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Clockwise from top left: The Plymovent System yellow hose fits onto the exhaust pipe. When the engine starts up, exhaust is vacuumed via a filter and vented outside. The hose automatically disconnects for rapid departure. Top right: Three refrigerators for three shifts—no more “borrowing” from another shift! Bottom right: The black boxes, located in the meeting room closet, connect to the countywide dispatch centers for fire. A special tone signals Station 55 calls and also announces calls to which 55 may be needed as backup. Bottom left: The much-argued about downstairs meeting room; critics wonder who will use it. Refrigerator photo by Tim Barry, others by Linnea Due.

Julie Stein Speaks Out on Resignation from the Fire Board

By Linnea Due
Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) board director
Julie Stein resigned from the board on December 20, 2024.



During a phone interview on January 10, Stein talked about her experience as a director and her eventual disillusionment with the board. Stein served from 2018-2024.

You had the most votes of any candidate for either board in 2022. Did you consider that a mandate and if so, for what?

The reason I ran was because I was determined to help bring the police back to Kensington. If that meant using some portion of the Public Safety Building (PSB), then I hoped that I could help lead that. In my campaign statement I wrote, “I am running for reelection in 2022 to work on a cost-effective and seismically sound solution to permanently house both fire and police in Kensington, while protecting Kensington’s open spaces and assets for community use.”

You ran as part of the slate of candidates on a platform that included restricting the park for recreation only and putting the police back in the Public Safety Building. Now the police are not in the building and it appears their most likely landing spot is in the park. What happened?

Back in February of '23, the ad hoc

See Stein, Page 6

PSB Open House February 8

By Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

The public is invited to an Open House at the newly renovated Public Safety Building at 217 Arlington Ave, on Saturday, February 8, from noon-3pm. We are excited to invite the community to explore the enhancements made to the facility, marking a significant milestone in our commitment to public safety and emergency preparedness.

The Open House will allow you to tour the building, meet your local firefighters and emergency responders, and gain valuable information on how to protect your family and home in emergencies. We'll also share insights into our ongoing and future initiatives aimed at enhancing community safety. For more visit www.kensingtonfire.org/openhouse

Stein

...from Front Page

committee of Jim [Watt] and me and Sarah [Gough] and Alex [Aquino-Fike] from the police side got some good news. We were told that the fire chief and the police chief would discuss bringing a police presence back to the PSB. Mary [Morris-Mayorga, at that time interim general manager of the KFPD] scheduled a call with Jim and me to say the fire chief was open to this as long as there was no evidence or ammunition kept in the building. [El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Chief Eric Saylor was concerned that fire-fighters could be exposed to fentanyl if evidence from a police investigation was stored in the building.] Then we were told that the police chief had agreed to discuss this with the fire chief. It was good news. Even though this would likely require two locations for police, we thought we were headed toward a solution. Then those letters from the unions came out. Some people assumed those letters were from the chiefs, but they came from the unions. Our board voted in April '23 to send a letter to the KPPCSD that we welcomed a proposal from them to use the first floor to come back into the PSB. They never acknowledged that letter, and the police directors stopped working with us after that. Then they gave the PowerPoint presentation at their May 7 meeting saying that moving back into the PSB was no longer an option. We weren't given any warning. It was a shock. We thought we had it solved.

How would you describe your tenure on the board between 2022-24?

I felt that it started out positively because I felt that both boards were on the same page about looking for a solution to house our police and bring them back to Kensington. When that fell apart, it became less productive. Conversations immediately turned to consolidation, but I felt that community sentiment really was about bringing the police back to Kensington. I felt that it was a very small group of people who were pushing consolidation, and in some way, there was an element of revenge on former fire boards.

Why did you resign?

