

Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

MAY 2021

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Fire District Votes to Pursue Fire-Only PSB

By Linnea Due

In what is surely one of the stranger sequences in Kensington’s political history, the past month began with March 25’s long-awaited joint meeting of the fire board directors and their counterparts on the police board. Occupancy in the Public Safety Building was the subject of that grueling four-and-a-half-hour meeting. The upshot was that both boards’ GMs—the fire district’s Bill Hansell and the police district’s Marti Brown—were directed to game out scenarios to see if it was possible for the police to stay in the building, and if not, what would happen to the administration of both districts and to the police.

Then came the police district’s regular board meeting on Thursday, April 8. Interim Police Chief Walt Schuld and GM Brown had put together a PowerPoint detailing what the police needed. Schuld finished with a slide called “Thinking Outside the Box” to reduce space needs, which included digitizing files to eliminate file cabinets, locating a second office in the Community Center for sergeants and the traffic safety officer (staff for both districts would be elsewhere, likely the Annex), and closing the lobby so that space could be utilized. He said that the department could live with 1200 square feet (SF) or even 1000SF if that’s all the fire department could give. (The latest plan, January 8’s Option G, allotted the police around 1020SF).

The next day, Brown said that GM Hansell informed her that the fire district’s agenda for its April 14 meeting would include an action item authorizing Hansell to start planning for a fire-only PSB. “I didn’t know [about this] on Thursday,” Brown said. “But I wasn’t surprised. It seemed like it was going in that direction.”

The fire board’s agenda was posted Saturday, April 10, provoking alarmed emails, phone calls, and bewilderment. Adding to the tumult was a second agenda item that would authorize Hansell to end the police district’s lease. Why this drastic move, callers asked, just when the police had agreed to cut their space needs down?

On Wednesday, April 14, the fire district met to take up these two action items. Sixty-four residents were in attendance (often attendees at fire district meetings can be counted on one hand). Hansell began with a PowerPoint presentation, stating that the goal was to find a solution for both departments. He said that a seismically vulnerable PSB was not acceptable, and that accessibility compliance was required and had been confirmed. (This was in answer to frequent discussions about the need for an elevator and a lift on the building’s second floor, which is occupied solely by sworn personnel, either fire or police.) He noted that no expansion was allowed except for the enclosure of the upper deck.

He said that engineering, permitting, and bidding would require plus or minus twelve months, during which presumably the building would continue to be occupied by both

Telling Stories



By Linnea Due

The pandemic has affected everything we know, including Read Across America. That program, which the National Educational Association (NEA) started in 1998, celebrates reading on March 2, Dr. Seuss’ birthday. For years Anne Forrest, the reading intervention teacher at Kensington Hilltop, facilitated special events on that day.

“I set up a book swap for all the kids in the school,” Forrest said. “Every kid got to choose a New-to-You book. Some classes would read all day. [Principal] Judy Sanders came to classes and read stories. Kids made book covers of their favorite books. Gretchen [Gillfillan] would read to the kids in the library.”

That day squeaked under the wire last year. “Of course, this year was going to be different,” Forrest said. “No kids in school. Couldn’t do a book swap. I tried to figure out what I could do to nudge kids to convince them that reading’s great.”

Forrest went on the NEA website and found two suggestions she liked: creating a movement-based reading Parkour

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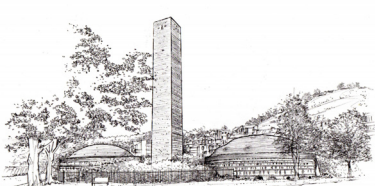
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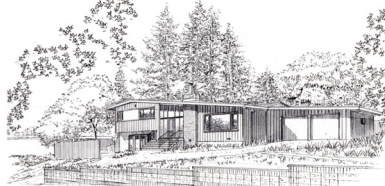
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Avg. Square footage	1,452	Avg. Square footage	1,954
Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$823.00	Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$598.48
Avg. Days on the market	45	Avg. Days on the Market	11
Sales January 2021 to present			
Number of Solds	17 (Per MLS)	Avg. Square footage	2,006
Avg. List Price	\$1,307,176	Avg. Sales Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$846.64
Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$686.65	Avg. Days on the market	17
Avg. Sales Price	\$1,583,031		

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PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDER



New Evacuation Route! Thanks to the diligence of KPD officer Brad Harms, the civic-mindedness of Sunset View Cemetery president Scott Pennington and members of the KFPD Emergency Preparedness Committee, the main road through the cemetery will be opened during an emergency evacuation order. There are signs on the cemetery gate at Sunset and Franciscan Way and directional signs through the cemetery down to Fairmont and Colusa avenues. The cemetery traffic gate at Sunset and Franciscan Way will be open when needed. The Kensington Traffic Evacuation Study notes that as much as 30 percent of traffic could be relieved by using this route!

