

CUMMINGS VALLEY PROTECTIVE ASSN.

Quarterly Newsletter No. 6 March 31, 1992

***REINSTATEMENT OF A COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

CVPA is working with other groups county wide for the return of a Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors abolished the Commission in 1981, and Kern is the only county in California without one.

Recent planning decisions by the Supervisors have illustrated how badly we need a better means to get public input into planning. At present the public is essentially excluded from the process.

The Grand Jury is investigating the need for a Planning Commission, and a bill has been introduced in the State Assembly to require all counties to have a Planning Commission. We will continue to work for reinstatement.

***VIX PROJECT**

The Vix commercial project at Hwy. 202 and Cummings Valley Road seems to be stalled, at least for the moment. As of March 26, the Planning Dept. had not received any of the required studies and information from John Vix. A number of people have speculated that he is currently not financially able to proceed.

Although the CVPA sponsored public forum on architectural design showed that area residents prefer a western or mountain motif (and Mr. Vix agreed), he has submitted for our review an artist's conceptual water color depiction which appears to be contemporary mission. We are writing to him for more specific information, although we realize the choice of style is his. We can only let him know what the public would prefer.

***TAMARON PROJECT**

The Brite Valley property owners who sued the Supervisors and the developer over the approval of Tamaron have negotiated a settlement with the developer. The number of homesites is reduced from 124 to 92 and measures to ensure a higher quality development were agreed to. Other specifics are not available until agreements are signed.

Although it would have been nice to see the approval of Tamaron negated completely, it could have gone the other way as court decisions are not predictable. The Brite Valley folks have won a moral victory and reduced the negative impact of Tamaron. They have shown that people can influence what happens, and we salute them.

***CUMMINGS VALLEY SURVEY**

As part of her long range land use study, Allison Cook sent a survey questionnaire to 1257 property owners. It was sent to all property owners in Cummings Valley /Hidden Oaks and to a 50 percent computer-generated sample of owners of improved properties in Bear Valley Springs, Stallion Springs and Alpine Forest Park. As of the February 1 cutoff, 231 responses were returned directly to Allison at UCLA.

The results show that an overwhelming majority do not favor any additional development beyond what is allowed by existing zoning. Based on total response, 84% do not favor more residential and 83% do not favor more commercial. Those who own land in the Valley are slightly less opposed to more development (77% against residential 78% against commercial) than those in surrounding mountain communities (87% against residential, 85% against commercial).

Those who farm or raise animals for business in Cummings Valley are the most opposed to more residential (89% opposed), but are not quite as opposed to more commercial (81% opposed).

The 12% who favor more commercial probably fall into two main groups - those interested in relatively minor convenience shopping, and those who are speculators and want major commercial development of more than 50 acres.

The complete results will be incorporated into Allison's masters degree thesis which will be available to interested parties in June.

***CONTRIBUTION TO CUMMINGS VALLEY ELEMENTARY**

Gerry Trierweiler, CVPA Telephone Committee Chairwoman, is starting a program of environmental awareness for the students of Cummings Valley Elementary. The school has agreed to undertake the program if they receive both financial and volunteer help to assist the teaching staff with the awareness and responsibility program. Responding to the request for help, the CVPA Board approved a contribution of \$100.00 and is notifying you of the opportunity to participate. For more information call: Gerry Trierweiler at 821-5053.

***MEMBERSHIP**

As of this writing we have 498 members. There are several in the process of joining, so by the time you read this we surely will be over 500. The response from Cummings Valley property owners has been very positive with 118 current members.

***WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE FOR CVPA?**

I think the 500+ members of CVPA have reason to be proud that so many area residents and property owners have joined together for a common purpose of preserving as much as possible of the rural character of Cummings Valley. We stand out in an apathetic world as people who care about what happens to themselves, their neighbors and the natural surroundings of their community. It has been said that "We are all the watchdogs of our fate". We must never forget this, if we wish to preserve the quality of life we came here for.

Our supervisor, Ben Austin, has made it very clear recently that he doesn't care a whit about what the people want - he wants development, and will approve whatever he cares to. We have to continue to grow stronger and let him know - and let developers know - that Cummings Valley is off limits for haphazard unplanned growth. A specific plan must be developed for the valley which reflects the desires of the majority of property owners in and around it. CVPA is working toward such a plan with Allison Cook's study to be the foundation. As her survey results show, 84% want to keep it like it is.

