



Indian Valley Associates  
Annual Meeting Minutes

Saturday June 9, 2012  
Loftus' barn, Indian Valley Road, Novato

**1. Meeting was called to order** at 1:15 pm by IVA President Rodney Bosche. Rodney welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating. He noted that he had served as President for four years and had been on the Board for at least eight.

**2. Board members:** Rodney introduced Board members present: Nita Bruinsslot, Jonell O'Day, Kitty Houghton, Bob Abeling, Monica Brett, Ed Grundstrom, Craig Knowlton, Sherman Leland, Vicki Martinez, Lynn Perry, Vivian Poole, Barry Sheppard, Tom Tharsing, and Emeritus members Ron Witzel and Carol Loftus. Absent were Board members Gary Frugoli, Larry Hoytt, John Isaacs, and Bill Stewart.

**3. Special guests and speakers:** Rodney introduced special guests Judy Arnold, Supervisor of District 5, Judy's assistant Tanya Albert, and Rod Myers, Accredited Septic Monitoring. He noted that Board Member Vivian Poole in her capacity as a member of the CSA-20 Committee would update everyone on the Arroyo Avichi Creek improvement project, and Emeritus Board Member Ron Witzel would speak on the founding and history of the CSA-20 Open Space.

**Judy Arnold, Supervisor:** Judy once again commended IVA for its active intervention on issues of interest to Indian Valley residents, and for maintaining a productive dialog with officials. Among topics she covered were: (1) redistricting, (2) septic regulations, and (3) the renovation of the Novato Theater.

(1) Re redistricting: Each Supervisor represents ca. 50,000 residents. Since redistricting in July 2010, Judy's 5<sup>th</sup> District includes all of Indian Valley. Steve Kinsey's 4<sup>th</sup> District includes not only all of West Marin but also some of Novato.

(2) Re septic regulations: There are 1800 standard septic systems and 300 alternative ones in Judy's District. County rules for monitoring and inspecting alternative systems (stand-alone engineered septic systems) have undergone change in the last year. Many Indian Valley residents are affected by this.

Prior to July 2011 under the old system, the rule was that new alternative systems had to be monitored twice a year by a licensed professional. Thereafter, the frequency of monitoring could be reduced if the system had operated satisfactorily. Most systems in the Valley were no longer new and were operating as designed to operate.

A new operating permit program was adopted on July 1, 2011. It required more frequent monitoring of new alternative systems by Marin County Environmental Health Services (EHS) or a septic professional, and a complicated set of conditions to be met if residents wanted to reduce the frequency of monitoring, either performing the monitoring themselves and submitting reports to the County, or having the monitoring and reporting done by a professional. In either case, the inspections had to be done by the County (EHS). Costs did not necessarily go down. The County

permit fee stayed the same, and if a septic professional performed the work, costs could go up if monitoring was more frequent.

Residents have now had nearly a year to evaluate the new system. It has been controversial, because it is hard to understand, appears to cost everyone more, and increases the workload for monitoring firms and the resultant costs without any defensible technical rationale.

The County received many requests to change the rules. Residents calling for change commented on the expense of maintaining alternative systems under the new program. The County insisted that stand-alone engineered systems had to be inspected at least once a year, but some residents had systems requiring inspection from one to four times a year. Some residents said they would monitor their systems themselves. Others called for a regulatory framework like Sonoma County's that mandates inspection by a professional firm but allows self-monitoring twice a year, and keeps costs down by permitting less frequent inspection. Many Indian Valley residents simply asked the County to go back to the old system.

As a result of a review of the new rules, the County has now agreed that, effective July 1, 2012, residents may continue to follow the old system whereby the monitoring and annual inspection is carried out by the County for \$495 or by a licensed professional for a County fee of \$415 plus the firm's charge for its services. Or they may do the monitoring themselves, have a professional do the inspection, and pay the annual fee of \$415 to the County. They no longer need to report results to EHS. Providing that they self-monitor twice a year, the inspection of their systems by a professional need only be done once a year, and if the system qualifies, once every two years. Their cost is the \$415 annual fee to the County, or the fee paid biennially if they qualify for inspection once every two years. The result will now be fees that are even lower than they were under the old program. A document dated June 8, 2012 available from Judy Arnold's office describes the Alternative Septic System Operating Permit Program.

A new set of California State septic regulations will become effective in January 2013. No changes are expected to the current operating permit program until it is clear how the state-wide rules will affect the County rules.

(3) Re Novato Theater: Over a year ago the City of Novato set out to raise \$750,000 to renovate the old Novato Theater on Grant Avenue, which had been closed for twenty years. The County then bought the building from the City, and created a 501(c) (3) non-profit public benefit corporation to lead the capital campaign and run the theater once completed. An estimated \$2,250,000 must still be raised before the theater can open. Once refurbished, it will be the only venue for live performances in northern Marin County, and will be available 365 days a year for film, music, theater, and performing arts events, and other public and community programming.

