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Another Matrix Meeting...or Two



Most seats were filled as residents weighed in on the final report from the Matrix team. Photo by David Bergen.

By Linnea Due

On Thursday night, February 28 and Saturday morning, March 2, Matrix's Richard Brady and Greg Mathews presented their final report, which included Phase 1, studying our present police services and laying out solutions to perceived problems, and Phase 2, which analyzed contracting solutions, either full or hybrid. The Thursday night meeting, which I attended, attracted about fifty or sixty people, fewer than expected, and reportedly about the same number came to Saturday's event. Still, those fifty or sixty asked plenty of pointed questions.

Brady went through his slides, saying several times that Kensington needed to make a decision: we could not continue as we have. He cited safety as his reason—sometimes only a single officer is on duty with no supervision, and that is not safe for either residents or the officer. In terms of improving the department, he suggested raising salaries 25 percent, equipping officers with body-worn cameras, providing more training, hiring full-time administrative support, and changing the staffing to a chief, four sergeants, a corporal, and four officers. With Rickey Hull interim police chief, the department now has one sergeant, Keith Barrow, with the rest officers, some of them senior. Costs for this, Brady estimated, would be about \$720,000 more per year.

Another option would be a full contract with an adjacent agency. This involves fewer people (eight sworn officers and one civilian as opposed to ten sworn and one

“Coffee with a Cop” a Storm of Revelations

By Linnea Due

On a rain-soaked Tuesday afternoon, few showed up at Inn Kensington for Coffee with a Cop. Officer Rodney Martinez was the host, and once Officer Ted Foley dropped in, the number of residents and cops matched. This left plenty of time to ask questions, which elicited interesting and surprising answers.

Has anyone been alarmed by the KPD's nighttime drives with the white overhead lights on? Martinez says that's the idea: to alarm criminals who might be casing residences or looking for unlocked garages and cars. He said that since they started the practice six months ago, crime (car break-ins, burglaries) has decreased.

“If you drive ten to fifteen miles per hour, it takes an hour and a half to explore every street and court in Kensington,” Martinez said. “The night patrol typically puts sixty to seventy miles on a squad car.” The idea is to mix up routes and timing. “If you were a criminal,” Martinez hypothesized, “and you saw us coming with the bright lights, it would set you back. You'd assume we were coming for you. So maybe we pass you by, but ten minutes later, we're back—at that point you'd leave

See Matrix, page 9

See Coffee with a Cop, page 9

An advertisement for Benjamin Moore's 'ben' paint. It features a large blue paint can with the 'ben' logo and text describing it as 'premium eggshell interior paint & primer'. The background is dark blue. Text on the right says 'Easy and Flawless Results' and 'Formulated for easy painting, ben helps with quick-fix drips and smooth touch-ups - while promising premium results.' At the bottom, it says 'Paint Like No Other' and provides contact information for the East Bay Paint Center.

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quality can be maintained.

Matrix overstates expenses to upgrade our current police. They include a 25 percent raise to all police employees. A Kensington cop at the meeting stated that such a large raise was unnecessary.

Who is in control? Logically, we have more control of a force where all personnel work for one police chief, who answers to our local special district, and has no problems managing conflicting priorities.

All forces have problems. When there were problems here, we reacted immediately. Chief Harman’s contract was not renewed. What if we were dealing with an officer who worked for El Cerrito?

The board mentioned liability concerns. The study does not consider how liability would be managed in the alternative proposals. Matrix says one third of residents want a local force. But that question was not in their survey. I think that most of Kensington wants a local police force.

Matrix’s conclusions were based on a new application that was not being used by the entire force. New data was provided to Matrix, and they said they would update the statistics. They never did. Look at the data. Funding does not exist to implement any of the Matrix options. However, if we focus on incremental improvements with our local force we can go far.

Matrix recommends that they write RFPs for contracting out to El Cerrito (Albany and Berkeley declined). Is this so they can charge KPPCSD \$12,000 more? Let’s not spend more money for Matrix. Let’s use Matrix’s recommendations to improve our current force.

Greg Collis

Losing It

Dear Editor:

That was quite a display at the Saturday March 2 Matrix presentation by one of Kensington’s “finest”: calling Mr. Brady a liar about his call data and getting quite hot under the collar in the ensuing discussions. Is this the sort of temperament we want in our officers—one who “loses it” so easily? Not me.

Mabry Benson

Concerns about Board and Media Coverage

To the Editor:

I’ve read with increasing concern the *East Bay Times* and *Mercury News* reporting about Kensington. Having attended both Matrix presentations last week, the major take-aways were: Kensington residents are fully behind their police force; the Matrix report features a stiff increase in spending without a source of funds other than more taxes; and phasing in several interventions while monitoring impact could better serve the community. We need improvements in our police department, but more compellingly, we need improvements in board governance.

About our police. Many individuals gave personal anecdotes of police support above and beyond what you could expect. For example, a local realtor reported that police came to inform her that her garage door was open, and because an unlocked door led directly to her house, and she wasn’t answering her phone, they came to make sure she was okay.

About our governance. Less clear is why our local board seems intent on outsourcing a police force that the citizens support. Only one director, Cyrus Modavi, came to both forums; Sylvia Hacaj came to the first. No other director showed up for these critical meetings. Noteworthy.

Having left the center before the reported incident with Officer Foley and GM Constantouros, I cannot speak to it. However, the leadership vacuum created by the board’s maintaining an interim chief position for over two years has had one primary impact: to escalate the problems under study—a tactic used to eliminate public services around the country.

About the reporting. Outside sources have been skewed, tarnishing all of our officers with the same brush attached to an errant few. The press might interview some of the hundred residents who came largely to voice their support of the police. They’ll hear concerns about board use of taxpayer funds on lawsuits and consultants—a board seemingly fixated on the notion that contracting out is the answer—when sound governance (including a phased approach to achieving improvements), leadership and community engagement can be far more cost-effective. We’d happily assist in uncovering the more complex reality beneath the hype.

Johanna Ferman

To the Funnies We Go

Dear Editor:

Wherever I have gone in the last two days, should it come up that I live in Kensington, I have had to endure ribbing about the latest reports of bad behavior by our community’s officials. The most recent internecine kerfuffle between the Kensington Police District and one of its officers is its own best argument in favor of outside oversight of the Kensington police. Two more embarrassing incidents along the lines of the last few, and Kensington will be awarded its own comic strip in the *Chronicle* funny pages.

Anita Bohn

Time for Action

Dear Editor:

Initially, the March 2 Matrix presentation was low-key with some grandstanding by those who want to keep our department as-is. Officer Foley spoke last, saying Matrix “lied.” Our GM said this was untrue, pointed out Matrix’s experience, knowledge and reputation, and added this outburst is “exactly what’s wrong with Kensington.” Regarding our GM, I find him committed to systematically fixing what is wrong with our town. Personally, he is consistently respectful and thoughtful based on my observations and interactions.

The Matrix report reviewed the department’s major deficiencies and options for improvement. The GM and the elected board will decide if hybrid options for services including property, report management and/or contracting for a shift would be beneficial. The report, unfortunately, did not strongly address our failings regarding risk management and ongoing litigation, but it did present some viable options going forward.

