



Bennett Valley VOICE

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA)

JANUARY, 2005

The Specific Purposes of Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA) are to: 1) promote and preserve the rural residential character and natural environment of Bennett Valley, 2) serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation, and 3) provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community. (Restated Articles of Incorporation, BVHA, Endorsed & Filed 2/2/04)

WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR! In the last issue of the VOICE, we asked for input on BVHA activities. We received overwhelming support from Bennett Valley residents, both prior to the meeting on 11/17/04 and at the meeting. Forty-six people signed in at the meeting, although there were considerably more people in attendance. Nine phone messages were received prior to the meeting; eight were very positive and one was negative. We received 33 letters and/or e-mail messages and all but two were very supportive of BVHA. Below are some of the excerpts from these messages which were very rewarding to read. There are additional excerpts on Page Two.

▪ *"Thank god that there is such a group of dedicated, involved, caring people to help maintain our beautiful countryside. Few of us have time to look into all the issues that arise in the valley, and my hat is off to those who take the time to learn and share their knowledge with us..."*

▪ *"...As a dues paying member who is currently building a house in the district, I have no problems at all with the BVHA giving input to the County of Sonoma PRMD. I have always looked forward to receiving the Bennett Valley Voice and read it cover-to-cover...the whole tone of it pleases me greatly. I am happy to support the BVHA in its dealings with the county..."*

▪ *"...My wife...and I have been residents of Bennett Valley for 32 years. We feel that if it were not for the dedicated directors, officers and members of the Bennett Valley Homeowners' Association our valley would not be the paradise that it is today. One does not have to look very far to see the results of apathy and lack of local community representation. The haphazard development of Rincon Valley and Fountain Grove are prime examples. (We) vehemently support Bennett Valley Homeowners' Association."*

After the last meeting, BVHA wrote Pete Parkinson, the director of Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD), for information about which applications are being sent to BVHA. His response, dated 12/7/04, states as follows: *"We send (to BVHA) referrals on all discretionary applications within the Bennett Valley Plan boundaries, except Administrative Design Review."* Administrative design review is part of the building permit process required of all new homes or remodeling of existing homes. We are NOT receiving copies of these *building permits*, as that is handled completely by PRMD. Questions such as whether or not the structures are using earth-tone colors, *"textures and materials that also blend harmoniously with the surrounding environment"* are included in PRMD's administrative design review process. The other "discretionary applications" being sent to BVHA are as follows: *Bennett Valley Area Plan Amendments, General Plan Amendments, Lot Line Adjustments, Subdivisions (Major and Minor), Zone Changes, Variances and Use Permits*, such as for a winery, resort or golf course. The BVHA Board, at the last meeting, voted to continue reviewing only these discretionary "land-use" applications. In these initial reviews, if BVHA determines the proposed change may negatively impact the "rural character or natural environment of Bennett Valley", it will then be discussed and reviewed with the parcel owner proposing the change. The next step would be informing Bennett Valley residents regarding this proposal, for further public information and review.

Another important issue which came up at this meeting concerns increased transparency for BVHA. It is not clear to Bennett Valley parcel owners what correspondence BVHA is sending out. Options for changing this will be discussed at our next meeting on **Tuesday, January 18th, 7:30pm**; see the BVHA Tentative Agenda, on Page Five.

Excerpts of Support for BVHA!

