

The Rancho Tehama Association TRAILBLAZER

May/June
2010

Board of Directors
Newsletter

www.ranchotehama.org

ASSESSMENT INCREASE POSTPONED

As many of you may already be aware, the increases in assessments have been postponed pending further investigation on the Humboldt Bridge. The assessments will remain at \$35.00 per month, due on the first and late after the last business day of each month. You can still use the coupons sent out at the beginning of the year. New coupons will not be sent out at this time. New notices and coupons will only be sent if the Board of Directors vote to increase the dues at a later date.

Spring is Here

As the grey skies and wet weather slowly make way to blue skies, April showers bring May flowers and weeds too! Now is the perfect time to start some much needed yard work. Cal-Fire has already been out to many properties and will continue to investigate properties for weed abatement compliance. It is important to keep a clear fire break 100 feet wide around all residences and structures or to the property line, whichever is nearer. Vacant lots 1.25 acres or smaller require a complete clearing of the entire property. For vacant lots larger than 1.25 acres firebreaks are required adjacent to and along all parcel lines for a width of 30 feet. If you have any questions please call Cal-Fire at (503) 528-5199, or you can pick up official Cal-Fire requirements at the Association Office

FREE... SAND ONLY

The Association has provided sand and sandbags free of charge for our members with flooding issues. We would like to continue to do so however, this is for **sand only**. Many members seem to have a misunderstanding and have been helping themselves to more than the sand. Gravel, asphalt, chip seal, etc. is for road repairs by the road crew only!! Please be considerate and take only what sand you need, and notify the office immediately if you notice anyone taking anything other than sand. This will help keep our cost and your dues down.

Burn Days

Burn season is almost over. Call 530-527-3717 the day you plan to burn to make sure it's a burn day. Starting May 1st burn permits will be required through Cal-Fire 530-824-5546.



HELP - HELP - HELP

The Oldtimers Firefighters (OTFF) and the Rancho Tehama Community Foundation (RTCF) need your help! A grant for each organization has been written and submitted. OTFF'S grant is for new firefighting safety gear for \$25,000. RTCF's grant is to purchase the property known as the Rancho Tehama Plaza for \$250,000 and move forward towards building of the new community center for the entire Ranch at no cost to the Association.

To receive the grant all we need is your DAILY on-line vote.

Voting starts May 1, 2010 and goes thru the full month of May.

So go to: www.refresheverything.com

In the search area, starting May 1, 2010, type in RTR and both grants will show up. Please contact ALL your e-mail addresses, Facebook, Twitter, Myspace friends and relatives and ask them to vote also. We are up against 1,000 other ideas, so

Remember to vote every day in May

Off Ranch Association Members.

I do realize that the off Ranch owners feel abandoned. I would probably feel the same way. What I would like to do is have you send an e-mail address with full name and current address to us, so we can start a database directed to respond to your questions and to try to keep you informed. The e-mail account being set up at this time is offRanch@RTR.net. If questions are sent in they will be answered and then sent out to everyone on this list. I encourage all of you who live off Ranch to take advantage of this and maybe we can help you feel more included. We will not give out your e-mail addresses to anyone. Those of you who do not have a computer, when you have questions please call. We are looking into the cost of a toll-free number.

May/ June CALENDAR:

What?	What Time?	When & Where
RTCF Ducky Derby	11-2 pm	May 1 Beach Park
RTCC Yard Sale	9:00 pm	May 7 Church
Car Club Meeting	6:00 pm	May 10 Rec. Hall
VFW Meeting	6:00 pm	May 11 Rec. Hall
OTFF Meeting	7:00 pm	May 12 Rec. Hall
VFW Barbeque	11-1 pm	May 15 Rec. Hall
Food Giveaway	12-2 pm	May 17 Rec. Hall
Open Board Meeting	9:00 am	May 18 Rec. Hall
VFW Aux. Meeting	1:00 pm	May 24 Rec. Hall
Rescheduled Recall Election	9:00 am	June 1 Rec. Hall
Friendship Kitchen	10-2 pm	June 5 Rec. Hall
State Elections		June 8 Rec. Hall
Food Giveaway	12-2 pm	June 14 Rec. Hall
Open Board Meeting	9:00 am	June 15 Rec. Hall
Car Club Meeting	6:00 pm	June 21 Rec. Hall
VFW Aux Meeting	1:00 pm	June 29 Rec. Hall
AA Meeting	6:00 pm	Every Sun Rec. Hall
Craft Club	1:00 pm	Every Wed. Rec. Hall

I would like to give my personal opinion on the recall election! Number one, it is a waste of Association money with the regular election so close! The last time I wrote to the Trailblazer I mentioned that so few people come to the Open Board Meetings. Well now I know, if all the people came there would not be this confusion about what was going on with the Ranch and Association. First of all I would like to thank all the members that do come to the Open Board Meetings, they are well informed about what we as a Board are accomplishing.