We could contract for the evening shift, which would save about \$100,000 a year in salary and future pension benefits. If we did it on a per call basis we would save more, but that may be less palatable for some residents. There are only a few calls per evening at most. Contracting the night shift would provide \$100,000 annual savings that could be applied to our growing future pension liabilities, yet would not trigger a costly CalPERS

termination.

We must improve the department, and in view of recent events and impending investigations, this would be one way to start.

Marilyn Stollon

Looking Ahead

Dear Editor:

Three options were presented by Matrix at the 28 Feb meeting. Option 1 was for a full service contract to an outside PD. Option 2 was for a full service in-house PD. Both could add anywhere from \$300 to \$1000 more/year to our taxes. Option 3 was for a hybrid plan that would be close to our present costs. Option 3 best suits our needs even though it is still rough and will need much further study. The board should take the lead here.

Meanwhile there is more to consider. The retirement costs of our present generous plan with CalPERS obligates us to paying officers for 10 to 15 years after they have left our employment (\$1 million to \$3 million/year). Matrix pointed out that our present plan exceeds the plans offered by all adjoining cities and sadly, explains why we are unable to hire young new officers. Officer candidates are looking for less retirement and higher salaries. In my opinion, this adds a substantial risk to our future finances and clearly should be revised without delay to conform to adjacent PD retirement plan levels. The board must take the lead here.

Lawsuits that stem from police department issues may add significant costs to the department. Perhaps the lawsuits may stem from the lack of “best practices” in the department but whatever the reason, the public likely will never know (but the board may) in time to inform a decision based on future costs to the community. Board must lead here.

Our present police department is 80 percent proactive, meaning they are busy on calls only 20 percent of the time—and this is with our present “understaffed” department. This means, in my opinion, the ranks of detective, sergeant, lieutenant, captain and chief are unnecessary in our small department, and we should instead align our staff categories with their actual tasks and available time. Matrix should take the lead here.

Franz Steiner

February Police Log

1

BURGLARY, Cambridge Ave. Cold.

ASSISTANCE TO OUTSIDE AGENCY, Sea View/Bonnie Dr. Man with knife. Taken into custody.

VANDALISM, Columbia/Colgate aves. Someone put feces on the window of his mom’s car. Wants to know if he make a citizen’s arrest if he sees the person doing it, can he slam them to th e ground.

2

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Edgecroft Rd. Someone sitting on the side of street.

ANIMAL CALL, Beloit Ave. Sick possum on front porch, not aggressive, CCC Animal Control advised.

4

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Blake Garden. Gate padlock found open this morning. Situation checks out OK.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Arlington Ave. Unknown male rang rp’s doorbell, she looked out of her window and didn’t recognize him so she didn’t answer. Subj stood at the door for a while and looked around. He then started writing something down and eventually departed. HMA, 40s, tall, drk hair, mustache, blk leather jkt, lite blue jeans. Ls headed nb in a silv Mazda, 4dr, and possible lic plate #.

5

IDENTITY THEFT, report taken at KPD.

WELFARE CHECK, Stanford Ave. RP wants welfare check,. Rp has been trying to reach for a month via telephone and hasn’t heard back from him.

6

MISC AUTO, Highgate/Sunset. Vehicle parked in such a way that it is nearly blocking the entire roadway.

WELFARE CHECK, Colusa Ave. Transient who has had10-56 (intoxicated pedestrian) but is now possibly sleeping in between rp’s tree and fence. WFA Blonde Hair, green jacket.

BURGLARY, Norwood Ct. Cold, RP believes his home was burglarized sometime late-night or early morning. Rp noticed his backdoor was wide open even though it has a double lock and did a walkthrough of his home and no one was there. Medications are missing. Unfounded.

7

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, KPD. Neighbor dispute, salting RP’s vehicle.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Amherst Ave. Rp gave name and social security # to a fraudulent caller posing as Social Security. Number that call came from. Rp’s phone is programmed to block unknown numbers unless it is called twice.

MISC AUTO, Arlington Ave./Amherst. AFA 60s driver crashed into the pillar appears intoxicated, got out of vehicle and was just staring at the vehicle. Unable to Locate.

VEHICLE ACCIDENT, Oberlin, no injuries. Services provided.

WELFARE CHECK, Coventry Rd. RP wants welfare check on two minors for a filthy house, garbage everywhere and drug dealing is present. Minors do not go to school. A male not related to the family lives there as well in the basement and also involved in drug dealing. RP says Family Services wants a call back when welfare check is complete.

9

ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY. Kensington Ct. Smoke or steam coming from basement. It was steam, no problems.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Purdue Ave. Underage party, approx. 30 teenagers seen smoking and drinking.

10

PETTY THEFT, report taken at KPD.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY, Ocean View Ave. RP requesting to speak with Officer Martinez regarding a citation that was issued on his friend's veh this morning ifo his res... .

11

DRIVING UNDER INFLUENCE, Arlington/Sunset. One vehicle possibly in middle, one pulled off to the side, blue BMW and gray Subaru. Arrest made.

12

THEFT, Arlington Ave. Tricycle taken from front of house.

WELFARE CHECK, Coventry Rd. Sister in house, reclusive, concerned for her well-being.

13

CITIZEN ASSIST, Arlington Ave. Smell of gasoline inside resident's home and outside. RP lives next to gas station. Advised him to exit his residence.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Ordway. RP’s wife and son left residence1915 hrs. Daughter was home alone and someone was ringing their door bell. She went

Continued next page

February Police Log, continued

to answer thinking it was her mother/brother and saw an unknown BFA. Did not answer. Subject kept ringing doorbell and after departing came back 20 mins later and continued to ring the doorbell. Rp concerned since door was see-through/glass. He advised that he just wanted this logged.

15 FICTITIOUS INSTRUMENT, Yale Ave. Received an overnight package that contains a check in the amount of \$4000, asking her to contact them. She did not do any work for the check.

SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Lawson Rd. LOJACK hit.

16 MISC AUTO, Stanford Ave. Vehicle encroaching on rp’s driveway, rp wants it cited. . Citation Issued.

19 BURGLARY, Purdue Ave. RP rec’d call from contractor, showed up for work,

found broken side door into garage, everything was stolen. On site now then GC arriving shortly and rp also on his way.

PETTY THEFT, Highland Blvd. Thought she misplaced her purse, but turns out it has been stolen, fraudulent charges on rp’s CC.

ANIMAL CALL, Purdue Ave. Mastiff, black w/brown feet/face, 130 lbs., jumped fence and attacked RP’s small dog, injuring leg. The dog did not attack a person. Dog lives on Purdue. .

21 SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Rincon. WMA, long dirty hair, Beige jacket, navy shoulders, w/ road bike.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Coventry Rd. Evicted resident has returned currently ifo in her vehicle, with her belongings on the sidewalk and blankets on bushes, rp feels she is scary, rp concerned about retaliation.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Edgecroft Rd. Unk race male subj casing homes. Wearing backpack, hooded sweatshirt, knocking on side windows. Unable to locate.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Edgecroft Rd. Trespassing in the laundry room attached to rp’s apartment, HMA 5’10-6 feet wearing a blue puff jacket, possibly wearing a backpack. Rp did ask subject to leave.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Highland Blvd. Near school, 2 WMA 20s-30s, on bikes, both wearing jeans and one wearing a blue jacket. RPadvised they were suspicious because they appeared to be “tweakers.” Rp stated he followed subjects to Highland and noticed they had keys to Northside of the house, possibly the garage.

