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# OUTLOOK

Bringing the Community Together

Available Online at [www.KensingtonOutlook.com](http://www.KensingtonOutlook.com)

MARCH 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 2

## KIC, Ruth Frassetto Team Up for Park Makeover



From left, Lisa Caronna, Ruth Frassetto, and Sarah Gough meet to examine plans to beautify the park at the corner of the Arlington and Coventry Road. Photo by Susan Brenner.

By Linnea Due

Sarah Gough and her family moved to Hong Kong in the spring of 2011, intending to stay just two or three years. They loved the vibrant city and their work there and extended their stay to nine years, during which they rented their house in Kensington. When they returned to Kensington in the fall of 2020, Gough says that she was struck by how the Arlington corridor had deteriorated in their absence—an unhappy change exemplified by the small triangular park, commonly called the gore lot, at the corner of Arlington and Coventry Road.

“We noticed the stark difference,” Gough says, “especially in that corner park. I live on Coventry and see that lot every day.

In the midst of the pandemic, I found its deterioration even more depressing. I wanted to help, so I reached out to members of the KPPCSD board (the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District owns the corner park), and its directors suggested I talk to the Kensington Improvement Club.”

This proved a fortuitous recommendation. Gough’s interest in reviving the little park was received “with open arms” by the KIC board, and she was invited not only to pursue the park project but to join the board. Now board vice president, Gough found that beautifying the park was

[See Park, page 5](#)

## KMAC Votes to Enclose PSB Deck and District News

By Linnea Due

The Kensington Municipal Advisory Committee’s (KMAC) January 25 Zoom meeting attracted an unusual number of viewers due to a variance notice sent to households within 300 feet of the Public Safety Building at 217 Arlington Avenue. At issue was the fire district’s plan to enclose the outside deck on the second floor of the building. Although the enclosure would not increase the building’s footprint, it needed a variance because the side lot size is smaller than required for interior space as opposed to a deck. As unincorporated Kensington does not have its own building department, KMAC advises county staff on view, variances, and other building-related matters. In its advisory role, it cannot grant variances and permits but county supervisors and staff usually abide by the conclusions of municipal advisory committees.

Fire district board president Larry Nagel opened the discussion by explaining that the idea was to trade 315 square feet (SF) of deck for 340SF of indoor space, slated for fire department offices. “Every square foot is precious,” Nagel said. “We’re not allowed to increase the footprint of the building. We’re not allowed to put on another story. We’re being forced to give up space in terms of the county requiring an elevator.”

Fire board general manager Bill Hansell explained that the building needs substantial

[See KMAC, page 7](#)



## Kensington and Beyond Update

February 2022



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## Kensington | Market Update

February 2022 to present



### Detached Single Family

2

#### New Listings

Median List Price  
\$1,712,500  
Average Sq. Ft.  
2,651

2

#### Pending Sales

Median List Price  
\$1,224,000  
Average Sq. Ft.  
1,837

4

#### Closed Sales

Median List Price  
\$1,450,000  
Average Sq. Ft.  
2,349  
Average Sales Price  
\$1,667,000

The problem with dual agency — In most real estate transactions, there are two agents involved - one representing the seller and one representing the buyer. It's also possible for both parties to be represented by the same person or a team, a situation known as dual agency. I am not referring to dual agencies when a brokerage has more than one agent representing a buyer in a multiple offer situation. That is also a dual agency. (Different agents from the same Brokerage) I am referring to the listing agent(s) as in a team or a single agent representing both sides of a transaction. (Seller and the buyer).

A real estate agent is required to act in their client's best interest at all times during a transaction.

For example, when negotiating the price, negotiating terms, asking for concessions, and throughout the escrow period, your real estate agent's job is to get the highest price and best terms for you.

Unfortunately, in a dual agency transaction, that isn't possible. I see it frequently, especially in a team where one team member represents the seller and the other team member represents the buyer, this is in my opinion a conflict of interest.

There's no way that an agent/team can simultaneously negotiate the best possible deal for the buyer and the seller. They can't put the interests of one party over the other. As a listing agent I must have my seller's interests my foremost priority. An agent or team working both sides of a transaction are not in a position to represent the seller 100%. A seller wants the highest value and a buyer wants the best deal, obviously these are opposing objectives. Even if you get some type of commission discount or closing credit, it could be worth less than you could potentially save by having someone on your side who can effectively negotiate on your behalf. The agent who has a buyer in their back pocket for your home and is also representing you is not doing you any favors.