There were several reasons. I felt that we were not pursuing a neutral evaluation of consolidation. I was very frustrated at the November 7 '24 joint meeting. I'd spent a lot of time preparing feedback about Ridgeline's analysis of the financial aspects of consolidating the two districts. But it became clear at that meeting that there was very little interest in critiquing the joint analysis. We had agreed that the analysis would first go to each individual board and then suddenly it became a joint meeting. That silenced any meaningful dialogue about the impact and the joint analysis. Then there is my decreasing confidence in the financial management of the fire district and the pushback on my raising my concerns. It became a no-win proposition for me to continue.

What do you consider the most pressing issues facing Kensington?

I think it's imperative that we have management staff who at minimum live within easy driving distance of Kensington. We have managers who could not easily drive here if we have an emergency. The fire district manager lives a good two hours away, and the police district manager lives in Portland. In an emergency, we need managers on deck. I'm also concerned that district decisions and activities have become paralyzed pending consolidation. Another reason that I ended up becoming disillusioned was that I was really inspired by some of my early meetings with Eric Saylor. I thought that maybe we could use the Kensington fire district as a nexus to help coordinate fire coverage on this side of the hills. Our dispatch is coming from the other side of the hills, Albany has a separate system, Berkeley a separate system. The ambulance service is disjointed. I was inspired by some of his ideas that we could bring together services from across county lines. I had put a lot of hope into the idea that our board could have these discussions with him. It would be a more modern, regional way of solving public safety service delivery problems. That to me was a consolidation that made sense. I don't think consolidation should be used to solve what are essentially administrative problems. But I was unable to get the fire board to even have discussions about that.

What should residents be worried about?

In light of the LA fires, I think that residents are learning about what would have made a difference to saving homes and saving lives. Residents should insist that we take a rational and evidence-based approach to public safety and fire protection and prioritize how we focus our resources for the safety of Kensington. For instance, home-hardening has really made a difference. We need an education campaign on home-hardening. And more emphasis on evacuation planning is critical. Taking the fire district's accumulated resources and potentially diverting them to building a police station for a very small police department is going to have a massive effect on resources for fire protection.

If you could go back and change a few things, what would those be?

The one thing that I've thought a lot about is if I could go back to 2020 I would have changed the fire district's decision to change the way the district is managed. The fire district used to function the way every other fire district does, with the fire chief playing a central role and the district manager managing finances and the El Cerrito contract. I think making the switch from a district manager to a general manager attracts a different kind of individual to the job that is not beneficial to a small fire protection district. We also enacted a set of policies that distanced the board from financial oversight—really, oversight in general. I know why it happened, but I wish we would have slowed down and taken our time. We had too many changes all at once in 2019-2020. I think that Janice [Kosel] had a lot of good ideas in 2019. She was the voice of experience, but instead we adopted changes that would have been better off if we'd adopted them as pilot proposals that could be reevaluated in a year or two. For example, the emergency preparedness committee has ended up using a lot of staff resources. I think it should be evaluated, but there seems no turning back. We should have slowed down before making some of these decisions that became permanent.

Do you have regrets?

Honestly, I regret having run again. I was not planning to run again, and so I did something I didn't really want to do. That almost never turns out well. And then I regret staying. My objective was bringing the police back to Kensington. When I saw that fail, I should have left then. And then I was very invested in forming a strategic cross-county effort at fire prevention on this side of the hills. As soon as I saw there was no interest in investigating that, it was another time I should have left. I believe it's bordering on negligence to dissolve a fire district in times like this. I've been hanging on, and that usually doesn't turn out well. It's a life lesson.

You've been one of the hardest working board directors. What will you do now in your "free time"?

Well, certainly I have a number of personal projects that have fallen by the wayside. I have professional opportunities. I'm looking forward to taking on as new challenges. I'm trying to consider how to channel what I've learned as a fire protection district director in a way that could have positive outcomes for the community. For example, writing grant proposals with what I've learned. Being an individual contributor. You can use your voice as a private citizen more effectively sometimes than you can as a board director.

