



Bennett Valley VOICE

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VOLUME 24, NUMBER 3

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA)

MAY, 2001

Results: Now It's Your Turn!

In the last issue of the VOICE we asked for the opinions of the Bennett Valley parcel owner on four issues. While these votes strongly influence the Board's decision, the Board may still have some other reasons to vote differently. Nevertheless in any communication from the Board relating to these issues, the percent of opinions received on both sides of the issue will be included; so you can be sure your *voice* is being heard. The vote tallies (votes are still being received) and the Board decisions follow:

A. VOICE mailed out to only members except for one or two times a year:

79% Yes 21% No - mail to all parcel owners

For this fiscal year the Board will mail out copies of the VOICE to all Bennett Valley parcel owners, finances permitting, to determine if it positively impacts the input from the community and increases the number of members joining BVHA.

B. Access to Annadel State Park from Bennett Valley Road:

81% No 19% Yes

The Board voted to uphold the decision by the Board of Supervisors not to have access to Annadel Park from Bennett Valley Road at this location. The Board's decision as well as the percentage of votes received from Bennett Valley parcel owners, was sent to all involved agencies.

C. Give new street names to driveways with more than one home only with input from Fire District jurisdiction, as recommended by Fire Chief, Kent Reynolds:

91% Yes 9% No-follow County ordinance

The Board acknowledged the strong response on this issue, but it did not necessitate any direct Board

action. This vote tally is to be shared with Mike Cale, our First District Supervisor.

D. Print the Veterinarian articles based on merit and available space:

70% yes, of interest

30% No - not relevant or useful

The Board voted to invite other veterinarians to submit educational articles to be printed on a rotating basis, as space allows. If you know a veterinarian who might be interested, please ask them to contact us.

In this VOICE, your opinions are being requested on the **General Plan Update** to be discussed with County staff at the next BVHA Board meeting on 5/16/01, at 7:30 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. (See Pg. 5) Other things of special interest from BVHA include the new web page, www.BennettValleyHomeowners.org to be operating sometime this month. Be sure to let us know if you want to receive your July VOICE from our web page rather than through the U.S. mail.

****For Bennett Valley Calendar 2002****

This Year something new

**Grab your camera, paints and brush
Pick your scenes and join the rush!**

For next year's calendar, the Bennett Valley Calendar Committee is inviting both painters as well as photographers to submit slides, prints or photographs of original art work showing the valley in all seasons.

Submissions should be in horizontal format. This year's deadline: August 31. Please call 544-0234 if you want additional information.

Thanks from BV Fire!

Dear Bennett Valley Residents,

On behalf of the Bennett Valley Fire Department, I would like to personally thank each and all of the residents of Bennett Valley for their continued support and dedication. The pancake breakfast this year was a huge success. We raised more profit than usual while attracting attention to our fundraising efforts. As you all know, these events provide us with the funds to purchase new equipment to better serve all of you. A special thanks to the Explorer Post and the Bennett Valley 4H Club for their help. Once again, thank-you to all who have given their continued support to our Fire District and we hope to see all of you this summer at Community Day on August 26 at Jackson Park.

Sincerely, Mitty Sully

Director, BVFD Pancake Breakfast

"Live Art Events"

Come watch the live art events throughout the day at Bennett Valley Community Day, on 8/26/01.

Bennet Ridge artists are organizing a day of fun and creative expression with other BV artists in the valley. There will be teams of artists working on creative projects. Painters will be painting on location and the artwork will be donated to the auction. For information contact Donna DeLaBriandais, 544-2153 or Karen & Stan Sommer, 528-8982.

Grange Road Bridge

Levi Gurule, Senior Civil Engineer with Sonoma Co. Public Works, reports that an outside consultant is in the process of designing the proposed Grange Rd. Bridge. At this time they are seriously considering using a precast bridge with prefab components. Once the foundation is put in, the rest can be completed much quicker. If this can be worked out, it reduces not only the time it takes to complete the bridge but the overall cost as well. It would then be a 3-span bridge, with piers on each side of the creek. The new bridge is expected to line up over the old bridge, but they are still working on the construction staging and the temporary bridge, to keep the traffic flowing during construction. They expect to have the design complete by fall, making it possible to build the bridge by the summer of 2002.