—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.

JUNE 2021 DEADLINES:
Advertising Deadline ❖ MAY 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ MAY 10

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the writers and do not reflect the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the Kensington Community Council. Letters must be signed and include the resident's phone number and address (which will not be printed). Letters 350 words or under will appear in the print edition (space permitting). Any letter over 350 words will be printed in the online edition only. Publication of letters and articles is subject to space and the editor's discretion. Obituaries of Kensington residents are printed without charge. All material must be received by the 10th of the month preceding issue date; submit by email to editor@kensingtonoutlook.com. No press releases or PDFs; Word documents or text in the body of an email are acceptable. Use one space, not two, after all periods.

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Letters to the Editor

Building Together Benefits All

The future of the Public Safety Building, which houses both fire and police, is at an impasse. It is in need of a seismic upgrade and other improvements. The fire district owns the building, and the fire chief wants expanded space for his department to accommodate additional firefighters in the event of a wildfire. Fire from the canyons behind and around Kensington, which have not burned in over 100 years, poses a significant and real threat, and we need a robust response in the event of a wildfire.

The proposed expansion of the PSB includes additional beds to accommodate added firefighters that may be needed in the event of a wildfire. The fire department has also considered another bedroom and equipment designed for fighting wildfires. While this would benefit Kensington residents, the result of expanded capacity for the fire department would leave the police with even less space than the inadequate space the department has now. Almost 75 percent of the police district’s revenues go to salaries, benefits, operational expenses, and retirees, leaving little money for a new home for the police. Thus, the expansion will likely result in tax increases to fund a new home for the police.

Expanding our firefighting resources would benefit nearby communities at the sole expense of Kensington residents. Perhaps there should be a more regional approach to prepare for wildfires, such as working with CalFire, the East Bay Regional Parks District, and nearby communities to add to the existing EBRPD fire station system along the ridgeline. These stations are equipped with material and personnel trained to fight fires in the urban-wildland interface. EBRPD has three stations from Richmond to Orinda with such equipment. But only the Grizzly Peak station is routinely staffed; park employees who are also trained firefighters are called to assist in when needed. This system could be expanded to provide housing for firefighters and additional equipment. The costs of any such expansion could be spread over more communities.

Bottom line: Kensington residents need both police and fire, and all communities that border the park have interest in improving fire protection.

Eileen Nottoli, KPPCSD Vice President

End the Turf Wars

Editor:

From reading the fire board’s meeting agenda [April 14] it appears that they are poised to go their own way on remodeling the Public Services Building that now houses fire and police staff. Their plan would be to remodel for fire services only and exclude the police. So, this is what several years of discussions produced? Really?

A few facts: The fire board’s own architect is on record stating that any remodeling is voluntary and not required by code. Of course we all wish that the building had more modern features but that is, essentially, a would-like and not a must-have. Secondly, our ex-chief of police, Mr. Steve Simpkins, stated that the police could do well with a few relatively simple modifications. Similarly, our current Chief, Walt Schuld, recently added some “out-of-the-box” proposals, and we seemed to be near a doable compromise. But no.

So, the community has watched the fire board arrive at a proposal that is not necessary and would hurt police services and drive up costs. Yet another poor value result for us taxpayers. The needs of the community for fire and police shelter should be addressed jointly. If the two boards cannot cooperate, then the community should blend the two boards into one district government that looks after the benefit of the entire community. This seems to be the first order priority before any serious and successful facilities planning can take place. No more unproductive turf wars. The situation would be further improved if new, open-minded candidates would run for the unified board that oversees Kensington services. We would all save money with such a slimmed-down organizational structure.

Andrew Reed

Park Not Sacrosanct

Dear Editor:

I listened to the joint meeting of the KFD and KPPCSD boards held on March 25 and was struck by the level of angst expressed in audience questions and comments about using the Kensington Park for new public safety facilities. If one were to believe these commentators, our entire community is emotionally attached to the park and holds its current configuration sacrosanct. I don’t believe this to be the case.

My wife and I have lived in the same house in “lower” Kensington for almost 25 years. Our daughter was six when we moved in. To us, the Kensington Park was too remote for a quick trip to play. If we wanted to go to a park with our daughter, we would head over to Memorial Park in Albany.

