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# KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

JULY/AUGUST 2021 PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOLUME 79 NUMBER 6

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## Permanent Chief Takes the Helm

By Linnea Due

Interim police chiefs Steve Simpkins and Walt Schuld are hard acts to follow. Consummate professionals, they left an indelible mark on the department. Now Mike Gancasz, a friend to both, has taken over the reins—and he is here to stay.

Schuld spent some time recruiting his friend, whom he had known for years when both worked for the city of San Pablo's police. Gancasz spent over twenty years in San Pablo and speaks highly of the department. "It's a very busy place and a very interesting community," he said during a phone interview in early June. "I can't say enough good things about the professional staff both at city hall and the police department."

Interim Chief Schuld had retired until Steve Simpkins coaxed him back, and both Schuld and Simpkins immediately began campaigning for a permanent chief for Kensington. "Chief Schuld called me up," Gancasz reported. "He said it's a wonderful community, and that if I'd ever thought of becoming a police chief I should try it here. He drove me around, we had lunch together a few times, and I fell in love with the place. I filled out the applica-

See Gancasz, page 10



## End of an Era

By Anne Forrest

The past year and a half have been the most unusual and challenging school years that any of us can remember at Kensington Hilltop School. As the threat of the pandemic passes, and in-person learning returns for all students, we anticipate many changes at the school. Most notably, after 29 years at Kensington, first as a parent, then a teacher, and finally as the principal, Principal Judy Sanders has made the difficult decision to retire at the end of this school year.

Beginning her career as a special education teacher at Sheldon School in 1972, Sanders and her family have been a part of the Kensington community since 1991. She first came to Kensington School as a parent when her older daughter, Rachel, entered kindergarten. After her younger daughter, Elizabeth, joined the school, she was PTA president and her husband, Jim, was Dads' Club president. She taught many grades at Kensington School, ending with her first-grade classes in Room 4, before taking on the immense job of principal in 2007.





Under Sanders' leadership, beloved traditions such as the annual school carnival and Garden Party were joined by the annual Math Festival, the very popular Multicultural Potluck, and innovations

See Sanders, page 10



# Kensington | Market Update

May 12, 2021 - June 9, 2021

 <b>Detached Single Family</b>	 <b>32</b> <b>Sales Price / List Price %</b> Up 32% from last year	 <b>45</b> <b>Months Supply of Inventory</b> Down 45% from last year	 <b>26</b> <b>Average Sales Price</b> Up 27% from last year
<b>2</b> <b>New Listings</b> Average List Price 1,654,000 Average Sq. Ft. 2,979	<b>6</b> <b>Pending Sales</b> Average List Price 1,522,500 Average Sq. Ft. 2,622 Average DOM 1	<b>12</b> <b>Closed Sales</b> Average List Price 1,234,500 Average Sq. Ft. 1,900 Average Sales Price 1,696,333 Average DOM 12	<b>Last Year</b> <b>Averages</b> Average List Price \$1,251,333 Average Sq. Ft. 1,333 Average Sales Price \$1,339,667 Average DOM 21



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# The Proof is in the Numbers

Kensington Update | Recent Sales

<b>15 Franciscan Way Kensington</b> 3 BD   2 BA + Legal Sep. 1 BD   1 BA Apt. List Price: \$1,695,000 Sales Price: \$2,300,000 % Above List: 36% Days on Market: 10 Learn More: <a href="#">Franciscan15.com</a>	<b>28 Kerr Avenue Kensington</b> 3 BD   2 BA List Price: \$1,498,000 Sales Price: \$2,150,000 % Above List: 40% Days on Market: 11 Learn More: <a href="#">28Kerr.com</a>
<b>8547 Terrace Drive El Cerrito</b> 5 BD   2 BA List Price: \$1,495,000 Sales Price: \$1,792,000 % Above List: 20% Days on Market: 16 Learn More: <a href="#">8547Terrace.com</a>	<b>1505 Arlington Boulevard El Cerrito</b> 3 BD   2 BA List Price: \$1,188,000 Sales Price: \$1,350,000 % Above List: 14% Days on Market: 15 Learn More: <a href="#">1505Arlington.com</a>

Of the 23 sales in Kensington March 1-June 9, 2021 Compass participated in 10 of those sales, that is more than any other company.

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—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.*

**SEPTEMBER DEADLINES**  
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**Editorial Deadline ❖ AUG. 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.*

## K E N S I N G T O N O U T L O O K

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# Letters to the Editor

## Duplication and Regret

Dear Editor:

The current spirited debate about the future of our Public Safety Building has highlighted a related issue that should concern our community—the wasteful and dysfunctional structure of our community governance.

We are one community with one tax base, but are governed by a combination of two special districts and the county. The conditions are ripe for wasteful duplication of costs.

Consider that each of our two districts now has a part-time general manager, whose combined annual compensation will surely exceed \$250,000, based on hourly pay rates. In addition, each district has its own clerk, administration, and finance staff. Each district retains separate independent accountants to conduct an audit each year. Each district has separate legal counsel, separate actuaries, separate insurance policies, and separate accounts with the county for which both pay service fees. These are just some of the duplicative items that jump off the page of the districts’ budget documents. In total, Kensington is spending over \$1.2 million per year purely on administration of the two districts, not counting the costs of police and fire personnel and operations.

There is no demonstrable value in having two separate districts. In fact the contrary seems true, as the two district boards have been unable to come together in a way that prioritizes the overall interests of the community as a whole in the future of the Public Safety Building.

It is time to unify our local governance in one policymaking, elected board. That won’t protect us from the consequences of bad decisions, but it will at least force the board members to focus on the whole picture, not just a part, and it will eliminate wasteful expense. It seems there are several ways to legally achieve such unification. We need someone (district boards? KPOA?) to take the lead and appoint a citizens commission to figure out how to do so now, before we get committed to choices we may regret in the future.

Vida Dorroh

## Self-Defense

Dear Editor:

I very much enjoyed the recent article by Robert Becker describing the various joys of walking through our beautiful neighborhoods. That said, you should be prepared to encounter hostile dogs along the way. In the last twelve years, I have been attacked and injured twice. Once by a vicious dog that lives near Beloit and Cambridge that should be destroyed and once by a German shepherd that escaped from its owner’s control on Wilamette. Both of these animals attacked without warning, and the experience was truly terrifying. I now carry a stout cane to defend myself.

Willard Bohn

## Number One Edgecroft

Dear Editor:

I very much enjoyed Robert Becker’s essay on his gorgeous walk through Kensington, but I would like to anoint your readers with an exceptional small walk that many Kensingtonians and their dogs and friends take starting at number 1 Edgecroft. I have lived in Colonel Blank’s (a WW1 decorated hero} house since 1964 with my husband Richard Bersin and my two sons, Josh and Adam Bersin.

I have learned since I am now over ninety years of age what a delicious exciting find it was when we bought this falling-down wreck for \$30,000 with \$17,000 termite work to be done, and frankly it has never stopped 65 years later.

My health is not good, so I spend a lot of time watching the wonderful parade that passes by my windows. The lovely older lady who walks from her son’s house sometimes starts at 6:30am. I have watched her for five years and she has become healthier and walks faster; there is another lady who is very petite, who also is a daily who has become faster and faster and so many others.

Then there are the guests to Edgecroft Rd. with their remarkable adorable dogs. The renters down Edgecroft are interesting. One young man brought a small pit bull onto his care, and I have watched him teach this dog to be quiet and respectful.

The Edgecroft walk brings one into different climates. The wind as the circle widens and the view of the bay astounds everyone; as one proceeds around the bend, the hill makes your heart race, offering the aerobic exercise one needs.

I used to do this walk with my dear neighbor Walter Frey who is no longer available; my heart and arthritic knee say “Don’t try it, Lillie, you might not get back.”

I love every single person and their charming dogs walking down this small street, and oftentimes I call upon someone to open a bottle for me or carry up some groceries if I am feeling too fatigued. Number 1 Edgecroft is my vista point, and I’m thrilled so many persons have found it.

Lillie Braudy

## Redlining Fears Ignore Context

Dear Editor:

I wonder if anyone else noticed the amazing irony at the juxtaposition of Rev. Nate Klug’s article on the laudable work to raise money for a Black Homeownership Repara-tions Fund, and KPOA President Rob Firmin’s dismay about increasing residential housing density in the May *Outlook*? Apparently increased density is OK elsewhere but not here because:

1. Increased density will make wildfire evacuation less safe: possibly true, but where are the studies showing that the density we have right now is safe, and any increase from this is unsafe? And what about exploring alternative options like the pre-evacuations that PG&E advised during high wind events last year?

