

Bonny Doon

Santa Cruz County

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Residents reject community center

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BONNY DOON — Seven years of research, debate and straw polls have left residents of this hamlet with a clear picture of what most *don't* want: a park and community center.

"I think it's a little shortsighted," said Mike Rose, a member of the Bonny Doon Community Center Committee. "But (they) told us we shouldn't put any more energy into it, so we disbanded the committee."

The issue came to a head this month when the results of a county-sponsored survey of residents revealed that 64 percent of those responding did not want a community center built in Bonny Doon.

Only 818 of the 2,014 mailed questionnaires were returned, but, said Supervisor Gary Patton, "results clearly indicated that the Bonny Doon community does not favor the development ... and I hope the controversy surrounding this issue can now be laid to rest."

The \$1,500 survey was financed by the Bonny Doon Park Dedication Fund, which has about \$110,000 the committee had hoped to use to begin work on a playing field at a site found for the proposed community center. The money comes from development fees and is intended to pay for community parks.

Opponents, however, pointed out that \$110,000 wouldn't even pay for planning and building fees, and questioned whether the small community could generate enough money to build the facilities and maintain them.

"The pro-center people are asking you to pay to live next to this facility," wrote opponents in a statement mailed with the questionnaire. "They are touting such qualities as: baseball games, picnic areas, party space and good times."

"However, all these activities have their inevitable downside: noise, litter, lighting, traffic, and as a magnet for vandalism."

There also was concern that a park

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would be open to all county residents, increasing traffic in the Bonny Doon area.

"Bonny Doon has a long tradition of not sanctioning the kind of development project whose impact tends to grow over time," wrote opponents. "It

has also been a tradition to not allow a development that will be somebody's bad neighbor."

But supporters said many of those who didn't want the center were "using the inflammatory tactics of fear."

The center, they said, could be built for a fraction of the nearly \$1 million estimate suggested by county officials. "We are a strong, resourceful community, capable of building and running a facility that would serve our needs at a potentially lower cost than what we now pay for facilities that are miles from us," said community center supporters.

Bonny Doon residents pay a total of about \$60,000 in fees each year to support county parks, money which some had hoped could be used to build their own facility.

"Right now, it's all past tense," said Rose about the center. "We put out these issues and people read it, and I guess they got scared."