- *"...I appreciate the information presented in the BVHA newsletters regarding new projects in BV. I do not have the time to go the County to find out about new proposals in the Valley and am very interested in reading about these proposals... I think that all projects proposed in the BV area should have the opportunity to be brought to the attention of BV residents, and the BVHA is an excellent forum for that. Any project proposal through the County is public information, and the BV forum is simply a way to get more information out there..."*
- *"...I have farmed grapes in Bennett Valley since 1974. Had it not been for the watchful eyes of the BVHA, our vineyard and winery operation would likely have been overrun by rural residential housing years ago. BVHA functions as an essential guardian of the international treasure that is BV and Sonoma Mountain. The viability of (Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association) must not be compromised."*
- *"Just to let you know, we do support the efforts BVHA has and is making to keep us all informed, and to preserve the rural nature of our valley."*
- *"...I've only been a homeowner in Bennett Valley for approximately three years, but in that time have been very impressed by your (the BVHA) efforts to maintain and promote an involved and informed community...I support your continued efforts, and thank you for having the willingness to take a leadership role – I know it's never without detractors..."*
- *"...I have lived at my residence in Bennett Valley for 35 years. I have never been anything but thankful for the BVHA, because it is the only organization that, for all these years, has consistently, abidingly, actively, patiently looked after the integrity of this magnificent jewel we call Bennett Valley. The Board of Directors has been fair and balanced in its positions, unflinchingly consultative with residents, and transparently informative to anyone who wants to listen..."*
- *"I have lived on Sonoma Mountain for over 9 years. I have always supported, and will continue to support the efforts of the BVHA to keep the citizens of this incredible place informed, educated, supported and connected. For everyone involved I think that the county taking over direct design review functions made sense. But I believe that the continued involvement of the BVHA in land use issues, planning issues, scenic preservation, water and fire issues, education, and information exchange is vital. I support the organization 100%..."*
- *"...BVHA does more for this valley and community than any other organization...All of the BVHA's board members are volunteers...Bennett Valley is the most protected and preserved valley in Sonoma County due largely in part to the countless hours dedicated by these same people...This list of contributions by the BVHA is long and impressive...They have kept a pulse on any potential commercial development and have made sure that this valley has the ear of our county supervisor... People should...give thanks to the handful of people who spend their time preserving this unique, magnificent valley...BVDRC has been abolished...Enough is enough..."*

2005 BVHA MEMBERSHIP

What terrific support we've read and heard about BVHA's work to promote our valley's goals! This is all done by hard-working volunteers with a modest budget. You can help, too. We need you to join BVHA; to send in your \$15 dues. It is only used for our community's interests. We'd like you to also consider sending an additional donation, over the \$15. These extra donations enable us to mail our VOICE and support our website, so that all of the Bennett Valley parcel owners are well-informed and government officials hear our collective voice. When talking to your neighbors and friends, tell them you financially support BVHA and encourage them to do the same. You can also help support BVHA by choosing to receive your VOICE via e-mail.

Presently, 156 households receive the VOICE by e-mail, with a savings in postage of \$346.32, not counting the savings in paper and printing costs. Please consider providing us with your e-mail address along with your \$15 dues and any added donations. The membership form and a return envelope are attached for your convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Bobbie Blair, 542-1608 or dreams7373@sbcglobal.net. **Thanks again for all your support, as we move forward into another great year in our lovely valley!**

2005 Calendar Sales A Big Success!

Over 400 vintage-theme calendars were sold, and the Bennett Valley Grange will receive the profits from this year's edition. Many thanks to residents who shared their photos and memories to make this calendar so successful. Special thanks also to valley residents, Patti White and Sandra Carr, who were invaluable in the calendar layout and design. Longs, B.V. Ace Hardware, Paterson's Nursery, and the B.V. Fire Station once again sold the calendars.

A few extra calendars were ordered at Christmas. Please call 542-1608, if you desire a calendar, as a limited supply is still available.

What do we do this next year? The present calendar committee is looking for ideas and new volunteers to produce a 2006 calendar. Call Judy, 544-0234 or Suzanne, 542-1608 with your suggestions. **Thanks to all for your support with these Bennett Valley calendars.**

Example: Sonoma County PRMD PROPOSAL

The only proposed application received from PRMD in the last couple of months concerns the approval of a third one-year extension of time for a Major Subdivision Tentative Map until January 9th, 2006. The following is taken from the PRMD Staff Report, dated 12/16/04, concerning this extension. *"The previously approved subdivision is consistent with the General Plan, Bennett Valley Area Plan and the RRD, 20-acre density zoning designation for the subject site. The requested extension of time does not include a request to modify the original approved Tentative Map...There have been no changes in the project, no change in circumstances surrounding the project, and no new information which would require additional environmental review or affect this request for an extension of time..."* The name of the parcel owner is not included as BVHA sees no need to go any further with this at this time. When we reviewed the paperwork previously, in 2000, we felt that the proposed "Major Subdivision" would only help to preserve the "rural character and natural environment" of Bennett Valley, with six sites ranging from 13.2 acres to 32.7 acres, a 111 acre designated remainder and 54 conditions of approval. There have been no changes since that time.