2. Homes are our biggest fuel problem for controlling wildfires: also possibly true, but it seems likely that the ship has mostly sailed on that front—my home, built in the 1950s, is less than six feet away from my neighbor’s home, built in the 1930s.

3. The development of additional housing units will ensure that this area is completely redlined from insurance policies: We certainly wouldn’t want our majority-white community to endure redlining, a treatment normally reserved for families and communities of color.

4. Our current zoning ordinance “protects views, sunlight, [and] privacy.” It seems likely that Whites prevented Black people from buying here just as they did in Berkeley, Oakland, and Alameda. The language of this ordinance is resonant of the advertisements describing “view properties” and “beautiful scenic homesites” with “improvements of the highest types...city ordinances prohibit stores, apartment houses and flats” that were

used to promote segregated Piedmont a century ago.

Anti-racist work isn’t just about “being nice to Black people”; it’s about addressing issues of systemic racism where we see it, and we do see it here. The financial reparations organized by Rev. Klug are a great start. Continuing the legacy of racism cloaked in the value-neutral language of safety, views, sunlight, and privacy, while expressing a fear of redlining—which has been used against communities of color for a generation—does not represent my values, and I suspect (hope) the values of others in our community.

Jen Lumanlan

## Correction:

Jean Cannon is pictured on the left in the photo that accompanied her obituary in the February 2021 issue of the *Outlook*.





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# The Public Safety Building: Facts and Fiction

By directors Kevin Padian and Larry Nagel, Kensington Fire Protection Board

The June 2021 *Outlook* contained several views from residents about how the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) is handling the necessary renovation of the Public Safety Building (PSB), the apparent need to remodel it for the fire department only, and the efforts to relocate the police department.

We respect and encourage the publication of opinions. However, these pieces ignored an important eight-page review of FAQs produced by KFPD general manager Bill Hansell, presented to and accepted by the fire board at its May meeting, as well as evidence produced at numerous recent police and fire board meetings. If uncorrected, these respected residents’ statements will mislead the public on a very important issue.

**Ownership:** Although the PSB has historically served both police and fire, it is misleading to state that “police have as much right to their space as fire does to theirs.” Fire has to be centrally located so as to minimize response time, and that is a narrow corridor on the Arlington (see FAQs). Police can patrol; fire cannot because they must stay with their vehicles and equipment. This is not only about emergencies, but affects insurance ratings for residents.

Although we join many Kensington residents in wishing that the PSB could continue to be jointly occupied, building codes have changed, and new ADA, DOJ, and Title IX regulations now require so much expanded room that it is impossible for both departments to continue in their cramped space. Our police and fire chiefs and GMs have been clear on these legal requirements.

**Fire Costs:** It is incorrect that the cost to retrofit the PSB “for fire use only” is \$8-10 million. The FAQs document that the Ahlquist-Priolo Act restricts renovation funding of such buildings to only half their worth, or currently \$4-5 million, of which, by the way, up to 80 percent can be externally funded. This is why the fire district is trying to engage a grant proposal writer. It is also wrong that cost estimates have been particular to single or joint occupancy by the departments.

**Police Costs:** An alternate site for the police that is being considered (as we write) is 303 Arlington, the complex next to Ace Hardware. It is incorrect to say that such a move would be “non-conforming” (it is zoned for occupancy that fits the police) and would require increased “handicap access” [sic] (it would not unless renovation exceeded some \$170,000, which is not anticipated). This was also clarified in the FAQs.

We do not understand why anyone complains about a projected lack of parking spaces when seven parking spaces are allotted to tenants of 303, no matter who the tenants are. A decade ago, the complex at 303 was filled with businesses and their patrons, and no one complained about parking. By the way, there is not enough space at the present PSB for official vehicles to be parked, let alone those of staff and visitors.

**Expanding Administrative Costs:** These have nothing to do with keeping police and fire together; both chiefs realize that there is no way both their staffs can fit in a renovated PSB along with other safety functions. We can’t speak for the police district, but at present the fire district has only a GM, plus a clerk who works off-site. That’s not an expansion.

**Available Cash:** The assertion that at start of construction the fire district will have about \$5 million of available funds, whereas “\$10+ million” will be needed is incorrect on both counts. Last month the fire board’s finance committee meeting reported \$9 million in current assets with a surplus of another \$400,000 for the present fiscal year. Some of the surplus needs to stay in reserve, but those larger numbers are incorrect.

We don’t need an additional “\$3-5 million” to renovate (see above), we don’t need to ask El Cerrito to restructure its fire services contract with us, and it is not anticipated by any scenario that a property tax increase (which would require a bond measure) will be needed. These views have no factual basis.

There is also a persistent and incorrect assumption that an additional 200 or 350SF allotted to the police would solve the problem; the fact is, the police need closer to 2000SF, which is more than police or fire have now. And yes, there are codes that say so. Again, this was laid out by the chiefs in public meetings, and in the FAQs.

The fact is that the PSB is seismically unsafe and dilapidated, and a seismic renovation triggers many government code requirements that demand increased space and improved facilities. The chiefs and GMs recognize that consequently both departments will no longer fit in the PSB if Kensington is to be provided the quality of services that residents want.

It is a disappointment that some residents can only offer complaints based on misrepresentations and misapprehensions, epithets such as “heist” and “hijack,” and accusations such as “convoluted rationale,” “extensive verbiage,” and “conveniently ignored.” We respect the civic engagement of Kensington citizens, and we welcome constructive ideas and views, supported by facts, on how the process of housing our police and fire should proceed.

Information on the topics discussed here can be found in the fire district’s FAQs at <https://www.kensingtonfire.org/public-safety-building>. We urge all residents to attend fire board meetings on the second Wednesday of each month, and express concerns and questions.

Note that although we are directors of the fire board, we do not write officially for the board; in our effort to provide the community with a response, there was no time to agendize this reply. Thanks for your consideration of the work done by our chiefs and GMs.

# KPOA Annual Meeting Tackles Challenges

By Rob Firmin, president, KPOA

The Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) is the only independent non-profit organization in Kensington that addresses the wide spectrum of Kensington community issues and challenges. A record number of residents attended our annual meeting June 5 to hear presentations on Kensington’s critical issues. The meeting recordings are available on our new website [kpoa.net](http://kpoa.net).

If you have time to view only one recorded presentation, we recommend Sheryl Drinkwater’s keynote talk on home-hardening practices to protect homes from wildfire damage. Her presentation is also accessible through our website, with thorough advice on simple actions you can take so that embers cannot ignite your home, including regular cleaning of gutters and vents, installation of mesh coverings over roof vents and soffits, metal flashing at deck-siding connections, vegetation maintenance within five feet around homes, removal of dried leaves on the ground, etc. We also recommend looking at the Diablo Firesafe Council site, [diablofiresafe.org](http://diablofiresafe.org), for additional excellent advice.

Continuing on the theme of wildfire threats, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Assistant Fire Chief Khari Helae, currently head of the fuels management department, accompanied by Captain Patrick McIntyre, offered sobering information about our exposure to wildfire risk, including that there are 62 acres of dead or dying trees in Tilden, with 1,000 acres dying in all of the park district. Sick and dying trees ignite easily. The entire boundary of Tilden and Wildcat Canyon parks along Kensington is about 1.45 miles long and largely uncleared of wildfire fuels.

Helae said that “Ideally, on every portion of our land, we would have our forests thinned and healthy, because a thinned forest area is a healthy forest area. . .” and that “The latest data has told us that by having a thinned and less competitive environment for those trees you give an opportunity for the trees that are there to thrive.” Thinning is not complete tree removal, but creates “shaded fuel breaks.” He said that clearing near occupied areas is top priority, but at this time they had not scheduled clearing or prescribed burns along the Kensington ridgeline. He also stated that eucalyptus “are not the enemy” in answer to a question about what needs to be cleared. (This was news to us, given the highly flammable oils in those trees that make them highly combustible.) With only a twelve-member fuels management crew, it is clear the parks district wildfire fuels clearing efforts are underfunded—KPOA strongly feels this needs to be addressed immediately. One example would be a California State Coastal Conservancy grant for fuels reduction in Tilden and Wildcat Canyon parks.

We remain concerned about the planning process for the Public Safety Building (PSB), including relocation of the police department. Upgrading the PSB has expensive consequences for both the police and fire districts, as both districts’ departments have been quartered in the PSB for about fifty years, and the fire board has made clear it is moving forward with takeover of the entire building for the fire department. GM Bill Hansel gave an overview of the fire board’s progress on its plan. He is in the process of hiring a new architectural firm and structural engineer to complete the renovation design of the PSB after four years of master plan development and about \$325k in expenses with previous firms. He was asked about creating a joint-district financial plan to quantify a number of alternatives for housing the police and fire departments. He began his response by saying he “has been looking forward to that landmine” regarding questions on the PSB at the meeting. He did not specifically address a unified joint-district plan but commented on the intention to hire a financial consultant to assess costs of the PSB upgrade for the fire department and police relocation, including looking at combined district funds.

