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— Bringing the Community Together —

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

Available Online at www.KensingtonOutlook.com

FEBRUARY 2026

A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 1

How the Kensington Fire Department Prepares for Extreme Weather



By Eric Saylor, El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Chief

As extreme weather events become more frequent and unpredictable, the Kensington community often asks an important question: How is the fire department preparing to keep us safe during high-risk conditions? One key part of that answer is temporary staffing increases at Fire Station 55 during extreme weather events, when requested and fully funded by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

Why Extreme Weather Matters in Kensington

Kensington faces a unique combination of risks during certain weather events. Strong winds, low humidity, and dry vegetation can significantly increase wildfire danger, while winter storms can bring heavy rain, landslides, and downed trees. The community's steep terrain, narrow roads, and limited access routes mean that even a small incident can quickly become challenging if conditions are severe.

Power outages and limited cellular coverage during storms can also delay emergency notifications or response. Because of these factors, Kensington is considered a high-risk area during extreme weather, and advance preparation is critical.

See Extreme Weather, Page 6

KCSD Board Meetings Deal with Fire Threats, Possible Ordinances

By Lin Due

The first thing attendees noticed at the December 11 Kensington Community Services District meeting was that the A/V problems that had plagued October and November meetings were fixed. A dress rehearsal in early December solved the issues, and residents can now access the meetings on Zoom. The next board meeting is February 12 at 7pm.

Electing officers was quick after Sarah Gough withdrew her name as potential president. Sylvia Hacaj and Daniel Levine were elected president and vice-president respectively. When to meet came up next: Fire Chief Eric Saylor is unable to attend Thursday meetings, and interim general manager David Aranda proposed changing the date to Tuesdays, when Saylor can attend. After a debate, the meeting was kept at the second Thursday, with the proviso that a representative from the fire department attend.

Emergency coordinator Johnny Valenzuela described a group forming of Firewise communities along the East Bay Regional Parks border. Worry arose that these Firewise groups or Fire Safe Councils (a separate entity from Firewise) might compete for grants, but Lori Gomes, on the board of Firesafe Kensington, or FSK, said there is no competition, and that grantors prefer collaboration among groups. Also, she noted, FSK is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that qualifies for grants not available to other groups.

The board then approved an \$80,000 hazardous vegetation grant and discussed the

See KCSD, Page 5

In Kensington, timing the market matters less than understanding it. Too many people worry about buying too late or selling too early. But this isn't a market you catch—it's a market you read.

Inventory, buyer behavior, and pricing here don't follow broad East Bay headlines. They shift subtly—street by street, view by view, property by property. The best outcomes come from understanding how those changes are unfolding now, not from waiting for a perfect moment.

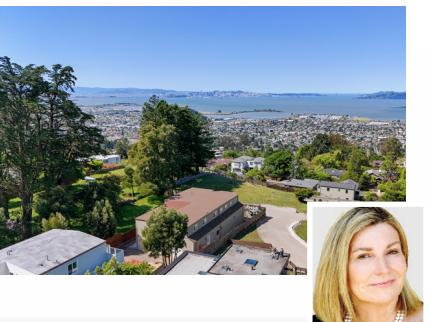
If you're thinking about selling or making a move in Kensington or the East Bay, clarity about today's market is your greatest advantage.

If you want a grounded, local perspective on what today's market means for you, I'm happy to walk you through it. Complimentary. Confidential. No pressure.

Ruth Frassetto
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An Update on Flock Cameras

By Anya Sophie Behn

On December 8, the Richmond Police Department turned off the Flock cameras in Richmond until further notice, after discovering the cameras are networked with millions of others across the country.

And a few months ago, a judge in Washington ruled that all the video data collected by "community cameras" is public information. Anyone can request and get access to that video. This ruling caused several communities to turn off Flock and end contracts with Flock since access to the videos is not restricted or protected to remain local.

Because Flock is a private software company, there are few laws, particularly around our data. Lobbyists for software companies have been focused on no regulation since the Internet became public. Beyond HIPAA, this functionally means no rules for software companies. They can do whatever they want with our data, despite any promises they make.

In addition, Flock Safety is being sued by many communities for misrepresentation of privacy, selling video data to ICE, FBI, etc., despite promises to the contrary. Berkeley, Oakland, and Richmond, like Kensington and many other communities, have restrictions against sharing data with federal agencies, yet that happened anyway.

Selling the nationwide linked community videos to ICE and other government agencies

See Flock Cameras, page 4

December Patrol Log

By Chief Mike Gancasz

Dec 4: Identity theft reported at the police department.
Dec 6: Non-injury accident reported on Arlmont Dr.
Dec 8: Casualty report taken at Marchant Ct.
Dec 8: An intoxicated individual in the Colusa Circle business area was arrested and transported to the county jail.
Dec 11: An intoxicated individual on Coventry Rd. was cited and transported to a hospital.
Dec 11: Robbery reported on Arlington Ave.
Dec 12: An intoxicated individual on Marchant Ct. was cited and transported to a hospital.
Dec 14: Residential burglary reported on Kerr Ave. Officers utilized the Flock community safety camera database to identify leads.
Dec 16: Traffic stop on Arlington & Amherst; Driver arrested for DUI, vehicle was impounded.

