



Bennett Valley VOICE

www.bennettvalley.org

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BENNETT VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (BVCA)

JANUARY, 2013

Bennett Valley Community Association: Who Are We?

A Group of Dedicated, Inspired and Involved Volunteers Working To Preserve the Bennett Valley Rural Environment, Educating Residents on Disaster Preparedness, Serving As An Open Forum, Providing a Bridge With Government Agencies and Communicating With the Bennett Valley Community. We're asking for your involvement and Your 2013 Annual Membership Dues!

Bennett Valley Community Association (BVCA) is a non-profit organization, with all our activities completed by volunteers. Our annual dues are \$15, plus any additional contributions you want to make, to better enable us to pursue our mission as summarized above. We now qualify as a tax-exempt organization for which you may be able to deduct your contributions, depending on your own tax status. We meet generally six times a year, on the third Thursday of January, March, May, July, September and November, at the Bennett Valley Grange Hall, starting at 7:00 pm. On occasion, when there is a special issue, we will have a special meeting. About one week before each meeting, we send out this newsletter, the VOICE, to all residents and property owners in Bennett Valley, roughly 900 households, free of charge. Each recipient of this newsletter can choose to receive it by email or first class mail. Isn't that a good deal for \$15 a year, plus any additional contributions you choose to make. You'll find the 2013 Membership Dues Form, with a self-addressed envelope attached to a middle page. Please complete and send it in today.

Some of the accomplishments by Bennett Valley Community Association in 2012 are listed below.

- Candidates' Forum Last year there was an election scheduled for our First District Supervisor, as Valerie Brown had chosen not to run for re-election. At a special BVCA meeting on April 19, five of the candidates came to make their presentation to the Bennett Valley audience. These candidate forums have proven to be a very informative way to compare different candidates on the issues.
- Speakers At BVCA Meetings; Scott Lawyer, "Geologic History of Sonoma Valley Area and the

Sonoma Volcanics" Sept. 2012; "Bennett Valley History and Memories", Evelyn McClure, July, 2012.

- Bennett Valley Roads BVCA President, Craig Harrison is one of the founders of SOS (Save our Sonoma) Roads, and his communication and efforts in this arena in the last 18 months have helped to bring about significant improvements for Bennett Valley Road, as we've all seen. (Article on next page by Craig Harrison on "*Plans to Fix County Roads Remains Elusive*".) He has also provided bimonthly reports on Sonoma County's plans for Bennett Valley roads.
- Bennett Valley Emergency Preparation (BVEP) Karen Sommer, our BVEP Coordinator, has arranged for numerous CERT training sessions for BV residents and has helped to create the BV Grange Shelter Container, with 30 cots plus other necessary supplies and equipment for an emergency. She coordinates BVEP fund-raising efforts, including with the BV Grange for their annual June barbecue and distributes valuable information, such as her recent article in the VOICE, "It's Never Too Early to Prepare for A Disaster: Now Is The Time To Do It."
- Bennett Valley Fire District: We provide a source for information from Bennett Valley Fire District staff, including safety tips, pertinent articles, and a summary of and access to minutes of the BV Fire Board of Director monthly meetings.
- Other Pertinent Information, including SOS Trees vs. PG&E, BV Clean-up Days, BV Calendars (through 2012), BV's Emergency Communication Center, Art Trails & Art On The Ridge schedules, and BV Grange Community Activities, such as their annual June Barbecue and Spaghetti Feed.

Plan to Fix County Roads Remains Elusive

By Craig S. Harrison, SOSroads

Almost 100 people attended the Road Summit sponsored by Save Our Sonoma Roads (SOSroads) on the future of county road funding in mid-November. They asked questions of county supervisors Shirlee Zane and David Rabbitt and Director of Public Works Phil Demery about the 1,180 miles of county roads that are not part of the primary road system. There are no funds to preserve the pavement on these roads, and the road department can only fill potholes by shoveling asphalt onto the surface as the road base deteriorates year after year.