Bachman Public Hearing/ BV Area Plan

Sonoma County Permit & Resource Management Dept. (PRMD) upheld the Bennett Valley Area Plan by denying a request to allow a new two-story residence to be built on a knoll which is in the Visual Corridor as identified on the BV Open Space Map. On this particular parcel there are 13 acres not in the Visual Corridor, with other possible sites where the structure could be built. The parcel owners appealed this PRMD decision before the Board of Zoning Adjustments on 4/26/01. In this hearing the Board voted to uphold PRMD and the Bennett Valley Area Plan. An appeal has just been received so this will now be heard before the Board of Supervisors, probably sometime in June or later. BVHA will be notified of this appeal date.

Sudden Oak Death and PGE

Bennett Ridge Community Association sent a letter of concern to PG&E about all of the tree-cutting being done by Davey Tree in this area of infestation. Without clear identification of the Sudden Oak Death Phytophthora and movement of the branches from affected trees, this fungus can be spread. Davey Tree agreed that these possibly infected branches are being moved from the area. All Bennett Valley Homeowner Associations have been sent a copy of this letter. PG&E has responded in the letter but it needs further follow-up.

Matanzas Creek Watershed Group

The Watershed Group's next step is to have the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District identify possible "Study Reach" areas for monitoring the Matanzas Creek. These areas need to have a low slope without rushing water, include both sides of the creek and be a certain length, such as 200 ft., depending on the (bankfull) width of the creek in that area. This also needs to be a part of the creek which has not been highly altered. The Study Reach areas hopefully will be identified by the end of May. Then all of the property owners in these areas are contacted to see if they are willing to sign an agreement to allow access for a trial period of one year for the purpose of monitoring the creek. When an area is secured with property owners' permission, there will be training for interested residents on how to conduct the monitoring, a monitoring schedule and a creek walk. Please contact Sierra Cantor at (707) 569-1448 with any questions.

Land Conservation In Bennett Valley; Something You Might Want to Consider?

by David Katz, Executive Director, Sonoma Land Trust & Michael Friedenberg, Vice-President, BVHA

As we all know, the impacts of growth are continuing to change the face of Sonoma County. In our neck of the woods, specifically the North Bay counties, we saw a whopping 67 percent increase in population in the twenty years between 1960 and 1980. We have worked to concentrate growth in our cities with the General Plan and urban growth boundaries, strong agricultural zoning and right-to-farm ordinances, and the formation of the Open Space District (OSD). Still the pressure for growth is relentless and greater than ever.

Two conservation organizations in Sonoma County exist to help promote the values of preserving the scenic and rural character of places like Bennett Valley. The Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space Preservation District (OSD) is a government agency formed by a vote of the people about 11 years ago, and is funded by a 1/4 cent sales tax in Sonoma County. They use this money to purchase land or conservation easements which fit into their categories of prioritized property to protect. The OSD has protected over 25,000 acres in Sonoma County. The Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) is our county's oldest land conservation non-profit and has protected over 11,000 acres. It is funded by membership, donations from business, foundations and individuals, and by revenue generated from facilitating conservation with other organizations like the Open Space District, California Coastal Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, etc. SLT can help landowners get professional assistance in land, estate, or tax planning. Their work is quick, responsive, private, flexible and confidential, with costs which are often much lower than public agencies.

A conservation easement is a way of selling or donating a right in one's property such as the right to subdivide, the right to harvest trees, the right to dam a stream, etc. The property owner still retains ownership and all other property rights that are not part of the easement. Conservation easements can be very flexible and tailored to the interests of the property owner. They do not require public access, although the property owner may choose that as an option. **Why would someone wish to donate a**

valuable right in his or her property? Many people feel their property has an intrinsic beauty that they want to be sure is kept forever. Some people believe ardently in conservation and charitable giving. Through a conservation easement, depending on the tax consequences, some property owners can take equity out of their property while continuing to own it and enjoy it. Also, it can be a very effective estate planning tool. Some properties which are not suitable for an easement may fit into a worthwhile donation scenario.

So what can the SLT or OSD do to preserve our open space and productive agricultural lands? How does their work fit in with the concerns of the landowners of Bennett Valley? Some property in Bennett Valley will fit into the goals of the OSD, some will not. While the OSD and SLT are separate organizations they do at times work together. By working cooperatively with private non-profit groups, the OSD more efficiently and swiftly reaches its acquisition goals. This is because Land Trusts such as SLT can usually bring in land transactions with cost savings to the OSD because of their use of volunteer professionals and the speed with which they can work.

By working with conservation professionals like OSD and SLT, interested landowners can have a win-win. They can keep the values they cherish in their property forever and be compensated for doing so; either by sale of the land, sale of an easement or through tax benefits resulting from donation of the land or easement.