Regardless of final department-location decisions, KPOA’s position is that they must be supported by a joint-district financial plan, for Kensington citizens, who pay for most of both districts’ operations, to be convinced that the decisions are in their best interests. Police district (KPPCSD) GM Marti Brown did not have any specific information to share at this point on a solution for housing the police outside of the PSB, but acknowledged potential lease space as an option under consideration. She also stated that three police officers have resigned, and that two new officers would be hired by the end of the year.

Our new Police Chief Mike Gancasz spoke about his role and police department priorities in support of the community. A thorny issue for the police, the fire department and all citizens is how a wildfire evacuation can be expeditious, especially given our narrow streets. Even in normal times fire trucks and EMT vehicles have to proceed gingerly, as has been observed on multiple occasions, through no fault of the fire department. Chief Gancasz and Fire Chief Michael Pigoni emphasized that during a wildfire evacuation we cannot expect them to be able to proceed at all when the streets are filled with evacuating cars.

Officials are working on this seemingly intractable challenge but new solutions are still needed and the police and fire departments are clearly waiting for strong direction from the community to implement necessary but unpopular evacuation solutions. The fire district has worked with Zonehaven to create evacuation zones in part to ease the traffic flow. The theory is that, depending on the direction of a wildfire, residents will be advised by the county Community Warning System to evacuate based on the zone in which they reside. Chief Gancasz said that if the community indicates strong support he would consider making recommendations for new parking regulations to improve traffic flow during Red Flag days. KPOA expects to conduct a member survey on this issue.

The county has substantial responsibility for Kensington. County Supervisor John Gioia commented on the tree-view ordinance, Covid updates, maintenance of public paths, and airliner flight paths. Although he supports the county Planning Department’s proposal to create new zoning categories in the General Plan that will allow an increase in the number of housing units per acre in Kensington, KPOA has opposed this planning designation.

We thank all participants for their generous time. The meeting audience was able to address questions to the speakers. KPOA is managed entirely by volunteers, but we have expenses. Please join or renew your KPOA membership at [kpoa.net](http://kpoa.net) to enable our community work to continue to meet Kensington’s challenges.




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see page 9.



Passings

**John “Jack” Griffith**, a Kensington resident since 1973, passed away on May 17. He was in private practice as a landscape architect, site planner and urban designer in Berkeley for over forty years with projects ranging from local, regional, state, national and international, including UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, Walnut Creek Civic Center Plaza, and Leshar Arts Center, Danville Livery Shopping Center, creek projects in El Cerrito, UCB, UC Davis and Chico State; City of Oakland Master Street Tree Plan, Lake Temescal reservoir, Festival at theLake, SF’s Delancey Street, many Tilden Park projects, Huber Park, Albany Memorial Park, Cordonices Park, Barrier-Free Playground in Roberts area of Redwood Regional Park, theme parks in Santa Clara and Vallejo, Alameda Beach park, plus state, city and school parks and playing fields.

He was also a lecturer at UC Berkeley, with his students’ graduations being held at Kensington’s Blake Garden. He was a 25-year member of KPOA and also a member of KMAC, KPAC and KPBC, working with the KPPCSD on the Kensington Park Master Plan. His firm provided site improvement plans and technical specifications for the Kensington Community Park Annex. He also designed the Triangle bulb and the ‘Welcome to Kensington’ sign on Arlington Ave. at the Berkeley border.

He was an avid reader, artist, artisan, toymaker, hiker and punster and will be missed by his wife Peggy, daughter Jenny, son Darren, and three grandsons plus other family members and friends. The family wishes to thank the Kensington police and fire departments for all their help. Contributions may be made in Jack’s honor to any Parkinson’s foundation of choice.



**Conrad Anello**, a cockatiel bird and Kensington resident, died on April 21, 2021. He was 22 years old. He loved bottles, packages, containers, and mirrors. He was smart and introspective.

Conrad communicated well, and could make his needs known across the species barrier. He had a special word he used for “water.” It sounded like “ff-ff-ff-ff.” He’d nod his head when he liked something you did and wanted you to continue. He would put his head down on a person’s shoulder when he wanted her to pet him.

Conrad liked to sit in high-up places, and he liked to nest. He was a good friend to his fellow cockatiel, Zeke. Conrad would always respond immediately when Zeke called out for support, and Zeke did the same to him. Zeke died earlier this year. Conrad leaves behind his two human family members, Robert and Alene.

If you want a bird in your life, please adopt, don’t shop. Go to PetFinder.com or Micka-boo.org.



Two More Grads from the Class of ‘21

(Left) Lillie Frick, El Cerrito High School, Indiana University

(Right) Jenna Fan, Marin Academy, Northeastern University



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Bird of the Month: Mourning Dove

Why mourning and not morning? Many experience the doves’ coos as sorrowful (doves themselves have an earthier interpretation). In many cultures, mourning doves are the symbol of peace and a bringer of renewal and spiritual growth. The Kensington doves pictured here are juveniles, fledged this spring. During courting males will puff out their throats, cooing to the females as they bob their tails. Doves have built-in straws, so when they drink, they needn’t tip their heads back to swallow as do other birds. They are notorious for building flimsy nests in odd places. These two doves were born in a nest of a single token twig placed beside a stump, in which the babies actually lived. The mourning doves’ rapid flight can make them look like small hawks, but doves have a smaller head and a wedge-shaped tail. Doves may lay eggs five to six times a year, so one pair may have raised as many as a dozen kids a year!

—written by Linnea Due and Ford Whitefield-Brewer, photo by Whitefield-Brewer



On March 2, members of the Kensington Community Council presented a \$15,000 check to the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District to improve landscaping at the newly renovated Community Center. Kensington residents donated to a special fund earmarked for this project. From left: KCC president Becky Stephens, past KCC president Anne Forrest, KPPCSD president Sylvia Hacaj, and community fundraiser Esther Hill. Photo by KCC recreation director Jenny Parks.

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# Still Truckin’ After 45 Years

By Linnea Due

Quick now...which East Bay health provider has over a thousand employees? Fourteen health centers? Provides supportive housing for the homeless? Offers dental, mental health, and social services on a sliding scale? Serves anyone regardless of immigration status or insurance? Here’s a clue: The Gray Panthers started its first clinic in 1976, which makes this the provider’s 45th anniversary. Some may remember the original Over-60 storefront clinic on Alcatraz and Sacramento streets in Berkeley. That clinic has morphed into LifeLong Medical Care, with the same mission—to provide quality health care to the most vulnerable members of the community. Almost everyone LifeLong serves subsists on an income below the federal poverty level. A third speak a language other than English; five percent are homeless. Three-quarters receive either Medi-Cal or Medicare, but 17 percent are uninsured. The Gray Panthers might have been surprised that nearly a third of the patients are aged 0-17. But there is still a coterie of older adults. Nearly half are African American, more than a third are white, and 13 percent are Asian American or Pacific Islander. Six stalwart and committed Kensington residents work for the least-known and most unique health provider in the East Bay. This is their story.

Several things coalesced for social worker Ann Sussman around eighteen years ago—she became pregnant, moved to Kensington, and gave up a job she enjoyed, conducting conservatorship investigations in Redwood City. Her husband is a professor at Cal, and after living in San Francisco, they decided to move to the East Bay. That let out Redwood City, especially after Sussman became pregnant. Looking around, she found LifeLong Medical Care. “It was very different then,” she explained. Nearly two decades ago, Lifelong had about 200 employees and now has a thousand. “When I started, I thought it might be a temporary job,” she said.

Sussman works in the supportive housing project. Although the main job of LifeLong is accomplished through clinics, the health care provider has several other missions, one of which is helping the homeless. “There are two housing sites in Berkeley where formerly homeless folks live,” Sussman explained.

“I’m always like seventeen different places at once,” she said. She supervises other social workers and also works out of several clinics. “That’s one of the reasons I stay in the job. I work with adults, mostly seriously mentally ill. I do some clinics, and I also talk to people who just need counseling.” She enjoys the flexibility and the challenges that come with different needs.

“Working with the homeless gives insight into the realization that we are all a step away from homelessness,” she said. “Some are mentally ill, some are estranged from their families because of substance abuse or mental illness, some just fell through the cracks.” She describes a man whose parents died, and he was not getting treatment for his mental issues. “He spent his inheritance and ended up homeless. And kids who age out of the foster system are really in danger of becoming homeless.”