GRANGE ROAD BRIDGE UPDATE

By Jim Alfieri, Sonoma County Bridge Engineer

Welcome from the Grange Road Bridge Project Team. Here's wishing you all a wonderful 2005. And here's a "brief" update on the progress of the Grange Road Bridge Replacement Project.

We've reached new "levels" in our progress. The concrete abutments, along with the temporary supports and formwork for the new superstructure, are now in place and can be seen at eye level as you drive across the temporary bridge. Also in place are the galvanized ducts that run along the length and inside of the superstructure to house the high-strength strands later to be pre-stressed.

Soon this month, the superstructure concrete will be cast in the formwork atop the temporary supports and be done in two separate operations. Being a typical Cast-In-Place Pre-stressed Concrete Bridge (now that's something worth remembering) the Grange

Road bridge structure consists of a bottom flooring, a top riding surface and, sandwiched in between, longitudinal walls. The first operation is to cast the bottom flooring, then the walls and finally the top riding surface.

What about the pre-stressing you ask? Those high strength strands are yearning to be *installed, stretched, released, and anchored* into the structure to supply the necessary forces, making this system work. The superstructure concrete asks that it be given ten days to build up its strength before applying those pre-stressing forces and that's what we will do. Our target date for completing these operations is the first week in February. Everything is right on target. The bridge "per se" will then be complete.

Meanwhile other significant operations are now and will continue to be pursued and completed, including the bridge approach, retaining walls, railings, drainage and fencing. Included in these operations are the placement of large size rocks for slope protection along the banks of Matanzas Creek, surrounding and beneath the bridge structure. The majority of these rocks have been placed and are performing admirably.

We're still aiming for completing the entire project and having it available for public traffic by late spring or early summer of 2005.

Again we do very much appreciate the positive cooperation and interest you have provided this project. We always look forward to your greetings as you cruise through the job. We will continue to provide updates. And, of course, as always, *please drive carefully.*

WHEN WILL BENNETT VALLEY ROAD BE REOPENED?

Steve Dittmer, Associate Civil Engineer with the City of Santa Rosa's Public Works Department, reports that there are only a couple of weeks of work left before Bennett Valley Road can be reopened, but they aren't sure when this will occur. This additional work requires a dry spell of weather for new pavement to be added. Presumably, this will happen well before the Summer of 2005.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

(BVFPD), **Bennett Valley Firefighting Staff**

24-hour Shift Firefighting Engineers:

Brian Campbell, Mike Musgrove and Bryon Reid

Daytime Firefighting Engineers: 8 am to 5 pm:

Kevin Burris, Danny Connelly, Matt Tognozzi

FIREFIGHTER ACTIVITIES, November & December

By Steve Gritsch, Firefighter

Medical Aids:15	Mutual Aid:7
Vehicle Accidents: 9	Structure Fires: 3
Smoke Investigations: 2	Other: 10

On December 8, 2004, two fire engines were dispatched to a vehicle rollover in the area of Molinari Rd. (renamed as "Matanzas Creek Lane" in the last month). A full crew (3 firefighters) responded on the newest Type 1 structural fire engine, referred to as #7882. Another full crew also responded to this accident on the wildland Type 3 fire engine, referred to as #7861. When they arrived on scene, one victim was already out of the vehicle. As a precaution, the victims (teen-agers) were transported by ambulance to medical help.

Later that day, BVFPD was again dispatched to a vehicle accident, a two-vehicle head-on collision on BV Road, near Matanzas Creek Bridge. The same two Fire Engines immediately responded with full crews. When they arrived, they found there were two victims needing medical assistance, and Bennett Valley Road was blocked. After both victims were cleared by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, the firefighters were able to open the roadway to relieve traffic congestion.

