implementing a plan, initiated by the directors of the fire district, to solve their long term financial problems.

II.) Water Conservation The BVHA Board continues to monitor issues affecting the potential quality and quantity of water available in the valley. At our October meeting we were fortunate to have an informed resident (Martin McDonough) available to speak to us about how valley water is collected within the structure of the earth, and how the use of one well may or may not affect the use of another. I have volunteered to be a member of the Matanzas Creek Watershed Group which is being formed by the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District. This group will begin meeting this winter to determine how to assess, on a voluntary basis, the quality of water in Bennett Valley.

III.) Communication During this past year I have been a member of the Bennett Valley Common Ground Committee working to resolve some of the frustration generated by the role of the Design Review Committee. The committee met for 5 months trying to find solutions. The recommendations of the group were presented at Bennett Valley 2000 and in the VOICE. During my tenure on the board we have worked to have an open dialogue with the community. The VOICE is now published six times a year rather than three, four of the issues being sent to all residents, rather than just members, so information and ideas pertaining to the valley can be shared in order that we may be a more pro-active rather than reactive community. The telephone numbers of board members are always published, and residents have an opportunity to speak at the monthly board meetings. The concept of a yearly town hall type meeting was initiated three years ago and has become a successful, yearly event. With these strategies in place we are hopefully operating as a representational body. However, for a representational system to function effectively, as we all know, individuals need to take responsibility for expressing their concerns, communication is an exchange of ideas and information. During the past year we have had a greater number of residents attending and participating in board meetings and we are a healthier more vibrant organization because of this active participation. The BVHA Board is currently exploring the possibility of creating a web site to add another dimension to our communication strategies. I will continue to support strategies to foster better communication.

The valley today remains an oasis of natural beauty, we don't have a trailer park or a convenience market thanks to the diligent efforts of many residents, and the protection given to us by the Bennett Valley Area Plan. My husband and I have been fortunate to live here and raise our two children, and now as our children, grandchildren family and friends come back to visit we all marvel at how the character of the valley has remained unchanged in the center of a very different Sonoma County. If elected to another term I will continue to work in a positive, professional manner, making careful decisions for the future of this magnificent area we all call home.

FIRE DISTRICT FUNDING
by Ron Collier, Fire Chief, Windsor
(SUMMARY PREPARED by Gary Galeazzi,
Captain, Bennett Valley Fire District)

● Fire departments such as Bennett Valley are funded 100% by property taxes. They receive no tax from sales tax, fuel tax or any federal funds.

● When the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) was enacted, in 1992, it took 10% of the various departments' monies to put forth toward the schools. (See "Additional Info," which follows.)

● The Bennett Valley Fire Protection District has lost \$104,167 in revenue between 1992 and 1999. The State is now proposing to increase that amount by an additional \$600 to \$700 per year.

● The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard for properly staffing fire stations is 1.59 firefighters per 1,000 residences in the community. Bennett Valley has one full-time person and one unpaid volunteer sleeper at night.

● Bennett Valley Fire District is charged \$28 by Sonoma County for any emergency call it makes. Bennett Valley can run up 200 calls per year. (\$5,600) Sonoma County also charges each Fire District additional fees for each check which needs to be written to pay the District's bills, and for collecting the taxes.

● The new standard for Fire Departments and Districts is that for two firemen to go into a burning building, there must be two firefighters outside ready to enter if help is needed. However, if there is someone in the building and a rescue is required, they may enter without the two back-up firefighters. The Bennett Valley Fire Station is working toward obtaining the funds for a new fire engine, to enable four firefighters to be on the "first-response" fire engine, for this reason.

● The Windsor Fire Protection District receives only three cents on each property tax dollar collected. This varies to some extent for the different locations. On the other hand, the special tax assessments, such as the \$60 per year in Bennett Valley, go almost entirely to that particular Fire Protection District.

You are urged to find ways to help the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District increase their revenue in order to improve the safety factor for all of us. Direct financial donations or donations in-kind (see below) for the Bennett Valley Fire Station are needed and welcome. Please send them to the Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Assoc., 6161 Bennett Valley Rd., Santa Rosa, 95404. You are also urged to attend Bennett Valley Fire Protection District Board meetings and ask questions.

ADDITIONAL INFO -FIRE DISTRICT FUNDING
In the recession of the early 1990's more than \$3 billion a year in property taxes was shifted by the state from local governments, including the fire districts, to schools. This transfer of funds, named Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) was to be reversed when State revenues were sufficient again. Needless to say, the State revenue is now back "on track" as evidenced by the upcoming sales tax reduction, recently approved by Gov. Gray Davis. Recent legislation passed by and unanimously supported by both houses of the State Legislature would have phased-in a cap on the amount of property tax shifted from local government to schools. This sensible change would have slowly reduced the property tax money going to the state and would have allowed local governments and special districts to better balance their budgets. Governor Gray Davis recently vetoed this bill, leaving special districts, such as fire districts, with continuing significant fiscal problems.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION from Joe Stans, 575-7951, <jstans@cableone.net>
The Bennett Valley Volunteers Firefighters' Association is looking for a large (old?) satellite dish. Training materials for the fire service are broadcast by FEMA as a public service and are in the public domain. It only requires a reception device. That's the rub - they are expensive. Are there any Bennett Valley homeowners who can donate satellite receivers (antenna and receiver module - old, inoperative or otherwise) for one of the following:

C-BAND

Galaxy 4R	Transponder 23
Downlink Freq.: 4180 MHz	
Audio freq.: 6.2/6.8 MHz	
Location 99 Degrees West	Polarity: Vertical

Ku-BAND

SBS 6	Transponder 4
Downlink Freq.: 11798.5 MHz	
Audio Freq.: 6.2/6.8 MHz	
Location 74 Degrees West	Polarity: Vertical

The volunteer firefighters might be able to make good use of it...Thanks!...cheers!

REPORT ON THE BVHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETINGS: September 20th & October 18th, 2000

At the Board meeting on 9/20/00, seven Board members and thirty other Bennett Valley residents attended the meeting. The attendance at these meetings has been increasing significantly lately, which is very heartening as a measure of community interest. As a result of this increased attendance, the first item on the agenda after the "Call to Order" was "Public Input". This gives those attending the meeting an opportunity to express themselves, with a reasonable time limit for each speaker, before the Board conducts its pre-scheduled Agenda business. The President, Bill Sullivan, said at the last meeting he would like to see the BVHA Board meetings remain informal with an open forum.

The main topic for discussion during the public input concerned a bus stop that had been located on the corner of Jamison Rd. and Sonoma Mountain Rd. Apparently it was in a state of disrepair and had become an "eyesore" in some people's opinion. Some of the neighbors living on Jamison Rd. wanted to remove it. Four months earlier, in May, a Bennett Valley resident had come to the BVHA Board meeting to ask if the Board would help pay for a dumpster which these neighbors wanted to use for the debris once they tore down the bus stop. The Board approved the allocation of \$105 for the dumpster, to be used by neighbors on Jamison Rd.

The property owner, one of the other neighbors on Jamison Rd. and a number of people in the audience expressed strong discontent over this Board action. Other things said by the public included, "The bus stops were put up by the school district a long time ago but they have become unsafe and are falling down. It needed to be torn down." "Will the Board put the bus stop back up?" "The Board should try to get a better pulse on what is going on with each issue." "Is the Bennett Valley Design Review disbanded and was the BVHA Board ever notified of this action to be taken by the County Supervisors on September 19th?" "Could the Board introduce themselves?" "How does one run for office."

Jim Katon, one of the Board directors, volunteered to research the bus stop problem and report back at the next Board meeting. Following this the Board went through the Agenda, which included approving the format and the budget for the Bennett Valley 2000 meeting, accepting Ray Longman's resignation from the BVHA Board, and approving Michael Friedenbergs' nomination to the Board by the President to fill that vacancy. Also, it was agreed that information on a BVHA web site would be presented at the next Board meeting by Board Director David Phillips.

There were also significant changes in regards to the BVHA elections. Because of a consistent lack of

interest in finding people who were willing to be on the BVHA Board, the Board had not appointed a nominating committee in July for the upcoming elections as called for in the BVHA bylaws. When this was challenged by one of the BVHA members, the Board agreed this was not correct and changed the timing of the elections in order to be in compliance with the bylaws and open the election to any BVHA member who might be interested. The bylaws call for three people on the Nominating Committee. Eve Boling, Jean LaCombe and Phil Temko were selected as this Committee by the Board. The Annual Meeting of the members and the election were changed from October 18th to December 20th. It was also announced that statements from the people interested in running for the Board, as well as dues from people qualifying as voting members, had to be received by November 1st.

At the next Board meeting on 10/18/00, eight Board members and 27 other Bennett Valley residents attended the meeting. The first item discussed involved the requested BVHA membership list by one of the BVHA members, as described in the Special Edition of the VOICE, sent out within a few days after this Board meeting. Another item discussed was the procedure for a Bennett Valley property owner to get a particular item on the Board Agenda. It was agreed that if an officer of the Board is contacted at least eight days before the next Board meeting with an agenda item, it will be included. The Board always posts its Agenda for the next meeting at the BV Fire Station, about one week ahead of time. Other things said at this meeting included, "BV Calendars will soon be ready and they are taking orders.", "Appreciated the Board taking time to fully check out the releasing of the member information to other members.", "I am not happy about the members' names being given out.", "The audience can be assured that the list would be used for candidate information only.", "Can we welcome new members with a call...?"

The bus stop report was made and distributed by Jim Katon and a number of different opinions were expressed. Jim Katon's personal conclusions were as follow: "The Board should be more careful in giving money to assist...BV residents" and "No Board director... was directly involved in...the removal of the shelter." The property owner, Nicole Wagner was asked what she thought was an appropriate redress for the bus stop and it was decided that Michael Friedenbergs as a BVHA Board member would meet with her to discuss the matter further. The Board also decided to authorize \$105 as a good faith gesture toward this redress for Nicole Wagner.