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## Save a Life, Learn CPR

The Kensington Fire Protection District is offering CPR and First Aid classes on two Saturdays, April 16 and May 21. Classes meet at the El Cerrito Community Center on Moeser. The CPR class is from 8:30am-noon and the First Aid class is from 1-4:30pm. Wear comfortable clothes. Register by calling (510) 215-4450. The fee is \$55 per class for Kensington residents.

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## ⚠️ PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDER ⚠️

### Mass Messaging by Cell Phone

Phonevite (phonevite.com) is a communication tool that offers a fast, easy-to-use and inexpensive way to send a voice mail message to a large group of designated contacts. To alert members of a group of an imminent emergency (e.g., wildfire), a designated member of the group can send all members listed on a predetermined phone roster by logging into the system from a cell phone, recording a message and sending it to all members. The cost is only 5 cents per call with no minimum. A message to 30 people costs only \$1.50! Cortis Cooper and his Wildcat Watch Group use Phonevite to alert members of a confirmed and threatening wildfire. Phonevite can also be incorporated into communications for existing groups, such as CERT.

-Paul Moss

*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.*

## APRIL 2022 DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline ❖ MAR. 8  
Editorial Deadline ❖ MAR. 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

## Build New to House Both Districts

Dear Editor:

Our public safety building (PSB) is unsafe and due for a necessary upgrade and retrofit for the safety of its occupants. Before pursuing that path, the Fire Board considered constructing a new PSB on Kensington Park property to house both the police (PD) and fire districts (FD) on an unused slope that opens out to the Arlington. This idea has been met with a visceral reaction by certain residents against the use of any park property for housing our PD and FD.

The original PSB was able to accommodate PD and FD needs of the 1900s. Fast forward to the present, where both districts need more space to safely conduct their business. Thus, a newly renovated PSB will only be able to house our FD, leaving KPPCSD to look for other PD housing options in Kensington. They are preferentially and appropriately pursuing property they already own, including the Annex—the empty building on the east side of the park’s parking lot next to the grassy field—in addition to other properties around Kensington.

And so those residents, who patently rejected any idea of our PD and FD in Kensington Park, due to the appropriate concerns for the children’s safety and the mixture of such a station’s hubbub and commotion with the park’s peaceful ambience and pedestrian traffic, are now faced with the exact scenario they hoped to avoid. Use of the Annex would put our police in the thick of park activities, rather than in a building that can be designed to sequester their business out onto the Arlington.

As a parent of two children, one currently on park property daily for KASEP classes, I support the use of the unused western slope on park property for constructing a new building to house both our public safety districts. And as an earthquake scientist, I will say that the park property is farther from the mapped trace of the Hayward fault than the current PSB. The people who protect and serve all of us deserve a new and safe building as far away from the fault as possible.

Danielle Madugo

## Is This What We Want?

Dear Editor,

There was a time when I was not concerned about where the police were relocated in Kensington as long as park property was not involved, and that would include the use of the Annex, which is the only place that we can expand recreation for our community. Time having passed in long weeks and months of COVID quarantine, I have come to a very different appreciation of the problem. It does matter that our police and fire share the same facility in our tiny town, and it doesn't make sense that we, the citizenry, the taxpayers, are put in the position of paying for something that we don't want, specifically two public safety buildings in a one-square-mile town.

I am particularly bothered by this: there is no effort being put into determining the community consensus or preference in this matter. There is no open discussion of the project. Years ago, before buying the land that expanded and established Kensington Park, there were two very intensively campaigned advisory votes which very publicly measured community support for the park purchase, and both those votes passed by more than seventy percent.

I would not have the fire board think we support this project. In this time of Zoom meetings, when boards do not see their constituents, it is pretty easy to assume that community silence means consent, but that is not necessarily the case. COVID has disrupted the civic life of our community, such that in-person civic meetings have been put on hold.

Well, now as we are starting to relax COVID protocols, it is time to hold community meetings again. If there is not community buy-in for this project, that the community will fund, then the project should be stopped in its tracks and rethought in terms of serving the whole community: police, fire, and community services district. That might mean a new building that the community might choose to pay for, or not, but the community certainly needs to be involved in this before choices are made by a few individuals that will raise property taxes for us all.

