

# Bringing the Community Together

# KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022

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## Keeping Tradition Through Creativity



Two sixth grade classes, 2020 and 2021, participated in a project to beautify a rusting container at Kensington Hilltop Elementary School. Photo by Paul Turin.

By Linnea Due

During months of enforced separation, parents, schools, friends, and relatives have brainstormed ways to mark kids' milestones. When school shut down in March 2020, Kensington Hilltop art teacher Winoka Turin and others gathered to figure out how to celebrate the sixth grade class. "COVID hit, and the sixth graders missed out on the sixth grade stuff they used to do, the promotion ceremony, the camping trip, and more," said Turin. "We thought we could do some sort of legacy project to celebrate." On a parallel track, the PTA was discussing how to make the container that holds the school's safety equipment less of a rusty, dented eyesore. "The two ideas came together," Turin said, "and turned into a sixth-grade legacy project to decorate the container."

Great ideas bring many challenges. Every kid needed to do his or her part of the project at home, remotely, without the artistic ferment that might result in a classroom. Whatever emerged had to function outside, in all kinds of weather. And the resulting piece, made of many parts, had to work as a whole.

To address the weather problem, longtime, now retired principal Judy Sanders suggested printing the kids' artwork on Melamine plates. A company called MakIt provides the service; the kids can upload their art on the firm's website. "They can do it all remotely," Turin said. "And I can make little edits, like brightening the color a bit."

Soon enough the project ran into another

**See Container, page 12**

## Kensington's Police Shortage Mirrors the Nation's

By Linnea Due

Those of a certain age recall when cops were routinely pictured with pig snouts while bumper stickers trumpeted, "In trouble? Call a hippie." Those days are gone, but divisive rhetoric and the fractured relationship communities, especially those of color, have with police departments remain. Kensington has been blessed with its own department, but that too has had its ups and downs, depending upon the integrity of the chief and officers the chief inherited or hired.

Kensington's department has undergone a renaissance of late. Steve Simpkins of the county sheriff's department began the transformation, passed the torch to Walt Schuld, and then to Mike Gancasz, our first permanent chief in some time. The three chiefs embarked on a program of reimagining, rehabilitating, and restructuring that resulted in positive change and a current department that has been lauded by residents who years' back might not have agreed upon the color of the sky.

But storm clouds are gathering—the fire board's decision to make the Public Safety Building fire-only means the police face eviction from their home for decades. Wrote Chief Mike Gancasz in an email, "With an incoming work force disinterested in policing as a career, the uncertainty and risks associated with the profession, and a pay scale struggling to compete with other Bay Area agencies, the uncertainty of where the police will be

**See Police, page 4**

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## Kensington | Market Update

October 2021 to present

	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Detached Single Family</b>	<b>New Listings</b>	<b>Pending Sales</b>	<b>Closed Sales</b>
	Median List Price <b>\$1,649,000</b>	Median List Price <b>\$1,199,000</b>	Median List Price <b>\$1,260,000</b>
	Average Sq. Ft. <b>2,889</b>	Average Sq. Ft. <b>1,829</b>	Average Sq. Ft. <b>2,203</b>
			Average Sales Price <b>\$1,407,000</b>

Could February be the beginning of the start of the Spring market?

Which month do you think most people who are considering buying a home actually start their search? If you're like most of us, you probably think the surge happens in the spring, likely in April. Not anymore. According to new research, Realtor.com sights February for the most monthly views per listing. So, what does that mean? The busiest season in real estate is about to start.

The same research indicates, "Historically, April launched the kickoff of the home shopping season as buyers would come out of their winter hibernation looking for their new home. However, the spring shopping season now starts as early as January for many of the nation's largest markets."

With the reality of fewer homes on the market in the winter, and that supply naturally increases as we head to the spring market, waiting for more competition to list in your neighborhood this year might put you behind the curve. Perhaps now is the time to jump into the market. George Ratiu, Senior Economist at realtor.com says, "As shoppers modify their strategies for navigating a housing market that has become more competitive due to rising prices and low inventory, the search for a home is beginning earlier and earlier."

There is a lot of speculation in the market about why the search for a home is shifting to an earlier start. The one thing we do know is if you're thinking about buying or selling a home this year, the earlier you get started, the better.



Bottom Line

Considering selling next year, now is the time to start planning. Call me if you wish to know what the next steps are to getting ready. If you wish to know the value of your home in today's market, call me. The appointment is both confidential and complimentary.

Ruth Frassetto, CRS | 510.697.8606 | [ruth.frassetto@compass.com](mailto:ruth.frassetto@compass.com) | DRE 00779030

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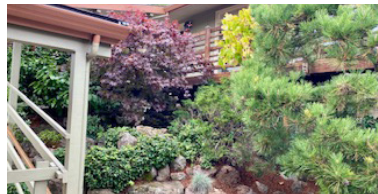
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## Kensington and Beyond Update

November 2021



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Happy Holidays! I am so grateful for a record setting year. I have been blessed with the wonderful clients, beautiful homes to proudly represent and the opportunity to work at Compass. It is simply the best!

Best wishes to you and your families in the coming year.

Ruth Frassetto, CRS | 510.697.8606 | [ruth.frassetto@compass.com](mailto:ruth.frassetto@compass.com) | DRE 00779030

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Jesus is the Light of Hope

2nd Sunday of Advent: December 5, 10 am\*

Jesus is the Light of Peace

3rd Sunday of Advent: December 12, 10 am\*

Jesus is the Light of Love

4th Sunday of Advent: December 19, 10 am\*

Jesus is the Light of Joy

Christmas Eve: December 24, 5 pm\*

A Service of Lessons & Carols with Holy Communion

A Joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus

\*Masks and proof of vaccination required.

For more info, visit  
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## PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDER

### Wildfire Preparedness Workbook

All Kensington households should have recently received the Wildfire Preparedness Workbook from the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD). Thanks go to KFPD's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela for assembling this and for establishing a new presence on social media. This may be one of the most important Kensington documents you've ever received. It is full of important wildfire emergency information, including essential phone numbers, contacts, preparedness guidelines, community communication info, and relevant social media platforms with associated QR codes. Read and act on the items included in the workbook and keep it handy in an easily accessible place, maybe with your go-bag. In any emergency, preparedness and communication are paramount. This document covers both! Stay safe.