Dec 16: Non-injury hit & run collision on Arlington Ct & Highgate Ave.

Dec 18: Stolen vehicle reported on Colusa Ave. Officers utilized the Flock community safety camera database to identify leads.

Dec 21: Grand theft of property reported on Arlington Lane.

Dec 24: Grand theft by false pretenses reported on Highland Ave.

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Funding Approved for Vegetation Removal

By Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

At the December 11 board meeting of the Kensington Community Services District, the directors approved \$80,000 in funding for the third round of the Kensington Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement Grant, reinforcing the district's commitment to wildfire risk reduction and evacuation safety.

Previous grant cycles targeted vegetation removal on individual parcels, helping reduce hazardous fuel loads near homes and along neighborhood streets. Building on that progress, this funding round continues to prioritize individual parcel applications, with a focused effort to remove high-risk vegetation such as bamboo and juniper. The range of hazardous plants extends beyond bamboo and juniper, particularly where these fuels impede evacuation, narrow roadways, or pose risks near parked vehicles.

What's new this cycle is a higher reimbursement threshold that enables larger-scope projects. Projects exceeding \$2,000 may qualify for a cost-share structure, allowing more complex and impactful work—such as eucalyptus removal. This approach expands the program's reach while ensuring funds are still used strategically to reduce wildfire risk.

Applications are available online starting March 1, 2026, and are due by May 31, 2026. Program details, qualifying hazardous vegetation, and the online application are available at www.kensingtonfire.org/grant

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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.

MARCH - 2026 DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ♦ FEB. 8
Editorial Deadline ♦ FEB. 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. 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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Passings

Binta Kemunto Iye Maina was a caring young woman with a beautiful soul who had an unbreakable and undying love and loyalty to her family and friends. She was born at Alta Bates Hospital to Samuel Ouya Maina and Isha Iye Bundu Maina on March 18, 2004. She is a triplet with two brothers, Ondieki Maina and Bockarie Maina, and has an elder sister, Ouyanatu Maina.



Binta was a lifelong Kensington resident. She tragically passed away in her senior year at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN on November 10, 2025 at the age of 21 years.

Binta attended Kensington Nursery School, Kensington Elementary School, Fred T. Korematsu Middle School, El Cerrito High School, and Macalester College.

She was involved in several sports activities from an early age. She played varsity soccer for ECHS, competitive soccer with Mavericks, and competitive softball with ABGSL Sting. She played recreational soccer with El Cerrito Futbol Club and Mersey Soccer Club. She also played recreational ECYB baseball, ABGSL softball and enjoyed fencing.

Binta was a senior at Macalester College where she was majoring in biology and neuroscience, and minoring in psychology and history. During her senior year, she was also involved in conducting research on the effects of iron deficiency in infants at the University of Minnesota. She planned to attend medical school after graduation to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a doctor—specifically a neurologist.

Binta worked as a medical scribe in several Twin Cities hospital emergency rooms and as a building manager in her school's campus center. When at home on school breaks, she worked at iScream and Insomnia Cookies. Binta also refereed soccer games locally with her siblings in their middle and high school years.

She still found time to participate in many college activities and clubs, making friends easily in sports fields, classrooms and at work. She was the centerpiece of many friend groups and enjoyed going out dancing with her friends and siblings. She also took great pleasure in cooking and baking with her family at home, and for her brothers and with friends in college.

Binta loved traveling. Her most recent trips were visiting New York City with friends in October 2025, and traveling with her sister Ouyanatu in the summer of 2024 to Kenya and Sierra Leone to see their grandmothers Sarah Maina and Zainab Turay. Binta also enjoyed road tripping across the country with her mama and sister, visiting 33 states. They were already planning their fourth road trip to be followed by a trip to Copenhagen after her graduation in May 2026.

Binta was passionate about helping people and specifically the education of girls, reflected in much of her coursework and the sponsorship that she, her sister and their mother have been providing to students in Sierra Leone. As a continuation of Binta's legacy, a scholarship fund has been established in her name to expand the provision of educational opportunities to more students in Sierra Leone and Kenya, and through an endowed scholarship at her alma mater Macalester College. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-binta-maina>

From childhood, Binta was always happy and stylish. She was smart, loving, honest, generous, kind, funny, bright, and was known for her welcoming infectious and beautiful smile. Though she died young, she lived life to the fullest, and many people will remember her for her iconic sayings - "YOLO (You Only Live Once)," "It's not that deep," and "Tighten up." Binta is deeply missed by her parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, classmates, professors and work colleagues here in the USA, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

Lorraine Osmundson, beloved mother and grandmother, passed away at her Kingston Road home on December 6, 2025. She lived in Kensington for 66 years, having moved here from Berkeley with her family in 1959. She lived to be 104 years and four months!