Ciara Wood

## Inaccurate Characterization

Dear Editor:

The February “Citizen Forum” from the Kensington Property Owners Association inaccurately characterized several important actions taken by Kensington’s KPPCSD and KFPD boards. As a KFPD director, I would like to respond to one statement: “The decision to remove the police from the building [Public Safety Building, where Police and Fire are historically housed] was made by the fire board (KFPD) unilaterally—not the Kensington voters, nor in consummate deliberation and cooperation with the police board (KPPCSD).”

The decision was made in consultation with both chiefs and GMs and the architects. The KPPCSD board did not participate. Representatives from both boards had met since 2017 to work out a solution for either a renovated PSB or a new building. Little progress was made. Eventually it became clear that the KPPCSD board would not allow a new joint building to be constructed in the disused SW corner of Kensington Park. Because no other site was available in Kensington that would preserve necessary response times, the only option was to renovate the PSB.

At KPOA’s urging, the boards agreed to form a 2x2 committee that would meet in public to discuss the PSB’s future. At the single meeting that was held, the KPPCSD board representatives would only introduce themselves and would not consider any agenda items. They declined to set a future meeting. Consequently, the KFPD board had to proceed on its own. As knowledge about increased space requirements for both police and fire accumulated, it became clear that both would not fit in the renovated PSB. There was no choice but to retain fire in the PSB. Neither Chief wanted a mixed facility with some personnel housed elsewhere.

The KPPCSD board then asked if they could consult the KFPD board’s architect to see if both departments could be made to fit. The KFPD board agreed. However, the drawings were only conceptual and did not claim to comply with all required codes. Both chiefs objected to the cramped quarters that would ensue. The drawings did not meet code requirements and could not be accepted.

Larry Nagel

## Inaccurate Characterizations, Part Two

Dear Editor:

As a fire board director, I respond to further statements made in the KPOA’s Feb-

ruary “Citizen Forum.” “Elimination of the PSB as a joint facility for police and fire districts—abandoning the original financial justification for building it—requires that the Kensington public receive full disclosure... of ... effects of the PSB conversion into a fire station.”

The PSB was built over half a century ago. Codes and requirements have expanded, as for residences. All plans and updates have been presented publicly at fire board meetings, with full disclosure, and posted on the fire district website. Additional information can be requested from the GM.

“Joint plans must be released publicly well in advance of meetings. It is critical that disclosed plans include the impact on ... cash reserves ... cost of locating both departments temporarily, and creation of a new permanent police department location.”

The fire board releases plans to directors and the public simultaneously. All plans are open for discussion at any meetings. Public comment is open before, during, and after meetings. The fire board engaged long-term financial planners, who presented projections at a recent board meeting. In no projections does the fire board anticipate tax increases or bond measures to fund the PSB renovation. The fire district has also engaged an experienced grant writer.

The fire board has long had a plan and projected costs for temporary housing. All of this information is on our website. When the fire board had to accept a fire-only renovation to the PSB, it offered all possible help to the police in relocating.

“... [W]e see that community governance is hampered by the current methods of decision-making and community participation.”

The fire board follows all state regulations at its meetings. Public comment follows convention in not creating debates between board members and the public. District personnel will sometimes respond briefly.

Larry Nagel and I hope this clarifies some issues. We urge participation in our monthly board and committee meetings, and we invite further questions to be directed to our general manager.

Kevin Padian

## Traffic Woes

Dear Editor:

We live on Beloit Avenue, and we think there is an accident waiting to happen near us: a section of Beloit Ave. between Purdue and Grizzly Peak Blvd. There are no sidewalks, many walkers, and plenty of traffic and blind curves.

Let’s not wait until someone is killed. A sidewalk on one side would solve the problem.

Bernice Shapiro, Louise Milota

## Mean Streets

Dear Editor:

As we are all aware, most of our streets are narrow with steep gutters. When driving on the side with parked vehicles, cars drive over the medium. Any oncoming car must pull over toward the gutter, risking damage to tires and cars, as has happened to several residents. While in general our street are not heavily trafficked, that won’t be the case in an emergency where many will try to evacuate. In an emergency, drivers may panic, leading to collisions with resulting blockage of our already too narrow streets. This happened in the Oakland fire as well as in other communities and led to loss of life.