The tasks ahead are large, but with a lot of members making small commitments we can accomplish our goals. We must divide up the load to make the burden manageable or run the risk of collapse. We must be developing a pool of candidates to take the helm when current Board members phase out. Please consider the possibility of becoming an officer of the Association.

In the near future we will organize our efforts into committee functions. We will be looking for good people to chair these committees and other good people to help them. Are you willing to make some time to help preserve a piece of California's priceless rural heritage for future generations? For your neighbors? For yourself? Say yes, and you'll be in for an experience that will give you a sense of satisfaction for years to come!

Interview with Cummings Valley Protective Association president

In June, the Cummings Valley Protective Association will reach it's second anniversary of being active. Recently, their activity has been reported in the *News* stories. It appears that this organization is playing an increasingly active role in monitoring the changing landscape of Cummings Valley.

In an effort to update residents on the CVPA, it's membership, history and goals, President Chuck McCollough, provided the following interview.

Q: When was the Cummings Valley Protective Association started, and how big is its membership now?

A: The concept of an association to protect the farmland and open space of Cummings Valley developed about three years ago. However, it was not until the county's General Plan Amendment of June 18, 1990 that sparked local action. The change, converting 6.5 acres of agricultural land to commercial at Highway 202 and Cummings Valley Road, caught the attention of many area residents who mobilized and started the CVPA membership growing. We currently have more than 450 members and are still growing.

Q: What is the current purpose of the CVPA?

A: Our primary goal is to protect the rights of the majority of property owners in and around Cummings Valley by opposing changes in the Kern County General Plan that we feel would be detrimental to the majority.

Q: What other goals do you have? **A:** In order to better understand what constitutes good planning and to quantify public desires and good, we are helping to fund a master's degree thesis by Allison Cook in the Planning Option at UCLA. A key part of

her study will be a survey questionnaire which has asked property owners in the area to describe their preferences regarding development in the valley.

In addition, we believe that farmland in the valley, classified as prime agricultural soils, should be preserved for future production of food and fiber. Although farming may be economically marginal at present, things change with time.

Also, Cummings Valley is a "storybook valley" with its fertile farm and grazing land surrounded by oak and pine studded mountains. I would like to think that County, State and Federal governments will continue to develop financial assistance programs for landowners who would like to leave some of our heritage of rural beauty and peacefulness to future generations. Once paved, it is gone forever.

Q: What are your feelings about individual property rights? Shouldn't people be able to do what they want with their own land?

A: CVPA believes very strongly in a person's right to do what they want with their property. It is not our intent to impose restrictions on use, as long as owners comply with the County Zoning Ordinance. It is designed to allow as much freedom as possible without letting people destroy their neighbor's right to enjoy their own property. The ordinance establishes the "rules of the game," so that when people acquire property they know what can and can not be done with it. Landowners should be able to count on that.

Q: Do you think most people agree with this?

A: Our personal contacts with

large numbers of area landowners tell us that people who invest their money in property located in a place like Cummings Valley are mainly people who are fulfilling their dream of living in the country. They want to settle far from all the city influences that affect what they believe is a desired quality of life.

Not everyone is the same. However, those seeking country living should be entitled to protection of their dream and investment by a maintaining of the zoning that existed when they purchased their property.

Q: Where does CVPA go from here? **A:** We believe that those who invested in property, expecting to be protected by existing zoning, should not be damaged by others who invest with the idea of making money through re-zoning. We are seeing General Plan Amendments being made to accommodate individuals or corporations over the objections of surrounding property owners.

CVPA intends to ensure that the public will regarding Cummings Valley is crystal clear. Allison Cook's study will be helpful toward that end.

If her survey results show that a majority favors development, we will work to make such development--when it comes--as beneficial and attractive as possible.

If, on the other hand, a clear majority of the area's property owners wishes to maintain the current status, we will expect our public officials to support that majority.

Editor's note: The above interview have been edited for reasons of length and available space. For more information about CVPA, call 822-3478.

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