Lorraine was born in 1921 on a farm in West Concord, Minnesota. There was no running water, electricity, etc. Her father lost the farm to the Great Depression, and the family moved to Sioux Valley and later moved again to Lake Park, Iowa. In 1939, she attended Iowa State College in Ames, where she earned a degree in math. There she met Ted, a landscape architecture student. The day he graduated, they married and took off for San Diego. She worked for Consolidated Vultee, a company building bombers for the war. She was not a "riveter," but worked in accounting. They soon moved north to the Bay Area; first to Oakland, then to Berkeley.

Lorraine enrolled at UC Berkeley and earned a degree in architecture. She did some small design jobs, but in 1948, she gave birth to the first of three sons and became a full-time mom. In 1963, Lorraine got her realtor license, working first for Dorothy Wilcox and later Mason McDuffie. There, in 1975, she became office manager, overseeing some 25 employees. After eight years, she stepped down but continued on as a realtor, finally ending her long career at E.J. Millstein & Associates in Kensington at age 85.

In 1964, Lorraine became a member of the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC), in which she was active until 2018 (54 years). She served one term as president. In 1966, she was involved in the construction of the amphitheater behind the Community Center. Her husband, Ted, designed and oversaw its construction. She and her husband also donated time designing and supervising volunteers in the construction of the Colusa Circle roundabout.

Lorraine always had a strong work ethic, was good with numbers, and her congenial personality won her many friends and contributed to her many successes. She always stayed busy, which might explain, in part, her exceptional longevity. Lorraine and Ted traveled extensively around the world. After Ted died in 2009, she carried on living alone at her beloved home, and managed two apartment buildings she owned in Berkeley. She spent her last years overseeing the restoration of her backyard garden, also originally designed by Ted. She enjoyed long conversations with John, her hired landscaper, who became her friend and confidant.

Lorraine claimed her greatest achievement was raising her three boys, with whom she has always kept in close contact and supported in every way. After suffering heart failure at the end of 2022, her youngest son, Douglas, moved in with her and looked after her care until her passing exactly three years later. He remains in the family home. Lorraine is survived by sons Gordon, Richard and Douglas, and three grandchildren, Leif, Raina, and Alicia. She will be missed by many.

Letters to the Editor

Flock Cameras Are a Surveillance Tool

Dear Editor:

The Flock system not only reads license plates, it retains the information for 30 days. I can think of no plausible reason for this. Certainly, KPD officers on patrol have data that alerts them about all vehicles associated with any sort of crime, so that they can react if they see such a vehicle. The Flock system likewise could, or should, have the same information, and it would seem to be an obvious benefit for law enforcement if the Flock system alerted KPD in real time the moment such a vehicle passed through an intersection.

But what benefit is gained by knowing that a vehicle passed through an intersection 30 days ago? Only in an extremely far-fetched scenario could that be helpful in apprehending a criminal. Given how quickly and easily a vehicle can move, it's even hard to imagine the tangible benefit of knowing if a vehicle went through an intersection yesterday—today it could be 500 miles away.

The reality is that this system is a mass surveillance tool, and yet another brick in the ever-growing structure of total surveillance. That is a threat to us as citizens of a free country seems painfully obvious. The police are tasked with the difficult task of protecting us from unlawful behavior, so it is only natural that they would want any tool that would help them do that. Concerns about the social ramifications of this tool is not their remit. It is the responsibility of the citizens, through the KCSD, to evaluate the costs and benefits, which is certainly tricky. But I would suggest that the small potential benefit that would accrue to us as citizens of Kensington is outweighed by the harm to us as Americans done by furthering total surveillance.

The basis of our legal system is that we are to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Mass surveillance tools, by their very nature, assume guilt. I would ask the police board to have the Flock system removed, and another vendor identified that can provide valuable public safety without the onerous surveillance side effects.

James Terrell

AC Transit Needs to Hear from You

Dear Editor:

I understand that AC Transit listens to its community so, if you have comments on the recent realignment of bus service in Kensington, I urge you to let AC Transit know: online at actransit.org/contact, by phoning customer service at (510) 891-4777 (option 2), via social media, and by mail at AC Transit, 1600 Franklin St., Oakland, CA 94612. We need to advocate for restoration of half-hour service in Kensington.

We in Kensington now have a new director to represent us: Harpreet S. Sandhu has been appointed to the Ward 1 seat on the AC Board of Directors, filling the vacancy left by the death of H. E. Christian Peoples. Mr. Sandhu will serve until the November 2026 election results are certified. Ward 1 has 24 bus lines traveling through it and includes Kensington, Albany, El Cerrito and surrounding communities.

AC Transit, suffering budgetary shortfalls, implemented in August a "Realignment"—adding, deleting, and changing bus routes and schedules after a lengthy period of analysis and public comment. Unfortunately, realignment has resulted in significant diminution of service in Kensington of lines some of us consider vital: lines 7 and 67.