Then there are the pandemic-related down-spirals. “People who have lost jobs due to COVID,” she said. “These people are in danger, and it’s hard to help them.”

LifeLong’s mission has always been to serve the underserved. “When I started,” she said, “we served a lot of people who had no insurance.” Since the Affordable Care Act, she said, “most have insurance. But some can’t get insurance because they’re here illegally.” (LifeLong estimates that 17 percent of its patients are uninsured.)

What one thing would she change about health care? “That’s easy,” she said. “We need health care for all. It’s ridiculous that health care is tied to employment. Everyone needs health care. As a society we would be so much better off. This pandemic would have been taken care of much sooner.”

She added an addendum: “We also need mental health care for all. It’s a huge, huge problem. People end up seeking help way too late. I especially see it with men; their issues could have been dealt with earlier but weren’t. Substance abuse is often self-medicating for mental health problems.”



Looking after her own mental health, Sussman works 28 hours per week. “Most people can’t deal with doing this kind of work every day. I know I’m replaceable, and that’s a good thing. We aren’t magicians. We can’t fix everything. Mainly we listen to people who need to have their stories heard.”

Camelot Court resident Stacey Stein has a big job: she is the director of clinical operations, which means she oversees five primary care centers. If that isn’t enough, she supervises the Call Center. “But right now, COVID vaccine takes up a lot of my time,” she said. Stein was director of patient services before taking on the job of supervising the clinics. “I’m not a provider,” she explains. “I take care of the people who take care of the patients.”

Stein started at LifeLong five years ago. She had worked at Planned Parenthood for years before she came to LifeLong. “Planned Parenthood was a subsection of the people we see. We had predominantly young people at Planned Parenthood, but they were the same people we would refer to community clinics.

LifeLong has such a broad array of primary services. And we serve people from birth to elder care. So LifeLong has a deeper scope, and that was part of why I wanted to work at LifeLong. I wanted a broad impact than I had at Planned Parenthood.”

Stein has lived in Kensington for nine years. “I got pregnant with my daughter right after we bought our house,” she said—her daughter is now eight, and Stein’s other child is two and a half. Her husband also works in health care, at UC Berkeley. “When you have a passion to do this work, you do a lot,” she said. “We wear many hats. I drink a lot of coffee.”

In fact, that afternoon, Stein was heading out to assist at the vaccine clinic because they were short-staffed. She had been primarily working from home during the pandemic, but after they got their staff vaccines in January, she has been doing more in-person work at the clinics she supervises.

“There was some vaccine hesitancy when we were first able to start vaccinating,” she said. “We have a high population of minority patients. And understandably, because of the history, those populations are hesitant to be the guinea pigs.” Radio interviews with LifeLong’s providers helped. Seeing friends and family get the vaccine also reduced qualms. “Another big thing is that our patients trust us,” she said. “We’ve been very successful at vaccinating African Americans and Latinx people compared to other caregivers. We have some very articulate and wonderful providers. They represent the community, and people trust us as a community clinic.”

Stein said that it’s only recently that she’s been more optimistic. “It’s extremely gratifying to be a part of this during a time of upheaval and fear,” she said. “This year we can see a light at the end of a very dark tunnel. The pandemic has been a transformative experience for those of us who do this work. It’s been only a few months of having positive things to focus on, and that doesn’t get old.” Stein brought her eight-year-old to an outdoor vaccine clinic run by LifeLong. “It’s really cool to be able to show your child that things are getting better.”

Pandemic or no, LifeLong faces difficulties. “It’s challenging to hire and retain staff with the cost of living in the Bay Area,” she said. “The work we do depends on people. We want to hire from the community and pay living wages. We are a federally funded community clinic. It’s hard to keep recruitment and retention competitive on limited resources.”

Stein said that she loves living in Kensington. “We’ve been so welcomed by our neighbors. I’m really appreciative of having the community we have.” A couple of days earlier, her two and a half year old let herself into the neighbor’s house, sat down, and began to pet the neighbor’s dog. Stein laughed. “We just have cats,” she explained. “She wanted to visit people with a dog.”

Dr. Kimberly Ceci grew up in Escondido and started her career in public health. “I had spent some time in Africa,” she said, and thought of taking a stint as an epidemiologist. “Then I got into St. George’s University.” St. George’s, in Grenada, is the top Caribbean medical school. She did her residency at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. “Two things were clear to me after my residency: that I wanted to practice community medicine and I wanted to come back to California.”

She began working at what was then Brookside in Richmond in 2011. “When I had the opportunity to take the job at Brookside, I thought it was perfect,” she said. “It’s so energizing to be present for people who have challenges and get them the quality care they deserve. It’s really rewarding.”

At that point, Brookside was an offshoot of Doctors Medical Center. “At first we dealt with low-level needs that could be addressed in urgent care.” A year after she joined, LifeLong took over Brookside, and primary care became the dominant type of care. “Urgent care kind of disappeared,” Ceci explained. Ceci said that when the two merged, the staff was cautiously optimistic. “LifeLong had a great reputation for being an advocate for diverse populations of need. We knew LifeLong was a bigger entity and there was more equity among staff and more support. As it turned out, it was a welcome transition.”

Merging with Brookside was LifeLong’s first foray into Contra Costa County. “It has been incredible to see LifeLong root into Contra Costa in a way that we can really advocate for patients,” Ceci said. But more changes were to come. In 2015, Doctors Medical Center closed, leaving Kaiser as the only hospital. “LifeLong stepped in,” Ceci said. “We created an urgent care center in our building. I’m the medical director of primary care, and Dr. Desmond Carson is the medical director of urgent care.” Carson, an emergency medicine specialist who grew up in Richmond, was recently on NPR talking about vaccine hesitancy, particularly in the African American community.

“It was a high priority of LifeLong to keep Dr. Carson in Richmond,” Ceci said. “He built out our urgent care department, and we’ve had major growth in primary care. And we’ve now integrated a full behavioral health department.” This includes a psychiatrist, LCSWs, and other social workers. “As a federally qualified center, we have a sliding





scale. Anyone can come in and see us. This allows us to see uninsured or undocumented patients as needed. I feel really proud to be part of it.”

Ceci described her sense of impending doom last January. “We knew that the pandemic was going to change our lives forever,” she said. “I was having panic attacks knowing that our community was at particularly high risk. We had never been given [federal] revenue for telehealth, so we were all in-person. We made the decision in early March to go 180 into telehealth. In a community health clinic, if you don’t get the revenue, you can’t build that out. It showed the flexibility and resilience of our staff and our community that we were able to do it. Now we have a better mix of telehealth and in-person. We’re advocating to continue telehealth and video visits. The ability to meet with people who are working or tending children has become crucially important. That aspect of the pandemic is our silver lining, that we can meet people where they’re at.”

Ceci has two children, a three-year-old and a five-and-a-half-year-old. “That half is a milestone,” she smiled. Her husband works for Dolby as a senior researcher in vision science. “We love what we do,” she said. “It’s such hard work. We all can be kind and present for each other.” She described the residency program for new doctors who want to go into family medicine. “Taking on education is a different level of commitment. It shows we’re interested in the future. We can grow a new generation of doctors who are committed to serving the community.”

Development associate Kara De La Paz moved to Kensington in March of last year—not the most opportune time. “With shelter in place, I haven’t had a chance to get to know my neighbors,” she said. “We were told that people in the neighborhood would get together Saturdays at 5. We haven’t been able to do that.”

De La Paz has worked at LifeLong for a little over five years. “Prior to that I was doing development at Children’s Hospital in Oakland,” she said. “What brought me to LifeLong was that I could work part-time.” De La Paz wanted to finish up her BA, which she was able to do at SF State. “LifeLong offered me a full-time position after I graduated.”

When asked what her job encompasses, she laughed. “That’s a good question. You know nonprofits, it’s all about the mission. LifeLong is multi-site and pretty large. We educate the public about what we do and build partnerships, both externally and internally.” As a federally qualified health center, LifeLong receives funding from the government. Approximately one in eleven people in the US seek medical care through community health centers. In LifeLong’s case, De La Paz said that 86 percent of their patients fall below the poverty level. Part of development work is to seek private and corporate sponsorships and donations to fill out LifeLong’s array of services.

LifeLong also hosts two large donor events, a golf tournament in the fall and a gala. De La Paz is responsible for setting up these events, though COVID has made that task harder. “This year the gala will be held virtually,” she said. “With most events, the overhead is very expensive. This area doesn’t have that many venues. But normally our



250-seat events are sold out two or three weeks ahead of time.” She explained that there are gaps in funding—for example, the transportation necessary to get to the clinic. “We have a Fund a Need program. We love to tell our patients’ stories.”