There is still no long-term plan to solve the road problem. SOSroads believes that the county needs to propose a concrete plan in the coming year that would achieve major progress within a decade.

A one-time \$8 million boost this year for roads, will allow \$6.5 million to be dedicated to improving about 13 additional miles (1.1%) of non-primary roads. Even if the one-time funding continued each year indefinitely, it would take 90 years to fix all county roads at this rate. Of course roads do not last 90 years, so they would never all be in good condition at the same time. The county budget is \$1.2 billion (\$420 million is general funds) and it might take \$80 million per year (6.7% of the entire budget or 19% of the general fund) to fix all county roads within a decade.

Supervisors Zane and Rabbitt emphasized that Sonoma County has twice the road miles of any other Bay Area county and there are no simple solutions to the huge problem. Each supports allocating more general funds to roads and stated that future levels of funding will depend on recovery from the recession and the availability of new funding sources.

Each supervisor expressed a commitment to maintaining all county roads, including over 700 miles of rural residential roads that are now designated by the Public Works Department as failed or failing. Nevertheless, most of these roads will soon degrade to dirt or gravel under the status quo.

State gas taxes will continue to decline because more efficient vehicles are using less fuel. Rural areas will receive less regional road funding as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission diverts funds to urban parts of the Bay Area. Much of the discussion focused on potential new sources of

funds such as raising the tourist occupancy tax on hotels (\$2.5 million per year), a sales tax increase and a vehicle license fee. None of these have the potential to fix even half of the county roads. Special assessment districts in which residents of an area assess themselves to fix their own roads was briefly mentioned. Some federal grant money is available for specific projects and the developers of the Rohnert Park casino will pay to improve some roads in that area but such opportunities barely scratch the surface of the problem. The supervisors did not know of any major new road funding programs by either the federal or state government for county roads.

No state legislators attended the road summit, and the assemblymen and state senators who represent Sonoma County seem oblivious to the fact that their constituents are experiencing a road crisis. Sonoma County's problems can, at least in part, be attributed to failed state policies with regard to the allocation of state gas taxes among counties and the failure of gas taxes to keep pace with inflation. It is time to ask our state legislators what they can do to keep over a thousand miles of Sonoma County roads from deteriorating to third-world status.

SOSroads is a Sonoma County-wide citizens' group that was formed to advocate for an improved allocation of public funds to roads. To become a member or to sign up for free newsletters, go to SOSroads.org.

Top Stories of 2012, *Kenwood Press*,

December 15

- The First District now has a new supervisor, Susan Gorin, a former Santa Rosa City Council member, who was sworn in on January 2nd. In the run-off election, she spent a great deal of time in Sonoma Valley, getting up to speed on important issues. She is the sixth woman in county history to be elected to the board of supervisors and has taken over from Valerie Brown, who was our supervisor for 10 years.
- Agreement was reached with state park officials to have Annadel State Park, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and Jack London State Park stay open and be run by someone other than the state, for anywhere from one year to five years...
- PG&E clear cutting has been challenged by a number of residents and SOS Trees. While PG&E has remained cagey about their plans, they have been willing to negotiate with some of the individual landowners who have been articulate about their rights. Apparently PG&E has not yet been willing to let people know this, in advance and in writing.

Responsibility For Bennett Valley Road Trees

By Tom O’Kane, Interim Co-Director, Sonoma County
Department of Transportation and Public Works

We are now into the rainy season which can bring with it the possibility of fallen trees and tree limbs which can result in serious injuries. I want to remind property owners in Bennett Valley and especially along Bennett Valley Road that they are responsible for all trees located on their property. The County may have an easement over some roadway frontage of property in this area which allows the County to access and maintain the pavement and drainage swales, pipes and structures and also to trim trees and bushes on occasion so as to maintain safe clearance above the road and along the shoulders; however, the trees and bushes belong to and are the responsibility of the adjacent property owners, not the County.