December had a particularly high volume of vehicle accidents and the Bennett Valley Firefighters remind drivers that road dynamics drastically change when the roads get wet. The only way to improve your safety is to leave at least five minutes early and SLOW DOWN! Also, watch out for downed power lines and never touch or even drive over them. Tires will not insulate against that quantity of electricity!

Burn permits are available at \$10, for creating a "defensible space" around your home as well as for agriculture burning. Be sure to inquire at the Fire Station from 8am until 5pm, about obtaining the required burn permit if you have piles of fuel on your property which should be cleared prior to the upcoming fire season. The BV Fire Station phone number is 578-8471.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa

(707) 578-8471

Board of Directors

Matt Phillips, *Chairman*

Dan Felciano, *Vice-President*

Deborah Haarstad, *Secretary*

Marilee Jensen, Mark Richardson

*The Board meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm. at the BV Fire Station. **You're welcome to attend**, but please confirm the meeting date first. If you have any questions or concerns, you can leave a message for the Bennett Valley Fire Chief, Andy Pforsich, at 823-1084.*

Bennett Valley "Clean-Up Road" Day

After scheduling two Bennett Valley Clean-Up Roads Days which were rained out (Sept.19th and Oct. 23rd), a small group of Bennett Valley residents spontaneously cleaned up parts of Bennett Valley Road on Saturday, Nov. 6th. It was not scheduled ahead of time or widely publicized, but it started when Dave & Sandy Sandine and Mike & Patty Hickey decided together that they would do some clean-up of litter on Bennett Valley Rd. on that day. Other people who also helped included Bobbie Blair, Norm Boling, Suzanne Dougherty, Gail Graser, Tim Murphy, Bill Robotka, Lu Schultz, and Chris Wills. Bennett Valley Road was all they could do, with their limited work force, but they had their orange vests, pick-up sticks and the orange bags to fill up with their picked-up litter. Their litter-filled orange bags were then left at the BV Fire Station, where Sonoma County Public Works picked them up shortly after that. **We want to give a special thanks to those who helped in this spontaneous but much-needed clean-up. Watch for the announcements for the next clean-up day, probably in April.**

Bennett Valley Grange History Night

The Bennett Valley Grange sponsored a well-attended History Night on Friday, December 3rd, from 3 pm until 8 pm. It was the unveiling of more than 80 photographs of Bennett Valley's historic buildings, taken by Bill Pisenti, who is now 87 years old. It was also the 121st anniversary of the dedication ceremony for the BV Grange Hall. On Sunday, November 28th, Gaye LeBaron had a column in the Press Democrat, describing the "ghosts" brought out in a drive through Bennett Valley with Ann Beach Burow, age 99, Bill Pisenti's sister. In the column there was also mention of the Grange History Night and our BVHA vintage calendar for 2005.

Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association

(BVHA) Board Of Directors

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Brief Summary, BVHA Board Meeting

November 17th, 2004

- **Public Input** Considerably more people attended this meeting, but 46 of them signed the roster. Many of these people spoke regarding issues addressed in the November VOICE, concerning BVHA activities. Most of them were supportive of BVHA, as reflected in the comments on Pages One and Two. There was also some concern expressed that "there be appropriate and respectful concern for private property rights" AND "that all the parcel owners and the private property rights need to be respectful in turn of the values common to all of us." One question asked by someone in the audience was, "Specifically which applications are sent by PRMD to BVHA?" This will be answered at the next meeting.
- Improved transparency of BVHA was another issue brought up for further consideration by the BVHA Board at the next meeting.
- Frank LaCombe expressed his opinion that BVHA credibility was a problem and we needed to be more careful about possible misstatements, in order to better serve as a unifying force in the valley.
- *At the BVHA October meeting, a formal notification system was adopted when a parcel owner's proposed changes were to be mentioned in the VOICE or discussed at a public meeting. The parcel owner(s) would be notified personally in advance by someone on the BVHA Board, and by registered mail if necessary.*
- *It was the opinion of the Board and many of those in attendance that only reviewing BVHA members' proposed land-use changes, rather than all such changes, would not work in keeping with the role of advocate for the Bennett Valley Area Plan, as the Plan affects everyone.*
- *The BVHA Board does review all proposed BV land-use changes, including for their Board Directors.*

- *The consensus of those in attendance was that designating a committee to check BVHA Board members' properties to see if they were in compliance was not worth discussing.*

- The BVHA Board moved, seconded and passed, with a unanimous roll call vote, its commitment to continue to receive notifications from PRMD on land-use applications in the Bennett Valley Area. BVHA will follow the procedures that have been outlined in receiving that information and presenting it as a public forum, when indicated, including possible follow-up correspondence with PRMD.