IDENTITY THEFT, report taken at KPD.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON, Arlington Ave. Flashlight too dark for a description. Shined light from gully in the creek. Unable to locate.

22 SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Coventry Rd. Subject sitting slumped over in his van ifo, rp has noticed van before but this is the first time she saw it occupied. WMA mid 30’s long black hair. Reported Situation checks out O.K.

IDENTTY THEFT, report filed at KPD.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Ardmore Rd. RP is housesitter, saw flashlights flashing against glass, once it got to the back bedroom with light on, the flash-light went out.

25 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Exxon on Arlington. Male customer broke nozzle on gas pump and departed after being confronted by employee.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Beloit Ave. Landlord/tenant dispute over deposit, former tenant dk clothing on front porch refusing to leave. Civil Matter - Parties Advised.

26 BURGLARY, Beloit. Auto, rear window smashed and rear seat pulled down. No loss.

VANDALISM, Kenyon Ave. Cold, tires are turned 180 degrees and believes vehicle was involved in a hit and run.



27 RECKLESS DRIVING reported at KPD. Blk Nissan Frontier, 60mph past school, tinted windows.

ANNOYING TELEPHONE CALLS, Coventry Rd. RP received two threatening texts that she’s uncomfortable with having on her phone and was shaken up, rp is living in converted garage at end of driveway, not main house.

28 SUSPICIOUS PERSON(S), Windsor Ave. Male subj pacing back and forth, said he was doing work in the area, but couldn’t tell the RP where or with who.

AREA SECURITY CHECK, Arlington Ave. AFA, 40-50yo, 5’5”, 140 lbs, light hoodie. Possibly casing, attempting to take package. Subj was in the middle of RP’s steps that lead to front door. Unable to locate.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Oak View Ave. RP requested extra patrol deceased mother’s home Rp has been there since 1200hrs and noticed knocked over items in bathroom, men’s grooming products and upstairs window unlocked. Rp is on scene with her daughter (37 years old).I advised her to get to safe place until officer arrives.



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Natalie DeJarlais, KM6UCF, secretary for KARO/ECHO participates in the drill on February 23. See story on page 6. Photo by Jon Hammond.

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New Minister Wants to Broaden ACC’s Outreach



By Linnea Due

Nate Klug’s first sermon at Arlington Community Church was about transformation—and he underwent a similar process in becoming a minister. “I wasn’t raised in the church at all,” he said in a phone interview. “I grew up outside Boston, raised by loving, educated parents who were not part of a church. I’d probably only gone to church ten times by the time I was eighteen.”

Klug went away to Chicago to college. “I had a hard time. My best friend’s father was murdered that first year. I was asking big questions about meaning and what I should do in the world. I had this other friend who was a poet and a writer. One Sunday he invited me to his church. It was a United Church of Christ, the same as ACC. I was just bowled over by the preaching and the message of inclusivity. I didn’t know churches that were like that.”

Klug took a measure of himself and came up with a surprising idea. “I love writing and I love people and I love talking to people and hearing about their lives. Maybe, I thought,

ministry is something that I should look into.” That realization eventually led to Yale Divinity School followed by a ministry in Iowa and in Redwood City before he started March 1 at ACC.

“I was familiar with Kensington because we’ve been living in Albany,” he said. “We have a nine-month-old daughter, and we do a nanny share with a family on Norwood. We’d take walks in Blake Gardens and around the neighborhood. I was already entranced with the natural beauty here, and then the position opened up.”

The fit seems perfect for Klug. Congregants at ACC began the Person of the Planet program several years ago. The program puts on environmental films and guest speakers and engages people to do more than wring their hands. One of the missions of the United Church of Christ is creation justice. Klug says, “Those two words go together to articulate a commitment that this church has, how God is calling us to be in the world. We try to devote a significant amount of resources and ministry towards helping the environment and educating ourselves about the environment. Besides Person of the Planet, we do a testimony every worship service for the earth. It could be a tip about carrying reusable silverware or a spiritual or meditative piece about the role of rivers or bees.”

“We are a hub for the community, and we want to think about more ways we can open ourselves up to being that kind of welcoming community presence. The church is already open to so many groups.”

And then there is his love for people. “This church has wonderful facilities,” Klug said. “We are a hub for the community, and we want to think about more ways we can open ourselves up to being that kind of welcoming community presence. The church is already open to so many groups.” And that will increase, with the Community Center rebuild almost upon us—ACC is taking on some KASEP classes as well as KPPCSD meetings and groups that have long met at the Community Center.

Lately the church has played an auditory role as well. “Helen Winters is a member of the church, and she has just started ringing the carillon bells. She plays every weekday in the late afternoons and right after worship on Sundays, around 11:15.”

Klug is a poet as well as a minister, his work published in the *Nation* and the *New York Review of Books*. He writes essays on spiritual questions as well as sermons. “I’m looking out of my office here,” he said, “I can see the bay, see down to Blake Gardens. I can write some good sermons here.”

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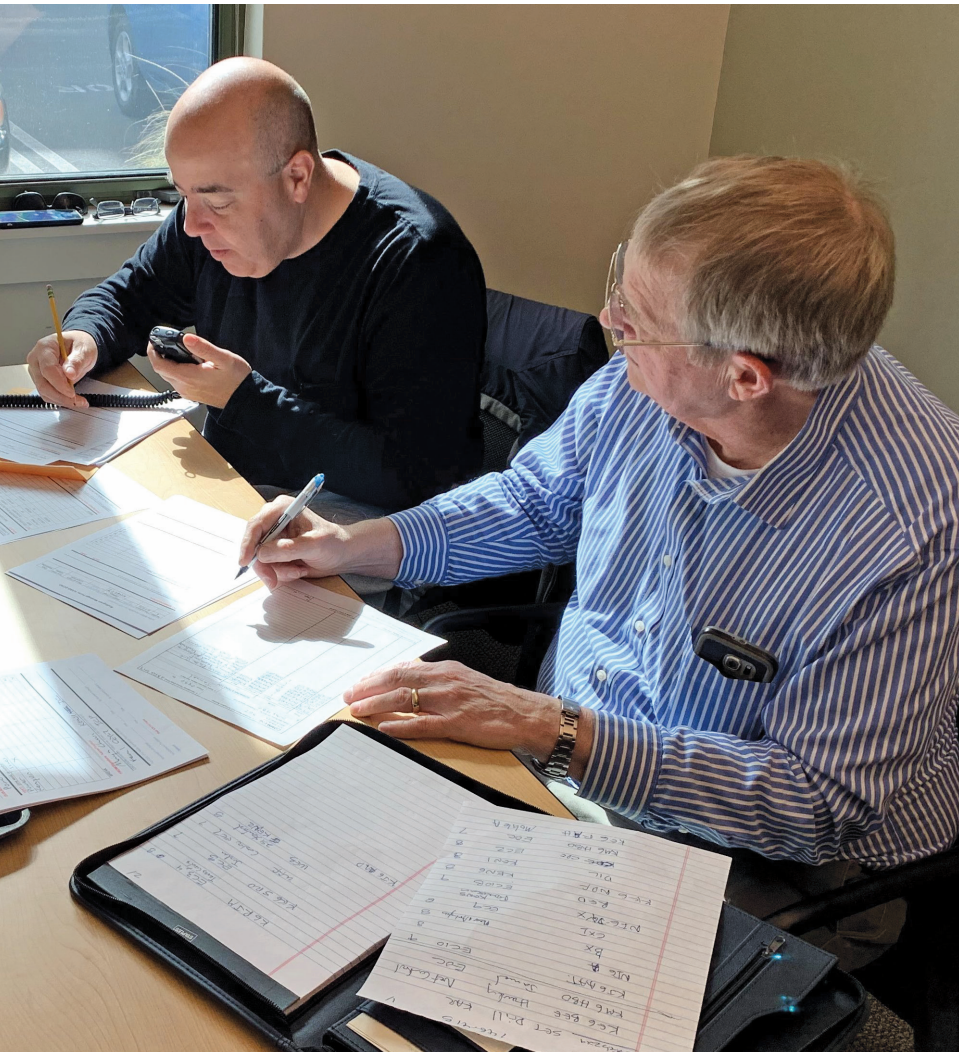
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Jamel Starkley, KM6HBO, the emergency coordinator for KARO/ECHO at the microphone with Larry Nagel, board director of the Kensington Fire Protection District and CERT Area Coordinator for Kensington Area 2 acting as the scribe located at the Emergency Operations Center at El Cerrito City Hall. Photo by David Swanson, KJ6AAT.