Other business included the Nominating Committee agreeing to count the ballots for this upcoming election. The marked ballot should be sealed in the smaller envelope and placed inside the larger envelope. It was also agreed that increased funding for the Bennett Valley Fire Station was to be on the next Agenda, in response to a personal letter and BV 2000.

GERIATRIC INFORMATION ON YOUR PETS

Is my dog old? Why is she grouchy now? She never used to be! Why is he forgetting where he is at times? My cat drinks a lot of water and seems to be urinating more. Is something wrong? I have to lift my dog into the car now because she seems to be in pain. What can I do?

Our domestic animals are living longer than ever before. Especially those country dogs and cats who get regular exercise, clean fresh air and lots of TLC. While we cannot halt the aging process, we can greatly extend the life spans of our pets. In this first article on "Geriatrics" we would like to give a brief overview of the aging process. In subsequent articles we will present signs and symptoms of specific disease processes and what can be done to keep your pet happier and more comfortable longer.

As the body journeys through life many changes occur. Environmental insults and injuries accumulate over the years. The most startling is a slowing of the metabolic rate. This leads to a decrease in the bodies' cell growth rate, which leads to a diminished ability to repair and heal. Hence, geriatric animals are more susceptible to diseases and have more difficulty in recovering from illness or trauma.

All bodily systems are affected by age-related changes. Because the repair mechanisms are dampened, the organs are at risk. The kidneys are particularly affected. The senses are dulled. The heart is less efficient and works harder to pump blood. The nervous system and brain function are slowed. Lungs are less able to supply oxygen to the blood. Teeth and gums can become infected. The intestines are not as absorbent and many nutrients are lost. The ability to replace blood and produce white blood cells is hampered.

Many geriatric foods are now available. Check with your veterinarian to help you decide which one is best for your pet. Watch for the next installment in our series of articles on geriatrics. Future articles will give more specifics on how to help our feline and canine friends age gracefully. Please call us with any questions you may have at (707) 525-9445. Dr. Deborah Hodesson, DVM and Dr. Avra Tracht, DVM, All Tails Wagging Veterinary Clinic

MATANZAS CREEK WATERSHED GROUP

In a recent telephone call from Sotoyome Resource Conservation District, it was confirmed that they are planning to have the first meeting of this proposed watershed group during the middle or end of January, 2001. There will be advance notice of this meeting to encourage attendance by every parcel owner in the watershed area.

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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Please feel free to call or write any of the directors with any questions or concerns you have. You can also send a FAX to the Editor at (707) 576-0405. If you want a direct return message, please indicate.

Thanks to the BVHA "VOICE" Editing and Mail-Out Committee: Bobbie Blair, Eve Boling (Editor Emeritus), Nancy Dell'Ergo, Peg Longman, Heather LaRiviere, Frank Nye, Marilyn Stocks, Bill Sullivan and especially Lois Brown, for her diligent work on the BVHA membership and mailing list.

Special thanks to some special helpers at the Bennett Valley 2000 Community Forum.
Jim and Janet Alfieri and the Bennett Valley Grange did an outstanding job in arranging for all of the beverages and refreshments for the meeting, many of them home-made by different Grange members.
Also, Heather La Riviere contributed a number of her lovely flower arrangements to the Bennett Valley Grange for this meeting. They really added a stylish, colorful touch which might well have contributed to the positive tenor of this Community Forum.

BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wells Wagner, Chairman
Lee O. Liddell, Marie Nottingham, Matt Phillips and Nola Stans. Feel free to contact the Fire Chief, Kent Reynolds, at 578-7761, with questions or concerns.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*"Committed to promoting & preserving the rural character
and natural environment of Bennett Valley."*

Santa Rosa, CA 95405
P.O. Box 2666

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

BENNETT VALLEY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- 1. BENNETT VALLEY GRANGE** - On Friday, December 1st, the Grange is going to have a History Night 2000, #2. The first History Night 2000 was on April 14th, and because of the success of that evening and by popular demand, they are going to do it again, with a continuation of Bennett Valley History from where they left off last time. That evening they will also be honoring people who've been in the Grange for a long-time, such as Ann Burrow, who has been a member for 75 years. She was also the Bennett Valley Grange secretary from March of 1925 until 1991. Watch for further announcements about this event.
- 2. BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION** - The Board of Directors meets the third Wednesday of each month, 7:30 pm, Bennett Valley Fire Station. Dates of next two meetings - November 15th and December 20th. The December 20th meeting will also be the Annual Meeting for members and the election night, when the ballots will be counted, for the Board of Directors. Bennett Valley residents encouraged to attend.
- 3. BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT** - The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 PM, Bennett Valley Fire Station. Dates of next two meetings - November 14th and December 12th. Bennett Valley residents encouraged to attend.
- 4. SONOMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** meets every Tuesday except on weeks when there is a holiday, at 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa. Information about the Board of Supervisors agenda, meeting dates or times can be found at www.sonoma-county.org or you can call 527-2241. Michael J. Cale is the First District Supervisor representing the Bennett Valley Area and Sonoma Valley.