Now I would like to voice my opinion in a very strong and direct way, as best I can, without sounding like I am putting anybody down and acting superior. First of all most people who live here are very knowledgeable, and understand things change. When they do, we have to change too and that includes people and things. So as the law and times change, we as an Association must change also. With this in mind, we as a Board try to do what needs to be done for the whole Association and Ranch not for personal agendas and not what a few or what a minority group think. So with that said, if any member wants to know what we are doing at anytime for the Association, come into the office. We will be glad to explain what is going on the best we can.

Your Director At Large,
Bob Garrison

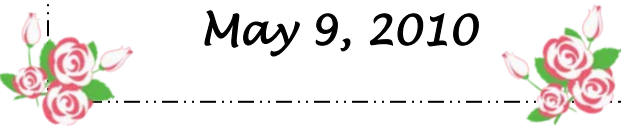
Rancho Tehama has 2013 lots and each lot owner is a member of The Rancho Tehama Association. As an Association Member you have rights, one of those rights is to express any ideas and opinions that you hold concerning our association. You may go to the Association Office and let the Board know how you feel about things and what you would like to see done; or maybe sometimes you may want to comment on something you don't want done. Either way you can voice your opinions. Another way to be heard is to go to the Association Meetings, find out what's going on, and voice some of your ideas about what is being discussed in the open forum. The most important thing you can do to be heard however is to vote; find out what incumbent board members and new candidates think about the things that are of particular interest to you and vote accordingly. People don't always agree on things and there can be an honest difference of opinion, so make your vote work for you. It may take a little work to sort out the gossip from the facts. You need to ask yourself, does this candidate have an agenda and how does it help him or her. Your next question should be, in the long run, is it also what I want. Presently there is a Board Member in the Association Office Monday-Friday during office hours, so please drop by if you want to talk about anything.

Written by: Gary Zimmer



Mother's Day

Mark your calendars
for Mother's Day
May 9, 2010



Rancho Tehama, Airport Committee

We are a community.

That means we collectively provide resources for all of us as a community. We provide particularly those things that none of us could afford individually. None of us could afford the Transfer Station, Roads, Beaches and yes an Airport as an individual. But those resources are exactly why we band together to provide for as common assets.

We are a community.

But for the moment, let's look at our world as though it were divided. Indeed, that is what some would have us believe. They suggest that if you don't use an asset, then you shouldn't have to pay for that asset. The argument is to divide ourselves against ourselves. And specifically they suggest that the Airport gets way too much funding.

So let's look at the reality.

There are 47 lots that are contiguous to the Airport. There are approximately 2000 private lots on the whole Ranch. $47/2000 = 2.35\%$ of the lots on the Ranch are next to the Airport. That 2.35% of the Ranch contributes dues of \$19,740 per year to the annual budget of approximately \$840,000. And for that contribution of \$19,740,

What do the owners of that 2.35% of properties get?

Let's be really generous and say that the entire \$5,250 for the Airport in the 2010 Budget year is solely for the benefit of those people who live on the runway. Further, let's take 2.35% of the Transfer Station's \$150,000 annual expense ($\$150,000 \times 2.35\% = \$3,525$) And now the big expense, roads. For 2009 that was approximately \$225,000. The airport lots contributed 2.35% of \$225,000 = \$5,287. And only one mile of approximately 52 miles of roads in the Ranch serves airport lot owners. One final item, there are 2 Children who live on the Airport.