Valentine's

...from Page 3

the French troubadour tradition. Which, according to my research, was influenced by singing slave girls from Muslim Spain. We've come a long way since those ballads sung by lute-strumming dudes in tights and long hair. Those angst-ridden songs of longing and poetry, were the predecessors of the many genres of the modern love song.

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Kensington Community Education

Photo: Mohammad Minhaz/Unsplash

KASEP: Kensington After School Program



In January, KASEP kicked off another exciting session, offering over 75 engaging classes each week for kids in TK through 6th grade! From sewing, judo, and gymnastics to circus arts, tennis, cooking, and hula hoop, there's something for everyone to enjoy and explore.

Mark your calendars for Spring Registration:

Tuesday, March 4th 7:00 PM: TK & Kindergarten, 7:30 PM: Grades 1-6

Don't miss out on the chance to sign up for our fun-filled and enriching classes!

Other important dates

Winter break February 17-21 Summer Camp Registration February 25th Spring KASEP Registration March 4th

Summer camp

KCC is excited to announce another fun-filled summer of KCC Summer Camp for 2025! Designed for children entering 1st grade in Fall 2025 through incoming 6th graders, our camp runs for 9 weeks, from Monday, June 16th, to Friday, August 15th. Families can enroll by the week, giving you flexibility to fit your summer plans. Each day is packed with engaging activities, including tennis lessons, arts and crafts, sports and games, and exciting themed activities like carpentry, ceramics, Legos, and more. Join us for a summer full of creativity, learning, and fun!

Online Camp Registration opens February 25th at 7:00pm We will begin taking camp counselor and CIT applications in March.



Winter Schedule for Adult and Family Classes

Slim Chance Circus School - All-Ages Unicycle and Juggling Class

Discover the joy of circus arts with our unicycle and juggling class hosted by Slim Chance! Whether you're a total beginner or looking to refine your skills, this class is open to all ages and skill levels.

When: Thursday evenings, 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Where: Recreation Building Classroom A (Kensington Park near the flat upper lawn)

Cost: \$20 per person (drop-in). Family discounts available!

Join us for a fun-filled session where you'll learn balance, coordination, and creativity while mastering the art of unicycling and juggling. No experience? No problem!

Come solo, bring friends, or make it a family affair—everyone is welcome.

Family Yoga in the Park with Lori Hess

Join Way to Glow Kids Yoga for some family yoga time where parents and kids will playfully explore yoga poses, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities together. Family Yoga will take place on rotating weekend days @ 10:00-10:45 (kids aged 2 to 5) on the grassy lawn outside the KCC Office/ Recreation Building (past the tennis courts). If possible, please bring a waterproof blanket/tarp, two yoga mats (we will have extra mats available), warm layers, and a water bottle. February dates: Saturday 2/1, Sunday 2/9, Saturday 2/15 and Sunday 2/23. Suggested cost: \$25 per class; discounted tuition and scholarships are available. Class will be run on a drop-in basis. Please complete a registration form at https://bit.ly/38Sq91k and contact Lori Hess waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

The Kensington Outlook can now be found at: KensingtonOutlook.com Archive copies can also be found on our website dating back to 2003.

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Recreation Building Kensington CA 94707 E-mail: Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org, or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.

Cardio Dance with Karma Smart Fridays 11:30am-12:30 Community Center Cost \$15 drop in or register online Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am Drop-in fee is \$15 Yoga with Anja Borgstrom Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am Gentle Yoga - Thursdays at 11:30 Cost is \$20 drop in or register online Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes

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KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Embrace the Warmth at Pho Ao Seng
By Ittai Shiu



As the temperatures drop and winter's chill sets in, there's nothing quite as comforting as a warm bowl of Pho (pronounced fuh). The classic Vietnamese dish featuring rice noodles served in a rich broth with meat and veggies is perfect for those cold days. And for the residents of our community, Pho Ao Seng in Albany has been the go-to spot since 2015.