De La Paz talked about living in Kensington and serving the poor. “People live all over who choose to do mission-driven work and meet the needs of people. I can walk in my neighborhood and rejuvenate my spirits and be grateful for what I have. Living in the inner city kind of burns you out. I don’t want to push my agenda to help people. But if people are interested in helping, I can be a tool to help them do that.”



Kensington’s police district board president Sylvia Hacaj puts on her day-job hat at LifeLong as director of development and communications. She and Kara De La Paz work together; Hacaj started working at LifeLong right before the pandemic hit. “Kara moved here after we started working together,” Hacaj said. Hacaj was the new kid at Lifelong while De La Paz was new in the neighborhood—the two live close to each other.

“My primary role is to help communicate what we do to outside audiences,” Hacaj said, though she also oversees internal communications with employees. “We have almost a thousand employees across multiple sites in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and now one in Marin.” In fundraising, she focuses on individuals and corporations, while De La Paz hews in on events.

“My first day was January 27, 2020. We just squeaked under the shutdown for our first fundraiser,” Hacaj said. “Then we went into COVID complete emergency mode. I can’t imagine what it’s like outside COVID because I haven’t experienced that.”

Hacaj explained that in addition to switching to telehealth for most patient visits, LifeLong also transitioned to a new electronic healthcare system. Despite—or in some cases, to address—the demands of the pandemic, Lifelong forged ahead with new initiatives, including a new health center, increasing help for the homeless, adding five street medicine teams, and expanding the residency programs for doctors and nurse practitioners. “Having a teaching component means we’re increasing providers who look like the community they serve,” Hacaj said. “We have a teaching mission.”

The Gray Panthers who started the Over-60 health clinic 45 years ago might be astounded at LifeLong’s sheer reach. But hewing to the mission to serve society’s most vulnerable has always been front and center.

Kara De La Paz’s observation about the pandemic explains LifeLong’s core values: “What I love is the heartfelt passion of staff. They were still serving people in the same way, passionately working against all odds to get people served. It’s really moving. We do it no matter what.”

*Dr. Sue Ferguson, associate medical director of the Downtown Oakland Center, could not be reached for this article.*

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Summer

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2021



KCC Summer Camp has begun in the Kensington Park. We are thrilled to have the kids back at camp this summer. The days are filled with sports, games, arts & crafts and lots of free play time. It's wonderful to have the kids run and play and laugh in the park again.

Teacher Vicky Brodt has been busy creating fun art projects and cooking creations in the newly renovated Community Center kitchen and Coach Kim has been keeping the kids busy on the tennis courts.

The first two weeks of camp we had Skyhawk sports onsite with Golf and Soccer lessons. A big thank you to all of our awesome camp counselors this year and camp director Kelly Barry. Summer camp runs through August 13th.



KASEP

Online registration for the Fall 2021 classes will begin August 31st and the first week of KASEP classes will begin the week of September 13th. A list of all our KASEP classes will be sent home through the Hilltop e-tree the first week of school. We have the perfect setting for small class sizes, our classroom spaces are well ventilated, and we are fortunate to have lots of beautiful outdoor space to use for our recreation classes.



**Community Blood Drive:**  
KCC has teamed up with Vitalant to host a community blood drive at the Kensington Community Center July 27th & 28th visit [www.vitalant.org](http://www.vitalant.org) to reserve your spot.

KCC Adult Classes are now happening inside the Kensington Community Center

**Yoga Classes**  
Tuesday evenings 5:30-6:30pm with Dani and Joanna  
Wednesday mornings 10:00-11:15am with Barbara Voinar  
Drop-in fee is \$15  
  
Community Yoga, refine your practice of the fundamentals of yoga, including mindful breathing and individualized alignment in poses. This practice builds strength, flexibility, and balance to relieve stress, counter injuries, and develop a calmer state of mind. All levels welcome.

**Zumba**  
Saturdays 9:00-10:00am  
Drop-in fee is \$15  
  
Start the summer off with some fun active dance fitness. Our experienced Zumba instructor will guide you through everything you need to know. First time and experienced participants welcome.

**Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi**  
Fridays 9:30-11:00am  
Drop-in fee is \$15  
  
This class teaches Tai Chi for better health, improving students' strength, balance, flexibility, and dexterity. A gentle martial art, Tai Chi is a safe, rewarding activity for people of all ages and levels of health. Tai chi emphasizes the mind and body working in harmony. Relaxing the body and calming the mind help reduce stress and increase the flow of energy.

**Register at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/adult-classes](http://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/adult-classes)**

Tennis Court Reservations: For weekends and holidays only, beginning at 9am.  
Call the KCC office for info. Court Fees: 45-min. singles reservation: Residents: \$2

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Bldg. E (Across the grassy field above the tennis courts in Kensington Park), Kensington CA 94707. E-mail: [kccrec@yahoo.com](mailto:kccrec@yahoo.com), or call 525-0292.  
Our website is: [www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org](http://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org).





District Correspondence:

The Public Safety Building  
Takes Center Stage

May 19, 2021  
Bill Hansell, General Manager  
Kensington Fire Protection District  
217 Arlington Avenue  
Kensington, CA 94707

Dear General Manager Hansell:

I am writing to you on behalf and at the direction of the Kensington Police Protection & Community Service District (KPPCSD) Board of Directors to request that the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) Board of Directors rescind their recent action at the April 14, 2021 KFPD Board Meeting to move forward with renovation of the Public Safety (PS) Building for a full Kensington Fire Departmentonly occupancy.

The KPPCSD Board of Directors would strongly prefer that the Kensington Police Department (KPD) remain and exist in the future renovated PS Building. To that end, the KPPCSD formally requests that the KFPD permit the KPD to remain in the future renovated PS Building and provide 1220 square feet in the building—as it currently does today—to headquarter the KPD now and into the future.

In addition, the KPPCSD respectfully requests that the KFPD not attempt to represent the views and/or opinions of the KPPCSD Board of Directors and/or District staff by suggesting, inferring or implying that they support the KFPD's current direction and action to renovate the PS Building with a Kensington Fire Department-only occupancy and/or any development/renovation options that require the KPD to permanently move to another location in the District.

The KPPCSD is very hopeful that the KFPD will reconsider its recent action and support these efforts to keep the KFD and KPD together in the same building by honoring the request to provide 1220 square feet so that the KPD may remain in the newly renovated PS Building.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. We look forward to your response.

Very sincerely,  
Marti Brown,  
General Manager, KPPCSD

Date: May 20th, 2021  
To: General Manager Marti Brown  
KPPCSD 217 Arlington Ave Kensington CA 94707  
MBrown@kppcsd.org

From: Bill Hansell, General Manager

Dear General Manager Brown,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Public Safety Building, dated May 19th, 2021. Unfortunately, the building's long and complex master planning process has challenged preconceived notions of what both departments need to function and to serve the community properly. We are all working to find the best solution for Kensington while dealing with an outdated building that is seismically unsafe and simply too small to accommodate present and future needs.

At the May 12th, 2021 KFPD Board Meeting, I presented the attached "Kensington Public Safety Building Renovation: Questions and Answers" Fact Sheet which extensively references all the reasons for that reality and explains the two actions taken by the KFPD Board in its April meeting. Your Board members also received this report individually on that date. I ask that the KPPCSD Board refer to the Fact Sheet, in particular Sections 2b-d, along with the reference links (including the "KPPCSD Preliminary Needs Assessment/Financial Analysis" of 03/11/2021 and "KPPCSD Potential Impact of Future Renovation on KPD" of 04/08/2021) to understand the numerous reasons why the analysis concludes that two departments will not fit in the renovated building. My "Request for Facility Discussions to Start" letter, which was sent to KPPCSD President Hacaj on May 6th, 2021, restated my "sincere offer to work on this problem jointly" and I am encouraged by your appointment as negotiator to that end. My letter described additional space needs of the KFPD's administration of up to 1,200sf, that had not been included in any of the prior joint-occupancy plans, and are just another reason why an additional location must be acquired.

The space requirements of both departments need to be considered jointly in order to make the best use of Kensington's tax dollars. As I wrote at the time, all of this "should be considered as part of the negotiations and which may facilitate financial aid mechanisms for the greater good of both agencies." While I specifically mentioned 303 Arlington Ave as a solution, I assumed there would be "other options and alternatives to investigate during facility planning phases over the coming months."

