

From: [Pamela VanGuelpen](#)
To: [CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bennet Valley Golf Course Proposal
Date: Tuesday, February 9, 2021 5:02:53 PM

Hello Santa Rosa City Council,

I wanted to add my voice to the many concerned citizens of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County regarding the Bennett Valley Golf Course proposals.

I grew up in Bennett Valley and have lived most of my life in Sonoma County. My grandfather was Robert Van Guelpen. He was a Santa Rosa sanitation engineer in the 1950's and city civil engineer in the 1960's and 1970's. He had a hand in many aspects of life in Santa Rosa including developing the Howarth Park project where many Santa Rosans (including myself) have spent countless enjoyable hours. The Bennett Valley Golf Course was, I believe, one of the final works of his life.

This vital part of Bennett Valley provides so much more than recreation to our communities. Not only can residents come to a stunning and affordable community golf course, but also enjoy a variety of children's and adult's sporting games, meet with friends for socially distanced activities and to just be in the outdoors - an activity we have all come to appreciate this year. The open space offers an easy to access picnic area with some of the most wonderful views of the hillsides in all of Santa Rosa. The old growth trees are some of the most majestic in the county. There aren't many places you can simply step out of your car and be right in a beautiful setting, feeling a million miles away from the hussle of the city.

This green belt also offers an incredibly important firebreak. The residents of Bennett Valley know all too well the stress and sleepless nights worrying that wildfire will spread to their community. The golf course additionally provides some open space for fire breaks to be drawn if needed.

While golf may not be the most popular sport in America, it has gained quite a resurgence this year. Even despite being closed for a couple months during the height of the pandemic, it is my understanding that Bennett Valley has increased attendance this year over years past. Most people I know who have found a new or rekindled love of golf in 2020 have no intentions of stopping the sport once they can travel again, whenever that may be. We have every indication that golf has found a bit of a renaissance with many young and diverse groups getting to participate in the sport for the first time. An affordable neighborhood golf course is exactly the thing these new players need. I am sure today's data of golf's popularity and demographics will change some of the dated information collected before the pandemic.

I understand the need to change the city plan and projects to meet the needs of modern residents, and I appreciate that my family's long history in Santa Rosa doesn't mean much if we can't change with the times. I am sure my grandfather would attest to that. You should know I am a proponent of developing affordable housing in our community. We desperately need a way to keep our diverse and young population groups here to help us continue on, not just the wealthy few who can afford to stay.

However, I do not believe that the Bennett Valley golf course is the appropriate spot for this development. On the outskirts of Bennett Valley's existing neighborhood, those additional cars

and traffic trying to get on and off of highway 101 would exacerbate an already incredibly difficult commute (and even during non-commute times traversing Bennett Valley is an exercise in patience). These additional housing units would be extremely impactful on the existing infrastructure of highway 12 and 101. The route out of town to the south through Bennett Valley Road, Grange Road, and Sonoma Mountain Road into Rohnert Park or Petaluma isn't designed for the amount of traffic it handles today. What would the additional cars do to these roadways?

I would concede the plan to redesign the course to accommodate some housing and increase the size of the driving range is an interesting one; if changes must be made to this site I think this could be an appropriate compromise. If it's possible to achieve this while still protecting the size of the 18-hole course, this would be ideal. A 9-hole course doesn't seem to be much of a draw for those who actively golf - the same players who have kept this facility operating in the Black for many years. I hope the council will take some time to listen to the residents of Bennett Valley and the surrounding areas regarding this proposal. There are many worthwhile ideas and opinions to take into consideration from those who actively use and enjoy this wonderful and unique open space.

Thank you so much for your time,

Pamela Van Guelpen



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From: [Brad D](#)
To: [_CityCouncilListPublic](#); [Nutt, Jason](#); [Santos, Jen](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bennett Valley Golf Course Concerns
Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 2:47:01 PM

Hello,

I am writing today to express my concerns over the impending plan to repurpose the Bennett Valley Golf Course. As a native-born Santa Rosan who's enjoyed the outdoor recreation activities/facilities the town has had to offer over the years, I think it would be a travesty to remove one of those facilities --a big one.