Bus no. 7 traverses the Arlington on its route from BART Del Norte through Berkeley to Emeryville. Its frequency has dropped from every 30 minutes to hourly. Line 67 from Berkeley via Spruce, reaches into Kensington at Kenyon and Trinity. Service went from 30 minutes to hourly and weekend service was eliminated. A new line 27 (replaces 79) from El Cerrito Plaza to Berkeley and Emeryville touches Kensington via Colusa every 30 minutes.

I also urge you to ride the bus. Ridership speaks louder than comments. It is quite reliable and pleasant. Ridership on the 7 declined by around 70 percent (comparing selected 2024 and 2025 August and September weeks). I fear these lines will be targets for elimination in the next budget reduction. Although all Bay Area transit agencies are in trouble, this is particularly disheartening at a time when we thought we would, for the sake of our air, climate, and congested roads, rely less and less on automobiles.

If you are interested in joining our bus #7 advocacy group, contact Joanna Pace of El Cerrito at [joannap](mailto:joannapace4@gmail.com)

Kensington Fire Department: A Year of Progress and a Look Ahead

By Eric Saylor, El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Chief

As we reflect on 2025 and look ahead to the coming year, I want to share an update on the work your Kensington Fire Department has been doing—and the priorities we are advancing to keep our community safe, resilient, and prepared.

Over the past year, the department focused on strengthening the fundamentals: emergency readiness, firefighter safety, wildfire preparedness, and organizational effectiveness. Our firefighters continued to provide dependable emergency response across all incident types—from medical calls and structure fires to wildland and regional mutual-aid responses. Behind the scenes, we invested heavily in training to ensure crews are prepared for increasingly complex incidents, including multi-company and multi-story response scenarios as development patterns evolve throughout the region.

Firefighter health and safety remained a top priority. In 2025, we expanded cancer-prevention practices, reinforced clean-cab procedures, and advanced occupational safety standards. At the same time, we continued leadership development and promotional processes to support succession planning and long-term organizational stability.

Technology and data modernization were also key areas of progress. We upgraded records and reporting systems, deployed new mobile tools to support field operations and inspections, and continued the transition to “living” operational guidelines—allowing policies to evolve as best practices and risks change.

Wildfire resilience continued to be a major focus. The department expanded vegetation-management and defensible-space efforts, using technology to better identify high-risk areas and improve compliance. We also strengthened coordination with regional partners during Red Flag conditions and extreme weather events, ensuring a unified approach to preparedness and response.

Finally, community engagement and transparency remained central to our mission. Throughout the year, we worked closely with the fire district board, its successor board, and community members to share information, support outreach efforts, and align departmental priorities with community expectations.

Looking Ahead to 2026: Preparing for Tomorrow’s Risks

Building on the progress made in 2025, the department’s 2026 initiatives are focused on long-term readiness, resilience, and fiscal responsibility.

One priority is ensuring the reliability of critical equipment. This includes long-range planning for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) replacement, command and support vehicles, and other essential response tools. Thoughtful planning today helps avoid emergency costs tomorrow.

We will also continue modernizing our systems. In 2026, the department plans to complete its transition to next-generation incident-reporting platforms and further expand the use of wildfire-risk and vegetation-management software to provide a clearer, district-wide view of community risk.

Wildfire preparedness remains a defining challenge. The department will continue working with neighboring agencies to improve Red Flag Day readiness, early-evacuation guidance, and regional coordination. We will also pursue grants and policy tools that reduce wildfire risk and improve access and safety during extreme fire weather.

Investing in people is equally important. Training, leadership development, and promotional pathways will continue through Command College and officer-development programs, ensuring the department remains adaptable and well-led as conditions change.

A Shared Commitment to Safety

The accomplishments of 2025 reflect the professionalism and dedication of Kensington’s firefighters and staff, as well as the support of the community and the district board. Fire protection is ultimately a shared responsibility—one that depends on preparation, partnership, and trust.

As we move into 2026, the Kensington Fire Department remains committed to thoughtful planning, transparency, and service—working every day to protect lives, property, and the character of this unique community.

Flock Cameras

...from Page 2

seems to be part of their undisclosed business model beyond their contracts. Why else partner with Amazon Ring cameras across the nation? Focused on private data collection and sale, Flock is like Palantir.

Palantir currently has access to your IRS, Social Security, and other private information thanks to E. Musk. Meanwhile, Flock is pinpointing details about every car’s distinguishing features and license plate.

With the partnership of Flock Safety and Amazon Ring, this means the two companies are sharing your car details, travel patterns, Ring front porch activity, family, everyone who comes over...and a lot of video of you.

Berkeley Baroque Strings at UUCB March 7



By Rose Fujimoto

Berkeley Baroque Strings presents its next concert at a new concert venue, Kensington’s Unitarian Universalist Church. Celebrating its 12th season, the 30-piece string orchestra will perform concertos by Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Georg Philipp Telemann, and George Frideric Handel.