I fully understand that the KPPCSD Board will determine which facility option(s) it prefers for the Police Department. I look forward to working with you on legal, realistic options that best use the resources of both our Districts and that provide Police and Fire with the space and resources they need to serve our community. I am concerned, though, that time is of the essence and wish to focus on moving forward and not revisiting alternatives that do not work.

Sincerely,  
Bill Hansell General Manager



The Outlook wishes everyone a happy, safe summer.

We'll be back in September.

APRIL POLICE LOG

- 1 VANDALISM, Ardmore Rd. Hate speech along the Ardmore path on the RP's fence and neighbor's fence.
- 3 WELFARE CHECK, Highland Blvd. RP requests welfare check on her aunt and uncle. Advised nephew's female friend is at the residence stealing and refusing to leave. Stated her aunt is afraid and wants a restraining order. She has two friends there who are trying to help resolve the situation. Misc Violation—Warning Given.
- 5 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Coventry Rd. RP believes 2 persons entered car/driveway. SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Yale Ave. RP took a package that was accidentally delivered to his address on Amherst. He saw lots of other packages on the porch some opened/some unopened. Rang the doorbell but no answer. Concerned that the resident inside may be injured. Misc Public Service Provided.
- CITIZEN ASSIST, Arlington Av/Amherst Av. Elderly female out walking to market and is now fatigued. Would like assistance back to her res. IFO cheese shop. RP advised she walked from her home in Berkeley to the Kensington Wine Shop. When she went to walk back home, she realized she did not know the directions to her home. I provided her a courtesy ride home. Misc Public Service Provided.
- PERSON SEEKING ADVICE FROM PD, Colusa Ave. Threatening messages sent to RP via Instagram. Message included her name, address, and picture of res.
- 6 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Franciscan Way. WMA 60s, 510, thin build coat & pants. Entered res w/ two juvs. WMJuv and WFJuv 10-11yr old. Starting to leave. Downhill on Eureka. Misc Violation—Warning Given.
- 9 REQUEST FOR EXTRA PATROL, Coventry Rd. Found items belonging to a possible squatter located on the west side of the residence. RP requesting more police presence in case they come back. Misc Public Service Provided.
- 10 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Cambridge. RP being harassed by a woman for the past 5 days, her dog chases RP up the stairs, RP requesting police patrol the area.
- MISC CIVIL MATTER, Cambridge. RP said that she wants to report that she was walking her dog home when the resident began yelling at her "for no cause" and yells "don't come near me" and she was scared and would like to speak to an officer. Misc. Public Service Provided.
- HIT AND RUN - Property Damage, Parkside/Canon. Reckless driver hit RP's wife, no injuries, almost hit pedestrian, only got a partial plate.
- 13 SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S, Coventry Rd/ WMA & WFA 20s. Female had red hair. RP's husband just saw them leaving area. Suspicious that they were prowling. NB Coventry then down the Ardmore path. Misc Public Service Provided.
- 14 SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S, Cambridge Ave. Female subj coughing on purpose at him & has harassed him for past several days. WFA 70s, red bandana over her mouth. RP does not know who she is. Put branches on his car. Had her dog chase him. Dog is blond-colored small. Last seen NB on Cambridge. RP requests contact ifo his res. Misc Public Service Provided.
- 15 PETTY THEFT, Princeton Ave. RPs purse taken from porch. RP was carrying groceries and purse and set them down on the porch. RP started receiving fraud alerts and has been unable to locate purse.
- 17 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Colusa. Neighbor stomped down hall and back steps to car, then placed a baseball bat or crowbar in his shirt and went back into apt.
- 18 ARREST FOR OUTSIDE AGENCY WARRANT, Colusa. Neighbor constantly banging on door. Poss that gf locked him out and is not letting him back in.
- SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Anson Way. Male subj came out of veh and up onto RP's property. When RP confronted him, he departed. Unable to Locate.
- 21 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Cambridge Ave. Veh taking mail out of mailboxes. Last seen NB on Arlington going towards El Cerrito. Unable to locate.
- 22 BURGLARY/ARREST, Colusa. WMA 50s, short, stocky. Broke down door w/three locks. RP's husband, daughter inside. Arrest and Case Report Taken.
- 23 MISC CIVIL MATTER, Hilltop Elementary. Male employee using facility to wash his car. Unable to Locate.
- PETTY THEFT, Beloit Ave. Mail stolen and tampered with the past couple of days.
- 26 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Beloit, Grizzly Peak. WMA, 60s, thin, long gray hair, beard spitting into the air and yelling idiot. RP was on the other side of the street. Unable to Locate Source of Complaint.
- 27 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Yale Ave. 2 strange vehs in the area. One large 4d older model pickup truck dark green was parked in emergency zone. HMA 20s, bb cap, blk shirt. Idled there for a few mins, then sped away. #2 veh dark green older model sedan w/cans in trunk. WMA 60s, thin, wht beard, blk tshirt, blk bb cap. #3 newer model blk compact. Both vehs have left the area. RP thinks they were casing or att to steal mail. Unable to Locate.
- Burglary, Trinity Ave. Driver side window and rear window smash. Speaker cabinet taken.
- SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Yale Ave. Received threatening email from an unknown person. States they will spread embarrassing personal information to her friends/family unless RP sends money. Resp had an old account password RP has used for bank/email etc. Doesn't believe this is an active password she is currently using.
- SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Highland Blvd. Threatening email reveal private info and shows an old password RP has used. Resp wants payment of bitcoin to prevent releasing information.
- BURGLARY, Kingston Rd. Residential between 1620-1715 hrs , house is clear no known loss possibly interrupted by the dog. Glass broken in breakfast room door to rear deck, door off its hinges.
- 29 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Colusa Market. WMA, short, in his 60s wearing a grey sweater and walking a brown dog. Very aggressive with RP when she told him not to stand so close to her. Subject yelled at RP and told her "Fuck off." RP wants the subject admonished for his behavior. Subject last seen SB on Colusa. Unable to Locate.
- 30 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Coventry Rd. RP stated that she was talking to subject and speech became garbled and slurred. Subject maybe on the Arlington in a gold Honda Civic.

New Hours at the Library

By Kara Sheetz

Time limits and building capacity limits have been removed for library visits. That means tables and chairs have been reintroduced for your use. We thank you for bearing with us these last few months. Our book drop is open 24 hours a day for returns. A library card or photo ID is still required to check out material. The library is following guidance from the California Department of Public Health and County Risk Management regarding mask mandates. Before your next visit, we encourage you to call the library or visit us on the web at cclib.org to find out the latest information.

Effective July 1, we increased our open hours from 35 to 40 hours per week. New library hours: Tuesday 12-8pm; Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-6pm; Friday and Saturday, 9am-5pm. The library is closed Sundays and Mondays.

Lastly, a bit of celebratory news: Ms. Mary has returned! She says, "I am so pleased to be back at the library after a leave of absence during Covid-19. I missed you all so much—especially the kids! Please drop by and say hello!"



CITIZEN  
FORUM

# Saving Kensington From Destruction by Fire

By Philip Zimmerman

Need the past be prologue? Consider that in September 1923, a fire started in Wildcat Canyon and swept southwest over the ridge into Berkeley’s Northside, where it destroyed 640 structures.

In October 1991, the Tunnel fire descended to the southwest from near the ridge above the west portal of the Caldecott Tunnel above the Montclair section of Oakland and burned 6,843 houses and 437 apartments and condominium units in northern Oakland and southeastern Berkeley. It had jumped not only four-lane highway 13, but also the eight lanes of highway 24. Though the resources marshaled to fight the fires equaled the equivalent of a 107-alarm fire, it was only controlled after 9PM of the day it started when the wind stopped.

We do not have much power in the face of these large fires when they arrive. But we can prepare.

Already only in May, we are facing the reality of a drought this year and hot dry winds from the northeast that already have sporadically assailed our community. This, I fear, is the new normal, and the several wet winters lately were anomalies in an ongoing drought.

Perhaps I am completely wrong in this, but there is at least one constant truth. When we have hot dry days, the wind comes from the northeast. What is to the northeast of Kensington? First, a ridgeline roughly parallel to the shoreline, and on its down slope to the east, just beyond us, is about a half mile of densely overgrown trees and scrub. It meets a fire road at the bottom. In the south, this overgrown patch extends from somewhere east of Berkeley well into Richmond, two cities to the north.

It is remarkably easy to anticipate the direction from which the destruction of our homes might come. And actually, I have a fairly palatable preventive measure to suggest. It is not even wildly expensive.

In driving back and forth to Orinda many times over the years, I have come to a private name for the down slope from Wildcat Canyon Road just to the south of Inspiration Point. I call it Cow Heaven. It is a great deal of pasture, interspersed with stands of shrubs and live oaks. It contrasts with the heavily brush- and tree-covered slopes to the east of Kensington, which have no open spaces of grassland. When that down slope of brush is dry and the wind is blowing over it and then down the ridge toward our homes, I am fearful for everything we have.

