



Ministers
...from front page

community is large, and it’s a church with a history.”

The Schmidts take over from a couple that ministered to Kensington families for nearly two decades: Bill and Barbara Hamilton-Holway. “We have nearly 400 adult members and about a hundred youth and children,” Christian said. “The Unitarian Church defines a large church as over 550 members, so it’s not quite there, but it operates more like a large church—it thinks of itself as a mindset church.”

The Unitarian Church offers a number of programs weekly, including a personal theology series and workshops on dreams and social justice. “We’re just a few months in, so we haven’t started a lot of new stuff,” Christian said. “We’re trying to learn more about the community before we change anything. And it’s doing things well already, so it’s not like we’re coming into a situation where we need to fix anything. We’re just absolutely pleased to find this.”

The Schmidts bring youth to a church that has had an older ministry for many years—Christian is 35, and Kristin is 33. “That’s a big shift,” Christian said, “and we’re part of a generational turnover.” Some families have been members of the church for decades, while others are comparative newcomers or younger family members returning to the community.

Writes Kristin about the couple’s personal theology: “We share a universalist and humanist theology. We believe that every single person is precious and worthy of wholeness, and that the divine work to transform our world into one of justice happens through human hands. We believe that God is love in the sense that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained the power of love in the world. In his Nobel lecture he wrote, ‘When I speak of love, I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response which is little more than emotional bosh. I am speaking of that for which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.’”

The Schmidts have two sons, CJ and John. CJ will be starting school this year in Pinole, while John is still a toddler.

Scam Alert #1
Romance scams start with fake profiles on online dating sites. The scammer, who is conveniently working abroad, quickly builds a relationship with the targeted victim, exchanging photos, romantic messages, or even talking by phone. Then they will make a request: money needed for an emergency or maybe to plan an in-person visit. The target sends money, and then never hears from the love interest again.

Scam Alert #2
If you get a phone call from someone you don't know who is trying to sell you something you didn't plan to buy, simply hang up the phone. If they pressure you to give out personal information, like your Social Security number or your credit card, it's most likely a scam. You can put your phone number on the National "Do Not Call" Registry to cut down on receiving unsolicited calls. Call 1-888-382-1222 from the phone you want to register. Just remember that scammers are unlikely to follow the Registry rules so you will need to stay on the alert.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam. Report scams to local law enforcement. Contact the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork for more information on fraud prevention.

January Police Log

January 3 IDENTITY THEFT, Kenyon Ave. Victim’s SS# was used to attempt to open a charge card, but the unknown suspect was unsuccessful.

January 4 HIT & RUN, Edgcroft Rd. Victim’s vehicle was sideswiped during the night.

January 6 HIT & RUN. Trinity Ave. Non-injury hit and run collision with parked car. No information left by suspect.

January 9 THEFT, Lenox Dr. Vehicle left unlocked, tools stolen.

January 11 HIT & RUN, Ardmore Dr. Unknown suspect(s) collided with victim’s car and fled location.

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY, Plateau Dr. Suspect(s) forcefully entered construction site and removed items.

January 14 VEHICLE BURGLARY, Arlington Ave. Vehicle’s window smashed and property taken.

VEHICLE BURGLARY, Arlemont Dr. Vehicle’s window smashed and property taken.

ROBBERY, Anson Way. Suspect obtained solicitor’s property at gun-point.

January 15 THEFT, Highgate Rd. Vehicle broken into and vandalized.

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT, Franciscan Way. Vehicle was left unlocked.

January 24 STOLEN VEHICLE, Arlington Ave. Construction vehicle was stolen while parked on street.

January 25 RECOVERED STOLEN, Lawson Dr. Stolen vehicle located.

January 29 DISTURBANCES, Arlington Ave. Loud party. Contacted numerous people coming from a party at the church.



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New Unitarian Ministers Here to Stay



By Linnea Due
Kensington’s newest ministers, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley’s Christian and Kristin Schmidt, never thought they’d end up in California. The couple were working in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, as interim ministers at a Unitarian church, when a friend suggested checking out Kensington’s UUCB as a permanent landing spot. “We just never considered that,” Christian said during a January interview. “For one thing, the cost of living scared us off. But our friend said that we should take a look at the materials the church provided to potential ministers.” The Schmidts liked what they heard, and now they’re here to stay—with the financial hurdle leapt by congregational help to get a house in Pinole for the family of four.

“Cherry Hill was a challenging ministry,” Christian said. “It ended well, but it took a lot of time and effort to make that happen. The biggest thing we accomplished was to get the staff on a better footing. We had always planned on doing two years there—it was the right time for us to leave.”