Neighbors Help Neighbors Stay Safe

By Linnea Due

A 6.8 earthquake centered in Kensington is all too feasible. On Saturday morning, February 23, members of KARO/ECHO conducted a simulated emergency test based on that scenario. That unwieldy acronym stands for Kensington Amateur Radio Operators/El Cerrito Ham Operators, a merger that occurred a few years ago in light of Kensington’s contract with El Cerrito for fire-fighting and emergency services. KARO/ECHO treasurer Larry Vanselow says that twenty radio operators took part in the simulated test. “Everybody got a package,” he says, “and inside the package were three messages that they were to send to another operator at a specific time.”

Vanselow says that the “earthquake” happened at 9am, and the exercise began at 9:30. “The messages were things like ‘this is an emergency, drop everything,’ or search and rescue or medical messages. We relay the messages to other operators. One person is posing as the coordinator at an emergency command center. He is trained as an emergency coordinator, and he was stationed at Tassajara Park in El Cerrito.”

Vanselow explained that once the message is relayed, the receiving operator writes it down on a FEMA form that includes a date, time stamp, who it’s from and who it was sent to. “It went very well,” Vanselow reports. “Sometimes, due to terrain, we can’t get hold of a certain operator. For instance, I couldn’t get an operator in Richmond. In that case, we have to relay the message through a couple of operators.”

During the exercise and debriefing, the group learned which operators couldn’t reach others and where signals were weak. “We can test reception strength,” Vanselow explains. “We also use a modified Mercalli Intensity Scale, which measures an earthquake’s strength from 1 to 10. If you’re on the radio, you have a way to tell them what happened in your area, what kind of damage.”

Vanselow says that the group has some newer operators, and the training was valuable. The only negative was that in Kensington, five operators participated. “There weren’t as many as I’d hoped,” he says. “In Kensington there are 51 licensed ham operators and 185 in El Cerrito. We have 48 members in our group. We want to get more people active.” This summer the group plans a joint CERT and radio operator simulation.

Besides exercises and trainings at meetings, some members self-deploy on Red Flag days to examine the ridges and canyons for flare-ups. They also check picnic areas and always work the 4th of July. They raise money to replace radio sets and for emergency equipment such as AEDs, or automated external defibrillators, which can jolt a heart back to rhythm. “There are only two in Kensington, one at the library and one at the Public Safety Building,” Vanselow reports. “We want to get one at Colusa Circle, at the shops on the Arlington, and other places as well.”

Fire Board Director Larry Nagel Wins Award

By Linnea Due

Laurence W. (Larry) Nagel, an electrical engineer and eight-year director of the fire board, won the prestigious 2019 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Donald O. Pederson Award in Solid-State Circuits. Nagel was cited “for the development and demonstration of SPICE as a tool to design and optimize electronic circuits.” SPICE is a simulator used in teaching and research. According to the citation: “Perhaps no single development has had as much impact on the microelectronics industry as the SPICE program, which originally was developed by Nagel during his graduate studies at UC Berkeley. SPICE and its subsequent enhancements moved mainstream circuit design from empirical, bread-board-based design into the era of scientifically based simulation and modeling. ... Today’s multibillion-transistor ICs, especially mixed-signal and precision analog ICs, would be impossible without the detailed circuit simulation that SPICE provides.” Congratulations to Nagel for this recognition of a lifetime achievement. (See photo of Nagel above in his other guise as a participant in simulated emergencies.)

Hannah Lane-Goldstein Fields Scholarship at SF State

By Linnea Due

On November 14, Kensington resident and El Cerrito High senior Hannah Lane-Goldstein signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball at San Francisco State. Lane-Goldstein has been a standout for years, so her scholarship is perhaps less of a surprise than her stats. As she writes by email, “In my three years at ECHS I batted .515 overall. Last year I led the league in doubles, home runs, RBIs, and total bases. In high school I also pitched and led the conference in wins and had the lowest earned run average. I was also named First Team All League all three years.”

She began playing in the Albany/Berkeley Recreation League at age seven and has played competitive softball on traveling teams since she was ten. Writes Lane-Goldstein: “I’ve appeared in the biggest tournaments in the country. Last summer my team placed thirteenth in the nation at Nationals. PGF (premiere girls fastpitch) Nationals is the dream tournament for all competitive softball players, and you must qualify to go. I’ve played throughout California, Nevada, Oregon, Colorado, Utah, and Florida.”

Lane-Goldstein chose SF State because she wanted to stay local, and softball in California is very competitive: “I liked the location of SF State, and they have a lot of great academic programs I am interested in.” She says that despite her skills, the recruiting process was still stressful. “The key is to be persistent. I emailed and sometimes called coaches before tournaments or visiting a camp on campus and always emailed to follow up. My coach Damion Wynne was also a huge help.”

She writes that she has played every position competitively except catcher. “From the time I was young,” she writes, “I always wanted to play on the best teams with the best coaches. I also always played with older girls that would push me to be better. I love how many amazing people I have met through softball and how it taught me leadership skills, confidence, and how to communicate with people I might not necessarily have been around. I love that softball gave me opportunities to travel and compete against players all over the country.”

Now those skills will travel across the bay—but she’ll have to wait until this summer to take the field. “I tore my ACL in October, and so far rehab has been going great. It has been a trying process at times, and I get frustrated I can’t play. My physical therapist pushes me to excel in getting back to better than ever. To anyone who is going through an injury like mine I can’t recommend acupuncture enough. It provides great relief, and I firmly believe it is cutting down my recovery time significantly.”