Perfect Pho broth is an art that requires time and patience. The process involves simmering beef bones with an aromatic blend of star anise, cloves, cinnamon, coriander, cardamom, and fennel for hours. While this meticulous preparation ensures the highest quality, the time investment is never felt by customers. The service at Pho Ao Seng is friendly, efficient, and fast...and I mean lightning fast, quicker than many drive-thrus or fast-food joints. It feels like the moment you set down the menu after ordering one of their signature combinations, a steaming bowl of goodness is placed in front of you.

"Fresh" is the key theme at Pho Ao Seng. The diverse combinations feature fresh ingredients like beef, brisket, meatballs, tripe, and tendon. Fresh veggies such as bean sprouts, mint leaves, and chilis accompany every meal, allowing diners to add them to their bowls and customize their dining experience. Not to be overlooked are the fresh-cut flowers adorning the restaurant, adding fragrance and elegance to the environment.

While Pho is undoubtedly the star of the show, there's much more to explore on the menu at Pho Ao Seng. Their specialty Chicken Noodle Soup (Pho Ga) offers a less busy but equally warming option, with rice noodles served in a long-simmered chicken broth with tender shredded chicken.

If you're looking for a starter, the rolls are a must-try. One of my favorites is Bo Bia, filled with dried shrimp, scrambled eggs, jicama, and peanuts, offering a balance of crunchy veggies and savory sausage. Another popular option is the Nha Trang Style Grilled Pork Spring Rolls, a delicious blend of grilled pork paste, lettuce, mint, carrot, cucumber, chive, and rice vermicelli, all wrapped in thin rice paper.

Bun (pronounced Boon) are rice noodles typically served cold, with hot toppings or broths. Consider the Bun Cha which is served with Hanoi Style Charbroiled Pork in light



fish vinaigrette or the Bun Bo Xao Xa which includes thinly sliced beef stir-fried with lemongrass and herbs served over a bed of shredded vegetables along with house fish sauce. These provide a delightful contrast in textures and temperatures that are great options moving into the summer.

For now, if you find yourself shivering from the cold and yearning for something to raise your temperature quickly, head over to Pho Ao Seng. The shortest distance between you and a warm, hearty meal is just an order away.

Pho Ao Seng
655 San Pablo in Albany

Save the Date for Second Town Hall on Consolidation

By Daniel Levine, president, Kensington Fire Protection District
The Kensington Fire Protection District and the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District will hold a joint Town Hall on March 1 at 10am in the Kensington Community Center on the proposal to combine the two districts into one unified district. There will be a presentation on the issues from both boards' committees and the opportunity for the community to give comments and ask questions.

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Passings

On November 30, **Barbara Wylie Nelson** died in Grand Junction, CO., where she lived near her daughter Karen. Barbara was born in 1930 to Margaret Hilson Wylie and Robert Lyons Wylie, in Manchester, New Hampshire. She grew up in New England during the Depression and had many memories of times of shortage. During World War II she lived under blackout conditions at night as a precaution from Nazi submarines. After Barbara graduated from high school, her family moved after her father accepted a transfer to Swift and Co., a meat packer in Portland, OR. Barb served as secretary to the Dean of Students where she was also a student.



Barb was a lifelong swimmer. During her time in Oregon, Barb joined a water ballet group and performed in the first water ballet show in Forest Grove. When Barb was 21, she moved to Berkeley, where she served as secretary to the superintendent of the Berkeley Unified School District. She met and married Henry (Hank) Nelson in 1955.

When Barb gave birth to their first son Scott in 1957, she stopped working, and the family moved to Kensington. They had Barry in 1959 and Karen in 1962. Barb and Hank spent many of their summers camping and hiking with their children while traveling across the country, stopping at historical sites, museums and national parks. Barb shared her love of hiking, swimming and gardening with her children.