Things are different now, said Christian: “We hope to be here for a really long time. The congregation is different, and the church has a wonderful staff. The presence in the

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High Legal Costs Plague KPPCSD

By Linnea Due
KPPCSD board president Rachelle Sherris-Watt says that she shares the community’s concern about the high legal costs that haunt the district. In December alone, those costs rose above \$30,000, with Public Law Group billing an almost equal amount to charges of new counsel Amara Morrison of Wendel Rosen, an Oakland firm.

In a February interview, Sherris-Watt said that December was a particularly thorny month, with very-interim GM/COP Kevin Kyle quitting right after Thanksgiving, questions from old and new board members to lawyers about contracts for possible Kyle replacements Kevin Hart and Rickey Hull, what could be disclosed to the new board members before they were sworn in, and more.

When PLG bowed out in mid-August 2016, after giving notice in mid-May, PLG’s John Holtzman penned a letter that left a lot of leeway: “Of course, we will be available to work with your new general counsel on transition issues. In addition, we are willing to continue to advise on labor, employment, and financial issues upon request.” The broad nature of what PLG might address raised worries about overlapping responsibilities and charges.

“We’ve tried to keep PLG on things that were already in progress,” said Sher-

See Legal Costs, page 5



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Letters to the editor

Which Board Manages Money Better?

Dear Editor,

There is a strong force in our community to farm out our police services. From what I see and hear, that includes the present KPPSCD board majority. One would think that almost twenty years of having farmed out our fire service to El Cerrito would make us wiser. The fire department services for El Cerrito and Kensington are run as one department, commanded by one chief and staffed with officers and firefighters who are interchangeable. Yet, El Cerrito has paid \$244 annually per household while Kensington households have paid \$693 annually for the last few years. Plus, services on emergency calls are 40 seconds slower for calls in Kensington. So we have been subsidizing the El Cerrito fire service for decades.

I agree that our police department has had lots of problems over the last few years, mainly because of poor management. The community needs a police chief with strong management experience. It is not that difficult to manage a staff of fewer than a dozen members. Mabry Benson's letter in the February *Outlook* states that as long as we see Kensington insignia on the uniforms of our officers and our police cars everything is fine. No, it is not. We need a police department with well-trained officers, a responsive chief who is supervised by the KPPSDC board. Neighboring communities ought not to get a profit margin from supervising our police force.

There are people in our community who think that finances in our police department are not well managed. They actually are, other than our board has not been able to control legal expenses, and that is inexcusable. There are also people who think that the Kensington Fire Protection District manages our finances well. It does not. That board has continued to spend some money carelessly, such as spending six figures, almost annually, to improve the safety building by making it more earthquake-resistant. The same safety building that the KFPD board now wants to raze and replace with a new building at a cost of likely \$10 million.

If you wonder why KFPD has large fiscal reserves and KPPCSD has reserves of only about \$1.6 million, look at the property tax split that favors the fire department unfairly. My figures are accurate, but I don't want you to trust them blindly, check them out. You will find out which board manages our finances well (other than legal fees and a couple of others) and which board does not.

Karl Kruger

How Much Money?

Dear Editor:

As a supporter of efforts to improve the safety and functionality of the Kensington Community Center, I am concerned about the process for moving forward. At the 1/26/17 Special Meeting, the KPPCSD board authorized President Sherris-Watt to negotiate and execute on behalf of the board a \$149,200 consultant services agreement with Glass Associates for architectural services for Community Center improvements, a project KPPCSD may not be able to afford.

I thank Bill Glass of Glass Associates for his forthright estimate of construction costs for essential improvements addressing seismic, Americans With Disabilities Act ("ADA"), and energy code requirements. Essential construction starts with the needed seismic work, which triggers and makes mandatory certain improvements required by the ADA and energy code. At the 12/08/16 KPPCSD meeting, Mr. Glass estimated that construction costs for essential improvements will run \$850,000-\$870,000. He also recommended a construction contingency.

How much KPPCSD money is currently available to cover estimated construction costs for essential improvements? If available funds do not cover estimated costs, what is the plan for making up the difference? We risk losing \$158,000 in grant funds if construction is not completed by the end of 2018.

Linda Spath

See Letters, page 5

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.

The opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the publisher, the Kensington Community Council. Residents are invited to submit letters on matters of interest to the community. Letters must be signed and include the author's address and phone number (address and phone will not be published). Publication is subject to space limitations and the editor's discretion. Letters of 250 or fewer words are preferred. One letter per person, per issue. Obituaries for Kensington residents are published at no charge. E-mail preferred to Editor@KensingtonOutlook.com

PLEASE NOTE: Modern digital customs call for one space, rather than the traditional two, after all periods.