Berkeley Baroque Strings has performed at every Berkeley Early Music Festival since its founding and twice at the Boston Early Music Festival. An affiliate of the San Francisco Early Music Society, the group is directed by renowned Baroque violinist Kati Kyme, a founding member of the Cantata Collective and longtime member of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra.

The concert is Saturday, March 7, at 4pm at the UUCB, 1 Lawson Rd., Kensington. Admission at the door: pay what you can. www.berkeleybaroquestrings.org



Q4 Kensington Market Update

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Property Address	BD/ BA	Sqft	List Price	Sale Price	Tracy's Notes
Westminster (00 Block)	3/1.5	2,290	\$699,000	\$975,000	7 offers, updates needed
Stratford (00 Block)	2/1	952	\$979,000	\$1,015,000	1 offer, small but cute
Valley Road (1500 Block)	2/2	1,020	\$995,000	\$1,305,000	4 offers, turnkey
Columbia Ave (200 Block)	2/3	1,844	\$1,095,000	\$1,200,000	2 offers, view
Kensington Ct (00 Block Block)	4/3	2,328	\$1,198,000	\$1,450,000	4 offers, view, updates needed
Highland Blvd (00 block)	4/3	2,185	\$1,375,000	\$1,525,000	2 offers, view
Eureka Ave (00)	3/3	2,128	\$1,395,000	\$1,640,000	4 offers
Cambridge Ave (200 Block)	4/4	2,762	\$1,395,000	\$2,120,000	7 offers, updates needed
Coventry Road (700 Block)	3/2	2,393	\$1,450,000	\$1,400,000	1 offer, some updates needed
Dewey Rd (00 Block)	2/1.5	1,533	\$1,495,000	\$2,030,500	2 offers, mid-century
Cambridge Ave (200 Block)	3/2	1,473	\$1,495,000	\$1,600,000	1 offer
Plateau (600 Block)	3/2	1,919	\$1,595,000	\$1,900,000	1 offer, mid-century
Coventry Rd (700 Block)	4/3	2,768	\$1,685,000	\$1,900,000	2 offers, turnkey
Willamette Ave (200 Block)	4/2	2,466	\$1,695,000	\$1,875,000	2 offers, some updates needed
158 Lawson Rd (100 Block)	4/3	3,528	\$2,536,600	\$2,536,600	New construction, big view
Purdue Ave (100 Block)	5/3	3,818	\$3,989,000	\$3,825,000	1 offer, rare 5BD/3BA home

Sales data sourced from MLS and is intended for informational purposes only. Sales shown are not exclusive to Tracy Zhou or Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty.

■ Listed by Tracy

A Message From Tracy

The Kensington real estate market closed the year on a strong note in Q4, with many homes selling well above asking and attracting multiple offers—clear evidence of continued buyer demand, even through the traditionally slower months. With interest rates widely expected to remain at or below current levels in 2026, and limited inventory continuing to shape this highly desirable enclave, the outlook for the year ahead remains optimistic. *As both your neighbor and a longtime Kensington resident, I'm deeply grateful for the support and connections that make this community so special. If you're considering a move in 2026, I would be honored to serve as your trusted advisor. Please don't hesitate to reach out for a free and confidential consultation.*

Tracy Zhou Robbins
周曉嘉

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FEBRUARY 2026

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

KCSD...from Front Page

the need for ADA parking at the Public Safety Building, now that the district's administrative assistant Rosa Ruiz is headquartered at the PSB rather than in El Cerrito. ADA parking at the back of the building is often occupied, and the building's back door is locked. That discussion was tabled to learn more about what the county would approve in front of the building.

The issue was tabled again at the January 8 board meeting, as Aranda said he was still waiting to hear back from the county. Lisa Caronna gave a presentation on Kensington's paths, three of which are now under the board's purview. A motion to spend up to \$65,000 on path improvements was passed unanimously.

Police Chief Mike Gancasz then discussed the need to enact ordinances that the police can enforce. At an earlier meeting, Gancasz noted that the board had not passed ordinances to prevent camping at Kensington Park, for instance. With an ordinance in place, the police could issue a citation that would result in a fine.

Ordinances passed by the board have a first reading, then a second, and then the ordinance goes into effect. A variety of issues arose: could a citizen issue a citation, who would be the hearing officer, could the ordinances be used against people often targeted by loitering or other minor complaints, and more.

Gancasz answered that the police would enforce events like someone drinking on the public paths. As to what ordinances, he said, “What time does your park close? If you have an ordinance about what time the park closes, then you can enforce that ordinance.”

Hacaj asked, “What are we trying to solve here? Because we have no ordinances, we can't cite anyone for doing anything.”

Gough said that the board required clarification over who could be the hearing officer and what Kensington-specific problems needed an ordinance. “We need samples so people could see what an ordinance looks like,” she said.

The matter was tabled until staff and the police come back with ordinances and consequences for violating them.

The board then passed an ember exclusion grant of \$15,000 to develop a program to give out ember exclusion mesh to Kensington residents. That program's policies are still being debated, but Valenzuela said that residents not in a Firewise community would not be excluded from the program.