These steep gutters are also a hazard to pedestrians, and few crossings in Kensington have curb ramps as required under the Americans with Disability Act.

With our now year-long fire season, our streets are critical in any evacuation in the event of a wildfire or other natural disaster. Recently, EBMUD and Stege Sanitary have been replacing water and sewage pipes in our streets. The resulting patches make for even more uneven surfaces. The state and local policies and laws to increase residential density make having roads that allow safe passage all the more important. The county has an obligation to make our streets safe. Let’s work together to ask Supervisor John Gioia to secure funding to make our streets safe.

Eileen Nottoli

## Go Take a Hike

Dear Editor:

Wildcat Creek begins in the southern part of Tilden Park, above Lake Anza, and flows northward through Wildcat Canyon, with a trail along its course. At Alvarado Park it turns west, passing through San Pablo and North Richmond with an urban trail along portions that remain above ground. Just west of Richmond Parkway the trail ends as Wildcat begins its final one-mile journey through the wetland to San Francisco Bay. There Wildcat Marsh Trail heads north and skirts West County Wastewater’s treatment facility, with holding ponds and solar panels, before encountering Republic’s West Contra Costa Sanitary Landfill at Parr Blvd. Another trail proceeds past Golden Bear Transfer Station, where Bay View R&R and other Bay Area haulers dump garbage into piles that are later loaded into tractor-trailers headed for Republic’s Keller Canyon landfill off Highway 4. The three-mile trail circles around a hill, identified as Garbage Mountain (158-foot elevation) on the East Bay Regional Parks map, and passes Retention Pond, intended to keep seepage out of the bay.

“The Dump” was started in the ‘50s but closed a couple decades ago when it reached the maximum height allowed, thanks to “Save the Bay.” But the mound dropped due to decomposition and sinkage into the bay, and more waste was added. Now it is at a new maximum height, but Republic can add organic waste, which is cultured and eventually hauled away and sold as compost. Kensington’s pure yard waste used to be deposited in a small area on the side but now with food waste composting, our organics are on top of the heap.

The view along what is officially known as Landfill Loop Trail is impressive, and I circumnavigated this future archeological midden all alone one rainy day. If you need to jolt yourself into not acquiring and discarding so much stuff, in particular plastic anything, go take a hike and see what’s blowing in the wind and floating out to sea around “Mount Dump” and then think “Re-fuse Ref-use.”

Dr. A. Stevens Delk



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# New Officer Appreciates His Role

By Linnea Due



Recently hired Kensington police officer Dustin Siebert always wanted to be a policeman. “But I kept putting it off,” says Siebert, who grew up in Solano County. “I got married at a young age.” He believed that he needed to be hired by an agency that would put him through a police academy: “I was 24 when I found out that I could put myself through.”

He enrolled at the Napa Police Academy at Napa Valley College. “I started there in March 2006 and graduated in September. I first worked as a security officer at Solano Crisis Center”— a stressful start to his career.

His wife, Heather, began a masters’ program in Memphis, and Siebert applied to the Memphis police department. He went through the police academy there, which he describes as very different from what he experienced in Napa. “Napa was more academic, while Memphis was a lot more physical. It turned out well for me.” Siebert graduated first in his class and began patrolling in South Memphis. “It was a culture shock,” he says, “going from Solano County to Memphis. I kept thinking, ‘This can’t be real.’”

After his wife graduated, the couple moved back to Solano County and bought a house in Fairfield. After working at the Paradise police department, Siebert was hired at Dixon, closer to home. He worked as a field training officer and then as Dixon’s canine handler. “That was the best part of my career so far,” he says. His canine partner, Fero, had to medically retire due to an injured back in 2018. Fero still lives with Siebert, enjoying his retirement, though Siebert says that when he leaves for work, Fero, a Dutch shepherd, stays by the window watching for his return. “You develop a very strong bond with the dog,” Siebert says. “It was hard to go to work when he first retired.”

If being a canine handler was the best of his career, the worst occurred four years earlier, in 2014. “We received a call that there was a disturbance between some high school students in the park that backed up to the school. They gave us a description of one of the kids. We drove around to see if we could find any disturbance. I saw someone come out of the bathroom that matched the description. I got out of my patrol car and started hearing shots. My brain didn’t comprehend that I was being shot at until the third shot, when I was getting hit by glass. The person, a fifteen-year-old, comes walking out from behind my car, like ten to twelve feet away, shooting at me with a handgun.”