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April Advertising Deadline March 8
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Week 2	June 19-June 23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: Ceramics - handbuilding• Field Trip: Berkeley Lawrence Hall of Scienc	Week 7	July 24-July 28 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: Talisman Jewelry• Field Trip: The Jungle
Week 3	June 26- June 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: SkyHawk Sports• Field Trip: Oakland Zoo	Week 8	July 31-August 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: Olympic Week• Field Trip: Adventure Play-ground
Week 4	July 3-July 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Closed July 4/Short Wk.• Specialty: Cooking with Vicky!	Week 9	August 7-August 11 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: Ceramics air dry clay with Jeanne• 26 Field Trip: El Cerrito Pool Party
Week 5	July 10-July 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPIRIT WEEK• Specialty: Cooking Part II with Vicky• Field Trip: Lake Anza	Week 10	August 14-August 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialty: Legos -Playwell Technologies• End of Summer Air Bouncer and Jousting Tents & Home-made ice

Summer Camp Registration is Online and On-going
Register on the KCC Website or call KCC at 510-525-0292

KASEP

Mark your calendars for KASEP Spring ONLINE registration: Tuesday March 7th at 7:30pm. KASEP Spring Class Brochures went home in student’s backpacks from school the end of February with extra copies available in the Kensington library. Spring KASEP class information is available for viewing on KCC’s website: KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org. KASEP Spring session begins Monday, March 20th and ends Friday, May 26th.

Sandy Thacker is taking a break spring session - we are delighted she will return to teach carpentry Week 1 Summer Camp and FALL KASEP 2017. Looking for an alternative class, welcome Legos! Legos is offered Spring session Tuesday afternoon. Legos is structured learning, teaching pre-engineering concepts and critical thinking skills.

Third to sixth graders - if you have not experienced the magic of Elaine Chu’s Art & BookMaking Class, now is the time to put this class on your must have KASEP class. Elaine’s creativity opens students’ eyes to new possibilities: pop-up animal books, felt space accordion books, whale’s tail (tales) and more. Her graphic arts training pave the way for each student’s work to be a piece of art and lifetime treasure. A class not to be missed!



KASEP Kinder Critters Class with Teacher Carey Piech



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Jazzercise It’s a new year--how about a New YOU!?! If you want to lose a few pounds, strengthen your muscles or tone up, Jazzercise is just the ticket.

Body Sculpting Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:45-9:45am; Community Center Body sculpting works on shaping your body so it is leaner, more toned and overall stronger. Drop-ins are welcome or you can pay for the entire month at one time. Bring a mat & your weights. Questions? Call Kevin at 486-2728

Acrylic Artists Wednesdays, 9:45am - 12:30pm, Community Center Looking for a big open studio with lots of natural light so you have room to spread out and paint? We’ve got just the spot for you every Wednesday morning! We provide the easels & studio, you provide your own canvas, paints & creativity. After painting for a few hours we eat lunch & offer friendly critiques of each other’s work. We’d love to have you join us!

Tai Chi Chuan 9:30-10:30am Fridays, Community Center, \$10 Join Nobuo in the wonderful practice of gentle Tai Chi Chuan. You will become stronger and more flexible. The gentle exercises strengthen the body while also helping to calm the mind, which in turn relaxes the body, which then reduces stress.

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Neighborhood News and Notes

John Hertzer Engagement

David and Anna-Maria Hertzer are delighted to announce the engagement of their son, John Andrew Hertzer, to Maggie Chow, the elder daughter of Enita and Patrick Chow of Arcadia, CA. John, who was born and reared in Kensington, earned the rank of Eagle Scout in Troop 100. He has an economics degree from Dartmouth College, an MBA from UCLA Anderson, and currently works as a portfolio manager for Dimensional Fund Advisors in Santa Monica. Maggie was born in Hong Kong and lived in Vancouver BC prior to relocating to Los Angeles for high school in South Pasadena. After attending UC Berkeley, where she studied molecular biology, psychology and dance, she achieved a PhD in neuroscience at UC San Diego, and an MD at UC San Francisco. Currently she is a dermatology resident at the University of Southern California.