On January 20, about 200 demonstrators gathered at the Arlington/Amherst intersection and at Colusa Circle, as part of the nationwide Free America Walkout protest. Handmade signs, costumes, bubbles, music, and plenty of shouting joined cars honking in support. Photos by Scott Goodman; overhead shot of Colusa Circle by Sue Threlkeld. More photos can be found on the last page of the digital February edition at <https://kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org/outlook/>



Who Wants to Vlog?

Enjoy free programs at the Kensington Library, 61 Arlington Avenue, 510-524-3043. Tues, Feb 3, 6:30pm Castoff's Knitting Club Meets on the 1st Tuesday. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tues, Feb 3, 10, 17, 24, 6:30pm Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.

Wed, Feb 4, 11, 18, 25, 2pm - Speak Up! English Language Conversation Group Get comfortable speaking English and have fun, all levels are welcome. Online every Wednesday, 2-3pm. Register online at ccilib.org to have access to the Zoom meeting link or email dean.jones@library.cccounty.us for information.

Fri, Feb 6, 9am-5pm Stuffy Sleepover Drop off your stuffy any time on Feb 6 during open hours for a rousing night of antics and books at the library! Return to the library after 10am on Feb 7 to pick up your stuffy and a souvenir photobook of their adventures.

Thurs, Feb 12, 19, 26, 6pm -Podcast Essentials Workshop This six-week online workshop is perfect for adults and teens eager to start their own podcast or vlog—no prior experience needed! We'll guide you through every step, from planning and recording to editing and marketing, ensuring you have the skills to launch, also grow and manage your show. You'll receive a Zoom link and program outline one week before the class begins.

Tues, Feb 17, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamstress Union, local 94707, in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags that will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market.

Tues, Feb 24, Read to a Dog Join a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday, 3-4pm. Drop-in sign-up starts 15 minutes before the read session.

Tues, Feb 24, 6:15-7:45pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday. This month is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.

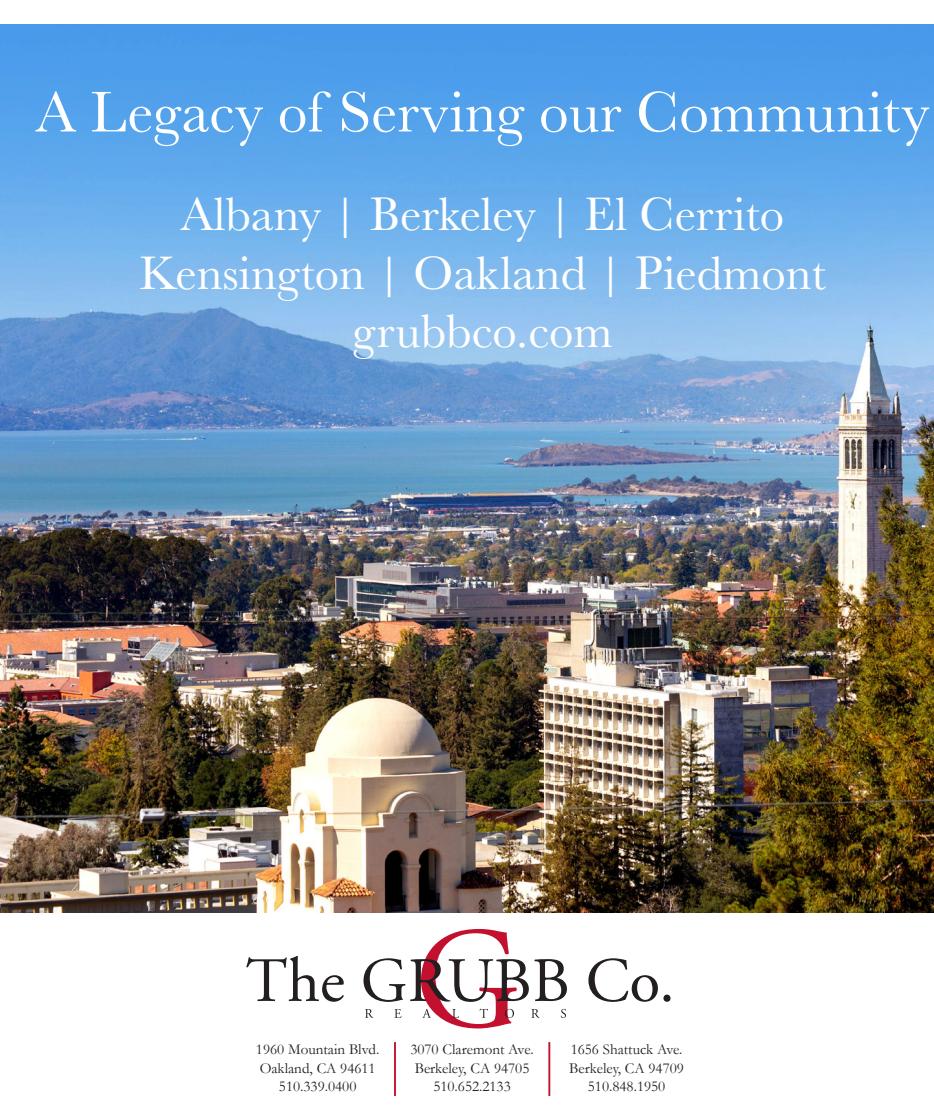
Art Exhibit Quilts by Khristel Johnson, incorporating needle point, embroidery and authentic African fabric and beads in celebration of Unity and African History. This is a satellite show of “Art of the African Diaspora,” in partnership with the Richmond Art Center. Website: Quiltsbykj.com