I propose that it be bulldozed to pasture, with only a few modest stands of native trees spared. The debris need not be removed. It can be piled and shaped pleasingly and covered with soil to gradually subside. Some fire roads meandering across the hillside would be good. I mean the biggest bulldozers, those that can push over trees and bury them with ease, from the ridgeline all the way to the bottom of the hill and the fire road that runs from the Little Farm to McBryde Ave. in Richmond.

Tolerating that brush- and tree-covered hillside to the east of us is like living under a sledgehammer. It would be far cheaper to make this alteration in the watershed lands than to rebuild swaths of Kensington. Would the political will and necessary permissions be a problem? I submit that a whiff of smoke coming from somewhere nearby will be a great motivator to all concerned. And more than a whiff is surely coming. The fire season inexorably lengthens and gets more dangerous each year.

I believe that something of the sort that I propose will eventually occur, and that the tinder-covered hillside upwind of us will eventually become a cow pasture, like parts of Wildcat Canyon Park.

The big question is, Will Kensington burn as the slope to the east of us is turned to cow pasture by fire? Once it has become pasture, I doubt that the survivors would allow it to become so overgrown ever again.

I noted above that an eight-lane freeway did not function as an effective firebreak in 1991. If we are to have a firebreak to our east instead of a tinderbox, let us make it a big one, with fire roads in it, and functional eradication of paths that fire could follow up the hill through the firebreak, and the removal of most of the fuel that could cause a fire-storm. And let it be permanent.

*Citizen Forums are guest editorials written by Kensington residents. To submit a Citizen Forum for consideration, email [editor@kensingtonoutlook.com](mailto:editor@kensingtonoutlook.com)*

**Sanders**  
*...from front page*

in reading and writing instruction, deep discussions around race and equity, and a peer mediation program that has trained hundreds of students in conflict resolution. Over the years, the school garnered many awards, becoming both a California Gold Ribbon School and a California Distinguished School. Sanders considers these honors to be “a testament to our strong faculty and engaged parent community.”

In retirement Sanders says that she is “looking forward to having some unstructured time with my family, digging in my garden, and traveling when it’s not the height of the tourist season! I look forward to seeing what emerges in this place that I have called home for so many years, and I will be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to serve this community.”

Regardless of what retirement holds for Sanders and her family, she can be assured that she made an impact in the educational lives of thousands of students who have walked through Kensington Hilltop School’s front doors during the last 29 years.

**Chief**  
*...from Page 5*

tions, took the tests and completed the process. It was kind of strange to be doing that after twenty years.”

Gancasz came directly from San Pablo. “I miss the people there,” he said “I built great relationships. They have a very professional command staff. But I thought this was an opportunity. I don’t regret it one bit. It is very peaceful up here. I feel spoiled when I walk down to the shopping center to get coffee. Everyone I pass smiles and says hello.”

Gancasz was born in Queens, NY. He moved out to California when he was ten. “We moved to Pleasanton. My father worked for United Airlines, and he was transferred from JFK to SFO.” He and his sisters grew up in the Tri Valley area and went to St. Michael’s Catholic School for elementary and middle grades and then to Amador High.

Much of his family still lives in New York, and he often goes back to visit. He comes from a family deeply steeped in public service. His grandfather, grandmother, and uncle were all New York City police officers. His grandmother was one of the first women on the force. A detective, she worked in a unit called the Pickpocket Squad, combing Times Square and the bus lines as an undercover cop. “It’s a family business,” Gancasz said. One of his sisters works for the NYC mayor’s office, while his uncle is a supervisor for the New York Transit Authority. Gancasz hasn’t left the valley—he and his family live in San Ramon.

As an officer in San Pablo, Gancasz worked for Schuld for a number of years. He worked homicide and all manner of crimes as a patrol sergeant, detective, lieutenant, and commander. He also worked the Safe Streets task force with the FBI, primarily focusing on street gangs.

Gancasz comes into a situation in which he can create a stellar force. With three recent departures (Manny Ramos, Keith Barrow, and Ted Foley), Gancasz has an opportunity to remake the department. “We’re in a rebuilding phase,” he said. “I am trying to hire three officers. That is a big gap to fill for a small PD. We are trying to get this organization contemporary, modernizing systems, procedures, and equipment. We have instituted new scheduling and reporting procedures. And we’re continuing to rebrand ourselves with new police patches and graphics on our vehicles. We’ve gotten great feedback on the new patches put in place by Chief Schuld.”

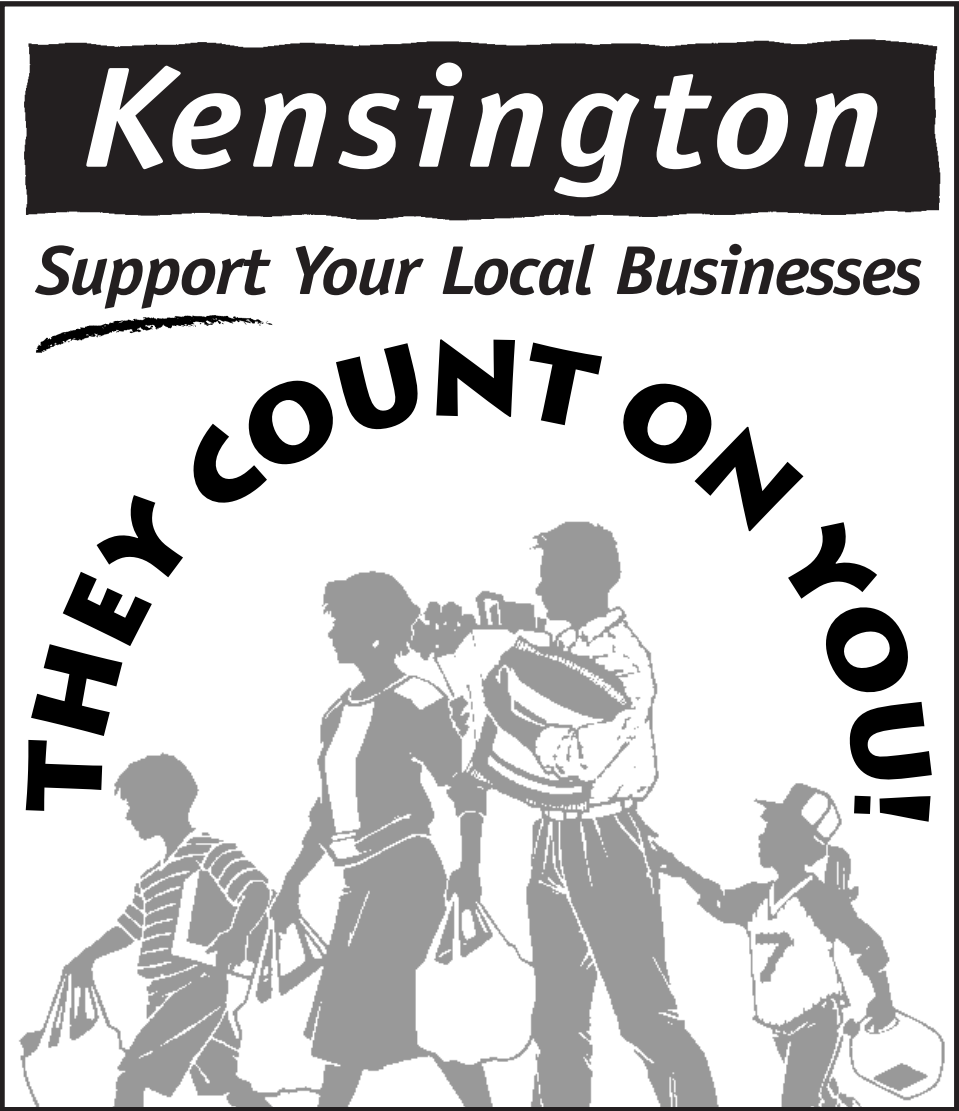
He plans to continue in the same direction that Simpkins and Schuld chose, that of community policing. “I talked to Steve before making the transition,” Gancasz said. “I wanted to know about the community. Steve had nothing but good things to say. Kensington is a uniquely small community where everyone seems to know everyone. We’re going one step at a time and committed to giving the best customer service that Kensington has ever seen. That is my goal with the organization.”

He believes that a solution will be found with the Public Safety Building, whether the police end up in the renovated building or elsewhere. “I don’t see it as a bad thing if an organization outgrows the facility its in, whether it’s fire, police, or a business. I see a lot of people collaborating, sharing ideas, and working hard to find a solution to a complex problem. [General Manager] Marti Brown is one of the hardest working people I have ever met, and she is working on this issue every day. We’re going to provide exceptional service wherever we’re housed.”