Calling County Grand Jurors

Looking for a volunteer opportunity with real-world clout that aids our democracy? Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia reminds us that citizen participation is essential to a healthy democracy. Civil grand juries serve as “citizen watchdogs,” with, says Gioia, “the crucial role of monitoring and reviewing government actions.” Grand jurors make recommendations to county agencies and cities with the goal of promoting responsible government. The term is for 2017/2018, and you must be at least 18 years old, a US citizen, a Contra Costa County resident, and not serving in an elected office. Jurors receive a stipend for attending jury and committee meetings and are also reimbursed for jury travel. Your service may include touring county and city facilities, meeting with officials and department heads, and other fact-finding activities. For more information, call the Office of the Civil Grand Jury at (925) 608-2621 or go to www.cc-courts.org/grandjury, where you can download an application. Apply by March 24.

Thanks for Your Dedicated Service



It is important in these changing times to make sure we say thank you to those who selflessly donate their time, share their talents, and actively work to make Kensington the community it is through careful stewardship. In mid-February a grateful group of Kensington citizens gathered to show their appreciation and to thank Pat Gillette and Chuck Toombs for their contributions to the community while serving on the board of the KPCCSD.

Chuck served for eight years from 2008 to 2016. He was able to juggle board commitments with his law practice while also raising a family. Pat, a trial attorney and author, served on the board for four years from 2012-2016. Chuck and Pat, together, navigated rocky waters during their tenure and their hard work will be built upon in the years to come.

Although Chuck and Pat will not be in the front of the room at our monthly KPCCSD community meetings, I am sure that we will see them at many meetings and town events, as I know their love for Kensington has not diminished. —Marty Westby



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Letters

...from page 2

The Trump Approach

Dear Editor:

Despite repeated requests for transparency, the KPPCSD board majority continues to cloak its decisions in secrecy. Under President Rachelle Sherris-Watt, this board has taken the Trump approach to governance: issuing pronouncements without citizen input.

For example, at the Feb. 9 meeting, Sherris-Watt announced her plan to push for putting Interim GM/COP Hull into the permanent position of COP, when the job is split, without opening the position to other qualified candidates. It appears this plan was previously vetted with directors Nottoli and Hacaj, since they both chimed in with prepared remarks supporting “promotion from within.” (Only Len Welsh seemed surprised by this attempt to forego a candidate search).

This came on the heels of the board finally revealing that Interim GM/COP Hull lacks at least one of the qualifications required by the District Policy Manual: a college degree. While I don’t necessarily endorse that requirement, I do think the public should have been informed—before the decision became final—that the board was selecting someone who did not meet a stated requirement of the job.

This lack of transparency is further amplified by the board’s spending \$150,000 on architectural services for the Community Center remodel, without disclosing the specifics of how it will to fund the \$1+ million cost; the lack of any data to support increasing Hull’s compensation by 25%; and without reporting the cost of the “professional recruiter” hired to assist with finding a GM. Moreover, they continue to allow the now 6-month absence of Vanessa Cordova from the district, without challenge.

The board majority may not feel bound by their promises of transparency, but we should demand it.

Pat Gillette

KPPCSD Board Busy with Multiple Tasks

Dear Editor:

While the news coming from Washington DC continues to be of concern, Kensington residents can take comfort in the direction of our local government. Since seating newly elected board members Sylvia Hacaj and Eileen Nottoli, we are moving to meet the diverse demands of our community and chart a fiscally sustainable course.

We faced significant headwinds at the start of this term with the sudden resignation of Kensington’s second interim GM/COP, leaving us with an immediate personnel decision to make. In December, we appointed Rickey Hull as our interim General Manager/Chief of Police. Chief Hull has served the Kensington community for over 19 years, beginning as an officer and rising to the rank of Master Sergeant. His 28 years of law enforcement experience, coupled with his commitment to Kensington, will be invaluable as he manages near-term challenges facing the KPD. This includes investigating options for dispatch services and records management services, as our contract with Richmond expires in July

In order to make our 67-year-old Community Center/Youth Hut seismically safe and accessible for all users, we are acting quickly to meet deadlines for use of a procured Measure WW Grant of \$158,000. On the unanimous recommendation of the Park Planning and Recreation committee, the board chose to retain Glass and Associates, Inc., for architectural and project management services with the goal of completing the project by the December 2018 deadline. In addition to leveraging grant monies, KPPCSD funds will be combined with fundraising dollars collected by the nonprofit Kensington Community Council expressly for this purpose. This building is a valuable capital asset, and this investment is long overdue.

With these issues on track for resolution, the board has turned its attention to the hiring of an independent part-time general manager who will manage the affairs of our community with professionalism and a sense of mission that we deserve. After two readings of a resolution, the board will have divided the positions of general manager and chief of police. This allows us to recruit qualified candidates. In consultation with Public Management Group, we are assessing the most pressing needs of the district and establishing priorities for our staff.