—Paul Moss, KFPD Emergency Preparedness Committee

*The Kensington Community Council is dedicated to the improvement, development, and education of the community, and to the promotion of social welfare in Kensington. It enriches the community by providing educational and recreational programs for all ages and by publishing the Outlook, a monthly newsletter that covers local events and issues. KCC also provides a forum for all Kensington community groups to meet and coordinate their respective efforts toward the common good of the community.*

**F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 2**  
**DEADLINES**  
**Advertising Deadline ❖ JAN. 8**  
**Editorial Deadline ❖ JAN. 10**

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the writers and do not reflect the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the Kensington Community Council. Letters must be signed and include the resident's phone number and address (which will not be printed). Letters 350 words or under will appear in the print edition (space permitting). Any letter over 350 words will be printed in the online edition only. Publication of letters and articles is subject to space and the editor's discretion. Obituaries of Kensington residents are printed without charge. All material must be received by the 10th of the month preceding issue date; submit by email to [editor@kensingtonoutlook.com](mailto:editor@kensingtonoutlook.com). No press releases or PDFs; Word documents or text in the body of an email are acceptable. Use one space, not two, after all periods.

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## Letters to the Editor

One Town, One Board

Dear Editor:

We appreciate the article in the October *Outlook* ("Is It Time to Consolidate?") on the need to finally confront the issue of consolidating Kensington's fire and police/community services districts. We suspect there are many K residents who barely understand the unique, two-district structure of our town. We believe that if all our citizens realize how inefficient the lack of coordination between the districts is, they'll overwhelmingly support removing the barrier between them.

One would think such a spare government presence would empower and maximize coordination of decision-making, but the irony is that the districts do just the opposite, as the current prospect of booting the police out of the Public Safety Building so poignantly illustrates. Governing for the benefit of all seems secondary to guarding turf.

Sane governance calls for decision-making and spending according to what the town needs. Instead, we are straitjacketed by jurisdictional boundaries that limit our ability to make the best use of our tax dollars and plan strategically according to the whole community's priorities.

As the article pointed out, the existing situation causes needless and wasteful duplication—two managers, two legal counsels, two financial planners instead of one of each. This hardwired structure makes no sense, and it doesn't exist in any other town around here. A predictable consequence is the growing imbalance of town funds, which has led to an excess fund balance in the fire district looking for something to be spent on, while the police/community services district is struggling to provide competitive salaries for police, management, and staff.

It's time for the needs of our one town to be managed by one board, instead of being held hostage to a jurisdictional divide that makes no sense. We need a single board that governs the whole town seamlessly, and it's time for the community to wake up to this issue.

Karl Kruger, Linda Lipscomb, Len Welsh

Two More Governance Alternatives

Dear Editor:

Recently some residents have been raising the specter of consolidating the police (KPPCSD) and fire (KFPD) districts to simplify administration and save money (I showed last month why it wouldn't). But "consolidation vs. the status quo" is a false dichotomy.

Here are two additional Swiftian "modest proposals." One is simply to dissolve the fire and police districts and let the county handle the services. It's customary for county police to patrol unincorporated areas like ours; Kensington has little crime, and we seldom have more than one officer on duty anyway. Plus we wouldn't need to house police. Fire is already contracted out to El Cerrito, and the Public Safety Building would still house firefighters. The parks could be given to the county. There would be a fee for management, but it would be in the hands of professionals. Some would grouse about "local control," but these same people think the district boards are dysfunctional and out of control anyway, so how much worse could it be to disestablish them?

Or: incorporate Kensington as a town, with an elected council and a professional executive (hired, not elected, not a resident) with broad authority. The fire and police districts could be dissolved, and some of their directors' roles assumed by councilmembers. Administrators under the Executive could manage Police, Fire, and other functions. This would eliminate the lack of coordination between the two district boards and put decisions in the hands of an executive who would have to accomplish goals or be replaced. But it would be costly.

Of the four alternatives (I have no favorite; vox populi rules), "consolidation" may be the most complicated and least efficient. It seems to be driven by some residents who can't accept that our PSB, which currently houses both police and fire departments, desperately has to be renovated seismically, and that these automatically trigger new legal and code requirements of space and facilities that will prevent police and fire from continuing to co-occupy the building. Unfortunately, consolidation won't change these codes and laws.

I'm on the fire district board, but I'm writing as an individual.

Kevin Padian

A Win-Win Strategy

Dear Editor:

At the October fire board meeting, President Larry Nagel discussed a meeting he attended at the Contra Costa Special Districts Association. The primary topic was the planned merger of the East Contra Costa Fire District with the larger Contra Costa Fire District (CCFD). Larry indicated that there are rumors that both Pinole and the Rodeo/ Hercules fire districts are considering merging with the county's district. He went on to say that "the future of the Kensington Fire District may very well be consolidation with the CCFD. I'm talking five to ten years." Larry added, "The beauty of consolidation are economies of scale." The consolidation concept was reinforced by Vice President Kevin Padian who mentioned the fire consolidation in southern Marin as well as Sonoma County. Board director Janice Kosel remarked that Kensington's consolidation with El Cerrito 25 years ago reduced costs.

With so many board members supporting the benefits of consolidation there would seem to be no reason why Kensington should not also consider consolidating with the CCFD, along with El Cerrito, whose financial situation is very dire. Why wait five to ten years if there could be immediate cost savings? Moreover, consolidation would mean the Kensington fire district would not need to rehab the entire Public Safety Building (PSB) for fire use only, thereby allowing space for the continued use of the police.

It is most unfortunate that Larry's remarks were not the basis of further discussion and evaluation. Instead, at the November board meeting, the fire board discussed what is shaping up to be a very expensive remodel of the PSB for fire use only. So rather than embracing a cost-effective solution for both fire and police, we are heading down a path that will create long-term economic costs for Kensington citizens. It seems than some of our elected officials prefer a lose-lose rather than a win-win.