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Extreme Weather

...from Front Page

A Statewide, Lessons-Learned Approach

California's approach to extreme-weather staffing has evolved over decades, shaped by hard lessons from major fires such as the Oakland Hills Fire and the Tubbs Fire. These events showed that wind-driven fires can overwhelm local resources in minutes—and that waiting to add resources after an emergency starts is often too late.

As a result, Cal OES now takes a proactive approach, requesting and funding additional firefighting resources *before* dangerous weather peaks. This strategy focuses on readiness, faster response times, and firefighter safety.

What Happens During Extreme Weather Events

When Cal OES identifies a period of elevated risk—such as a Red Flag Warning or major winter storm—it may activate a strike team. A strike team consists of five fire engines and a supervising officer, allowing for rapid, coordinated response across the region.

The El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department typically contributes one engine and a battalion chief to these teams. When possible, the department's goal is to house one of these strike team engines at Station 55, given Kensington's risk profile and limited access routes.

These deployments are temporary, usually lasting between 12 and 48 hours, and occur only a few times a year—typically between three and ten events annually.

Station 55 Is Vital to Emergency Efforts

Kensington's Fire Station 55 was intentionally designed as a flexible, multi-use facility. In addition to housing a full-time engine company, its first-floor meeting and training room was always intended to support multiple functions, including training, emergency coordination, and temporary housing during emergencies.

During extreme weather activations, that room may be temporarily converted to house additional firefighters using foldable beds. Once the event passes, the space quickly returns to its normal role as a training and meeting area.

This flexibility allows the department to maintain strong coverage in Kensington while still supporting training and regional coordination.

Supporting Firefighters Who Step Up

Staffing additional resources requires firefighters to volunteer for extra shifts or extended hours during already challenging conditions. Providing them with a safe place

to rest is a basic and important part of maintaining readiness and safety.

Similar accommodations already exist at other fire stations in the region, and the department is working to ensure Station 55 can provide the same level of support when needed. **No Cost to the District**

Importantly, all additional staffing during these extreme weather events is requested and fully funded by Cal OES. There is no impact to Kensington's operating budget, permanent staffing levels, or long-term financial obligations.

Temporary staffing at Station 55 during extreme weather is not a new or improvised practice. It is part of a broader, statewide shift toward risk-based planning and community resilience—making sure resources are in place *before* emergencies happen.

The fire department remains committed to transparency, fiscal responsibility, and proactive preparation and will continue working closely with regional partners to protect the Kensington community during times of heightened risk.

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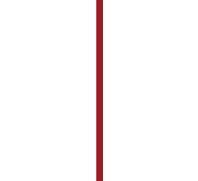
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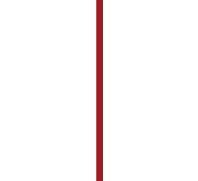
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Kensington Community Education

Photo by Josh Kirk/Unsplash

KCC Summer camp & KASEP

KCC - Summer Camp

KCC is thrilled to welcome campers back for an exciting Summer Camp 2026! Our program is open to children entering 1st grade in Fall 2026 through incoming 6th graders and runs for nine weeks, from June 15 through August 14, 2026. Families can enroll by the week, making it easy to build a summer schedule that works best for them.

Campers will enjoy full days filled with fun, variety, and enrichment, including tennis instruction, arts and crafts, sports, group games, and hands-on themed activities such as carpentry, cooking, Legos, and more. KCC Summer Camp is the perfect place for kids to stay active, spark their creativity, and make lasting summer memories.

Online Camp Registration opens February 24th at 7:00pm

Hiring Summer Camp Counselors – Applications Open in March!

We're excited to begin hiring summer camp counselors this March! We're looking for responsible, energetic individuals who love working with kids and are ready to be positive role models. Counselors must be at least a high school senior (or older).

Students entering **9th grade** are encouraged to apply for our **Counselor in Training (CIT)** program, a great opportunity to gain experience and build leadership skills while supporting our camp staff.

Applications and more information can be found on our website at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/Summer-Camp.

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 3rd

7:00 PM: TK & Kindergarten

7:30 PM: Grades 1-6

The new session begins the week of March 16th , 2026.