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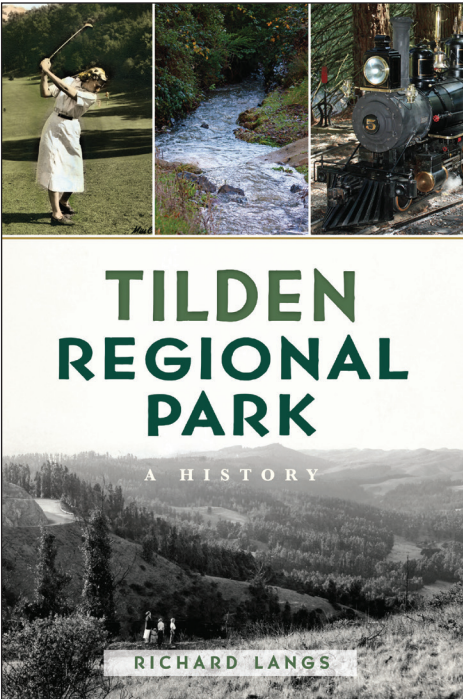
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New Book Tells History of Tilden Park

By Linnea Due

Richard Langs, a retired financier who spends much of his free time at Tilden’s golf course, recounts the history of the East Bay Regional Parks in clear prose that prioritizes the people who moved the project forward. Although I spent many happy hours in Tilden as a child and young adult, I did not know that the parks owe their existence to private water companies that were eventually subsumed by East Bay MUD, which sold those undeveloped lands to a district formed to buy the land with property taxes and state and federal funds. The East Bay Regional Parks, advertised to the public as “The Chance to Save Our Hills,” were authorized by the state senate and became the first park district that crossed county lines.

Those who contributed are well-known, at least for their names: Sibley, Sproul, Vollmer, Vail, even Frederick Law Olmsted, senior and junior, and, of course, Major Charles Lee Tilden. But Langs doesn’t just focus on the formation of what is truly a crown jewel of the entire Bay Area—he rolls all the way up to 2018 with a photo of the current board of directors and covers much in between. These include the construction of the golf course, the Little Farm, the environmental center and more. Some get short shrift; the Little Farm rates only a few paragraphs, while golfing merits a chapter. The lack of an index is unfortunate. But those who have an interest in public policy, recreation, and the area’s history will find much in *Tilden Regional Park: A History* to ponder and enjoy.



It’s Carnival Time!

By Lauren Burns

Spring has arrived, and that means plans are in full swing at Kensington Hilltop Elementary school for the 72nd Annual Spring Carnival, to be held Saturday, May 11 from 11am-3pm. Rain or shine, we’ll be grilling, playing and celebrating under the maypole! A Kensington and Hilltop tradition, the festival also serves as the school’s PTA and Dads’ Club main fundraiser of the year. Months of planning and hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours go into the event. From assembling the water balloon catapult to manning the grill and spinning tunes for the cakewalk, it takes the entire community to bring the event to life. Last year, over 250 people hours were spent helping to prepare and serve 670 meals, preparing 1500 water balloons for launch, and running fifteen food and game booths! Proceeds from the event are used to fund the school community, such as disaster preparedness supplies, assemblies, recreation equipment, teacher appreciation events, Dads’ Club work party supplies and more.

The school community relies on local support to help make the event a success. This year’s grand prize for the 37th annual raffle is the stunning “Color Burst” quilt, created by a joint effort of Jennifer Ritter, Sherry Garcia, and Kin Foong. Local businesses can still donate items for the other prize baskets by contacting Sherry Garcia at sheryngarcia@yahoo.com. Watch for raffle tickets to go on sale starting April 18, and purchase them from your local Hilltop family. Get ready to take home lovely kid-made and kid-grown plants and arrangements at the 8th annual Rhea Wilson Plant Sale. Perfect for Mother’s Day gifts and your garden! The “Deals on Wheels” benefit bicycle sale welcomes your donations of all sizes of bicycles, child- to middle school- to adult-sized, including those needing a tune-up or small repairs by our Dads’ Club volunteers. To drop off your donation, contact Bruce Marvin, bmarvinca@gmail.com.

The Carnival’s popular White Elephant Sale will be the hottest one-day sale in town! Set aside your excellent to gently used donations (no computers, electronics, or large furniture please), including clothing and shoes. Donations can be dropped off at the school Multi-Purpose Room on Friday, May 10.

Check out next month’s *Outlook* for more details on the Carnival fun, or access the event webpage at kensingtonhilltop.org/carnival/, and see you there on May 11!

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Community Education

KASEP Kensington Afterschool Enrichment Program

KASEP classes comes home to the Arlington Community Church in Spring. Kensington Recreation started at the church in 1960 before relocating to the present location. Due to the impending community center remodeling project, the Arlington Community Church has graciously invited us back so our KASEP classes can continue. Thank you!

- Our last session of the year began March 18, 2019.

LOCATION CHANGES & DAYS CHANGES FOR THIS SESSION

- Please look at the brochure either the hard copy or on line to see where your child’s class is being held. Due to the construction of the community center, some classes will be held at the Arlington Church. There will be additional staff to ensure the safety of the students crossing the street. All gymnastics, Circus and Cooking Classes will be held at the Arlington Church.
- Tuesdays (2:30 - 3:40pm) and (3:50 - 5:00pm) - Play-Well TEKnologies is back with thousands of Lego parts. Build engineer-designed projects such as: boats, arch bridges, catapults, and battletracks, etc.
- Gurus Education continues on Thursday and Tuesdays for grades 4-6th.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention

Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30am, Community Center, \$10

In the United States, it has been recommended by the Arthritis Foundation and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for its effectiveness in bringing pain relief, improving balance, and significantly reducing falls. This class is suitable for all people, regardless of physical condition. It is however, especially helpful for people who may be experiencing some health difficulties. The exercises incorporate all the health enhancing benefits of regular tai chi, but focuses on movements that are safe and relatively simple to do.

For further information, contact Nobuo at: nnishi50@gmail.com or 510-495-4860

Acrylic Artists

Wednesdays, 9:45 - 12:30pm, Community Center, \$9

Open Studio, lots of natural light. Come paint with other artists. Easels and tables are provided. Bring your canvas, paints, and creativity. Friendly group

Tai Chi Chuan

Fridays, 9:30-10:30am, Community Center, \$10

A gentle martial art, tai chi is a safe, rewarding activity for people of all ages and all levels of health. Tai chi incorporates both mind and body. Nobuo Nishi, instructor, has been teaching for 18 years.

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Bldg. E (Across the grassy field above the tennis courts in Kensington Park), Kensington CA 94707. E-mail: kccrec@yahoo.com, or call 525-0292. M-F, 11:30am-5pm.