Jim Watt

Job Done

To the Editor:

Fix Our KPD was formed in 2018 by concerned Kensington residents to reform and professionalize our police services. The group came together in response to continuing

problems with poor management, lack of accountability, and exposure to the risks and liabilities of an in-house police force. We represented a mix of community members whose voices would otherwise not have been heard. Our approach was data-driven, collaborative, transparent, and civil.

While a reform board had already been elected, the multiple crises that precipitated their election had receded and with it public momentum for reform. We advocated for contracting as a means to effect change in the department's culture, but our bottom line was structural change with an overhaul of policies, leadership, and personnel.

What eventually occurred was a series of "turn-around" interim chiefs who radically remade and professionalized the department. They set new policies (including use of force), created progressive discipline, recruited new hires, and professionalized record-keeping and data management.

With substantial improvements in Kensington's governance and police services, including 100 percent officer turnover, we see our mission as having been completed. Members of the group will continue to remain involved with police services as well as other issues that affect public safety. For the time being, the Fix Our KPD group has decided to disband knowing it made a difference and that our police department now has a blueprint for ongoing improvement.

We would like to thank all the community members who supported our efforts and made generous contributions.

David Bergen, Tom Dean, John Gaccione, Andrew Gutierrez, Marina A.P. Gutierrez, Eyleen Nadolny, Craig Rice, Marilyn Stollon, David Tuft

BART Parking Woes

Dear Editor:

Our elected BART director Rebecca Saltzman dealt an intentional blow to the future of El Cerrito Plaza station parking. Based on survey data, BART staff recommended a policy to build 100-250 onsite parking spaces for BART riders (currently there are 740) in conjunction with the new housing development on the station parking lot. At the BART board meeting October 28, Saltzman insisted on lowering the minimum threshold to 60 spaces, but at the request of San Francisco BART Director Li, agreed to change the motion to lower the minimum spaces to zero. This was done despite a number of letters from Kensington residents and John Gioia to Saltzman asking that parking be provided due to the lack of alternatives to the station is maintained. Write to board president Mark. [Foley@bart.gov](mailto:Foley@bart.gov), [BoardofDirectors@bart.gov](mailto:BoardofDirectors@bart.gov) and cc: [KPOAssoc@gmail.com](mailto:KPOAssoc@gmail.com) explaining your lack of other reasonable options to access the station.

Gail Feldman

Treasuring Community

Dear Editor:

In the wake of our traditional day of thanks I wanted to send out a few thoughts along with a heartfelt message of gratitude to all of you. When we started the current farmers' market twelve years ago, we did it with the goal of making it a commercial success. Over the years we discovered something far more profound and rewarding than just a project's commercial viability.

We found a renaissance of community and solidarity in the growth of this weekly event that was truly greater than the sum of its parts. While we were helping to nurture small farms and family businesses, we also discovered an all too often missing ingredient in our lives—social connection with our neighbors and families along with healthy delicious food.

We got to witness young children listening and dancing to live music, quite possibly for the very first time. We even watched many of them grow up and become shoppers themselves. Our vibrant community of musicians came to share their talent and artistry along with the kale, honey, corn, and all those delicious baked goods.

Many people thank us for making this kind of community possible, but it could only have become the current reality through the thoughtful and caring people who come every Sunday to say hello to each other and meet those families and individuals that bring their hard work from the fields, the kitchen, and the sea.

With the combined efforts of our board, editor, and neighbors, we have accomplished something rare and welcome in these challenging times: coming together with no other group identity than the simple pleasure of being with each other.

Though Thanksgiving has passed, it's never too late to say it again: Thank you Kensington, Berkeley, El Cerrito, Albany, Richmond, and all of our shoppers who take time to spend their Sundays with us.

Chris Hall, manager of the Kensington Farmers' Market

Smarter than We Know

Dear Editor:

This morning, as I was driving up Coventry toward Arlington, I encountered a small flock of our local turkeys. The one male was standing with his back to me with his fan of tail feathers fully displayed as his "harem" crossed the street. Having just come through Albany with the kids on their way to school, stopping as required when the crossing guards raised their hand and STOP sign, it occurred to me that our male turkeys seem to intuitively know how to be crossing guards, without having received any of the attendant training that we humans apparently need.

Also want to report that on a recent trip to our nation's capitol, I visited its suburb of Kensington, Maryland. It is about the size of our Kensington. I met the town manager, and at his request have sent him a copy of our *Kensington Past and Present*.

Kris Whitten

## Take Care with Pets over the Holidays

Treats, furry visitors, too much ruckus—pets can get cranky or overstimulated during the holidays. And that's if they don't get sick! Be sure to feed pets a normal meal, not treats from the dinner table, especially not alcohol, which is poisonous to dogs. If friends bring their own dogs to dinner, introduce the visitor in a neutral area and keep your cats in a safe place apart from the dogs. It's smart to have your animal microchipped in case a dog escapes in a strange neighborhood. Lastly, even if it seems rude, let your guests know the lay of the land: no treats from the table, pretty Phoebe sometimes scratches when she tires of being petted, etc. Better safe than sorry, a sentiment with which we are all too familiar. Adapted from the Humane Society. —Linnea Due



Police  
...from front page

housed exacerbates an uphill battle when it comes to convincing qualified applicants to apply for a job in Kensington.”

Like nearly every department in the country, Kensington is dealing with what many call a perfect storm. Said Gancasz in a phone interview November 3, “Police departments everywhere are resorting to desperate tactics to recruit officers due to retirements, fear, fewer young people today interested in policing. Hiring is slowed down in the industry across the country. We just happen to be a small organization so it hits us hard.”

Gancasz ticked off reasons why young people don’t want to be police officers: “Increased scrutiny and criticism of police. Widespread media coverage and protests make it more difficult for departments to recruit any officer. A lot of competent people who would make good officers are refraining because they feel they could go to prison for doing their jobs.”

Then there is the lure of technology, especially in the Bay Area. “Higher pay, cafeterias with any kind of food, stock options,” Gancasz said. “Young people come in now and want to be sergeants right off the bat. They’re comparing policing with other career paths, and policing comes up short.”