Where is the benefit of Fawn Meadow? RECAP of Benefits to Airport lot owners:

Airport Dues paid:	\$19,740	
ALL airport budget	-\$5,250	<i>Balance contributed to the rest of the Ranch: \$6,638!</i>
2.35% Trans. Sta.	-\$3,525	
One mile of Roads	-\$4,327	

But, we are a community. As a community we take care of the Ponds, and we do not begrudge those who benefit from living next to a pond. We take care of the Beaches, without ever finding fault with those who choose to purchase property next to a Beach. And never has anyone been heard to say that we should eliminate Fawn Meadow because they have no children. We are a community, and we care for and maintain all the amenities of our community. That is the meaning of community as physical assets. Being able to share those assets with your community is what makes living in a community so worthwhile.

Progress in the management of Rancho Tehama - By Hignell

There have been some who have said that the hiring of the Hignell Companies has been the cause of financial issues for the community. The facts do not support this view. The following chart shows that the operating budget, out of which Hignell is paid, actually went down after Hignell was hired:

2007 Operating Budget	\$ 677,708	
2008 Operating Budget	\$ 585,769	Hignell hired in August
2009 Operating Budget	\$ 564,630	
2010 Operating Budget	\$ 610,410	Incl. additional \$45,000 for bad debt, Hignell fee stayed the same

The additional \$ 4.57 per month in assessments charged in 2009 was to fund the road reserves and initial bridge study, **not** higher costs because of hiring the Hignell Companies. Before 2009, there was no road repair plan; the Board in 2009 put together the plan so that they could reasonably know what monies would be needed on a yearly basis. In 2009 about \$ 115,000 was spent on maintenance of the road system. In addition, the initial bridge engineering work was completed.

For budget year 2010, the Board was able to balance the budget without increasing the assessment of \$ 35.00 per month, even though the budget was based on 1,800 paying units instead of 2,013. If the facts are considered honestly, the Boards along with The Hignell Companies have done a great job of managing the RTA finances over the last two years.

The following compares several items from the balance sheet from 2008 to 2009:

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Change</u>
Operating Cash	\$ 61,750	\$ 82,400	\$ 20,000+
Reserve Cash	\$ 231,200	\$321,490	\$ 90,290+
Accounts Receivable	\$ 226,900	\$192,900	\$ 34,000-

After a grace period of six months, the Board began to enforce the Association's collection policy. Numerous payment plans were opened and a number of accounts had to be sent to collection. As a result of these actions, \$ 60,222.90 of back assessments has been collected from accounts that had gone to collections alone. Much more has been collected from accounts that have been brought current through payment plans and lump sum payments. The number of delinquent owners has continually been decreasing.

Rancho Tehama is stronger financially than it has been in some time. In addition, business is being carried out according to the laws that govern community associations. Sometimes these laws are in conflict with the current, very old and often outdated, Rancho Tehama documents.

The Bridge – By Hignell

It seems that some would have you believe that the temporary bridge which was put in place more than 25 years ago is perfectly safe and does not need to be addressed. The facts do not support this view. Twenty-five years ago the Board knew the bridge needed to be addressed. With engineers help, they documented this. In 2009, it did not take long for the current engineer to come to the same conclusion. Should the report of the current engineer be disregarded because he is not part of a 'public' agency? **Should the community at large ask the Board, any Board, to turn the other way, be derelict in their duty, and take on personal liability, not to mention neglecting the safety of many fellow Rancho Tehama members, because some owners are not willing to do what needs to be done? Surely not!**

Fact: the previous Board sought out engineering firms, funding sources, and signed a contract with the engineering firm, Robertson & Dominick, to begin the process of finding possible solutions for a replacement of the bridge (see May 5, 2009 minutes quoted as follows: **"Voted to hire a firm to perform a preliminary investigation into acceptable alternatives for replacement on the Humboldt Bridge not to exceed \$25,000.00 and charged to Reserve Funds expense. (Schultz-Motion seconded and passed)"**). This was one of their many accomplishments. The current Board has continued this process toward completing a project that is 25 years overdue.

Why would the previous Board hire a firm to investigate acceptable alternatives for replacement if the bridge was perfectly safe and did not need to be replaced? They wouldn't! That Board made a difficult but **good** decision to address the problem of the bridge, knowing that it would be costly and was necessary. The current Board is continuing the process that the previous Board began.

The previous Board also initiated meeting with an engineering firm specializing in grant writing. The current Board has followed through and hired this firm, and the potential for both grant and low interest loan funding to Rancho Tehama is very good. This funding source is available now, but we have been told that by September the funding will no longer be available.