The beauty of Bennett Valley is enhanced by the many trees that line the roadways. Age, insects, and disease can have a detrimental impact on these beautiful trees. Therefore, they need to be monitored and maintained properly to ensure they do not create a potential hazard. Because the trees are the responsibility of individual property owners, I encourage you to monitor and maintain the condition of your trees and have them professionally inspected by an arborist. Hopefully, you will find them all to be healthy and secure, but if not, you need to take corrective action immediately to remove any potential hazards. The property owners have responsibility for removal of trees that are dead, diseased, or dying. A fallen tree or dropped limb poses a significant hazard to road users and could result in an expensive liability to you as the owner of the property on which the tree is growing.

Bennett Valley Road Report

By Rob Silva, Road Operations Manager, Sonoma
County Department of Transportation and Public Works

Currently the Sonoma County Road Department has no planned or scheduled projects in the Bennett Valley area at this time. Road crews are still responding to damage and debris created by last month’s storms throughout the County, including road damage caused by flooding, cleanup of downed trees and slides, and pothole filling. The past couple of weeks, crews have been working on two roads in the north county off Geysers Road. Both Pine Flat Road and Pine Mountain Road had landslides that took part of the road with them. One lane of each

road remained open. The crew completed building a rock wall on Pine Flat Road last week and re-established both lanes for travel. The crew is on Pine Mountain Rd. this week (January 4).

Also a problem the past couple of weeks has been the freezing temperatures that have created icy conditions on many roadways. Crews have been out in the early morning hours sanding roads for traction and safety. Some sections of roads in the Bennett Valley area that crews have responded to and where extra caution is needed when driving on freezing mornings include Bennett Valley Road near the Santa Rosa City Limit signs, Sonoma Mountain Rd. in the Redwood Grove, and portions of Enterprise Rd., Pressley Rd., Mt. Taylor Rd. and Grange Rd.

Upcoming work in the Bennett Valley area will continue to be emergency and storm response for downed trees, slides and potholes. The bridge crew will be available for any needed guard rail repairs in an emergency. Traffic crews respond to downed road signs countywide. A portion of Bennett Valley Road is still being considered for chip seal next summer, from Grange Road east to around Old Bennett Ridge Rd. At some point this winter, the Road Department would like to schedule crack sealing of this section, as part of its preparation for chip seal. A period of dry weather is needed for this project, and emergency and cleanup work from winter storms must be completed before a crack seal crew can be made available.

For reporting winter road problems, such as potholes, slides, down trees, etc., call the Road Maintenance office at 565-5100, Monday through Friday, 7:00am to 3:30pm. For after-hour and weekend emergencies, call the Sonoma County Sheriff Dispatch at 565-2121. They will notify our 24-hour contact and the appropriate personnel will be dispatched.

Recent Fallen Oak Tree, BV Road

By Marilee Jensen

One large oak tree fell on the narrow winding part of Bennett Valley Road, near Walker’s Pond, before Old Bennett Ridge Road, on December 5, at 7:13 am, per the BV Fire Station records. Because of the road blockage, BV Road was closed all day until Sonoma County Road Maintenance was able to clear the road, by about 5:00 pm that same day. Luckily, no one was injured. Following that, part of a large oak tree in the same area could be seen alongside the road with telephone wires lodged in the tree, but the telephone company had Atlas Tree remove those wires the last week of December. The property owner is now responsible for any further work which may or may not be needed with that tree.

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

(BVFDP) 6161 Bennett Valley Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Phone: 578-7761 bennettvalleyfire.org

Board of Directors:

Mark Richardson, President; Joseph Mazeau, Vice-President;
Marilee Jensen, Secretary;
Don D'Avanzo and Arnie Tognozzi, Directors.

Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper:

Kori Lantow, 823-1084, klantow@comcast.net

(Gold Ridge Fire Administrative Supervisor, Ruth Newman.

*Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday each month,
7:00 pm, at the BV Fire Station. Please confirm meeting date
ahead of time by calling 823-1084.*

Bennett Valley Paid Firefighting Staff:

Interim Fire Chief: Darrin De Carli, 823-5502

48-hour Personnel: Lieutenants Matt Tognozzi and Travis
Browne, Engineer Rene Torres

Part-time Firefighters, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm:

Engineers: Mike Alcocer, Derrick Alvestal,
Ly Leng, Jon Matej and Patrick Tognozzi

Bennett Valley Volunteer Firefighters

*There are about 29 BV Firefighters, including the volunteers
and interns. Three rotating shifts of three volunteers each
are paid a stipend to sleep overnight at the Fire Station,
for improved coverage. During the day, interns are used at
no cost, when available, allowing the fire station to cover
unfilled firefighter positions on those particular days.*

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District

By Lieutenant Matt Tognozzi,

Call Log; November/December, 2012

Structure Fire – 5 Vehicle Fire – 0

Grass Fire – 0 Medical Aid – 34

Vehicle Accident – 6 Public Assist – 2

Strike Team – 0 Other Type Call – 13

Total – 60

Access to Approved Minutes For

Bennett Valley Fire Protection District (BVFDP)

Members of the public can request the meeting agenda be emailed to them 72 hours before the board meeting or they may pick up a copy of the agenda at the BV fire station 72 hours before the meeting. Complete minutes from the previous month's meeting will be available to the public after board approval, either by picking them up at the next Board meeting, or requesting a copy be mailed to them. Please make these requests to the Bennett Valley Fire District Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper, Kori Lantow, by email, klantow@comcast.net, at the BV Fire Board of Directors meeting or by telephone, 823-1084. Below are highlights selected by Marilee Jensen from the approved minutes for the monthly board meetings on October 16, and November 13.

Brief Highlights of BV Fire Board Meeting, October 16

Darrin De Carli reported that the strike team leaders had glowing reviews for the BV Firefighting staff on the strike teams sent out to help fight fires in other areas, with their paid time reimbursed by the state. This is a source of significant added annual revenue for the BV Fire District, available to us because the Gold Ridge Fire District also operates fire stations and can cover our fire station with

additional personnel and equipment, as needed. It does leave us short of funds, temporarily, waiting for the state reimbursement. The BV Board of Directors approved the latest Memorandum of Understanding with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District, which included the changes we had requested.

Brief Highlights of BV Fire Board Meeting, November 13

One of our part-time paid firefighters has recently left for another job, but we're using interns or paid part-time firefighters who do not receive benefits, in order to maintain a minimum of three firefighters on duty. Travis Browne, one of our Lieutenants, is working with Trevor Galeazzi, a volunteer Captain, to try to recruit Explorers from the local high schools.

PRACTICE SAFE COOKING BEHAVIOR

Unattended cooking fires and related accidents around stoves and ovens can result in devastating structure fires and serious painful burn injuries. Cooking equipment fires are the leading cause of home structure fires and associated civilian injuries. These fires account for 40% of all reported home structure fires and 36% of home civilian injuries.

It can be easy to get wrapped up in entertaining guests, but it is important to remember to monitor meal preparation closely as most cooking fires start because cooking has been left unattended. Some additional tips include:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking and check what you're cooking regularly. Use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on. If you must leave the house, turn off the stove or oven.
- Keep things which burn, such as pot holders, oven mitts, paper or plastic, off your stovetop.
- Never use water to put out a cooking oil fire.