She was active in the Friends of the Kensington Library, including serving as president. As their kids got older, Barb became a part-time gardener—including serving as the gardener for the town of Kensington.

She and Hank traveled extensively, including bicycling in Holland, visiting Turkey, hiking in Costa Rica and driving trips along the California and Oregon coast. Barb lived a good and long life and was a much-loved mother. She was predeceased by Hank. Barb left this world under her own terms without fear and looking forward to the next adventure. Barb had the love and support of her three children right up to the end—which is now a new beginning. Barb's family and friends hold gratitude for her love and many years of friendship.

Wendy Street Bergman, age 81, passed away on September 26, 2024. She was born on February 26, 1943 in Denver, CO. to Dr. Bernard and Ms. Mary Lou Street, the second daughter in a family of four children. After the war, Wendy and her family moved to Northfield, MN. Wendy entered Carleton College and met her husband Robert ("Bob") Bergman there; they were married in the Street home in 1965, shortly after Wendy's graduation. Bob had graduated from Carleton two years earlier and was pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of Wisconsin. Wendy joined him there where she completed an M.A. in Education.



After several more moves and the birth of their two sons, Michael and David, Wendy's growing interest in early childhood education led to her active participation in Kensington Hilltop Elementary School, where her boys were enrolled. Later she obtained her CA teaching certificate at UC Berkeley, and then was employed as a full-time teacher at Manzanita Community Elementary School in Oakland. She remained in regular contact with many of her teaching certificate classmates who have remained in the Bay Area.

While she was employed and even after she retired, Wendy continued to contribute to the community around her, especially with organizations dedicated to education. She participated extensively in parent organizations at El Cerrito High and in the Read Aloud Volunteer Program at West Contra Costa County Schools and in CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Contra Costa, spending hours working on the education and well-being of mostly disadvantaged kids. Encouraged by her mother Mary Lou and sister Susan, Wendy became a member of the P.E.O. Chapter EL, a philanthropic educational organization where women help women to achieve their educational goals through scholarships.

Wendy was consistently kind and thoughtful; she almost never declined requests for help. She was a consummate cook, amassing several hundred recipes. She loved to entertain family and friends and never seemed to lack for a cheerful word, even with others who were dealing with difficult times in their lives. Wendy struggled with slowly increasing dementia during the last nine years of her life, but almost to the end she never failed to brighten when family or friends came to see her. She could never walk by flowers without remarking about how beautiful they were, and she could never walk by a small child without initiating a cheerful conversation with them.

Wendy is survived by her children David and Michael, her husband Robert, her siblings Susan and Bernard, and her grandchildren Darren and McCovey. Please join us in making donation(s) to the BASIS program of Community Resources for Science (Bay Area).

A resident of Kensington since 1987, **Gina De Sousa** passed away on December 26. She was born in Boston, Massachusetts on July 5, 1940. She was a member of a large Cape Verdean community.



Gina had a number of friends in the Bay Area but no relatives. She has cousins in Boston, including Tony and John Costa.

Gina had several careers: Accounting, horticulture, real estate, and social work. She began working as a social worker in the '70s for the county. She became a licensed clinical social worker in 1981. In 1995, she went into full-time private practice as a psychotherapist. She was a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

Gina loved movies, theater, comedy, and live jazz and blues. She also loved spending time with her poodle dog, Taffy. A memorial service will be scheduled at a future date.

Longtime Kensington resident **Violette P. Gallardo** passed away in October at the age of 97. She is survived by her three children, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Vi Gallardo was born in Minot, North Dakota to Ukrainian immigrants Mike and Lydia Philipanko. Their extended family was part of a wave of homesteaders establishing wheat farms in the area.



At the age of 14, Vi moved to Sacramento to live with family members who had migrated to the West Coast, where she attended high school and Sacramento State. Vi then relocated to San Francisco, where she held various administrative positions. She met her spouse of 66 years, James F. Gallardo, through her brother-in-law at a Bay Area boating event.