Gancasz said that department poaching is rampant. Kensington does thorough background investigations before hiring any officer, and training and backgrounding is expensive. A candidate pre-vetted by another department is a prize.

In a special meeting in late October, the KPPCSD board approved hiring bonuses of \$10,000 and a referral bonus of \$1,000, paid to anyone besides the GM or the chief who refers an officer who is eventually hired. A retention bonus was approved at the November 11 regular meeting for \$10,000 paid over two and a half years. These bonuses give Kensington a fighting chance at recruitment, but job-hopping has become an issue with every department.

“We’re playing Money Ball here in Kensington.”  
—Police Chief Mike Gancasz

“We’re playing Money Ball here in Kensington,” said Gancasz. “We’re competing with major-league police departments with bigger payrolls that offer a variety of opportunities. To recruit and train a new officer takes a lot of money and time. The field training program is sixteen weeks. Probation for a new officer is eighteen months. It costs about \$60,000 to put a cadet through a police academy. There is no guarantee that a cadet will succeed in the department that put them through. Sometimes an agency will end up letting the recruit go during probation.”

He explained that Kensington’s hiring bonus is meant to attract lateral police officers. “They’ve already completed probation and been through the academy. We’ve received 35 to 40 applications and interviewed 25 to 30 applicants. We made conditional job offers to five of those people, but three failed to meet the stringent requirements during the background phase. We’ve been successful with two.” One was hired November 8, and another will come on board November 29. Two more are in the backgrounding phase. The November hires replace two recent departures, Tamiko Fodor and Roy Bang, Kensington officers moving on to new departments.

“The name of the game is to retain employees,” Gancasz said. “You need to make those employees feel valued, that their ideas are listened to. I’ve talked to more people who are interested in a good work environment and a positive work place. Law enforcement retirements are not what they were. Depending on age, a newly hired cadet may have to work more than 35 years in the profession to be eligible for retirement.”

Gancasz holds no grudges. “I want the best for those two who are leaving,” he said. “I would welcome them both back, and they’ll get good referrals. They want better pay, different challenges, more stability.”

The desire for stability, Gancasz said, refers to the uncertainty around the Public Safety Building. “They’re looking out for their families,” he said. But he is optimistic, partially because the situation in Kensington is so positive. “The board of directors has been incredibly supportive. They are absolutely 100 percent supportive of this police department. They didn’t bat an eye when we asked for a hiring bonus.” That bonus sunsets on December 31, 2023 or whenever the department is fully staffed, whichever comes first. The union must approve the bonus; the district is in negotiations with the union, with bonuses part of those talks.

Gancasz also praised interim GM Rick Benson, Lieutenant Brad Harms, and Sergeant Amit Nath. He said that Harms and Nath have traveled to academies and departments from San Jose to Eureka, looking for quality cadets and lateral transfers who want to work in a small town that focuses on community policing and plenty of interaction with residents. “I think we’ll look back on this in a year and say remember when,” Gancasz said. “We should have a waiting list for people wanting to work here.”

Gancasz has his own creative ideas for reducing job-hopping and department poaching while affording younger officers the chance to experience different methods and communities. In “Could Workforce Sharing Help Solve the Police Recruitment Crisis,” an article for *Police1*, Gancasz writes, “Instead of agencies competing against one another for qualified talent, departments could partner to offer exchange programs. Qualified officers could transfer between agencies for set amounts of time (2-5 years).... Workforce sharing is not new to law enforcement. Specialized task force teams comprised of officers from various agencies have proven successful and can be a model to build from.”



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What’s most important for Kensington is not to go backwards. Said Gancasz: “We’re making progress recruiting. And we’re scrutinizing every applicant. We’ve come too far to risk what we’ve accomplished with the department by hiring someone just to fill a spot.”

Passings

Linda Spath passed away on October 28 at the age of 74 after a courageous two-year battle with cancer.

Linda was an active member of the Kensington community, attending many meetings and serving on the board of the Kensington Improvement Club. As the secretary of the KIC board, she was both efficient and meticulous in her documentation of meetings. As a KIC board member, Linda singlehandedly worked with the Contra County Public Works Department to install the “Welcome to Kensington” signs that are along the major roadways as one enters Kensington.

With degrees in both Library Science and Law, her research abilities combined with her critical thinking and perseverance made her an asset to any project or initiative. Always thoughtful of others and creative in problem solving, Linda could be counted on to go the extra mile for someone in need of assistance. Linda was a beautiful, thoughtful, and gracious person who gave much more than she ever expected to receive.