For more information on cooking safety or other fire safety and prevention information, please contact Corinne Barclay of Sonoma County Fire Prevention Officers at (707) 778-4468. **SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PREVENTION OFFICERS' WISH YOU A HAPPY AND SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON!**

AT&T Cell Phone Tower at the BV Fire Station

To improve cell phone coverage in the Bennett Valley area, the Bennett Valley Fire District has, for some time, been leasing space to Verizon Wireless for a tower and a shed. AT&T has been interested in also leasing space for a tower, a shed and the necessary equipment at the BV Fire Station. It has been determined that there will need to be a new tower installed at the fire station for both companies to share to provide cell phone coverage to the area. The existing tower will be removed once this is approved, but without any break in cell phone service. Both AT&T and Verizon are currently working on the design for their new tower, for eventual approval by Sonoma County Planning, including public hearings. BVCA is planning to have AT&T make a presentation at one of our meetings, if that can be arranged.

Bennett Valley Community Association

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www.bennettvalley.org

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bill@williamfinkelstein.com For any questions about the BVCA website contact Bill Finkelstein.

BVCA MEMBERSHIP DUES, 2013

The annual dues are \$15 plus any additional contribution you want to make, to enable us to pursue our mission. You may either send in your check to BVCA, P.O. Box 2666, Santa Rosa, CA 95405, or pay online with a credit card or PayPal account. To pay online, go to www.bennettvalley.org (our BVCA website), then choose from the menu on the left side of the first page “Join/Renew: BVCA Membership”, and follow the instructions. If you have any questions, please call Larissa Goliti at 578-3453.

Brief Summary, BVCA Minutes

November 15, 2012 Meeting

- Fay Blair reviewed board expenditures. There are no new spending requests. The name change seems to be complete.
- BVEP: Nothing new to report. Craig Harrison expressed that BVCA would like to support better cell phone coverage in the area, with the pending AT&T coverage at the BV Fire Station.
- Craig Harrison also noted that the stripping had begun on the newly paved section of Bennett Valley Road.
- Karen Sommer indicated that Matanzas Creek Winery would like to become more involved in the community.
- Craig Harrison, on behalf of the board and the community, thanked Fay Blair for his dedication and

service as Treasurer which was enriched by his spirit and wit. Fay’s presence will be missed.

- After adjournment, the board voted on the officers for the following year. Craig Harrison will remain Board President and Larissa Goliti will remain Vice-President. Debbie Forton Engle was elected Treasurer. Frank LaCombe will remain Secretary.

Board of Directors’ Tentative Agenda

Thursday, January 17, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall

- Report from Bennett Valley Emergency Preparation Committee
- Information on the proposed AT&T Cell Phone Tower
- Road Issues
- Update on PG&E Tree Clearing
- Speakers for May, July, and September meetings
- New business as determined by board.

Previous Bennett Valley Firefighter, Steve Gritsch, “acts in time to snatch baby from death on a cold night”, as a San Francisco Policeman

(Chris Smith Column, Press Democrat, December 23

“Steve Gritsch learned emergency medicine amid his training as a BV Volunteer, then a BV professional firefighter. “ When a man handed him a “blue and non-breathing baby newborn boy”, Steve, a San Francisco policeman, “commenced cardiopulmonary resuscitation” which he did continuously on the baby until they reached the emergency ward of S.F. General Hospital. By the time they arrived, the baby was moving.

Artisan Cheese and Wine Pairing at Matanzas Creek Winery

Matanzas Creek Winery would like to extend a special invitation to the Bennett Valley Community Association members. Now through March, we invite our neighbors to take this opportunity to discover our new Wine and Cheese Pairing experience, at a discount. This exceptional culinary journey pairs some of our limited-production wines with local artisan cheeses in a casual atmosphere. This wine country experience promises to be relaxed, fun and educational. **General Public \$30 per person/\$20 for Bennett Valley Community Association members.**

For reservations, please call 707-521-7016.