KCC Summer Camp 2019

Online enrollments are available now.
<http://kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org>

KCC Summer Camp Activities & Schedule 2019

\$310 per week; 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

July 4th (short week): \$248

Field Trips on WEDNESDAY

All Specialty Courses and Field Trips are subject to change

Week 1 June 10 - June 14

- Specialty: Carpentry with Sandy
- Field Trip: Pump it Up

Week 2 June 17 – June 21

- Specialty: Art/Cooking with Vicky
- Field Trip: The Jungle

Week 3 June 24 – June 28

- Specialty: SkyHawk Sports Medley with Victor
- Field Trip: 101 Surf Sports & McNears Beach

Week 4 July 1 – July 5

- Closed July 4, Short Week
- Specialty: Art/Cooking with Vicky
- No Field Trip
- Friday Activity: Jumpy Houses and Obstacle Course

Week 5 July 8 – July 12

- Specialty: Skyhawks Sport (Golf) with Victor
- Field Trip: Antioch Water Park

Week 6 July 15 – July 19

- Specialty: LEGOs Play-Well Teknologies
- Field Trip: Bladium

Week 7 July 22 – July 26

- Specialty: SkyHawk Sports Medley with Victor
- Field Trip: Scandia

Week 8 July 29 – August 2

- OLYMPIC Week
- Specialty: Ultimate Frisbee / Cooking with Vicky
- Field Trip: Oakland Zoo

Week 9 August 5 – August 9

- Specialty: Contemporary & Hip Hop Dance
- Field Trip: Bladium

Week 10 August 12 – August 16

- Specialty: Girls INC (STEM)
- Field Trip: Walnut Creek Clarke Pool
- Friday Activity: End of Summer Jumpy Houses and Obstacle Course

- Art and Crafts led by KASEP Teacher Vicky
- Tennis group lessons with Kim
- Self-Directed Time: camper can play games inside or be outside (soccer, ping pong, card games, baseball, etc.)

Specialty Teacher Activity: 1:00 pm

- Campers are broken into 3 groups, by age. Lesson is 1 hour for 3 days a week (Mon, Tues, & Thurs). When lesson is finished: friend time, tether ball, ping pong, lanyards, and friendship bracelets take over.

- 1:00-2:00 Grades 1st – 2nd
- 2:00-3:00 Grades 2nd – 3rd
- 3:00-4:00 Grades 4th – 6th



HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR 2019 PHOTO

Let the tradition continue! Calling all high school seniors who live(d) in Kensington, or who attended Hilltop Elementary School for all or part of their elementary school years – you are invited to join other alumni for the annual Kensington High School Senior Photo.

The photo shoot is scheduled for Sunday, May 5th at 3:30pm. Location: KCC Office /Recreation Building. Come early to catch-up with old friends! The photo will appear on the cover of the June Outlook.

Matrix

...from front page

civilian for the in-house model). They estimate these costs as \$858,000 more per year. The third option is a hybrid model. They provided a couple examples of this: day patrol would be in-house, while a contractor would provide a one-officer night shift patrol, or Kensington provides day shift, there is no night patrol, and a contractor answers calls at night for approximately \$125 per call. Brady said it was hard to provide estimates because of varying schemes; the final report (available at the district website, print copies at the Public Safety Building) gives some guesstimated costs, including a savings of approximately \$100,000 for the one-officer night shift patrol, which eliminates some in-house positions.

Questions were many, ranging from the perennial can-we-vote-on-this (no answer from Matrix, of course, nor from KPPCSD GM Tony Constantouros) to a query about how many ten-person-or-fewer departments had Matrix analyzed (no substantive answer there either, though Brady thought he recalled one in the Central Valley), from why CalPERS had to be used as a retirement model to questions from several people wanting to cost out specifics to improve the present department on a budget, to a question about whether El Cerrito, Berkeley, or Albany follow best practices (Brady: “They meet more best practices than you do.”) Others asked what would happen if the contractor agency went belly-up (Brady’s answer: “This question is being asked all over California.”)

The majority of meeting-goers supported keeping the present department with improvements—though not to the tune of \$720,000 per year, which would amount to around \$400 per parcel added to tax bills. Mathews stepped in to say that their recommendations might come to half that amount if salaries were not raised. Sergeant Barrow, standing at the back of the room, said that officers didn’t expect a 25 percent raise, though he allowed later that some had left for higher salaries.

Mathews said that Kensington offers outstanding benefits but that recruits in their twenties don’t care about benefits. Often during the meeting there were similar instances where unspoken assumptions seemed to drive Matrix’s thinking—that Kensington wants young officers (see adjoining story on Coffee with a Cop), that the staffing problem is due to low salaries, though it was not mentioned that one hire has completed her background check and will likely be on board by the end of March, while another possible hire is progressing through the pipeline (background checks can take six months). Nor was it explained how no night patrol with a pay-per-call system or a one-officer patrol with supervision would be safer for the officer or residents than what we have now.

Kensington officers charge that Matrix’s numbers are incorrect and that the consulting group did its survey when the department had switched to a new computer system that did not function well. Brady admitted toward the end of the meeting that its numbers of service calls were limited to 911 calls and alarms, and did not include hours spent on nightly patrols, citizen aid, rolling to medical calls, and the like. These are all grouped under “proactive time,” which Brady felt should be managed better.

Then there is still the matter of our adjoining neighbors not seeming eager to contract with us, though Matrix’s final slide suggested that the district should develop an RFP to “test the waters” (Matrix’s quotes) for a full contract or hybrid involving contracting out the night shift or abandoning it for an on-call service. Strangely, the one hybrid model that had gathered some support, jobbing out services such as HR or investigations, was not mentioned in the meeting, though a few estimates were given in the full final report. For example, contracting out the evidence room and crime scene investigation is estimated at costs of \$10,000 and \$13,275 respectively.

At the end of Coffee with a Cop, Officer Martinez mentioned that he believed that contracting out the night shift would be the beginning of the end. “There wouldn’t be enough of the department left,” he explained. “You need to have a certain weight to make things work.” (Matrix proposes that four in-house positions be eliminated to contract out the night shift.)

Rather than sending out RFPs to unresponsive agencies, one resident thought it might be more effective to appoint a small citizens’ committee to study how much more we can afford and how best to spend that money. As several in the audience pointed out, crime is low, with traffic concerns the chief complaint. It may be that other solutions could be less costly and ultimately more satisfying.

Residents can view both meetings through a link at the district website. See Coffee with a Cop for more.

Coffee With a Cop

...from front page

and not return.”

To do this, the department instituted swing shifts, with two officers manning the twelve-hour stints, from noon to midnight, as well as a graveyard shift from 6pm-6am (from midnight to 6am, Albany helps the KPD officer with backup). Kensington has overlap during the busiest nighttime hours, from 6pm-midnight. On some occasions, one officer will start patrolling in lower Kensington and one begins a slow drive up on the ridge. At some point they cross. It’s enough, Martinez says, to put the wind up break-in artists.

He offered some advice. “Lock your doors. I know some residents just leave their door open. And don’t leave your cars unlocked.”

The manager of Inn Kensington, who had joined at that point, noted that people do that in San Francisco to prevent their windows from being smashed.

“We don’t need to do that here,” Martinez said. “Many of the car break-ins in Kensington are of unlocked vehicles, with change and phone chargers the most common items taken.”

Foley and Martinez said that part of their time is spent driving around shutting people’s garage doors, car trunks, doors, and the like. “You’d be surprised how many people leave their car doors open,” Martinez said. “Maybe you’re carrying groceries or wrestling with the kids, and you just forget to shut the door.”