Q&A: Questions were raised about the new septic system regulations and about affordable housing. Judy said in connection with housing that Marin County residents want most of their land to be parks and open space. She noted that a family of four making \$90,000 a year qualifies for low income housing in our County. She underlined that there is no housing designated as "affordable" in Indian Valley. Until recently, 75 percent of affordable housing was allocated to cities, and 25 percent to the County. But recently the percentages were changed to 67 ½ percent to cities, and 32 ½ percent to the County. Bob Abeling pointed out that Indian Valley had been removed from the LAFCO Sphere of Influence several years ago, and that this assured that the Valley would not be pulled in for down-zoning. This had been an important step in further preserving the rural and agricultural character of the Valley.

**Ron Witzel, Emeritus Board Member:** Ron spoke to the residents about the founding and history of Indian Valley's CSA-20 (County Service Area 20) Open Space. In the early 1970's, under threat of strong pressure for urban development and road construction in Marin County, open space lands were acquired by the County for Parks and Recreation. During the same period, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was created. Indian Valley itself was facing the threat of hundreds of new homes and possible construction of a road from Indian Valley Community College to Indian Valley Road. A ballot measure in 1972 barely passed with a two thirds majority, after delicate negotiations and an effort by the Supervisors to secure buy-in from various neighborhoods. A bond was sold, raising \$640,000 of the total price for the land which was over \$1 million. It was a time of high interest rates, and the market was attracted to low interest rate municipal bonds. Longtime Indian Valley resident Woody Melone persuaded Fireman's Fund to buy a large portion of the bonds.

Indian Valley's portion of the open space was 885 acres of the former Pacheco Ranch, then owned by Soiland Corp. The 885 acres became the Indian Valley Open Space Preserve. Loma Verde homeowners sought to preserve the 10 acres now comprising the Joseph Hoog Community Park on Ignacio Blvd. in Novato. The Marin Golf and Country Club homeowners were focused on open space parcels surrounding their development, including hillside land above 400' in elevation. Today it is administered by Marin Parks and Recreation, and the CSA-20 Committee, made up of five Indian Valley residents, advises the County. Projects undertaken over the years by the Committee include creating firebreaks and maintaining trails.

**Vivian Poole, IVA Board Member and member of the CSA-20 Committee:** Vivian updated residents on the recent Arroyo-Avichi Creek Restoration Project, undertaken this past year with the help of Parks and Recreation, Indian Valley Associates, and the local community including members of Marin County Boy Scout Troop 76 and their fathers. In particular, Eagle Scout Connor Barnett led the Scouts on a day-long work party in the fall to build a split rail fence along the Indian Valley Fire Road to protect creek-side land and vegetation from over-use, particularly by dirt bikers. The project was completed at a third of the estimated cost, thanks to volunteer labor and a discounted price for materials from Novato Builders Supply. School children and teachers from a local school then planted native species and will cultivate the new vegetation as part of a newly established Community Education Center. Future projects are on hold. A vegetation management plan is being drafted by Parks and Recreation to include vegetation, roads, trails, and footpaths.

Note: Later in the meeting Connor and his father put in a brief appearance and were introduced by IVA President Rodney Bosche, who had recently attended Connor's Court of Honor to receive his Eagle Scout rank. Rodney commended Connor for his hard work, thanked his father, and also gave kudos to Greg Reza who coordinates the volunteer program for Parks and Recreation.

Residents at the meeting were asked to complete a short survey eliciting their views for or against the use of single track hillside trails off Indian Valley Fire Road by mountain bikers. A call went out for volunteers to help conduct a petitioning effort at the start of the Indian Valley Fire Road, to gather signatures supporting a ban on bicycles on the side trails.

Q&A: A resident commented with appreciation on the extensive volunteer work done on trail maintenance in the Indian Valley Preserve this year by Indian Valley homeowner Ken Harth. President Rodney Bosche said that Ken was being recognized by the IVA Board for his work.

4. **Election, Ed Grundstrom:** Ed read the list of incumbents up for re-election this year on the IVA Board. They were Bob Abeling, Gary Frugoli, Ed Grundstrom, Kitty Houghton, Sherman Leland, and Tom Tharsing. Each was asked to say a few words about his or her number of years living in the Valley and engagement with its concerns. All were re-elected. Ed announced that two Board positions were open. There were two nominees, Lisa Marvier and Skip Fenner, and other interested residents were invited to step forward to run. Michael Goldin spoke up. The three nominees were invited to say a few words introducing themselves and their commitment to the Valley. Ballots were passed out for the vote for the two positions. Lisa and Skip were elected to fill the two vacancies.