- Copies of VOICE newsletters and BVHA minutes will be kept for three years on the BVHA web-page.

- Per John Maitland, Public Works, "arterial roads" are eligible for federal funding and "collector roads" are not; in any case there is no federal funding available except for Grange Road Bridge and Stony Point Road.

- After adjournment, Michael Friedenber was selected as the BVHA Vice-President for 2005.

- Two days after this meeting, on November 19, we received a request from Rebecca Ng of PRMD to support Sonoma County's application for a Grant from the California Department of Water Resources, to offer matching funds to homeowners to destroy abandoned water wells on their property. This is needed because each abandoned well presents potential contamination to the groundwater. All of the voting Board members consented to this action, so the letter of support was sent by BVHA on 11/26/04.

Board Of Directors' Tentative Agenda

For January 18th Meeting, 7:30 pm, BV Fire Station

- 1.) What changes shall BVHA make to improve their "transparency"? Two possible solutions are to keep a public binder of any correspondence we send out, and/or to have our correspondence available on the web-page, for the public's review, unless it includes some individual confidential information.
- 2.) Specific description of what types of applications PRMD does send to BVHA.
- 3.) PRMD's response to BVHA's request to have parcel owners notified of changes being considered in the General Plan 2020 Update.
- 4.) Report on Sonoma County Water Coalition Meetings in December (Frank LaCombe) and the status of Sonoma County's proposals for changing well ordinances (Michael Friedenber).
- 5.) Possible speakers for 2005. Previous suggestions include speakers on water conservation, solar energy and the need for wildlife corridors.
- 6.) Discussion on BVHA's following the Brown Act.
- 7.) Discussion on possible name change for BVHA; legally, we are not a "Homeowner's Association".

To Be Printed and Mailed in to Blair/Dougherty, 7373 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404:

BENNETT VALLEY HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES, 2005

(BVHA MAILING LABEL)

Please mail in this form with your annual dues of \$15 plus any donation you're willing to make, so that we may continue to pursue our specific purposes. Mail the envelope to Blair/Dougherty, 7373 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 or call (707) 542-1608.

Let us know if you would like to receive the VOICE by e-mail. If yes, include your e-mail address. E-mail address: _____

We also are interested in hearing any comments or concerns you might have, or any corrections or additions we should make to your name(s) , address, or phone #. (Current Phone#: _____) If you don't have enough room, insert additional paper. Thanks!

Comments/Changes: _____

Remember to note these dates on your calendar!

1.) Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association (BVHA): *Please note the changed meeting date for BVHA.* At the request of the BV Firefighters, BVHA has changed their meetings for 2005 to the third Tuesday, every other month, plus October, instead of the third Wednesday. The next BVHA Board meeting will be on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 18TH, 2005, 7:30 PM at the BV Fire Station. The Tentative Agenda for this January meeting is on Page Five.**

2.) Bennett Valley Fire Protection District: The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. You are welcome to attend these Board meetings but it is recommended you verify the meeting day in advance, at 823-1084.

3.) Sonoma County Board Of Supervisors meets every Tuesday (except on weeks when there is a holiday) at 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa. Valerie Brown is the Supervisor for our First District. You may call her or Lynn Morton-Weil, her Aide, at 565-2241, if you have any questions or concerns.

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Bennett Valley Homeowner's Association
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

BVHA web-page <bennettvalleyhomeowners.org>

SPECIFIC PURPOSES OF BVHA: *"To promote and preserve the rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley, serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation and provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community."*

NOTE: New BVHA Meeting Time
Third Tuesday, January 18th, 7:30 pm