This is not the stuff of TV cop dramas—so is it true, as some allege, that Kensington is not an attractive place to work? “No, this is a great place,” Martinez said, and then allowed that perhaps someone straight out of the academy wouldn’t find it that appealing. “For us it’s great,” he said. “People here are so supportive of the police, people wave, they’re grateful for our help. We don’t have that hostility you find elsewhere.”

Foley chimed in. “At my age, I’m not going to be vaulting over fences in a foot chase. It’s a dream job for older officers.” He explained that after five years, a Kensington officer is eligible for lifetime medical benefits. “That’s a draw.” (Whether it’s sustainable is another matter—see accompanying story on the Matrix final report.)

Foley then turned to the Matrix study, saying that the consultants’ figures were wrong and that he planned to challenge them at the upcoming Saturday morning meeting. Sergeant Keith Barrow was tagged to assert the same at the Thursday meeting. See “From Bad to Worse” for the score on that game plan.

The afternoon at Inn Kensington ended with a financial discussion. Martinez and Foley pointed out that the department could receive grants for officer training and equipment, but someone would have to write the grants—no one has time to write grants *and* police. A suggestion was made that the department could avail itself of the good citizens of Kensington if residents know that the police need volunteer help. Meanwhile, the iced tea was excellent, the discussion interesting, and the rain barely sputtering by the time we walked to our cars.

From Bad to Worse

By Linnea Due

Sergeant Keith Barrow waited until the end of Thursday night’s meeting to challenge Matrix’s figures. He was just gearing up when KPPCSD GM Tony Constantouros cut him off midway and adjourned the meeting. (Many people had left at that point.)

Officer Ted Foley also waited until the end of the Saturday morning meeting, tried to talk without the mic, then got the microphone and while disputing Matrix’s figures, charged that the numbers used by the Matrix team were “lies.” He was interrupted by Constantouros, who later allegedly said that such behavior was an example of what was wrong with the Kensington force.

According to witnesses, Foley and Constantouros talked following the close of the meeting, and Foley ended making a citizen’s arrest of the GM, charging him with misdemeanor assault. This event is under investigation, and Foley and interim Chief Rickey Hull could not comment. Board president Eileen Nottoli, who was in Manhattan during Saturday’s presentation, affirmed by phone that “we have to have a thorough investigation.”

During a phone interview, Constantouros said that he feels that it was a misuse of police powers. “[Foley] made statements that were not accurate, and I called him on it. I told him that it was wrong to give misleading information, and he retaliated against me. There was no assault. I haven’t assaulted anyone in my whole life. That’s a false statement.

“I like the police,” he continued. “I am a strong believer in police departments and the role of the police and the difficult jobs they have. But I won’t accept that kind of behavior. That was intimidation. There’s a history of these kinds of problems in Kensington, unfortunately. [This incident] makes the whole department look bad.”

The video of the Saturday morning meeting reportedly was held back as evidence, though viewers could watch Thursday’s meeting. By March 13, Saturday’s video of the meeting was posted on the district’s web site.

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Kensington Calendar

April calendar

Locations:

Arlington Community Church (ACC), 52 Arlington Ave., 526-9146
Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Ave., 525-0292
Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Ave., 524-3043
Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB), 1 Lawson Rd., Kensington, 525-0302, www.uucb.org

Ongoing:

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30am, Building E, Room A at the park, \$10

Tai Chi Chuan Fridays, 9:30-10:30am, Building E, Room A at the park, \$10

Jazzercise with Kevin Knickerbocker Mondays-Fridays, 9am \$20 class or \$55 unlimited per month. ACC.

Mindful Yoga with Wendy Beckerman Tuesdays, 9:15am, bring yoga mat. \$18 drop-in or discount for series. ACC.

Israeli Folk Dance Wednesdays, \$6, lessons/beginners 8pm, request dance party starts at 9pm. ACC.

APRIL

April 1 Kensington Library Knitting Club “The Castoffs” All levels welcome. Bring your own needles and yarn. Learn new stitches, share your talents, and meet new friends. 6:30pm. Free.

April 2, 9, 16 & 30 Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

April 4, 11, 18 & 25 Baby & Toddler Storytime Stories, songs, puppets, scarves, shaky eggs, and loads of fun! Kensington Library, two identical sessions 10:15am & 11:15am. Free.

April 4 First Thursday Fellowship, 6pm, ACC, free. Monthly potluck supper, all welcome. Rev. Nate Klug will offer a short presentation on “The Weird Genius of the Puritans.” Stick around to learn a little more about some of the spiritual ancestors of Arlington Community Church. Bring a dish to share, and if you wish a beverage, too.

April 6 Neighborhood Volunteer Morning at Blake Garden 9am-12pm. Volunteers can help weed, mulch, and rake the garden ready for spring! Enjoy a rare Saturday morning walk through the garden. Must complete volunteer form before working. Bring garden gloves if possible. Parking limited so please carpool.

April 6 & 20 Technology Tutoring for Seniors with Kensington Library’s new Teen Tech Expert. She will provide answers to all of your Apple brand device questions every 2nd & 4th Saturday from 10am-1pm in the Adult Reading Area at the Kensington Library. Sign up in advance for a 1-hour one-on-one session. These sessions are intended for beginning to intermediate Apple users. Please bring your questions, device(s) and necessary passwords with you. Sign up at circulation desk or telephone for assistance. Free.

April 6 Shred those papers at the Kensington Fire Department’s spring shredding event. Come to the north end of the Community Center/ACC Church parking lot, where you can watch your papers shredded from 10am-2pm. Free.

April 6 Bryan Baker & Friends present piano music and songs by Beethoven, Schubert, Fauré, Puccini, Chopin and Harold Arlen; from the “Pathetique Sonata” to “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” UUCB, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$15 at the door. No one turned away

for lack of funds.

April 7 Dr. W. Frederick Shaw, CEO and founder of Developing Indigenous Resources, which empowers people living in slums of developing countries to provide their own health and human services. “Help Yourself & International Development.” UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

April 8 & 22 Kensington Library’s Digital Docent will answer your eReader and digital library questions every other Monday by appointment at 1pm. This one-on-one 60-minute appointment is intended for people seeking assistance with eBooks and eReaders. Sign up at Info Desk. Please bring your device. Free.

April 11, 18 & 25 Read to Dogs Each week one to three calm & gentle therapy dogs will be at the library, waiting for kids to read to them (or parents of younger kids can do the reading). Call or come by to schedule an appointment. Drop-ins often also work. Kensington Library, 2:30-3:30. Free.

April 14 Stephen Miller, LCSW, Kaiser therapist and teacher of Anxiety, Anger and Sleep classes. “Serenity Now.” UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

April 15 Memoir Group 10am, free. ACC. Free Monthly Memoir Group led by Ruth Robinson in the Fireside Room.

April 15 Cubelets Robot Blocks! Come create changeable robots entirely out of cubes that attach magnetically. There are sensing, action & thinking cubes that cause the robot to move around, spin, light up, detect distance and more. No experience necessary. A fun introduction to simple coding concepts! Best for age 5 and up. Kensington Library, 3pm. Free.