In order to productively manage the district’s affairs and prevent decision-making from extending into the wee hours of the morning, in February the board began conducting two regular meetings a month. We also revised our committee structure and appointed community members. The public is always welcome at our regular meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month. Open session begins at 7:30pm. The Park Planning committee meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month, and the Finance committee meets the 4th Wednesday of the month beginning at 7pm. For agendas and more committees, see www.kensingtoncalifornia.org. (These opinions are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other directors.)

Rachelle Sherris-Watt

Car Talk

Dear Editor:

Last May, during a KPPCSD board meeting, then interim GM/COP Kevin Hart mentioned purchasing a new sound system for the Community Center. He had obtained bids ranging from \$20-30,000, but only \$6,000 was in the budget. Then “Car Talk” began. Director Vanessa Cordova asked why we couldn’t get a Toyota, not a Cadillac. Director Toombs said we already had a Toyota—and how does that feel? Hart said the district did not need the top-end Cadillac and recommended the more moderately priced Chevy.

President Welsh finally asked that the matter be placed on the next agenda and that Hart prepare a written report. I have found no agendized discussion or report. However, during the July KPPCSD meeting, Welsh suggested getting the system previously discussed—presumably the Chevrolet.

The following month, Hart mentioned that another company had proposed a system that would provide enhanced audio for the hearing impaired and live coverage of meetings. The system was slightly more than what the district wanted to spend, which was now budgeted at \$21,000. That audio/video system, with assistive listening devices, was installed and first used in October. It is definitely a great improvement, although there were some glitches with our new vehicle.

The December budget showed the cost as \$34,000, more than the Cadillac we decided we didn’t need. And it turns out, ongoing monthly charges will be required for live-streaming and WiFi. Fortunately, KIC and KCC increased their contributions to a total of \$10,000.

But I will say—this Mercedes certainly does “provide a much better ride.”
A. Stevens Delk

Polarizing Behavior

To the Editor:

In the last issue of the *Outlook*, Tricia Mindel, a relatively new resident, is quoted as objecting to the phrases “Old Guard” and “Reformers.” I look forward to the time when we are not polarized, and the “Old Guard” isn’t being the “Old Guard” and still-needed reforms no longer require “Reformers” to do them. But Dr. Pangloss was wrong, and this isn’t “The best of all possible worlds”—not yet.

The most recent example that the Old Guard is still trying to guard whatever mysteries they feel the need to protect is the letter in the same edition of the *Outlook* by former KPPCSD director Pat Gillette. Pat has done some good things for which I thank her. Since leaving the board, however, she has used her highly paid legal skills of sophistry in her ongoing criticism of the newly elected board. That’s the charge for which Socrates was so unjustly executed, a charge that thankfully is no longer a capital offense.

She uses the urgency required of the board to fix a situation created by the Old Guard—which supported former Chief Harman until the Reno fiasco, then hired Mr. Hart as interim GM/COP and gave in to his post-hiring demands, costing the district a good deal of money. I won’t go into other details of Mr. Hart’s questionable tenure. Now the new board, without any time to address an unavoidable learning curve, has to clean up the most recent manifestation of the Old Guard’s rule. Mr. Kyle, hired to fill in after the Hart resignation fiasco, resigned in two weeks having seen how “complicated,” as he so diplomatically put it, the situation is.

The way I see it, the newly elected board is doing a good and principled job of cleaning up the mess they took on bravely and with eyes open. Ms. Mindel, I also long for a time when such designations become unnecessary because the community is no longer polarized and when, as Director Sherris-Watt put it, “Kensington (becomes) boring again.” Gillette’s consistent and unfair criticism of the new board isn’t helpful in bringing that about.

Leonard Schwartzburd

Legal Costs

...from front page

ris-Watt—items like the contract with Kensington Community Council, which rents the building for its after-school enrichment program. In an effort to control costs, Sherris-Watt said that the board has instructed the attorneys that they are the board’s legal representatives, not the public’s. “That was happening in the past,” affirmed Sherris-Watt, noting that time spent answering public inquiries was billed to the board.

Sherris-Watt also directed that legal questions for Morrison come from the board member who chairs that committee rather than, as earlier, from several directors on the same topic. “Controlling legal fees will be a priority of this board,” Sherris-Watt said. “We will make sure that we utilize our time wisely, and we’re going to discuss how we manage [Morrison’s] time.”