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

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil/KASEP



Winter Schedule for Adult and Family Classes



Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am
Community Center - Drop-in fee is \$15



Chair Yoga with Angi Love

Thursdays 10-11am
Community Center - Cost- Sliding scale drop-in or register online



Yoga with Anja Borgstrom

Strength & Balance Yoga - Tuesdays at 8:30am
Community Center - Cost is \$20 drop in or register online



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

KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Comfort Food with a View at the Overlook at Tilden
By Ittai Shiu

High above the fairways of Tilden Park Golf Course, the Overlook restaurant lives up to its name. Tucked into the Berkeley hills, the relaxed yet elevated café pairs classic American comfort food with sweeping views of rolling greens and open sky—where the scenery easily rivals what's on your plate.

The restaurant's expansive terrace immediately sets the tone. Designed for lingering, it offers plenty of space to gather at communal tables or around fire pits, creating a sense of calm that feels far removed from the city below.

I've stopped by Tilden many times for a quick driving range session and a drink, never quite giving the menu its due. A recent family lunch finally slowed things down enough to appreciate what the kitchen is doing.

We started with Truffle Fries, finished with black truffle salt, parmesan, and scallions, followed by Crispy Brussels Sprouts tossed in a sweet-and-savory glaze and topped with caramelized shallots. For mains, the Grizzly Burger stood out—a 1/2-pound brisket and chuck blend layered with provolone, crispy haystack onions, maple bacon jam, and house blackberry BBQ sauce on a brioche bun.

The TKF Sandwich offers a lighter, more playful option, with either fried chicken or a crispy tofu patty tossed in honey-go-chujang glaze and paired with cucumber, cilantro microgreens, kimchi, and garlic aioli. Paired with a glass from the Overlook at Tilden wine pour, the meal strikes a balance between casual and memorable.

Beyond the food and scenery, the Overlook is intentionally designed as a gathering place. The kitchen emphasizes fresh, locally sourced ingredients, while the staff creates an atmosphere that feels equally welcoming to golfers and families.

That approach is by design. As Kensington resident Ralph Freightman, the regional manager overseeing the golf course, explains: "The Overlook restaurant was the culmination of a bigger vision to make Tilden Park Golf Course not just a great golf venue, but a community destination—one where golfers, neighbors, and casual park enthusiasts feel welcome to stop by for a great meal, a tasty beverage, and one of the many community-based events we offer throughout the year."

That vision has already taken shape through family-friendly programming, including a recent Snow Queen-themed event that drew families from across the area. February continues that momentum with a Valentine's Day dinner featuring live jazz, a family pajama night centered around crafts and a movie, and a beer tasting with Alameda Brewing Company accompanied by live music. More details can be found at overlookattilden.com.

At its core, the Overlook delivers something increasingly rare: a place to gather, linger, and enjoy good food in good company—no tee time required.

The Overlook at Tilden/10 Golf Course Drive, Berkeley/(510) 848-7373

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Contribute to Public Safety—Join the EPC

By David Aranda

Are you interested in assisting your community in developing preventative measures that would reduce the risk of a disastrous wildfire? How about helping by providing input regarding evacuation routes that on safe practices on Red Flag days?

The Emergency Preparedness Committee is a standing committee of the Kensington Community Services District. The committee makes recommendations to the board of directors regarding funding for initiatives to make Kensington safer, collaborates on fire prevention measures and brings to the table issues in the community covering a wide range of emergency preparedness subjects.

The public is always welcome to attend the committee meetings, but we are looking for individuals interested in becoming a committee member. Please contact Raychel Jackson at rjackson@kensingtonfire.org. The next meeting of the Emergency Preparedness Committee is Thursday, January 22, 4pm, at the Kensington Community Center.

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Team Trivia Tuesday Feb. 24 at ACC

By Sara Laferte

What is the only metal that is liquid at room temperature? What artist painted "The Persistence of Memory"? Who put the bop in the Bop Shoo Bop Shoo Bop?

We have questions—do you have answers? Come to Arlington Community Church on February 24, from 7-9pm, for Team Trivia Tuesday. Bring your best team (three to five people recommended) or join a team when you arrive. The Trivia Host will be John Chapman, star of the popular *49ers Rush* podcast.

Adults, teens, and older children are welcome. There will be pizza, beverages, snacks, and prizes. Easy parking across the street. Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Ave.

Death Doula Explains her Role at ACC Program

By Sara Laferte

A death doula, also known as an end-of-life doula or death midwife, provides non-medical support to both the dying person and their family. Doulas provide emotional, spiritual, and physical support at an intensely personal and crucial time.

They assist people in finding meaning and planning for how the last days will unfold. Doulas also guide and support loved ones through the last days of life and ease the suffering of grief in its early stages. This emotional support can make all the difference for a dying person and the family facing a loss.

Julie Derby Jaechsch of Final Season Doula is an experienced death doula. You are invited to meet Julie at Arlington Community Church on Thursday, March 5. A potluck dinner will be served at 6:15pm (bring something to share). The program will start at 7pm.

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KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

More photos from Kensington's "Free America Walkout"

Photos by Scot Goodman