



THE

Highlander

July/August 2020

The Rural Bonny Doon Association Newsletter

RBDA Virtual Public Meeting **Communications & Power Infrastructure in Bonny Doon**

Wednesday, August 5, 7:30 p.m.

Zoom Video Conference Meeting

The RBDA will be organizing a series of meetings over the next year to discuss the many critical issues surrounding the safety of our community. For the first meeting, we have assembled a panel of experts to discuss communications and electric power infrastructure issues.

Panel members will include:

Ryan Coonerty - County Supervisor, 3rd District

Rachel Dann - County Supervisor's Analyst, 3rd District

Bettye Saxon - Central Coast External Affairs Regional Director, AT&T

Maureen McCarty - District Director for Assemblymember Mark Stone

Kate Beck - Public Utilities Regulatory Analyst, Public Advocates Office, California
Public Utilities Commission

Jeana Arnold - Local Public Affairs, Central Coast Division, PG&E

The 2018 Camp Fire was a wakeup call for all Californians. A great deal has changed since Bonny Doon was last threatened by the Martin (2008) and Lockheed (2009) fires. At that time, Bonny Doon residents had copper wire phone service and received reverse 911 phone calls in time to evacuate. The copper wire infrastructure was reliable and robust. During winter storms it was not uncommon for the power to go out for days, but the phones still worked. Today many people have only mobile phones and/or internet based voice over internet protocol (VOIP) phone service. As a result, during winter storms, it is now common to be without internet services for days, even after power has been restored. In the past, a temporary loss of phone service was considered mostly an inconvenience. However, as traffic and the cost of housing has gotten worse, more people are choosing to live and work remotely (and the pandemic has required and accelerated this), so a service loss can have severe economic consequences. Furthermore, with PG&E's Public Service Power Shutoff events, we are now contemplating a future where, during wildfire season, the only line of communication people have is vulnerable.

At our August public meeting we will discuss three main topics with an expert panel comprised of the different communications and power stakeholders, including internet service providers, traditional telecommunication providers, power utilities, and local government. First, how does the current communication infrastructure work—from our personal communication devices, to the network infrastructure outside our homes, to data centers operated by internet service providers and power utilities? Second, what can be done today to be better prepared as an individual, community, local government, and/or non-governmental stake holder? Third, what might the future of communication infrastructure in small rural communities look like, and what kind of infrastructure and technologies should we advocate?

Please join us for this important discussion on power and communication infrastructure. We need your input!



Details on How to Participate in the Virtual Public Meeting

Zoom (zoom.us) is a video conferencing platform that is free to use through either a web browser or application, and audio participation is possible through a dial-up connection on your phone. We selected this platform based on its widespread use and ease of accessibility. For this meeting, we will be utilizing all the available security features, including password-protection and waiting rooms managed by the host.

Here are details for accessing and participating in this meeting (these can also be viewed at our website rbda.us):

- Send your e-mail address to board@rbda.us to receive the meeting credentials and password. Your email will not be used for any other communication and will not be shared.

- Alternatively, you can call Kendra Turk-Kubo (626.379.7232) to get on a list of participants who will receive the meeting credentials and password via phone the day of the meeting.

- If you would like to set up a private meeting with one of the board members prior to the public meeting to give the Zoom platform a trial run, please contact us. We will be available to schedule these pre-meetings during the week prior to the public meeting. This will help ensure a smoother meeting for the presenters and all participants.

- Please call into the meeting between 7:10 and 7:20, so that we can begin at 7:30.

We appreciate your patience as we host our second virtual public meeting, and we look forward to "zooming" with you soon!

Future of UCSC Cloudier Than Ever

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages across California, significantly altering all our lives, UCSC is in the midst of preparing its growth plan for the next 20 years. Predicting what the future will look like, and what California's higher education needs and resources will be such a long way down the road is more difficult than ever.

While UCSC has not, over the last 30 years, actually built what it planned to in its long-range growth plans, it has consistently increased its enrollment by several hundred students a year. The cumulative result is that the quality of a UCSC education has suffered, with larger class sizes, dormitory rooms converted from two beds to three, lounges converted to bedrooms, and students' increasing difficulty to enroll in the classes they need to graduate in four years (until very recently when that statistic has marginally improved).

Meanwhile, some California host cities that have been highly impacted by the growth of their UC campuses are stepping up the fight to gain some measure of control. For example, a group called Save Berkeley's Neighborhoods recently got the First District Court of Appeals in San Francisco to agree that UC Berkeley violated California's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by increasing enrollment far beyond UCB's projections without doing an environmental study of the impacts of that increase on the surrounding community, or trying to mitigate them.