The rebuilding phase institutes a new command structure, complete with promotions. If the KPPCSD board approves the structure change, officer Brad Harms will assume the role of police lieutenant. Harms would join detective sergeant Amit Nath to supplement the new command staff. Harms came to the KPD with many years of experience as a sergeant.

Gancasz wants to add volunteer and cadet programs. “We’re also still looking for reserve officers,” he said, though he’s focused on filling fulltime officer slots first. He explained why some choose to start as reserves. “Some officers want to test the waters a bit,” he said. “For example, Thang Ho comes in once a week and rides with another officer. He has a fulltime job elsewhere.” Often when a career decision is made and the fit is right, hires can be made from reserves.

Concluded Gancasz, “I am honored to have the privilege of serving the community of Kensington as its police chief.”





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On June 19, residents pose in front of the north wall after kicking up their heels at the just-opened Community Center. Photos by Jenny Parks.

## In-Person Adult Classes Return

By Jenny Parks, KCC recreation director  
Since the pandemic began, KCC has been holding several of our adult classes outside at the park, but some remained virtual. On June 15, we brought all our classes back inside the newly renovated, newly reopened Community Center.

We started a new Zumba class this year on Saturdays at 9am. Instructor Mariana brings her high energy and enthusiasm each week. We also added two new yoga classes, one on Wednesday mornings from 9:30-11am with Barbara Voinar and on Tuesday evenings 5:30-6:30pm with Dani and Joanna. And Nobou Nishi is back with his Tai Chi class each Friday 9:30-11am.

We hope to bring back more of our adult classes in the coming weeks. All of our classes are suitable for students of all levels, including rank beginners. You can read more about our classes on our website at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org or follow us on Instagram @KensingtonCommunityCouncil

## Cerrito Canyon Is in Danger

By Linnea Due  
Cerrito Canyon spans the entirety of lower Kensington from east to west. The county line bisects it, separating Kensington from Berkeley. Anchored by Colusa at its base and the Arlington at its top, the canyon is a tinderbox. Both shopping centers and hundreds of residences could be lost in a fire.

As a child, I could walk from Colusa to the Arlington on trails; now, because of downed trees and fallen limbs, it is often impossible to walk fifty feet. The debris impedes wildlife, who must make elaborate detours on the hillsides, causing erosion.

The state agency CalFire allows property owners to create a FireWise group to give us tools to make a meaningful difference. Professionals evaluate the threats, set annual goals, and put us in line to access grants. FireWise has deemed Cerrito Canyon appropriate for such a neighborhood project. Because of complications of two jurisdictions, two fire departments, and two counties, Berkeley is creating its own FireWise group, but we'll all work together.

The program will reduce fire danger, help our native animals, and protect our live oaks and bays. Clearing will chiefly take place on the upper slopes and not impact Cerrito Creek. No private property will be accessed without permission. Please join our group by emailing cerritocanyon@gmail.com.

## Students from the Navajo Nation Need Supplies

By L. Johansson, E.Pilling, F. Sherris-Watt, and G. Troxell  
Nenahnezad Community School, located in the Northern Navajo District of New Mexico, is in need of school supplies for its students. It is a place of learning for kids K-6th grade. In the Kensington area there is a Girl Scout troop of 12- and 13-year-olds who want to help. Cadette troop 30643 has been together for six years, meeting at the Kensington Community Center, the Arlington Church, and, most recently, via Zoom.

Troop 30643 is collecting backpacks, pencils, pens, erasers, glue and crayons, June 20 through August 10. An Amazon wish list has all the needed items. Email 4kensington@att.net for the link. Monetary or gift card donations are also welcome. Look for our backpacks at Kensington Veterinary Hospital or Raxakoul Coffee & Cheese. Thank you for your support!

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### Highlights of May Police Log

**Stolen Bicycle** On Sunday, May 1, at 2131 hours, a KPD officer responded to the 260 block of Colgate Ave for a report of a stolen bicycle. The victim reported his bicycle was stolen by an unknown suspect around 2000 hours, and the suspect was captured on his surveillance cameras. Officers were unable to identify the suspect seen on video but have distributed the video to other officers as a person of interest to be on the lookout for. The investigation is ongoing.

**Stolen Vehicle** On Wednesday May 5, at 1625 hours, an officer responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 1600 block of Oceanview Ave. The victim reported their car had been missing for a few days but did not notice it until Wednesday. There were no witnesses to this crime and no suspect leads. The vehicle was entered into the stolen vehicle system. On May 10, Oakland Police found the victim’s car unoccupied and recovered it. The victim was notified, and they responded to take possession of their car.

**Impounded Vehicle** On Wednesday May 12, a KPD officer followed up on a vehicle that had been marked for illegal storage seven days earlier in the 600 block of Oberlin Ave. The vehicle had not been moved and met the requirements for removal. Officer Harms had the vehicle removed pursuant to the vehicle code and mailed the registered owner, who lived in San Rafael, a notification form.

**Domestic Abuse** On Thursday May 14, an officer took a telephone report from staff at the Kaiser Hospital in Richmond. Staff advised they were treating a 78-year-old adult male with injuries consistent with an assault. Officers interviewed the doctors who advised the elderly man sustained an abrasion on his forehead which they believed was suspicious. The victim left the hospital before officers could speak with him. The investigation is ongoing.

**Auto Burglary** On Friday May 15, an officer responded to a report of an auto burglary in the 1100 block of Arlington Ave. The victim’s vehicle was broken into by unknown suspects who pulled out the door lock sometime during the night. The suspects stole property valued at approximately \$1,050.00. There were no witnesses and no suspect leads have been developed. The case is being investigated. **Possession of Burglary Tools/Narcotics** On Tuesday evening May 15, an officer pulled over a silver Lexus for an equipment violation in the 200 block of Amherst Ave. While speaking with the occupants, the officer saw tools inside the car commonly used to steal catalytic converters. The officer searched the car and found a portable car jack, three battery powered reciprocating

saws with metal cutting blades, and dozens of shaved keys which are commonly used by thieves to steal vehicles. In addition to these items, there were fraudulent identification cards, suspected methamphetamine, drug paraphernalia, and a replica firearm. A records check revealed all three adults have extensive criminal backgrounds and none reside in Kensington. Their vehicle was impounded, and they were arrested and transported to the County Jail in Martinez.

**Road Rage** On Friday, May 28, officers responded to a report of a road rage on Stratford Avenue and Yale Avenue. Officers determined a motorist confronted another motorist in a threatening manner and left the area. Officers were able to obtain the license plate of the aggressor’s vehicle from citizen-owned security cameras. Using databases, officers identified the driver and contacted him at his residence. Although there were no injuries and no requests for prosecution, a police report was taken detailing the events.

**Auto Burglary** On Sunday, May 30, an officer responded to the area of Colusa and Oak View avenues for a report of an auto burglary. The victim’s vehicle was parked in a vacant lot at the Farmers Market, where unknown suspects broke the passenger window and stole a portable stereo valued at approximately \$150.00. There were no witnesses to this event.

**DUI Arrest** On Wednesday, June 2, an officer stopped a vehicle traveling south on Arlington Avenue in the wrong lane. During the stop officers determined the driver was under the influence of alcohol. After failing a field sobriety examination, the driver was arrested for driving while intoxicated, driving on the wrong side of the road, driving on a suspended license, possession of methamphetamine, and violating his probation. His vehicle was towed from the scene.

**Fireworks Patrols** During June and July, KPD will be ramping up its proactive trend to deter the use of illegal fireworks in Kensington. On June 7, officers began directed patrols throughout Kensington looking and listening for fireworks use. The goal is public safety through enhanced patrol efforts. Officers are reporting the time spent on these details and thoroughly documenting instances of fireworks use. KPD has taken a zero-tolerance stance on the use of illegal fireworks and will be issuing citations to anyone using them. All cases will be forwarded to the District Attorney for prosecution and all fireworks will be confiscated and destroyed. A social media outreach campaign has also been initiated on Facebook, NextDoor, and Nixel educating the public about the dangers and high fire risk associated with using illegal fireworks. This outreach campaign will continue throughout the summer.

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Drop off in Colusa Circle! The Zero Waste Art Supply Recycling Box will be outside the Zip Code East Bay office, at 380 Colusa Ave in Colusa Circle, each Sunday in July and August beginning July 11. Swing by anytime during the Kensington Farmers’ Market from 10am-2pm to drop off your art supplies contact-free.

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