The Bennett Valley Homeowners Association is a great example of citizens who have been working together for over 30 years to preserve the values of their "neighborhoods" that brought them here in the first place. We wanted to be sure we didn't become another sprawling extension of Santa Rosa, such as Fountaingrove. Only with the guidance and support of landowners who not only love their local landscapes, but who live there observing what's happening to the land, can we effectively carry out our mission of protecting land for the long term. If you have questions about how you could benefit from land conservation, please call David Katz at the Sonoma Land Trust, 526-6930 or the Open Space District at 524-7360. Or you can call Michael Friedenberg, BVHA, at 579-5310.

**BVHA Board of Directors Tentative
Agenda for the Next Meeting, 5/16/01**

- Greg Carr and Scott Briggs, Sonoma County PRMD staff, will present information and receive public input on the updating of the Sonoma County General Plan
- Public Input
- Monthly meeting reports: Board of Supervisors, Open Space District, BV Fire District & Matanzas Creek Watershed Group
- **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - BV Pamphlet update
 - BVHA Web Page update
 - BV 2002 Community Forum update; administrative committee, scheduled date, thirty year celebration
 - Sudden Oak Death & Davey Tree cutting; PG&E response to letter, follow-up information
 - BVHA calendars; contribution to BV Firefighters & 2002 calendars
- **NEW BUSINESS:**
 - Proscribed Burn Regulations and Burn Permits--Jim Katon
 - Precise wording of BVHA "motions"

Sonoma County General Plan Update

The last Sonoma Co. General Plan update was in 1989, and the State requires it be updated about every ten years. Sonoma County has now started on their "issue-focused" update. Some of the issues which have been proven problematic or have arisen since the last adoption of the General Plan include *Land Use, Open Space, Agriculture, Resource Conservation, Circulation, Air Transportation, and Public Safety*. BVHA has some special interest in *Circulation*, related to the defined category of our roads. *For instance, in the General Plan, Grange Road is classified as an arterial (inter-county relatively high travel speed) road, rather than a "two-lane rural scenic roadway" as it is in the BV Area Plan.* There is also interest in stronger conservation of oak trees and fire-safe vegetative screening. In preparation for the Board meeting, please be sure to let us know any ideas you have about the updated General Plan. You can write us at our P.O. Box 2666 or send an e-mail message to marileej@sprintmail.com.

**BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S
ASSOCIATION (BVHA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

Marilee Jensen, President & VOICE Editor
(576-0405 -phone # and FAX)
Michael Friedenberg, Vice-President (579-5310)
David Phillips, Treasurer
Bobbie Blair, Recording Secretary & Mailing
List/Membership Coordinator (542-1608)
Leanore (Lolly) Mesches, Corresponding Secretary
(545-8684) .
Jim Katon, Director (528-9487)
Nancy Dell'Ergo, Director (525-1202)
Marilyn Stocks, Director (528-2458)
Bill Sullivan, Director (528-6804)

If you are not sure if you have joined BVHA this year, just check your address label on the VOICE. A check in the box under your name means you are a paid member. To join BVHA, please send \$15 plus any donations to Blair/Dougherty, BVHA membership, 7373 Bennett Valley Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Bennett Valley Community Calendar

- 1.) **Bennett Valley Grange** – On Saturday, June 3, the 128th Annual Picnic & Barbecue is being sponsored by the Bennett Valley Grange at their Grange Hall. *The public is invited.*
- 2.) **Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association** - The Board of Directors meets the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:30 pm, Bennett Valley Fire Station. The Tentative Agenda for the next meeting is on page 4. *These Board meetings are intended to be informal and an Open Forum for Bennett Valley residents within certain time limits. We encourage you 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. *The Bennett Valley Fire Chief, Kent Reynolds, encourages Bennett Valley residents 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.

Report on the BVHA Board Meetings, March 21st and April 18th

The Board Agenda for each meeting is posted on a bulletin board at the BV Fire Station at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. The agenda includes a brief description of items for proposed action or discussion at the meeting, including information on the scope of the proposed action.

At the 3/21/01 Board meeting there were eight Board members and approximately ten other Bennett Valley residents in attendance. During the "Public Input", two people expressed their disapproval of having any access to Annadel State Park from Bennett Valley Road and one them also stated that she supported the VOICE being sent to everyone in the Valley for one year, as a trial. A third person asked what was the purpose of BVHA. He was shown a copy of the BVHA Bylaws and the Bennett Valley Area Plan to answer his question. These documents will be sent to anyone upon request.