Here in Santa Cruz, the County and City Task Force on UCSC Growth is moving forward with a plan to try to limit UCSC to the 19,500 students allowed under a 2008 legal settlement. The task force's plans include lobbying State legislators to force UC campuses to take into consideration the impacts on the resources and abilities of their host communities to support enrollment growth. The task force will also try to build opposition to UCSC's Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) for 2020-2040, which aims to grow enrollment to 28,000 students. A draft of that plan's Environmental Impact Report is expected to be released later this year.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may also impact UCSC's ability and need to grow. While in the near term (the next 1 to 2 years, or perhaps even longer) many classes will be held online, reducing the need for student housing, the economic effects will last much longer. The state is facing a huge fiscal deficit, and with the deteriorating economy many prospective students will find it much more difficult to afford college. How this will affect UCSC's growth plans is hard to predict.

In order to provide for enrollment growth past and future UCSC has embarked on what it calls its Student Housing West project, a planned addition of 3,000 beds. A local



UCSC water tank - Photo by Ted Benhari

community group, Habitat and Watershed Caretakers (HAWC), has filed a suit claiming that the project is a violation of the 2005-2020 UCSC Long Range Development Plan legal settlement and requires an amendment of the Environmental Impact Report for that LRDP. HAWC's attorney, Stephen Volker, is the same one who successfully represented the Coalition for Limiting University Expansion (CLUE) and the RBDA in a 2005 lawsuit that resulted in the historic 2008 legal agreement, under which UCSC acknowledged for the first time that it has an obligation to help the city build and maintain infrastructure that supports the campus.

Also, a group called the East Meadow Action Committee (EMAC) has organized opposition to building a 150-bed dormitory near the main entrance to the campus that would despoil the pristine environment of the meadow. Last month it won a verdict in Superior Court here in Santa Cruz. Judge Paul Burdick found that the UC Regents' approval of the project was done improperly. He found that UCSC withheld necessary financial information from the Regents that they were required by law to consider in choosing among various sites for the dormitory, and that the Regents delegated the decision to a subcommittee without providing a cost analysis for the various sites. Therefore, Burdick ordered the Regents to vacate their approval of the East Meadow site.

We have been outspoken in our position that UCSC needs to limit enrollment. Santa Cruz has been highly impacted by excessive UCSC growth. Single-family homes are increasingly occupied by students, and streets can't handle the amount of UCSC-related traffic. Ever-increasing rents and

home prices in Santa Cruz (and Bonny Doon) are largely the result of the high cost UCSC charges students to live and eat in its dormitories, which make it much cheaper to live off-campus.

Opponents of UCSC growth point out that Santa Cruz is one of the least affordable cities for housing in the country, making it much less attainable to students with lesser economic resources, many of whom are underrepresented minorities (URM), to choose to enroll. UCSC has been addressing the inaccessibility of higher education for URMs in a number of ways in recent years and says it will continue to reshape its policies and priorities in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The newly appointed UC president, Dr. Michael Drake, has been a strong proponent of enrollment growth, particularly for URMs, as the former chancellor of UC Irvine.

This creates a conflict between entities that oppose UCSC expansion, and the university's important efforts to create opportunities for upward mobility for URM students. This is one of the main considerations to be resolved in the effort to limit UCSC enrollment going forward.

Besides trying to keep UCSC committed to the environmental values it professed when it was founded, opponents of UCSC growth are determined to limit its impacts on the surrounding communities, to make it responsible for fully mitigating whatever impacts are unavoidable, and to house all its additional students, faculty and staff on campus. By its votes on ballot measures to that effect, Santa Cruz residents have shown that they overwhelmingly support those positions.

Proposed Changes to Commercial Cannabis Cultivation Regulations

In June, the Board of Supervisors considered several changes to the county's commercial cannabis cultivation regulations. Some made sense, such as streamlining licensing for commercial operations on properties with Agricultural (A) zoning. However, other changes that were recommended by the County Cannabis Licensing Office (CLO) manager would have allowed increased commercial cultivation on parcels zoned Residential Agriculture (RA) and Timber Production Zone (TPZ), at the expense of protection of neighborhoods and the environment. The CLO manager's proposed changes would have made 3,000 additional RA and TPZ parcels eligible for commercial operations (as opposed to personal cultivation), but the additional oversight and responsibilities would be accompanied by no additional funding or staff for the cannabis office or the Sheriff's Department, thus impairing enforcement.

In 2018, the RBDA and Coalition for **Felton Quarry Update**

Thanks to Kenneth Coale for pointing out a significant error in the May 2020 *Highlander*. We originally reported that the Felton Quarry was seeking to increase its hours of operation by an additional 80 nighttime hours. This is incorrect. The amendment would allow 80 additional nighttime **operations**. Operations are not limited in hours, nor in number of trucking hauls. One operation could last all night. The number of hauls per operation are not limited.