Siebert stepped back into the driver’s door, ducking down. “They told us in the academy that in those situations you’d have auditory exclusion, tunnel vision, time would slow down. I experienced every single one of those.”

He could hear the shots but didn’t know where the shooter was in relation to the car, whether he was coming towards Siebert or circling behind the car. Siebert realized he had to move away from the car so he could see the boy. “He was walking away from me, but he had his upper body turned towards me, and he was shooting at me. I hit him once, he started running, the other officer pulled up and held him at gunpoint and then he gave up at that point. I took some time off after that. Something like that changes you.”

In fact, the current role of the police is a difficult subject for most officers to parse. “I’ve been in law enforcement for awhile,” Siebert says. “When I first started, you would hardly ever hear of officers being attacked or shot at. Now it’s a weekly thing in the news. It feels like it’s becoming a matter of not if, but when.”

Which makes Kensington a good landing spot for Siebert, who was hired in November. He is grateful to be here. “I really like Kensington,” he says. “In small towns you get to be more involved with what goes on. At Memphis, we’d go to a scene, we’d take a basic report, and our report would go to a bureau that dealt with that sort of crime. There was no follow-up on our parts.”

In Paradise, Dixon, and Kensington, he says, “You do your report, and then often you do your own follow-up and investigation. It exposes you to more, and you become a more well-rounded officer.”

Siebert is enjoying the job. “People are receptive and kind, happy that I’m here. From what I understand, the KPD went through a rough patch. We’re gaining the community’s trust again. I’m glad to be a part of that.”

Kensington police officer Megan Farley will be profiled in the April Outlook.



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Park

...from Front Page

“right in KIC’s wheelhouse.” KIC has a hundred-year history of Kensington improvement (think Colusa Circle’s roundabout, oak tree and holiday lighting, construction of kiosks, publication of two editions of *Kensington Past and Present*, among many other projects). And happily, it turns out that several KIC members are landscape professionals. Lisa Caronna is a retired landscape architect, and she dove into the park project.

Also critical to the project’s inception is the interest and financial help of realtor Ruth Frassetto. “Ruth’s been a huge supporter,” Gough says. “She has generously offered a large donation to provide professional labor for the project.” Frassetto was behind the beautification idea from the start. In an email, Frassetto writes, “The vacant corner will be an inviting outdoor space with built-in seating opposite the Village shops. A place to enjoy, eat lunch or just catch up with friends. I am really excited about this project. I worked on the design with both Sarah and Lisa, and I am managing the purchase of the plant materials and labor for the landscaping.”

Gough didn’t stop with buy-in from KIC. “I wanted to get a sense of broader community interest. I went door-to-door, canvassing about 200 homes close to that intersection. People recognized [the park] had gone into decline and wanted to help. They offered to volunteer labor and money.”

Gough says that neighbors have a high interest in improving the little park. “It’s a highly visible, highly used space,” says Gough. “It should be a space we can be proud of, not a blight, which it has become. It should be a wonderful addition to the community. Once it’s done, it will be highly appreciated.” Gough anticipates the project will be completed within the calendar year, “sooner than later,” she promises.

The park’s trees had become diseased and had to be removed several years ago. Two oak trees were planted, and an irrigation system to sustain them installed, along with bark chip mulch, meant to suppress weeds. But the mulch has slid down the grade onto the steps and the sidewalk, and the park’s bench is in sad shape.

Those involved in the park project have been meeting to suggest ways to improve the existing park. “We need to remove weeds and deter future weeds,” Gough says. “One of the new oak trees behind the bus bench was destabilized because the ground around it is sinking. That can be easily rectified. The plantings around it will help retain the soil and deal with runoff. We are targeting meaningful, modest plantings. We saw we could do a big improvement without a massive overhaul.”

The project will improve and extend the irrigation lines and plant areas to prevent erosion and provide seating. Gough is also looking into improvements that are not within the province of KPPCSD, which voted to approve the project at its December board meeting. “The bus stop bench is also rotted,” Gough says. “I’ve been working with AC Transit to address that. That conversation is ongoing. Maybe we can get some kind of bus shelter.” Gough mentioned other areas in the Arlington corridor that could use some help, such as pedestrian issues, which are matters for the county to address.