Frank LaCombe and Marilee Jensen gave a presentation of the new Bennett Valley pamphlet which Frank, Marilee and Heather LaRiviere have been working on for months. Finding a consensus for three different perspectives, a "common ground", has been a very useful, dynamic and positive process. PRMD reviewed an initial draft and made a number of suggested changes intended to make the key points of the Bennett Valley Area Plan and the County's Administrative Design Review process more clear. The BVHA Board reviewed the content and made a couple of changes including adding the BVHA web page address and "Sonoma Mountain Woodlands" to the map. The Board then proceeded to "approve the proposed content... conditional on PRMD having approved any further changes made" and authorized 6,000 copies at a cost of \$3,633.53.

David Phillips presented the contract for the BVHA web page, which the Board accepted and signed. Bobbie Blair gave the Board an update on the Silent Auction. She will bring a budget to the next meeting for approval. Next the Board reviewed the votes, opinions and comments from Bennett Valley readers on the four issues as described on page 1. Verbal "votes" on these issues from the public attending the meeting were included in the vote count, also.

Finally the Board voted to approve Michael Friedenbergs recommendations related to moving a building envelope on two parcels of land in Sonoma Mountain Woodlands, where he had made a site review with PRMD staff, representing BVHA. Frank LaCombe had also made the same site review, representing Homeowners of Bennett Valley and he summarized his impressions of this land use change at this Board meeting.

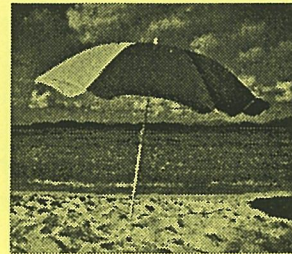
The 4/18/01 Board meeting was attended by seven of the nine Board members plus six other Bennett Valley residents. The Treasurer, Nancy Dell'Ergo, reported that the decision had been made, as previously approved by the Board, to place all of the BVHA funds in a Charles Schwab checking account, where reasonably good interest is paid, more than offsetting the monthly fee, without any time constraints. It was also agreed that David Phillips would be appointed Treasurer, immediately, in conjunction with this transaction to change the deposit of funds. It was reported that BVHA has 325 members so far this year.

David Phillips presented various styles for the BVHA web page for Board review. He stated the web page should be operating by the next Board meeting, at <BennettValleyHomeowners.org >. Bobbie Blair presented a budget of \$400 for publicizing and operating the Silent Auction, which was approved by the Board. See the flier insert for more detailed information.

The BVHA Board agreed to change the November meeting to the the second Wednesday of the month, that is November 14, rather than November 21, which is the night before Thanksgiving.

The Sonoma County General Plan update was discussed. Michael Friedenbergs suggested some County staff come to the next BVHA Board meeting to discuss how the update might impact Bennett Valley. As discussed on page 4, this has been arranged for and input is being requested from Bennett Valley parcel owners, in advance, if they are not able to attend the BVHA Board meeting on Wednesday, May 16th.

An announcement was made about the Bachman Public Hearing on 4/26/01, appealing aspects of the Bennett Valley Area Plan, as discussed on page 2.



As residents of Bennett Valley, we all know how valuable and important the **Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighter's Association** is to our community. The time has come to help them in their efforts to purchase additional life saving and fire fighting equipment. To raise much-needed money for this equipment, and as a means of thanking the BVVFA for their support of us, we are pleased to announce our first-ever Silent Auction. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

Donation items are currently being sought for this event. Be creative! Do you have a treasure that you are willing to part with for a very worthwhile cause? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Donate any of the following items - or others - which can be auctioned off to raise money for this important cause. Don't be shy; get creative!

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| ■ Artwork | ■ Pottery | ■ Sculpture |
| ■ Photographs | ■ Woodwork | ■ Yard Work |
| ■ Professional Services | ■ Massage Sessions | ■ Dinners for 2 |
| ■ Get-away Trips | ■ Time Share Spots | ■ Wine (bottle or case) |
| ■ Computer Training | ■ Contact Friends for a | ■ Be Creative! |
| ■ Pet Sitting | Donation | |

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

August 26, 2001 from 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m.
Bennett Valley Community Day Celebration!

QUESTIONS OR PICK-UP?

Contact **Bobbie Blair** (707) 542-1608 or
Heather LaRiviere at 522-0106
to arrange pick-up of your auction item,
or for further information.

THANK YOU!