Although new counsel Amara Morrison is listed as a land-use attorney on Wendel Rosen’s site, she has worked with special districts such as KPPCSD. Before she went into private practice, she was assistant city attorney for Livermore and for Walnut Creek. “She’s very smart and very professional,” said Sherris-Watt. Morrison was chosen from among five attorneys interviewed for the position; she is the district’s attorney of record and thus responsible for legal liabilities.

KPPCSD’s contract with Morrison began November 6. During a phone interview February 7, Morrison said that she and PLG are “continuing to overlap to a certain extent. They’re handling still pending personnel matters, while I’m handling general counsel services.” Morrison entered at least three fluid situations: the transition from PLG to herself; the changeover from the old board to the new—and she hardly had time to get her feet wet before she was immersed in Kyle’s departure.

“Anytime there is a transition from a former board, there is a carryover to the current board,” Morrison said. “The board that approved my agreement was very thoughtful. We expected that the first three months of the contract would probably result in a higher number of hours. I agreed to offer my services at a reduced cost for those first three months. We also agreed on a flat fee for my attendance at board meetings.” Within reason—no one wants a return of meetings ‘til I am. That doesn’t worry Morrison: “Two meetings a month will allow them to accomplish things more expeditiously. And once the transition [between PLG and myself] has been accomplished, I think there will be a reduction in legal expenses.”

One cost-saving plan floated by directors and the public is to conduct some board meetings absent an attorney. Morrison doesn’t like that idea. “I think it’s always advisable for a district or municipality to have legal representatives present. [Board directors] are volunteer public officials, so they don’t necessarily have the knowledge. It’s good insurance to have counsel present.”

“December was an unusual month,” concluded Sherris-Watt, “but still we’ve got to get that in hand. I have to remember how many meetings we had. And the old board and new board were asking questions of both law groups. Still, it doesn’t matter. We have to counterbalance that, so that we make sure that we’re not coming into \$300,000 per year for legal costs. That would be unforgivable. We’re going to take every precaution to fix that.”

Scam Alert

Scammers are now trying to get people to pay for big-ticket items they buy online with Amazon gift cards. Posing as sellers, scammers claim they need to sell a car or other item fast. They may claim they are in the military and are about to deploy. They'll tell you to pay with an Amazon gift card. This is a scam! Amazon gift cards can only be used to purchase goods on Amazon.com. If you share the code on the card with someone, you're giving that person control of the money on the card. By the time you figure out it's a scam, the money will likely be gone.

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CITIZEN FORUM

New Board Working Hard to Correct Past Dysfunctions

By Andrew Paul Gutierrez

I regularly attended the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) meetings for more than ten years and was dismayed by the contentious and unprofessional nature of deliberations. I am pleased to see the tenor changing under our new board, which was elected last November by a 2:1 majority. Most of the deliberations concerned problems resulting from a lack of effective oversight of the GM/COPs and of the Kensington Police Department itself. The new KPPCSD board inherited a district with a litigious history and legal and settlement costs of over a million dollars (no one knows for sure), one that allowed a top-heavy police force and associated runaway retirement costs to develop, and ongoing legal costs and issues associated with the police department.

To understand what the new board came into, consider that of a police force of nine officers, two are on workers' compensation, one is on administrative leave, and two have grievances against the KPPCSD. Worse, the details of all of this are buried by legal constraints and Police Bill of Right regulations so we may never know the facts. The reduced police force results in high overtime pay to the remaining officers and reduced policing and traffic enforcement.

The new board is working hard to salvage the wreckage of the district to enable our community to emerge from years of mismanagement, scandal and litigation. That will take time to resolve, but the new board is making good progress. The new KPPCSD board is composed of four strong, civic-minded women plus continuing former board president Len Welsh. The number of board meetings has increased to two per month to gain community input and to speed up problem resolution. As a director told me, "It has become a full-time job." The calm, businesslike demeanor of board president Rachelle Sherris-Watt impresses me—she allows unfettered community discourse and then deftly summarizes what the board is doing to address problems raised.

However, I am less impressed with two former board members (and supporters) who have the audacity to suggest that the new board lacks transparency, when a lack of transparency was a hallmark of their board tenure. They raise issues of costs that they did little to control. For those who have not followed the antics of the past two months, interim GM/COP Hart resigned, setting in motion further drama. The former board hired Kevin Kyle for the position, but after a week on the job he too quit. Then these former board members made the outlandish demand that former interim GM/COP Hart should be rehired. When longtime Kensington master sergeant Rickey Hull was proposed as interim GM/COP until an interim GM could be hired to help the board untangle the department's problems and begin serious exploration of options for long-term, stable police services, one former board member made disparaging remarks about Hull's qualifications, complaining that the new board had not adequately vetted him. Yet, when these folks were on prior boards, their vetting record was dismal: they gave us Mr. Hart and Mr. Kyle, who without warning and in complete breach of their commitments left us in the lurch. The vetting procedures of prior boards also brought us former GM/COP Greg Harman who was fired after *Contra Costa Times* reporter Thomas Peele exposed Renogate. Luckily for the old board, the expose came after the 2014 election.