#### 5. Committee Reports:

a. **Treasurer's Report:** Jonell O'Day reported that the financial condition of Indian Valley Associates was good and dues were up. She thanked Lloyd and Carol Loftus for the use of their barn for the annual meeting, and Rodney and Robin Bosche for hosting the IVA Board meetings.

b. **Chipper Days:** Tom Tharsing thanked Nancy Niche and Stella Cantarutti and family for making their vacant lots available for residents to bring and deposit brush to be chipped. He thanked Nancy for design and printing of the Chipper Days postcard notifying residents of the dates of Chipper Days twice a year – in October and in May. He noted that this service to IVA residents is funded by the Novato Fire District and Fire Safe Marin, and IVA is grateful to those organizations. He remarked that IVA was viewed as the poster child for fire safety in Novato because of its Chipper Days.

c. **Website and Newsletter:** Nancy Niche urged residents to visit the website and to provide news items and photos for posting on it, and for the annual newsletter sent out right before the annual meeting. On a separate subject, she proposed a gleaning program in Indian Valley for the fall and winter, to augment collections of leftover produce she makes from the Farmers Market in spring and summer. The produce is then offered to the CERES program which teaches teens to prepare healthy food for cancer patients.

d. **Membership and Use Permits and Variances:** Nita Bruinsslot said it had been a quiet year and she had nothing to report.

e. **Welcoming Committee:** Bill Stewart normally reports on new residents, but he was absent from the meeting.

f. **Elections Committee:** Ed Grundstrom announced the results of the election at the end of the meeting after ballots had been counted. He said that he would serve just one year of his two year term. Then Lisa Marvier could step into his Board position for the second year, and a new Board member could be elected to fill her second year.

g. **Road Safety Committee:** Rodney Bosche said that IVA would once again ask the CHP to patrol Indian Valley Road this summer to discourage speeding.

A question was raised about the open ditch along Wilson Avenue near the intersection with Indian Valley Road. Rodney replied that there are no County funds for its repair, and residents will have to ask the City of Novato.

h. **Annual Meeting planning, set-up, and execution:** Rodney Bosche thanked Lloyd and Carol Loftus and Tom Tharsing for setting up the barn for the annual meeting; Vivian Poole, Jonell O'Day, Monica Brett, and Sherman Leland for planning and procuring the food for the BBQ; and Al Nunes and Tom Tharsing for serving as Chuckwagon crew to barbeque the meat for the lunch.

**j. Raffle Sponsors:** Vivian Poole thanked the sponsors and donors of prizes for this year's Raffle. She noted that last year IVA made enough money from Raffle ticket sales to pay for the annual meeting BBQ.

**6. Rod Myers presentation on Septic Systems and maintenance:** Rod Myers of Accredited Septic Monitoring addressed the group about stand-alone septic systems, which virtually every Indian Valley resident has. These systems are living systems. They normally consist of a septic tank and a leach field or pump. Every system has a tank. Sludge causes systems to fail, so residents need to check their system every three to five years to determine whether it has to be pumped. If the system is a gravity system, residents should do a hydraulic load test. Build-up of bio-mat (from wrong materials put into the system) can also eventually cause failure. Food particles don't belong in the septic tank. Therefore garbage disposals should not drain into the septic system. Grease should not go into the tank, either. The tank doesn't need enzymes or other additives. It does its work naturally. Residents should avoid putting paper towels, handi-wipes, or diaper and baby wipes into the tank, as these don't break down. Liquid detergent is better than powder.

When inspecting a tank, residents should look for scum or sludge. When it constitutes 25 percent or more of the contents of a tank, both sides of the tank should be pumped. It is a good idea to put an effluent filter (four to 12 inches in diameter) between the tank and the field, to catch larger particles before they go into the field. Bacteria will also grow on them, to help break down organic waste. The filter just needs to be cleaned once every year or two.

More advanced systems have pumps, ATUs, and treatment systems. They have to be maintained more often, and have more parts that need to be inspected and maintained. As long as they are maintained, they will last forever. Every system regardless of complexity needs to be inspected and maintained.

If a resident's system fails and he needs to put in a new one, he should ask:

1. What is the required maintenance schedule for the new system? How often does it need to be inspected and maintained?
2. What is the energy consumption of the system?

Q&A: A resident asked about gray water. Rod said that it could be put into the system. Some counties require that it be kept underground, e.g. not used in the open to water the garden. Gray water is any waste water that doesn't come from the toilet or kitchen sink. The later are classified as black water. Another resident asked about leach fields in pastures. They should be fenced off from buildings, and from areas where livestock could trample on them.

**7. Open Time:** A resident, Claudine Le Moal, raised the idea of a community garage sale and passed out a flier describing the concept.

**8. Meeting adjourned** at 2:40 pm and was followed by lunch and award of the Raffle prizes. An estimated 90 people attended, including guests, visitors, and children.

Respectfully submitted by Kitty Houghton, IVA Secretary, June 2012