KIC is seeking community donations for the lot beautification. “With Ruth’s commitment we’re already halfway to our \$20,000 goal,” Gough says. A GoFundMe account has been established specifically for the lot. People can also donate by mailing a check payable to Kensington Improvement Club, noting that it is for park improvement. See mailing and GoFundMe instructions below.

Gough has another mission: to increase community engagement in Kensington. “We were so fortunate that we kept our house,” she says. “There is no place we’d rather be than Kensington. We love our quirky, unincorporated village. And what I’ve realized more than ever is that this is a community run by volunteers. It’s the responsibility of residents to aid our community.”

Joining KIC is one way to do so. “KIC is always open to new members and new board members,” Gough says. “We have nearly 300 members but we have open board spots. I didn’t realize all that KIC does. If you want to get something done, they’re the organization to go to. And so many board members have served Kensington so long it’s incumbent for others to step up.”

Gough, with a law degree, has stepped up all her working life. In Hong Kong, she founded two nonprofits, one to mentor survivors of human trafficking. She continues similar efforts today in the Bay Area, aiding a nonprofit that identifies exceptional leaders from post-conflict countries and provides education and mentoring, with the goal of those leaders returning home to serve in nations recovering from wars. She is a mother of three, ages fifteen, twelve, and eight.

Everyone agrees that one improvement to the corner lot would be a name that sticks. Its familiar name, the gore lot, is simply a description of its shape. “It’s not what we hope it will be called,” Gough says dryly. On her canvassing forays, she heard suggestions: Little Oak Park, the Corner Park, and more. “People can email me with suggestions,” she says. “We can give suggestions to the district but as they own the land it’s their final call.”

Gough says, “This is one small thing that will bring a lot of joy. I am very happy here. I just want to see Kensington thrive.”



Heavy weed growth, bark mulch strewn across steps and sidewalk, and evidence of erosion are all visible in this photo of the “gore lot” before the park’s facelift planned for this spring. Photo by Sarah Gough.

How to Donate to the Park Project

Checks: Mail to Kensington Improvement Club, PO Box 8165, Berkeley, CA 94707-0165. Credit card donations: Go to [gofundme.com/f/donate-to-improve-our-little-kensington-park](https://gofundme.com/f/donate-to-improve-our-little-kensington-park).

KIC is a club, not a 501(c)(3), and the park fundraising campaign terminates on April 10. To ask questions, provide feedback, or join KIC, contact Sarah Gough at [KICpost@gmail.com](mailto:KICpost@gmail.com).

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K E N S I N G T O N

Community Education



Kensington After School  
Enrichment Program

This spring we will be offering more than 60 classes for students after school. Our small class sizes and wonderful outdoor spaces are a perfect setting for kids k-6 after school. Our location is an easy walk for kids coming down from Hilltop School and offer a homework club right after school for kids who are taking a later KASEP class. This spring we have added a kids Yoga class and Chess club with Kim Roots.

Registration for our spring session of classes opens on Tuesday, March 8th at 7pm for kindergarten and 7:30pm for grades 1-6.

**Important Dates:** Spring break is April 1-8th and there will be no KASEP classes that week.

**KASEP Chess Club is back.** The game of chess challenges memory, calculation, visual-spatial skills, and critical thinking abilities. Kim Roots has been playing chess for more years than he cares to share. He has continued to play online competitive chess throughout the pandemic.

The popularity of chess has skyrocketed over the last 2 years, partially due to the pandemic and partly due to the popularity of the movie *Queen’s Gambit*. The KASEP Chess club will be held on Tuesdays at 2:30.



KCC Adult Classes

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](https://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-classes)

Tennis Court Reservations: For weekends and holidays only.  
Call the KCC office to book your reservations 510-525-0292

New KPPCSD Court Fees:  
1 hour reservations- residents: \$7 non-residents \$10

The *Kensington Outlook* can now be found at: [KensingtonOutlook.com](https://KensingtonOutlook.com)  
Archive copies can also be found on our website dating back to 2003.

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 510-525-0292. Our website is: [www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org](https://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org).