Matanzas Creek Winery, 6097 Bennett Valley Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404 (800) 590-6464

www.matanzascreek.com

Bennett Valley Community Association
P.O. Box 2666
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

www.bennettvalley.org

PURPOSES OF BVCA: *To promote and preserve the residential rural character and natural environment of Bennett Valley; to educate, instruct, train and inform the local residents on disaster preparedness and emergency response as well as local land use and environmental issues; to serve as an open forum for Bennett Valley community participation; and to provide a bridge for communication between government agencies and the Bennett Valley community.*

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- Practice Safe Cooking
- Status of AT&T Cell Tower, BV Fire Station
- BVCA Membership, Minutes, Agenda
- Steve Gritsch, Previous BV Firefighter
- Matanzas Creek Winery, Invite, Discount
- BVCA Membership Form; Send in with 2013 Dues

Bennett Valley Community Calendar

Mark your calendars now!!

- **Bennett Valley Community Association:** The next meeting is Thursday, January 17, 7:00 pm, BV Grange Hall. See Tentative Agenda on Page 5.
- **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. Please call 823-1084 to confirm meeting date ahead of time.
- **Bennett Valley Grange #16,** Go to bvgrange.org to learn more about and to become a member of the Grange, our Community Activity Center. Coming soon: The Sonoma County Radio Amateur clubs (SCRA) will be holding classes and exams in learning ham radio at the Bennett Valley Grange. When these dates are set, it will be noted in the calendar on the Grange website, bvgrange.org. Another place to check for these dates is the SCRA website, www.sonomacountyradioamateurs.com/.
- **Amateur Radio (Ham Radio) Licensing In Just One Day:** (From website smrs) The next scheduled one day licensing class and exam is Saturday, February 9, Petaluma Senior Center. Cram session, 9:00 am - \$10, Exam session, 1:00 pm, \$15. Please pre-register in order to get help with obtaining your Federal Registration Number. Contact Dale, 762-0414 or wb6tms@arrl.net.
- **Sonoma County Board Of Supervisors:** Meets every Tuesday (except weeks when there is a legal holiday), at varying times, 575 Administration Drive, Santa Rosa. Susan Gorin is the newly elected Supervisor for our First District. If you have any concerns or questions, you may call her at 565-2982, or send her an email at susan.gorin@sonoma-county.org.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- For emergencies, use your landline or your cell phone to call **911**. Or you can also report emergencies to dispatch, 576-1365.
- To talk to someone at the Sheriff's office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to either report concerns that may be an emergency or to discuss a situation that may require law enforcement response, call 565-2121.
- Call Sonoma County Road Maintenance, at 565-5100 to report dangerous potholes, fallen trees or landslides and to request possible help with litter control and bulk trash in the road. After hours call 565-2121.
- Call Sonoma County Animal Control, at 565-7100, regarding the removal of dead animals along the road.
- Call California Highway Patrol, at 588-1400, as another resource if debris is causing imminent traffic hazards on county roads.

BENNETT VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (BVCA) MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2013

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Learn about our beautiful and interesting community.

Find out about events and people that will affect our valley.

Support volunteers and neighbors who work for all of us.

**Join or renew your membership in our
Bennett Valley Community Association!**

Annual dues are only \$15, plus extra to better enable BVCA to carry out our stated purposes. Easy options to pay...

- Send your check with this form completed, to:

BVCA – P. O. Box 2666 – Santa Rosa CA 95405

- Pay online with your credit card or PayPal account. On our website www.bennettvalley.org see the Menu on the first page, left side. Select "Join/Renew: BVCA Membership" and follow easy instructions.

How do you want to receive your VOICE newsletter? Check one box.

- By email to me at (email address) _____
- Paper in the mail, to my address shown above,

Or to this address: _____

Special BV email alerts! These are only sent to alert the community to immediate safety or security matters (repeated burglaries or criminal activities, fire or road emergencies, etc.) Be sure to sign up for these email alerts!

- Yes! Send these alerts to this email: _____

????? Questions about membership, dues, VOICE mailing, email alerts ?????

Please call Larissa Goliti, Membership Coordinator, 578-3453

We're requesting your phone number here, if we have questions _____