So while we enjoyed the holidays, our new board dealt with inherited chaos. Recently they chose to break with the mistakes of the past and hire interim GM/COP Hull from within the department for the valid reasons put forth by Sherris-Watt at the February 9 meeting (see video at <http://kensingtoncalifornia.org/>). Hull has demonstrated a strong twenty-year commitment to our community and knows the strengths and weakness of the department. Moreover, he has taken the reins when past GM/COPs vacationed, quit or were fired—and unlike past holders of his position, he works closely with the board. Hull will do a good job while the new board consults with the community and determines the best way forward. We should be thankful that Mr. Hull accepted this challenge so graciously. The new board's selfless dedication to changing the culture and resolving the problems that have dogged our dysfunctional district is very encouraging.

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Kensington Calendar

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

Ongoing:
Jazzercise, NEW HOURS: 8:15-9:15am, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Community Center.
Body Sculpting, 8:45-9:45am, Tuesday and Thursday, Community Center.
Acrylic Artists, Wednesdays 9:45-12:30pm, Community Center. Open Studio to paint with easels provided.
Tai Chi Chuan, 9:30-10:30am Fridays, Community Center, \$10

March 1 Kensington Unit of League of Women Voters Join your neighbors in discussing issues of local interest. 1:15pm at 631 Parkside Ct. 527-1266. All are welcome.

March 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 Baby & Toddler Storytime Stories, songs & action rhymes for young children and their caregivers. Kensington Library. Two identical sessions 10:15am & 11:15am. Free. 524-3043.

March 4 Kensington Symphony Orchestra. Join us for our exciting season’s performance of Eastern Euro Rhapsody. Frederic Chopin—Fantasy on Polish Airs, Op. 13, Daniel Glover, piano; Sergey Lyapunov—Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes, Daniel Glover, piano; Antonin Dvořák—Symphony No. 7 in D minor Op. 70. \$20 general, \$15 seniors and students. Homemade refreshments, wheelchair accessible. 8-10pm, UUCB.

March 4 & 25 Saturday Drop-in Craft Kids and parents are welcome to come and make simple crafts and drawings. Kensington Library. Available all day (10am-5pm) while supplies last. Free.

March 5 Rev. Cathleen Cox, UUCB Affiliated Community Minister, spiritual director, teacher, certified dream worker and workshop facilitator. “Jesus: Radical Teacher of Love in Action.” 9:30am, free. UUCB.

March 6 Kensington Library Knitting Club “The Castoffs” All levels welcome. Please bring your own needles and yarn. We will provide support, encouragement and help. Learn new stitches, share your talents, and meet new friends. Normally meets on the 1st Monday of the month. 6:30pm. Free.

March 7, 14, 21 & 28 Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome. Kensington Library, 6:30pm. Free.

March 10 Remembered Migrations:

Voices of Women in Medieval to Modern Song. Vajra Voices with Shira Kammen and Theresa Wong. Medieval hymns in a style inspired by Hildegard von Bingen. 7:30pm, Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Ave. Tickets \$20 general, \$15 senior, \$10 student (with ID at door). Presale at www.bayareabach.org

March 11 and 25 Heartfulness Meditation: An Introduction Learn to meditate with Dr. Som Soni from the Shri Ram Chandra Mission Meditation & Retreat Center. Dr. Soni and his wife Gita will answer questions and lead a beginner’s guided heartfulness meditation. Kensington Library, 10:30am-12pm. Free. 524-3043.

March 12 Rev. Christian Schmidt, M. Div., Andover Newton Divinity School, new UUCB senior co-minister, father, humanist. “Detoxifying Masculinity.” 9:30am, free. UUCB.

March 13 & 27 Kensington Library’s Digital Docent will answer your eReader and digital library questions every other Monday by appointment at 1pm. This free one-on-one 60-minute appointment is intended for people seeking assistance with eBooks and eReaders. Sign up onsite at Info Desk. Please bring your device.