KCC Summer Camp 2022

Join us for KCC Summer Camp 2022 where kids can enjoy the outdoors with exciting team games, arts & crafts, dance, sports, Olympic week, cooking, tennis and much more! Each week KCC Camp offers a 9-5 camp day filled with adventure and fun. We will be enjoying the newly renovated Kensington Community Center this summer with its abundant kitchen and large outdoor BBQ, tennis courts, basketball courts, classrooms and large grassy areas at the Kensington Park-all in one area, no need to travel anywhere else!



Camp provides a positive and nurturing environment for students entering grades 1st through 6th in Fall 2022. Campers learn new skills, develop new friendships, and have an exciting summer!

Camp is from 9:00am - 5:00pm Monday through Friday

Camp Cost is \$375 per camper, per week  
Register On-line: [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org](https://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org)  
Registration Starts Tuesday, March 1st at 7pm and is ongoing  
\*Scholarships are available by calling the KCC office and requesting a scholarship application.

Calling all Counselors!

We have openings for summer camp counselors. If you are a senior in high school or older, enjoy working with children, and want to be part of a fun, energetic team, please download an application at [KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/kcc-day-camp](https://KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/kcc-day-camp)



Kensington High School Senior Photo in May

**Sunday May 1st at 3:30pm** - keep the tradition alive- all high school seniors, attending all of or part of Hilltop Elementary School, are invited to participate in the annual Senior group photo. The photo is always the highlight of the June *Outlook*.



KMAC

...from Front Page

changes to floor, slab, interior walls. “What that means is that you have to take the building apart, and then you have to follow federal guidelines for ADA. You have the elevator and the machine room for the elevator.” He said that the fire department needed more space for many reasons, including extra personnel on Red Flag days.

After the fire board’s why-is-this-necessary presentation, KMAC Chair Patrick Tahara called for public comment. Much was said, little related to enclosing the deck. Nearby residents on every side of the compass spoke about their fears for their properties and health impacts during the building’s renovation and about noise during and after.

One feared that pile-driving deeper piers could damage their next-door home’s foundation. Another that the deck enclosure would cut out light to a home office. A third that machine noise from the roof was already disturbing and now more machinery would be sited on the roof. Another that parking was nearly impossible and what would it be like during construction? Another asked about the large meeting room and staff offices downstairs that added up to a possible load of twenty or more people, not counting the three firefighters. Where were they all to park? Several expressed dismay that the renovation itself was suddenly front-and-center. “This sounds like a major remodel,” one said. “I thought this was just going to be about enclosing the deck.”

Hansell said that noise will be less of an issue because old equipment will be replaced with smaller, quieter units. He added that remodeling plans had been discussed at fourteen fire board meetings and that the plans and explanations are on the district website. “The variance required public notification,” he explained. “But the project was not intended to be identified as just the variance. We’ve tried to be totally transparent with the scope of the project.”

In the end, KMAC voted to recommend approving the variance to enclose the deck. Perplexity pervaded both the meeting and its aftermath: one KMAC member, explaining his vote, said that we had to support the fire department so it would not be “consolidated” with El Cerrito. That ship sailed in 1994 and is considered by almost all a successful partnership. Following the vote, claims were made online that KMAC had approved the remodel, resulting in the exclusion of police from the finished building. (KMAC can only advise, and the remodel was not on the table.)

The Police Board Looks at Options

At the February 10 meeting, the KPPCSD discussed a smorgasbord of options to re-house the police department. Interim GM Rick Benson laid out several scenarios in addition to describing problems with 303 Arlington, the building in the Ace parking lot on the Arlington.

Residents had expressed frustration that the police board seemed to be doing little in its search. It turns out they were doing a lot—but as Benson explained before the meeting, the only options on the agenda in closed sessions were 217 (the Public Safety Building) and 303 Arlington. Said board president Sylvia Hacaj, “The Brown Act is very specific about what can be talked about in closed session. You can discuss real estate negotiations about specific properties.” It does not allow free-ranging conversations about options.

Directors privately made other suggestions to Benson. Again because of the Brown Act, a suggestion brought up by one director could not be relayed to the rest unless it was in open session. “One director would tell me privately, ‘I think we should seriously consider this,’ and another would say, ‘Don’t forget about modulars,’” Benson said. “I thought 303 was a good option, but we needed to look at it seismically. We found out it would cost a lot to make it what we wanted seismically. Then we had to have an appraisal done. And figure out what improvements we’d need to make. Just this week we learned that it doesn’t look like we’ll be able to buy it.” That would mean spending \$1.3 million on a building the district does not own and would need to rent.