On top of that, I purchased my first home (and only home--I still live here) which is a condo facing the golf course. Part of the reason I decided to purchase was the fact that there was a golf course literally 4 feet from my deck. Part of the property value of where I purchased is based on the fact there IS the course right next door. Building other residential buildings would lessen my property value and cheapen the area overall by removing a long-time outdoor recreation facility that has become part of Santa Rosa.

I urge the City Council to reconsider this poorly thought-out idea. For the sake of Bennett Valley, those who enjoy the course (on and off!), and to preserve what helps make Santa Rosa a top place to live. Don't "pave paradise"...please--Santa Rosans like me are urging you to say NO.

Thank you,

Brad Davis

From: [Bob and Sharon Sorani](#)
To: [CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bennett Valley Golf Course
Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 9:53:47 AM

Dear Council Members,

It has been very disturbing to read about your considering to make «drastic» changes and possibly even eliminate this wonderful facility. I myself am not a golfer who uses the course, but I and my family have lived in Bennett Valley for 54 years and have driven past that beautiful course, green tree adorned space on an almost daily basis. We have cherished it and especially as the Santa Rosa area has grown, it has remained one of the beautiful aspects of Santa Rosa that make this such an inviting place to be in, and which contributes to the beauty of our entire county. To destroy that would be terribly disappointing. There certainly are, must be, other locations that would be much more suitable for developing «unsightly» but much needed housing without destroying this beautiful golf course..

Also, while not a golfer myself, I was a Physical Education/Kinesiology professor and coach for 28 years, so I truly value the need and opportunity for active recreation. Golf is a sport that can be very beneficial and enjoyed by a very large range of our population from the very young to the elderly senior.. Your reference to a decline in participation in recent years, if that is accurate, I believe has occurred to some extent because of the lack of affordable public courses. The extremely high cost to play on private courses has made it totally undoable for all lower income families, and probably all, or at least many middle income families, turning this wonderful activity into largely one for only the wealthy. To now consider taking away our beautiful Bennett Valley course would, to me, be a terrible mistake, and a disservice to our beautiful community and many of the people who live here and use and/or love this course.

One last note - I also think it would be a big mistake to reduce the course to one of only 6 or 9 holes as that would further reduce its attraction for many golfers and thus reduce its over-all use and possible income.

Thank you for allowing me this input. Hopefully you will find a way to keep and maintain this treasure.

Sincerely,

Robert Sorani

From: [dennis yarnell](#)
To: [_CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Future of Bennett Valley Golf course
Date: Tuesday, February 9, 2021 12:05:51 PM

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express my dismay about the possible loss of our beautiful golf course. Ever since my wife, Cecelia and I moved here in 1998, I have enjoyed many a round at an affordable rate thanks to Bennett Valley Golf Course. The staff are friendly and helpful and the course is just a little bit easier than the rest of the courses in the county.

Here are a few of my suggestions that might make it possible to keep the golf course as it is. First of all, it may be that since we are in a pandemic, fewer people are venturing out to play golf both for safety reasons and financial ones. It seems to me that a golf course is a long term investment in the health and vitality of a community. Perhaps the management of the golf course could create more income streams to keep the course open.

For example. How about a life time membership? This might give the course an infusion of cash to help with immediate expenses. Also how about a mini-membership where a golfer could be rewarded financially for playing more rounds in a given month. For example: a loyalty card where every round over a certain minimum say 15 rounds/month could be slightly discounted. This might motivate some to play more and drive up the rounds/year. Another option might be the cultivation of sponsorships from our local business community. Or you might organize a used equipment sale where members could bring in older unused equipment and donate it to the sale for the benefit of the course.

Overall, it seems that selling the course and developing the land is a short term solution that results in a long term loss for our community.

Thank You for your thoughtful consideration of this issue,
Dennis H. Yarnell (Retired Music Teacher and Marriage and Family Therapist)

From: [Charles Hawkes](#)
To: [_CityCouncilListPublic](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please look at the health benefits the golf course has given so many people during and before these hard times these hard times
Date: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 3:19:53 PM

Sent from my iPhone