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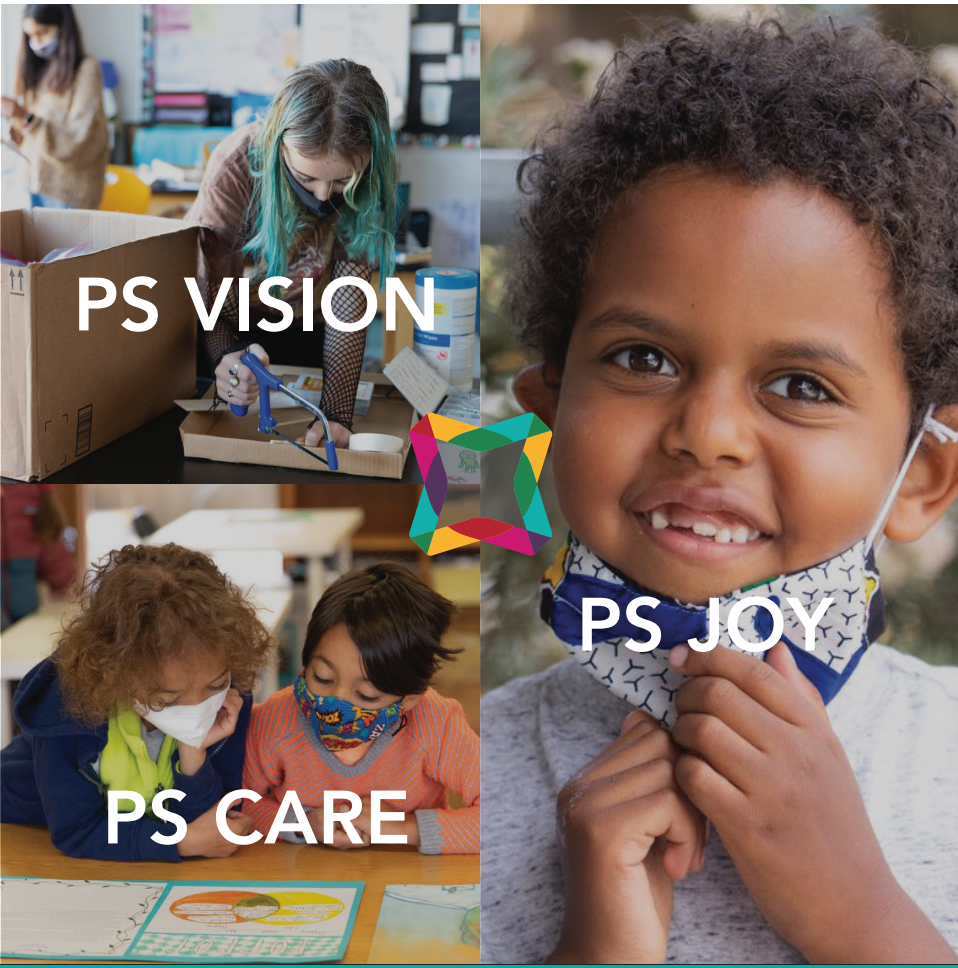
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Coyotes a Catalyst for Controversy

By Linnea Due

Lately NextDoor has been full of coyote talk: sightings, missing cats, fearful residents, and those who believe coyotes were here first, and that we need to coexist with our wild neighbors. Says Project Coyote’s National Carnivore Conservation Manager Dr. Michelle Lute, “So-called human/wildlife conflicts are often more about disagreements between humans.”

Kensington is a classic wildland/urban interface, with Tilden on our east, El Cerrito’s Hillside Natural Area on our north, and Kensington’s own canyons, some large and deep, some so hidden behind houses as to be almost invisible. People may not visit these areas, which are often difficult to access, but they are home to foxes, bobcats, deer, owls and hawks, raccoons, opossums, and coyotes, among other species.

An occasional mountain lion may trek through as it circles its territory. This capacity to nurture the wild is what attracted many of our town’s two-legged residents, and it’s one of Kensington’s most precious attributes.

When I described my experience with one of Kensington’s coyotes, that the animal would turn its head and ignore my presence as if I weren’t there, Lute said that was common. “Perceived risk can really vary among individual humans,” she said. “All things are in the eye of the beholder. If some spot a coyote in the middle of the day, they see its presence as a risk. If the coyote approaches, they perceive it as an attack.”

Coyotes, she emphasized, are wary of people. She said that people feeding coyotes, unintentionally or out of misguided kindness, create problems, mainly for the coyote. She quoted a well-known saying that applies to most wild animals: “A fed coyote is a dead coyote.”

Unsecured compost can be a lure. “A source of conflict is attractants in the backyard,” she said. “Compost, bird seed that attracts rodents.” Companion animals can be at risk,



and I mentioned the number of cats that had been taken by coyotes.

“There are other predators of cats,” she cautioned, mentioning the major “predator”—cars. “But it sounds like the coyotes have learned to identify a source of food in the area. Cats have to be under supervision or stay indoors. This can apply to small dogs too.”

To the oft-repeated story that coyotes entice larger dogs to play or chase so a hidden group can dispatch them is false. “This is not something they do,” Lute said. She explained that in some states, depending upon prey, coyotes will act as a group, but not in California, where individuals hunt rats, mice, and rabbits. “Drought or local fires might impact larger ecosystem issues,” she said. “And there are times food sources are so low they might look closer to human habitation for food.”

She noted that coyotes are more active at different times of the year. They breed in February or March, and gestation is three months. This means that late spring or early summer is when pups are born. Some in Kensington have had the experience of coyotes seeming to follow them. “Coyotes exhibit what we call ‘escorting behavior,’” she said. “If people, especially those walking dogs, come close to a den where there are pups, the coyote will follow along until that person gets a safe distance from the den, and then the coyote will turn back. People misinterpret that as stalking behavior. And sometimes the coyote is just curious, particularly young coyotes in the fall, who are striking out on their own. Individuals have personalities just like any other animal.”

Lute and Project Coyote are partnering with the Kensington Police Department to distribute educational material. A variety of brochures are available at the station, including examples of how to safely secure compost. “If you get all the neighbors playing along, then you reduce interactions and problems,” Lute said. “But if you have one neighbor who won’t secure an attractant in his backyard, then it causes problems for all neighbors. Food experiences are indelible for animals that spend their lives looking for food.”

Some have said that coyotes should be hazed to “go back” to Tilden. “Coyotes have a natural fear of humans,” Lute said. “We recommend hazing if there is a continual conflict. Get big and loud. But just seeing a coyote at any time of day or night is not a reason to haze.” (Examples of hazing are on the Project Coyote website.)

I mentioned seeing a coyote with mange. “Unfortunately, coyotes are getting mange far more often because of eating poisoned rodents,” Lute said. “Coyote prey are pretty small, and the rodenticide affects the coyote’s blood so that they get mange more frequently. Please don’t use rodenticides at all. If you’ve got coyotes, you’ve got built-in rodent control.”

She mentioned that coyotes occasionally take deer fawns. “Usually, these are fawns that are weak because of other factors,” she said. “Fewer deer starve if predators take a few.”

She noted that coyotes have expanded and contracted their range over the millennia. “Coyotes are thought of as a Southwestern species that expanded. They just arrived in New York a couple decades ago. But going back across the historical record, they were coming back to New York. Wolves will suppress a coyote population. When we exterminated wolves, we created a system that needed apex predators. That’s why we’ve seen them expand again in the last century.”

The Project Coyote website has much more information and videos about living with coyotes and other wildlife. See projectcoyote.org and also pick up some brochures from the Kensington Police at the Public Safety Building, 217 Arlington Ave.