According to David Carlson, the Santa Cruz County planner assigned to this permit application, the 80 additional operations allowed by the permit would be added to the current 20 allowed operations, for a total of 100 nights of quarry operations and trucking. These additional hours are intended to accommodate nighttime paving projects done during low-traffic hours, but there is essentially no oversight to how Felton Quarry is used during these jobs. Whichever paving contractor wins the paving job is allowed access to the quarry. Granite Construction spokeswoman Erin Kuhlman explained, "We do not operate or schedule the trucks that come to our facility. Our customers either hire a trucking company or use their own trucks."

This permit would allow even more leeway for an already underregulated quarry. A Negative Declaration means that no EIR would be needed to adopt this amendment to the Felton Quarry Mining Approval. We hope you will join the RBDA in opposing this permit, which will allow a devastating increase in noise and nighttime traffic from Felton Quarry without any oversight from the county. Due to COVID-19 delays, comments are still being accepted on this permit. You can reference application #191104. The Santa County Planning Department website is: www.sccoplanning.com.

Environmental Santa Cruz researched the cannabis cultivation regulations for all 58 counties in California, relying in part on the Bureau of Cannabis Control Commercial Cannabis Business Licensing Program (September 2017, Project N. 16.044, www.omarfigueroa.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CEQA.Local_.Summary.pdf).

At that time, only three counties allowed commercial cultivation on RA (or equivalent) parcels. Two of those (El Dorado and San Luis Obispo) required parcels of at least 20 acres, and Humboldt County had a minimum of 5 acres. The proposed 1-acre minimum on RA parcels proposed by the CLO manager is outside the realm of anything that was allowed in any California county in 2017-2018.

Fortunately, the Board of Supervisors voted against those reductions in minimum parcel size for commercial cultivation on RA properties.

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RBDA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yearly dues are \$20/pp or \$15/pp for multiple members at same address.

Memberships expire on Jan. 31 of the next year. *

Number of Members _____ Number of years you are joining or renewing for _____

Multiply years times number of memberships. Checks only, please, made out to RBDA.

Amount enclosed for dues: \$ _____

I also wish to support the RBDA with an additional contribution of \$ _____

Total amount of enclosed check \$ _____

Name(s) _____

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I certify that I (we) live or own property in the Bonny Doon Planning District.

Clip out and mail to RBDA, P.O. Box 551, Felton, CA 95018.

Dues mostly go for printing and mailing **The Highlander**, your voice for keeping Bonny Doon rural and natural. Additional contributions are gladly accepted and greatly appreciated!

*Dues paid after Nov. 30 count toward the next year.



THE Highlander

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Bonny Doon's voice in preserving our special quality of life, The Highlander, is mailed free 6 times a year. RBDA Public Meetings are usually held the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, September and November. We encourage you to participate. Send correspondence to The Highlander at the above address.

Access the RBDA on the Internet at:

www.rbda.us

E-mail us at:

board@rbda.us

Facebook (RBDA Members Only):

RBDA, Rural Bonny Doon Association

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**Bonny Doon Resident
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Aug. 5 Virtual Public Meeting: Power and Communication Infrastructure

Wildfire Season and Public Safety: Update on PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs

After last fall's disruptive Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events in the wake of several devastating wildfire seasons, PG&E has publicly confirmed the contributing role of power lines to our wildfires. Although they maintain that PSPS events must be endured to prevent further power-line related blazes during fire season, they have also committed to improving customer communications and mitigating the size and length of the PSPS events.

An informative resource for learning more about the work that PG&E is doing to manage PSPS events is a webinar focused on Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties. It can be found at the RBDA webpage (rbda.us), along with a pdf that summarizes the webinar. If you are not already receiving advisories about PG&E power shutoffs, please sign up at pge.com/mywildfirealerts.

In Bonny Doon, we should be prepared to live without power for a few days in the event of

a PSPS event, just as we prepare for power loss due to winter storms. If you do not have a smart phone, please call 1-866-743-6589 to learn how to receive updates on events in Bonny Doon. You can also e-mail wildfiresafety@pge.com with any questions or to get signed up for e-mail alerts. If you or someone you love has medical necessity for power, please contact PG&E right away to find out more about programs that support

independent living.

According to Rob Morse, PG&E manager for the Central Coast, areas of the Central Coast considered high risk for fire danger have increased 50% in the last 8 years. Increased fire danger in rural California is a result of many factors, including a changing climate. Building homes in rural areas directly contributes to both climate change and wildfires. Fires in urban-wildland interface areas (like Bonny Doon) are responsible for much of the dizzying cost of western wildfires. Housing cost pressures and zoning laws have contributed to more building in California forests and rural areas, and the impact of increased development in urban-wildland interfaces on threat of wildfire is an issue that the state will need to address. However, resulting from community action and organization, PG&E has been successfully pressured to take responsibility for their role in our state's devastating fires.