Vi became enamored of the Kensington community on a visit prior to her marriage and hoped to settle there. After their first son Gregory, was born, Vi and Jim purchased their home on Rugby Avenue and subsequently had two more children, Janice and Charles, residing in Kensington from 1958 to 2022.

Vi held several important positions, the last of which was as a grant administrator in the Botany Department at UC Berkeley. She also assisted at Gallardo Interiors after retiring from the university.

Vi was very active in community events throughout her long tenure in Kensington. She was an Honorary Service Member of the local PTA organizations from kindergarten through high school, as well as teaching Sunday School at Arlington Community Church. Vi was reliably involved with her kids' activities, including scouting and running the snack shack for baseball. She made sure her kids were exposed to the arts, music, and sports, and was a strong guide and support in their academic paths.

As her children matured and moved into their adult lives, Vi became a member of PEO, rising to statewide positions. Vi spearheaded a reentry program connecting PEO and UC Berkeley, interviewing female students needing scholarship assistance. Vi was particularly proud of the successes of this program.

She was a member of a successful women's investment group (TWIG) and devoted countless hours to the Turnabout Shop in El Cerrito, a resale boutique that provides orthodontia services to underserved children.

Vi's great passion and acumen at raising orchids drew her to the El Cerrito Garden Club, where she held many positions. When Vi left the area in 2022, she donated her stunning collection of orchids to a local orchid rescue.

Vi was well-known for her great sense of style, taking great pride in her wardrobe throughout her life, with a preference for beautiful and colorful outfits. Her style was also evidenced by her expertise in planning events and her impeccable sense of taste and excellence in cooking. An avid reader, Vi was a member of three book clubs.

Vi's generosity and loyalty to close friends and family is an inspiration to all who knew her. She lived with a determination to assist those in need and greatly valued staying connected to current issues throughout her community and the world at large. She is greatly missed.

We are all grieving the loss of **Eileen Rose Amandes McNally** who recently passed away from cancer on December 4. Born on July 2, 1960 in Burlington, Wisconsin, Eileen was the seventh of eleven children of Phil and Virginia Amandes; she was raised in Crystal Lake near Chicago. Married to Peter McNally in 1998, Eileen and Peter raised their two children Clarissa (25), Gwendolyn (22), and dogs Casey, Jasper, and Gavin in their home of 26 years in Kensington.



Soon after earning her degree at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington in 1986, Eileen relocated to the East Bay in 1987 where she applied her education in nutrition and health, which led to a career in medical administration at Gandy Clinic and at McKinnon Institute in Oakland. She had a deep love and appreciation of live music which she honored by signing on as a "Blue Coat" with concert promoter Bill Graham Presents for 10 years where she was fortunate to meet up backstage with talented musicians whom she admired greatly such as Bonnie Raitt, Jacob Dylan, and the most gracious Tom Petty.

Eileen was passionate about advocating and standing up for what she believed in. She attended many protests and was involved in local politics, fighting for environmental causes, social justice, women's health and healthy food for everyone. Having embraced the virtues of a healthy and organic diet since college, Eileen shared and applied the virtues of healthy and balanced nutrition with her family. She also had a love for working with children. Eileen spent her time in the 2010s helping the KASEP enrichment program, which was a truly rewarding experience for both Eileen and the youngsters of Kensington!

Other cherished family memories include summers with the girls at Lake Tahoe, weeks in Hawaii, Lair of the Bear family camp, home exchanges across the states and Europe, road trips throughout the west, and shows at the Greek Theater. Eileen was into bicycling, hiking, yoga, and cross-country skiing.

A celebration of life memorial event is planned for Sunday afternoon May 25, 2025 at the Coventry Grove amphitheater at 500 Coventry Road. In lieu of flowers, you are encouraged to donate to the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, 1388 Sutter St. #901, San Francisco, CA 94109 or www.BCPP.org.