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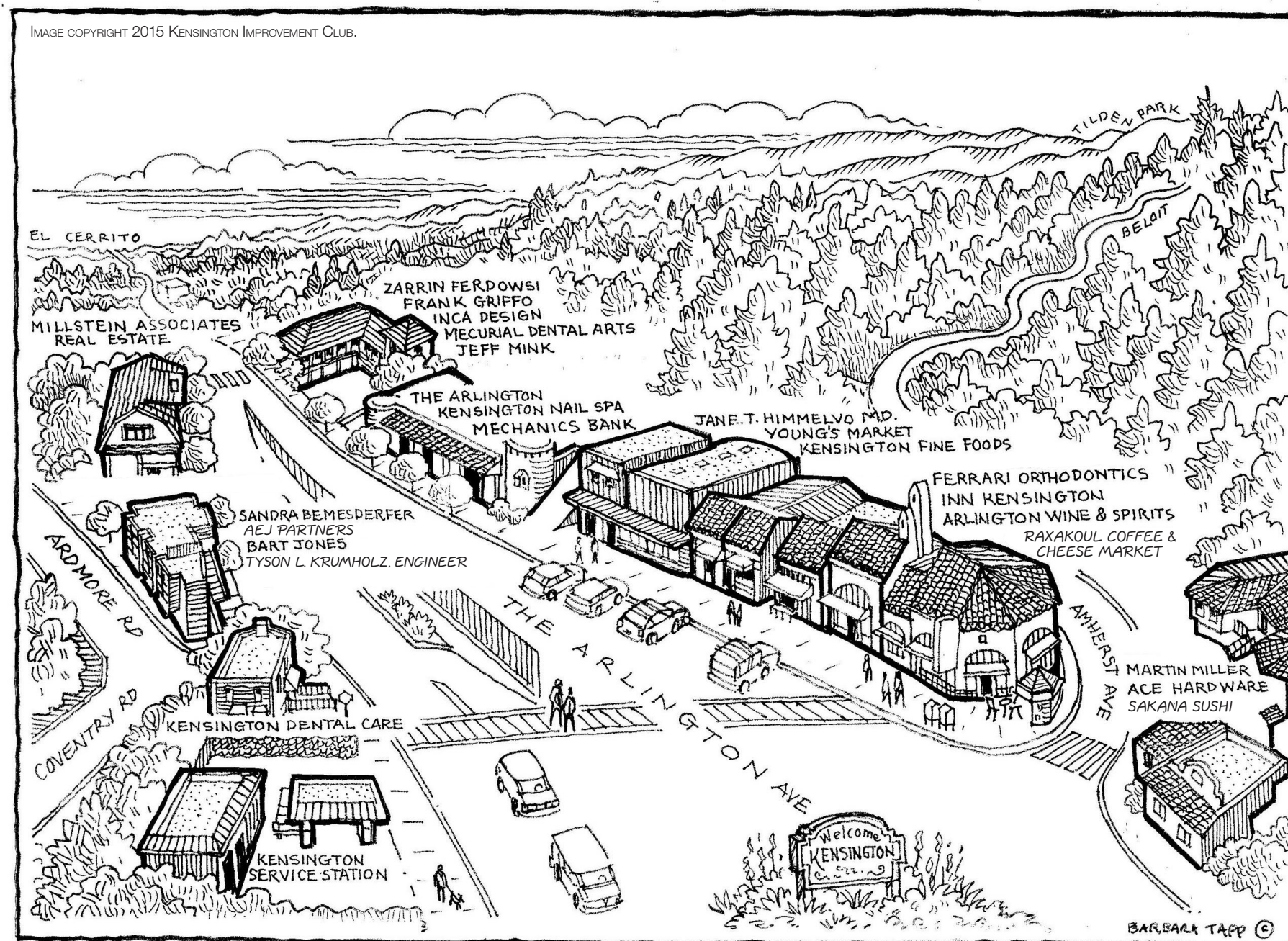
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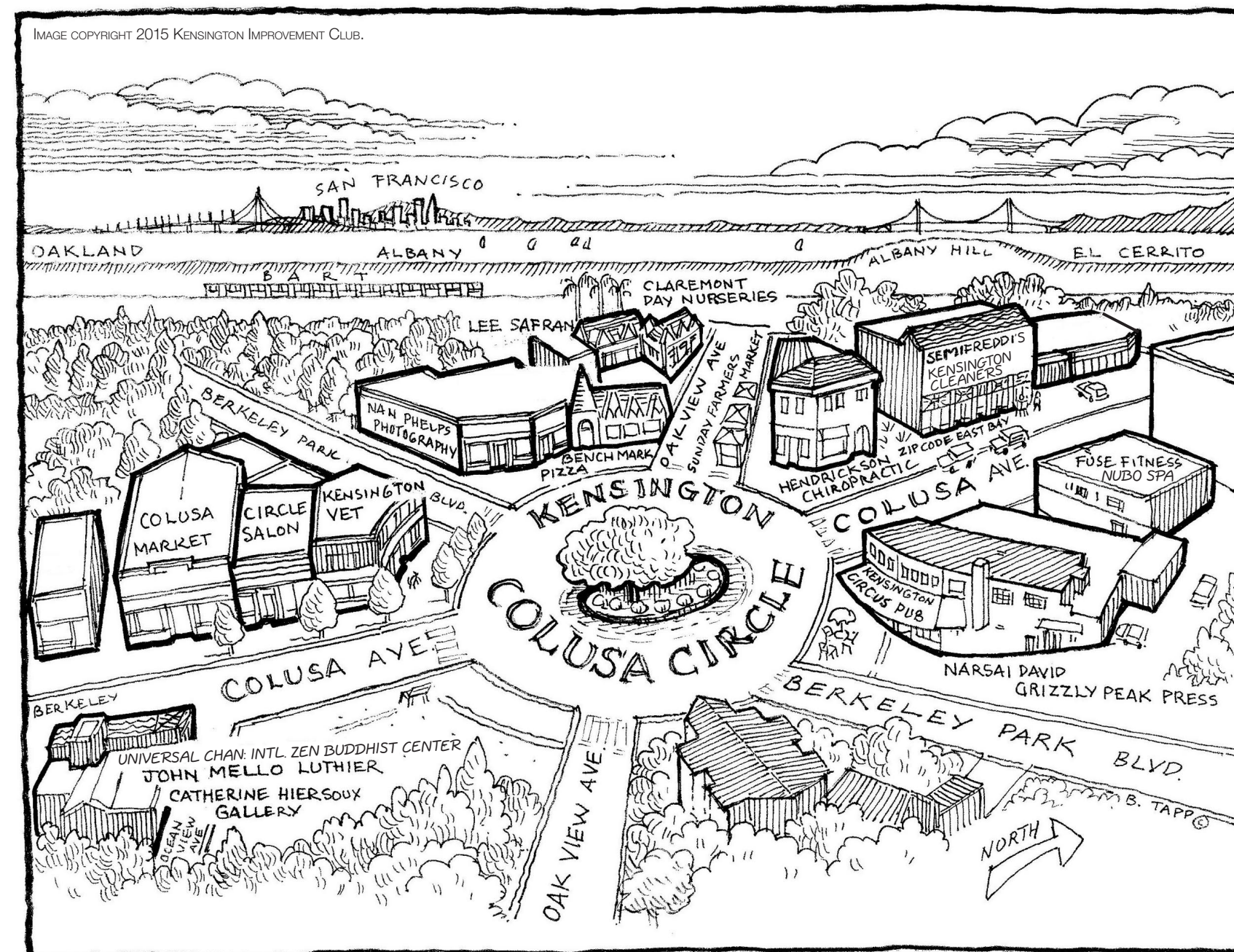
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## Colusa Avenue