The point: both boards were doing their duty and at the same time working alongside The Hignell Companies to help find funding for a safe and long-term solution to the bridge problem, which must be built to county code. The timing has also been perfect for a **solution that may cut the cost significantly to every single owner within Rancho Tehama.**

By: Bill Westin

I was surprised after Saturday's "Meet the Candidates" meeting just how many false stories and ideas are out there. I guess this shouldn't surprise me because I've lived here for five years. I was always taught to search for the truth, not misinformation. To stop these rumors, the current Board of Directors makes a director available to you Monday through Friday. Rumors and half-truths need to be stopped. What you learn in some of the electronic mailings and websites are misleading and untrue for the most part. Investigate what you hear or read, don't just accept it as fact. Ask questions of both sides of an issue, and then make up your mind. Don't be like the ostrich that buries its head in the sand.

Let The County Condemn The Bridge

That was one of the shortsighted comments made by a member of the audience at the Saturday Meet the Candidates meeting. If we wait for the County to condemn The Humboldt Bridge, that would strand some 300 of our neighbors and their children. We could not let the school bus or any vehicles across that bridge. Do you think we would have an emergency situation at that point in time? Do you think those people owning property would say "oh poor us for living on the wrong side of the bridge", I don't think so. They would more likely sue the Association for everything its worth. How long would it take to get the environmental and engineering studies completed to build a bridge if we waited? Do you think delaying the construction of the bridge would not increase the cost of that bridge?

The engineering company hired to evaluate the bridge (in May 09) has found it to be substandard in at least five areas. A Tehama County engineer has stated that the current bridge needs to be addressed and that it will have to be brought up to county standards. The previous board took the advice of the engineer and reduced speeds crossing that bridge. The current board went one step further and put stop signs to help reduce the impact of the trucks, buses and high-speed cars.

Get Rid of Hignell

I was never for a management company, having worked with five different ones before coming here. The cost I felt was prohibitive. Having worked with Hignell for the past two years my opinion has changed. I believe them to be an asset to our community. What do we get from them? Well, we have two managers, three bookkeepers, Administrative Assistants, human resource management personnel, and a payroll department (who also monitors our employees' vacation time and sick leave). Through the managers we get advice about the current laws which affect the association. Their work with over 40 Associations raises their expertise and experience level which only benefits us. Their experience and expertise in recommending different contractors/lawyers is very valuable. Do you really think you could find people with this kind of expertise that would not cost the same amount money?

Let's face it, when you look at a \$120,000 yearly salary it looks big. What would the wage be if you try to find a manager in the open market that has expertise in human relations, bookkeeping, able to manage 11 to 12 employees, and in-depth knowledge of the Davis-Stirling Act and the California Corporations Code? Experience in general knowledge of liens and the foreclosure process. I would venture to guess that this person's wages would be \$55-\$65,000 a year. Now let's talk about a bookkeeper, this person would have to be a certified public accountant with expertise in multiple computer programs and accounting programs. I have heard people say that we could get away with one bookkeeper and a part-time helper. A CPA would be \$45-\$55,000 now we are up to \$100,000-\$120,000 a year and that does not include the part-time helper in bookkeeping and administration. Do those figures cause you to think? In almost every meeting we've had, with the exception of the last two years with Hignell, the biggest problem owners had was with the onsite accounting. The biggest arguments between homeowners came about because of this issue. Expertise and knowledge count for a lot. I'm not saying that we shouldn't be open to considering other management companies. That is only prudent on the part of your directors.

We have two managers now and if one goes on vacation we still can do business as always. With one manager we are held hostage by that person and their vacation needs and accessibility. The same thing goes for a bookkeeper. Are you going to hire someone to audit the books every month, two months or four months, how often? Or don't you think this bookkeeper needs to be monitored. Do you think a business like Hignell will risk losing all their associations and the money they bring in if caught embezzling funds? Each association hires their own auditor so Hignell gets checked many times in their bookkeeping skills. Remember we all know you get what you pay for. We have all heard comments like, where did the money go, he paid for his new car with association monies, and I'm sure money got into his pocket. This board hasn't handled any of the monies; all bills go directly to Hignell so you don't hear these comments anymore. **Your Directors Do Not Get Paid Any Money.**