March 12 Health Care for All Come see the powerful new documentary, *Now Is the Time Healthcare for Everybody*. With the future of the Affordable Care Act in serious doubt, millions may lose their health insurance. Medicare and Medi-Cal are under attack. This documentary explains what single payer healthcare is and how it saves money. A Q&A with film producers Laurie Simons & Terry Sterrenberg will give audience members a chance to learn more about the national healthcare debate and our new legislative campaign in California for single payer universal health care. 3-5pm, Arlington Community Church—United Church of Christ, 52 Arlington Ave.

March 18 Islam Ameena Jandali, member of the Islamic Network Group, will speak at the meeting

of the AAUW West Contra Costa Branch. Christ Lutheran Church, 780 Ashbury St., El Cerrito. 10am. Free, all are welcome.

March 18 LUNAFEST, fundraising film festival championing women’s issues and filmmakers returns for 10th anniversary season at El Cerrito High’s Performing Arts Theater. 7:30pm. Tickets \$20 general, \$10 seniors, \$5 students/teachers with ID. Filmmakers’ panel, treats, raffle. <https://lunafesteastbay2017.eventbrite.com>. Limited tickets at door.

March 19 Bill Garrett, PhD, past professor of religion and philosophy at JFK University and UC Berkeley, now teaches through the Osher Lifelong Learning Program. “The Reemergence of Paganism in the 21st Century: It’s Not What You May Think.” 9:30am. Free. UUCB.

March 19 Longtime Kensington resident Macy Blackman and his band, The Mighty Fines, will bring their high-powered New Orleans sound to The Back Room in downtown Berkeley, playing songs from their new CD, *Shoorah Shoorah—The Songs of Irma Thomas and Allen Toussaint*. The Mighty Fines features saxophonists Nancy Wright (John Lee Hooker, B.B. King) and Ken “Snakebite” Jacobs (Neville Brothers, Temptations), bassist Bing Nathan (Lavay Smith) and drummer Larry Vann (Martha Reeves, Elvin Bishop). Blackman, a master pianist and cornetist, has played with Dr. John, the Drifters and the Coasters. Tickets \$15 (www.backroommusic.com), \$20 at the door. 8pm, 1984 Bonita Ave., Berkeley.

March 21 Berkeley Garden Club Lecture Program, Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue. Ixia Windows: Sculptural Bouquets and Permanent Arrangements by David Mulkey, floral designer. 12:30-1 Plant Exchange, 1-2 General Meeting, 2-3 Lecture.

March 26 Bill Garrett “Thinking Through the Anthropocene.” 9:30am. Free. UUCB.

March 26 Lariat Larry and Chili Dinner Fundraiser

Lariat Larry, cowboy storyteller & trick roper perform at Arlington Community Church (ACC), 52 Arlington Ave., at a fundraiser for two members severely injured in a car accident on their way to church in November. This family-friendly, Old West entertainment will be followed by a chuckwagon-style chili dinner. Lariat Larry dresses as an authentic cowboy of the Old West and combines fancy trick roping with tales of the Wild West full of adventure and excitement. Stories include true and tall tales, with plenty of fun audience involvement. 4:30pm. \$25 adults; \$12 children under 12. After March 23, \$30 adults; \$15 children. Checks payable to ACC should be sent to Attn. S. Laferte, Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Avenue, Kensington 94707. Please write “fundraiser” or “chili dinner” in the memo line. Email acc.staff@sbcglobal.net or call Sara Laferte at (510) 526-8362.

March 27 Kensington Library Book Club Discussion of *Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe. Book Club normally meets on the 4th Monday of the month. 6:30pm. Free. 524-3043.



Town Meetings

Kensington Community Center 59 Arlington Ave., Kensington

KCC-Mar.6 Kensington Community Council 1st Mondays, 7:30pm. 525-0292

FKL-Mar.7, Friends of the Kensington Library, 7pm (at the Library) 1st Tuesdays

KPSC-Mar. 13, Kensington Public Safety Council Earthquake/Disaster Preparedness 2nd Mondays, 6pm. 501-8165

KARO/ECHO-Amateur Radio Operators 2nd Mondays of odd months, 7:30pm. 524-9815

KFPD-Mar. 8, Fire Protection District 2nd Wednesdays, 7pm. 527-8395

KPPCSD-Mar.9 & 23. Police Protection and Community Services District 2nd & 4th Thursdays 7:30pm. 526-4141

KIC-Mar.27, Kensington Improvement Club 4th Mondays, 7:30pm. 524-7514.

KMAC (Tent.)-Mar.28, Municipal Advisory Council Last Tues. 7pm. (Call Supe. Gioia’s office to confirm: 231-8691)

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