## October Police Log

On October 7 at about 7:30am, KPD and KFD responded to the 100 block of Edgcroft Road on a report of a medical emergency. Upon arrival, first responders located a deceased male who had been in declining health and appeared to have died naturally in his sleep.

On October 7 at about 1:35pm, KPD was dispatched to the 500 block of Beloit Avenue on a report of a possible fraudulent activity. After investigating the incident, it was determined that the suspicious email was a legitimate warning from a company advising their customers to be on alert of possible identity theft.

On October 18 at about 9pm, KPD was dispatched to conduct a welfare check on a person in the 100 block of Norwood Avenue. Upon arrival, through a window, KPD saw the outline of a person lying on the floor. Forced entry was made to ensure of the safety of the person, and upon entry it was determined the person had been deceased for a while. There were no signs of foul play, and the Office of the Sheriff's Coroner's Division responded and conducted a parallel investigation to determine the cause of death.

On October 19 at about 5:40pm, KPD responded to a report of a welfare check in the 300 block of Colusa Avenue. Upon arrival, it was determined that one person violated a Domestic Violence Restraining Order, and as a result was arrested and booked into the County Jail for PC273.6-Violation of a Domestic Violence Restraining Order.

On October 23, at about 3:20pm, a resident in the 200 block of Stanford Avenue reported their 1999 Honda had been stolen. The vehicle was entered into the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) and in less than 24 hours, the vehicle was recovered by Richmond PD and eventually returned to the owner.

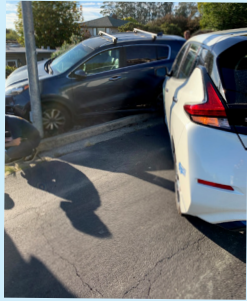
On October 27 at about 2:15pm, KPD was advised of a cold Hit & Run Collision that took place 5 hours earlier. During the investigation, a suspect was identified, and the driver was successfully located and contacted the next day in El Sobrante and cited for CVC 20002-Hit & Run. More importantly, the suspect's insurance information was obtained to help cover the \$3,511.53 in damage to the victim's car.

On October 27 at about 7:30pm, KPD was advised of a cold catalytic converter theft in the 300 block of Ocean View Avenue.

On October 29 at about 4:30pm, a two-vehicle minor injury collision took place at the intersection of Arlington Avenue and Kenilworth Drive.

On October 29 at 7:30am, KPD was dispatched to a stolen van in the 700 block of Wellesley Avenue. The vehicle was placed into CLETS.

On October 31 at about 3:15pm, both the KFD and KPD responded to the 100 block of Rincon Road and located an elderly male who appeared to have died from natural causes. Lifesaving measures were performed with no success.



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## Have You Done Your Homework?

By Johnny Valenzuela,  
Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

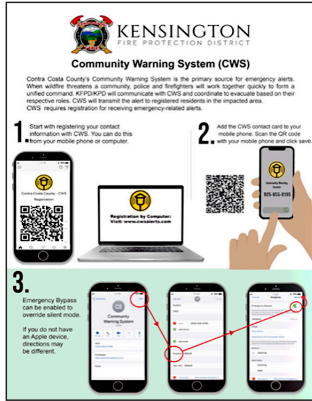
In October, the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) published a Wildfire Preparedness Workbook and mailed a copy to all Kensington residences. This workbook provides residents with the tools necessary to access information and engage with the KFPD.

The publication has a Communication Toolkit. Each of the communication tools provides a unique asset to Kensington. If you wonder why there are so many platforms being used for communication, it's because each platform has unique benefits (and limitations) that the others don't possess. Unfortunately, there is no single platform that is a one-stop shop; this is why we call it the Communication Tool Kit. Much like a master carpenter needing many tools for a project, your success in being well prepared and informed relies on how reliable and timely information is accessible to you.

Kensington residents are encouraged to use their mobile devices and explore what is in the Communication Toolkit. If you are not on the Nextdoor app, you may have missed a post we published about QR Codes, what they are, and how they can be beneficial for accessing information with ease. If you are not subscribed to district emails, you may have missed the opportunity to hear updates related to the Public Safety Building renovation.

Kensington residents have the opportunity to be the most informed community with a high level of engagement with the KFPD. Take a second look through the Wildfire Preparedness Workbook, and find all the action items for you to build your own Communication Toolkit. We look forward to engaging with you online!