April 15 UC Master Gardeners: Good Bug Bad Bug Master Gardeners explain the difference between pests and beneficial insects in your garden, how to discourage the former and encourage the latter for a healthier garden. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

April 16 Model Hidden messages in an egg! How can you put a hidden message inside an unbroken egg? Italian scientist Giovanni della Porta figured it out back in the 1500s and used it to send secret messages during the Inquisition. We will show you how he did it and let you make a message of your own. Kensington Library, 3pm. Free.

April 21 Easter Brunch, Egg Hunt and Services, UUCB. See uucb.org for details.

April 22 Kensington Library Book Club Discussion of *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* by Joanna Cannon. Book Club is open to all. 6:30pm. Free.

April 23 Magic Dan 6:30pm, Kensington Library. Magic Dan’s shows are a blend of great magic with a whole lot of fun! His captivating performances keep the kids on the edge of their seats. Come join us for a delightful evening of family entertainment.

April 25 Passover Seder at UUCB, starting at 5:30pm promptly. The main dishes will be catered and side dishes are potluck. \$20 adults, \$40 families. Advance tickets on EventBrite. Sign up for side dishes in the church atrium on Sunday afternoons or call or text Marin Fischer 510-798-3551.

April 26 Bridge Night 6pm free, ACC. Monthly potluck and bridge play at all levels for ACCers and new guests.

April 27 Green Engineering and Materials Ezinne Achinivu, PhD, past Fulbright Scholar and now AAUW Fund Scholar researching Biomass Deconstruction will talk at the AAUW West Contra Costa Branch meeting about using Green Engineering and Mate-

rials to develop a sustainable energy infrastructure. Christ Lutheran Church, 780 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito, 10am, free. All welcome.

April 28 Lois Snipes Atkinson, retired social service worker and teacher, student of eclecticism, and UUCB member. “Religious, Not Spiritual.” UUCB, 9:30am. Free.

April 29 How to Grow Tomatoes from Seeds Charlie Costello of Berkeley’s Marilark Farm will talk about saving the seeds from your best tomato crops for the next season and offer insight on how to grow the delicious fruit. Free tomato seedlings while supplies last! Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.



Kensington Police, the Matrix Report, Our Board, the Bottom Line

By Meryl Natchez Rafferty

Over 100 people showed up for two separate meetings to discuss the future of our police force. What did we learn? That there is overwhelming support for our local police force; that while there may be matters requiring supervision and oversight, the absence of a qualified chief over an extended period is a major obstacle; all options recommended by Matrix far exceed the community’s current financial resources, and outsourcing the police does not save money.

At both meetings during the Q&A portion, I cited statistics from the Phase I report that 98 percent of respondents to Matrix’s survey said they feel safe, 85 percent rated their contacts with Kensington police as positive, and 78 percent defined police services as responsive to their needs. My question was: Given the level of satisfaction with the Kensington police, why did Matrix explore outsourcing at all, as opposed to focusing on ways to improve our current services? Matrix answer: “The board told us to.”

My final question after four hours of meetings, and lengthy discussion of alternatives and costs was: Is there a downside to taking steps to improve our current police force by first getting a qualified police chief, staffing up, getting authorization for training and phasing in recommendations for improvement?

Matrix answer: “No. There is no downside.”

Given that, the direction to the board seems clear. We need to either elevate an acting chief from our existing ranks and/or actively recruit a new chief. All improvements depend on improved leadership. We may not achieve “best practices” recommended by Matrix all at once, but with strong, independent leadership, we can move towards them using a phased approach that monitors the impact of each step. And we can afford to do this without raising taxes. The chief could then be in charge of salary vs. benefit discussions, training and equipment needs, possible services to outsource and additional hiring. As Matrix agreed, there is no downside to this approach.

The town recently settled an \$89,888 lawsuit against the interim chief whose contract has been renewed by the board multiple times over the past two years despite protests from citizens. I really have no idea why our board has become so adversarial to the community. Only one board member, Cyrus Modavi, came to both meetings. Sylvia Hacaj came to one. The remaining board members did not attend.

The future of our police is the most critical issue facing our town, but other concerns are present. The cost of increased reliance on consultants, the \$100,000/year paid for a two-day-a-week general manager, the move to replace long-term administrative personnel with five new positions also raises questions about sound management and financial decision-making.

I am not a believer in conspiracy theories, but the recent actions of the board give rise to a wide range. I personally can’t understand why, if the board had confidence in Matrix, they instructed them to explore outsourcing the police department after the results of the Phase I study and the subsequent town meetings on this subject. In 27 years of change management I have never seen the kind of positive numbers our police received.

We could have spent the money on a report that took into account the support of the current force, our financial resources, and a realistic, measurable, affordable path to improving problems. As it is, we have a report that gives us unrealistic and unaffordable “best practices” suitable for a much larger city.

My hope is that the board will begin to be open to discussing these questions. Kensington is lucky to have many citizens with time and energy to offer; we’d like to be part of a constructive process to work together for our town.

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Make Plans to Tour Our Hillsides in Early May

By Clare Sheridan

The sixth Annual El Cerrito Hillside Fest will take place from Friday, May 3 to Sunday, May 5 at sites throughout the Hillside Natural Area, a 100-acre open space in the El Cerrito hills. Presented by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and El Cerrito’s Environmental Quality Committee, the Hillside Fest provides opportunities to explore, hike, and learn about nature, history and geology for young and old—and even dogs.

On Saturday, highlights include a Young Persons’ Nature Hike led by Madera Elementary School PTA and Foundation members in the Madera Open Space; Merit Badges, Community Service and Therapy Work for dogs with Dog Scouts of America from 11am to 3pm (meet at Madera Elementary). From noon-2pm you can learn about the rocks, faults and landslides of our hills, co-sponsored by the Northern California Geological Society (meet at Schmidt Lane trailhead).

On Sunday, join an Early Morning Bird Walk led by Golden Gate Audubon Society member Tara McIntire from 8:30-10 am. Explore the Hillside Natural Area with its magnificent views and grasslands covered with beautiful, native, tangled oak forests, and creeks and learn to identify birds (Schmidt Lane trailhead).

Kids will enjoy a Geology Stroll from 10-11am (meet at Schmidt Lane trailhead), Scavenger Hunt from noon to 3 pm (Schmidt Lane), an Insect Hike from 1 to 2:30 pm (meet at Regency Gateway) and a Wildflower Hike from 2:30 to 3:30 pm (meet at King Court).

Adults and kids may both enjoy a Hidden Poetry/Geocaching Hike from 3:30 to 5 pm. Join Jenny Hammer for a 90-minute family-friendly hike in search of hidden geocaches, both officially registered and ones containing poems. Coordinates of the caches will be supplied. Bring a GPS device if you have one (Schmidt Lane).

Kensington and El Cerrito Fire Marshal Dave Gibson will lead a walk focusing on Preventing Wildland Fires from 11 am to 12:30 pm, addressing volunteers can work together to reduce fire danger (meet at King Court).

The weekend wraps up with an informal gathering from 5-7pm to enjoy views, snacks, and good company (meet at King Court) and Meditation in Nature with Nicole Becker from Ojas Yoga Center high in the hills by a rock outcropping with stupendous views (enter at King Court Trailhead and follow the signs).

The festival is free but maintaining and improving the hillside is not. Please make a tax-deductible donation at www.ectrailtrekkers.org. Learn more at the website.



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