Which led to the re-housing agenda item for the February 10 open regular board meeting. “All these ideas are coming from different directions,” Benson said. “We needed a situation where all the board members could know everything. And so the public can see that we’ve been looking at other options. Now we can put everything on the table and talk about it.”

The meeting itself gave directors an opportunity to air ideas and frustration that options posed months earlier had not been investigated. Among options proposed were the Annex, the long-unused building opposite the tennis courts in Kensington Park and Building E, which currently houses the Kensington Community Council. The district owns both of these properties in addition to part of the parking lot below the Community Center. Also proposed was buying land from EBMUD, buying or leasing commercial property on Colusa Circle (there are several vacant buildings), a property on the Arlington, another on Lawson Road, and a plan to assess the ins and outs of eminent domain and its tax advantages to a seller.

Rachelle Sherris-Watt suggested that an ad hoc committee be set up to look at the Annex and Building E. Board president Sylvia Hacaj objected, saying board directors should not be doing staff work. But interim GM Rick Benson is only in town infrequently, and he said he would welcome help. Eventually two ad hoc committees were formed: Sherris-Watt and Chris Deppe for the Annex and Building E and Eileen Nottoli and Mike Logan for possible EBMUD properties. District counsel Ann Danforth will look into eminent domain, and Rick Benson, with the help of a realtor, will focus on Colusa Circle and other properties.

In his opener, Benson stated the obvious: “All of this is going to be costly. It’s going to cost the district a great deal of money to move.” Benson estimated that because the district has been prudent, it has between \$800,000 and a million to spend on relocation, but the rest will need to be borrowed.

Said Sylvia Hacaj two days after the meeting, “What I’ve seen through this process is that both districts are looking out for the best interest of their community, not just the best interest of their district.”

Grant Grumblings

At the Kensington Fire Protection District’s February 9 fire board meeting, district general manager Bill Hansell said that he’d recently learned that the \$5.3 million FEMA grant the district has been hoping would finance much of the Public Safety Building remodel could take months to be granted—and that the district is unlikely to be awarded a grant. Also, getting federal funds would mean using “Build America Act” materials that Hansell estimated could add a million dollars to the cost. No bidding could start before getting a yea or nay on the grant, as a start would be disqualifying.

Hansell laid out two options. Drop the grant process and rely on a \$4.9 million loan, in which case construction might start next fall, or continue the application and face a likely 21-month delay. He suggested that one requirement of the grant, a structural engineer’s cost-benefit analysis due by April 8, be undertaken, as it would be useful in both scenarios.

Hansell estimated that \$4.6 million in reserves plus the loan would cover the remodel and the temporary facility build, necessary to site the fire department during the remodel. Interest in the amount of \$300,000 per year would service the debt. In the end, the directors voted to scotch the grant but to allot \$12,000 for the structural engineering report.


Director Janice Kosel said after the meeting, “It is very disappointing to have the rug suddenly pulled out from us on the FEMA grant after working with our grants person for nearly a year. Perhaps the grant was never a realistic possibility.”



Next Month: An Interview with Retiring Fire Chief Michael Pioni

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She was a star pupil of Berkeley High School and turned down the opportunity to attend UCB. Instead, she chose to study at Heald Business School, as she was anxious to begin working so she could help her parents financially. After finishing her studies, she went to work in the mail room of the "Telephone Company" which was then Pacific Bell, but rose quickly through the ranks, becoming a supervisor, and later a computer programmer.



She loved her home and surroundings in Kensington and will be sorely missed by friends and neighbors.



Good Neighbors: Kensington Officer Jose Fajardo, who speaks fluent Spanish, aided the El Cerrito PD and the Albany PD with translation help when drivers who appeared intoxicated were stopped. In both cases, arrests were made. KPD officers responded to a request for mutual aid in El Cerrito, where a fleeing suspect crashed his vehicle into a home and set it on fire, along with a patrol car. Officers were able to extinguish the flames while the suspect was apprehended. In another case, KPD officers coordinated with Berkeley and Albany police in a successful yard-to-yard hunt for a man suspected of stealing catalytic converters.

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