If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to Johnny Valenzuela [jvalenzuela@kensingtonfire.org](mailto:jvalenzuela@kensingtonfire.org).



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## Good News from the Library

By Kara Sheetz

Kensington Library is now offering Books for the Homebound! This is a free accessibility and delivery program designed to help patrons who can no longer come into the library on their own. If you, or someone you know, would benefit from home delivery of the items available at the library, please contact library staff at 510-524-3043.

And even more good news: Kensington Library is looking for community volunteers! Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age and show proof of vaccination. We are looking for an art coordinator and a technology tutor. The art coordinator recruits local artists and schedules regular art exhibits to be displayed in the quiet reading area. The coordinator helps hang and remove each exhibit on a bi-monthly rotation schedule.

Technology tutor: Are you comfortable using various devices to check email, download e-books and e-audiobooks? Can you reset passwords and stream movies? You can be our next library tech tutor! Seeking someone for regular weekly tutoring sessions. Teens are encouraged to apply.

If you would like to volunteer for either position, please fill out the volunteer interest form at [ccclib.org](http://ccclib.org), and contact Anasa Tatum at 510-524-3043 during library open hours for more information.

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We welcomed three awesome realtors to the ZCEB family: Laura Dubinett, Melissa Eizenberg, and Zoe Lui. We are growing our team, so get in touch if you want to be a part of a group who practices real estate as a force for good.

As a Giveback Homes Brokerage Partner, we donated funds from our sold listings to help build homes for those in need.

We continued our community initiatives by hosting two recycling drives that helped divert used batteries and art supplies from the traditional waste stream.

We hosted a Giveback Homes Build Day in Oakland, volunteering as a team to make essential repairs for a community member so that they could live safely and well in their home.

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Container  
...from front page



Hurdle three was solved with the foresight of Turin’s husband Paul, a mechanical engineer who thinks ahead. “As we were discussing what kind of adhesive to use to affix the plates to the container, Paul said, ‘You know, if you glue those plates on the container, kids are going to use it as a climbing wall.’ That could have been....” She paused, no doubt picturing mayhem and broken limbs. “I just hadn’t thought of that.

“Paul said, ‘Here’s what we’ll do,’ and he described a process in which we cut circles into a wood holder, with the plates absolutely flush. They’re so tight no one could get a finger in there.”

Paul Turin and members of the Dads’ Club applied adhesive and caulking to mount the plates, and then they all installed the wood panels on the freshly painted container. Winoka Turin painted the profile face blowing all those scintillating bubbles.

“So many people worked on this,” she said. “It was heartwarming.” Turin did the legacy project on her own time, apart from her art classes at school. The PTA and Kensington Educational Fund paid for the materials, and Turin wanted to especially thank new principal Megan Burnham for unlocking the school on the weekend and Mario Presa, the school’s custodian, “for cheerfully helping me lug, shift, heave, turn, and store the panels.” SoulMind Studios sourced the special wood panels that can withstand the weather.



Winoka Turin

The project transformed a rusty, dented container into a thing of beauty—and it became one of the many gifts that teachers, staff, community members, and parents have given kids to make the pandemic bearable.



Dads' Club members apply the final touches and mount the panels on the old container



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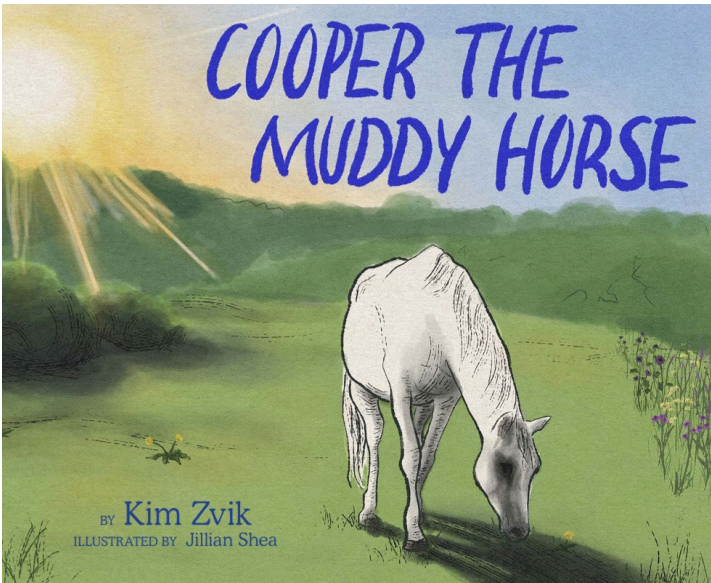
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Muddy Horses, EBMUD Land

By Linnea Due  
The new children’s book, *Cooper the Muddy Horse*, by Kim Zvik, must be the only book dedicated to a municipal utility district, in this case and fittingly, EBMUD. Longtime Kensington resident Zvik said that she came up with the idea to write a children’s book during the Covid shutdown. “I’d written another book years ago that was an adult book and kind of dark. I wanted to do something more defined.”



Zvik keeps two horses on EBMUD land in the East Bay Hills. There she met a woman who mentioned that she does book layouts. Earlier, Zvik had posted a notice on Next-Door, asking for someone to paint a mural. She got a response from a graduate of California College of the Arts, Jillian Shea, who painted a coyote on Zvik’s house. When Zvik contacted Shea, Shea said she’d be interested in illustrating a children’s book about a muddy horse—“So it came together by a bunch of different people,” Zvik said.

The horse in question is a double Polish Arabian with a fancy registered name, more familiarly known as Cooper. Zvik got him when he was eight and rode him for years. “My kids grew up riding him, and I got to see him all the way until his later days,” she said. “It was so wonderful to have this happy animal nicker at you.” Cooper passed recently at an advanced age.

In simple language, the book explores watersheds and their connection to drought management and conservation. “People don’t understand what a watershed is,” Zvik said. “We’re so fortunate to have those trails and a place you can board your horse for \$80 a month. Otherwise those hills would be full of houses.”

But mostly it’s a story, told through Cooper’s eyes, of the perils of getting a bit too muddy. The book, published by Edition One in Richmond, is available on Amazon or through Zvik at kimzvik@gmail.com.



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