I’m not saying the park isn’t valuable, but rather that it isn’t considered to be Kensington’s crown jewel by everyone in town. I suspect others who live down the hill on Kensington’s western edge feel the same. Kensington is in the middle of a large urban area with amenities and services available in neighboring jurisdictions. We’re not an isolated place where the Kensington Park is the only available recreational area.

The most child-friendly area of the park would not need to be touched to accommodate safety facilities since the most logical place for siting is on the unused western slope bordering Arlington Avenue. Let’s not prematurely remove yet another option from the very difficult task of ensuring Kensington’s public safety facilities meet 21st century standards while, more importantly, ensuring our first responders have a safe place to work.

Mark Wegner

The Park Belongs to All of Us

Dear Editor:

The Public Safety Building (PSB) must be seismically retrofitted. The fire district owns the building and, rather than retrofitting, proposed building a new PSB in the park.

While there was immediate pushback from the community, some members of the fire board continue to believe there is little opposition to constructing a new PSB in Kensington Park.

Locating the PSB in the park would adversely impact enjoyment of the park. Families with children and other park users should be very concerned about housing police and fire services in our park.

Our park is a valuable community asset. In 1994 and 1995, a large number of Hilltop parents campaigned with Kensington residents to urge approval of two bond measures to buy surplus property being sold by the bankrupt Richmond Unified School District. This was a hard-fought and ultimately successful campaign that had overwhelming and widespread community support. By taxing ourselves, Kensington property owners purchased the property for the exclusive and perpetual use as a park.

It’s not clear if these bond measures would allow a PSB on land purchased for use as a park. The proposed location of the building next to the library would be intrusive and would destroy the quiet joy of the park. Litigation by residents against either or both the fire and police boards would be costly for taxpayers and delay or even stop construction of a PSB. A previous geologic survey indicated there may be faults crisscrossing the property. The Hayward fault runs in front of the park—this location is no better than the PSB’s current location, also close to the fault.

We were among the many residents who approved the bond measures to purchase the surplus property to create Kensington’s only park. When we visit our park we delight in seeing so many children and young families taking advantage of the last remaining open space in Kensington.

We write to urge you to contact members of the fire board and the KPPCSD to work together to design a seismically safe and retrofitted PSB and to protect our park from any encroachment.

Monica Sullivan and Celia Concus

Proposed Density Plan Could Lead to Disaster

Dear Editor:

KPOA recently sent a letter to Supervisor John Gioia regarding proposed county and state actions that will increase housing densities for Kensington. The county is currently updating its General Plan, which guides development to allow two housing units plus an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on most parcels in Kensington. The proposal would zone most of Kensington to Residential Medium zoning designation of 7-17 units per acre (ADUs are not counted in this figure). Currently the same area is zoned 5-7.2 units per acre (county believes current density is 7-10 units per acre).

In addition to the zoning proposal, state legislative bills such as SB9 would require all residential zones to allow duplex construction under a ministerial building approval. This could undermine the current Kensington overlay zoning ordinance that protects views, sunlight, privacy, and regulates large-scale homes.

KPOA is greatly concerned about the high wildfire and earthquake danger in our community. The last several years have shown us that many CalFire-designated areas have burned with tragic effects. Increased densities will lead to disastrous results as people try to escape their homes down crowded narrow streets.

Our fire chief has already told us that homes are our biggest fuel problem for controlling wildfires; with homes built even closer together, this will add more fuel for embers to leap between houses. We do not think it is wise to add further density in most areas of Kensington—the fire and earthquake risk is too high, and the streets cannot accommodate the vehicles that will clog the roadway. Geologically, we have poor drainage systems, which makes our area prone to slides. As a result of the wildfire risk, the insurance industry is already denying policies to our area, and the development of additional housing units will ensure that this area is completely redlined from insurance policies.

The plan has a high likelihood of producing a loss-of-life disaster in Kensington. We are happy to discuss realistic ideas for how Kensington might contribute toward county housing goals. Kensington residents can attend a meeting on the proposal April 27, 6pm. Zoom ID: 8832 411 8530; password 572938.

Rob Firmin, President, KPOA

Working Group for Paths

Dear Editor:

Kensington Pathkeepers, Kensington Improvement Club (KIC), Boy Scouts, and many community members have volunteered over the years to clear and maintain some of the footpaths that criss-cross Kensington. The Kensington Pathkeepers, a volunteer group sponsoring path walks, has advocated that the paths be publicly owned so they can be improved and maintained for the safe enjoyment of residents.

After listening to the Pathkeepers, KIC and residents, and personally joining them on path walks, I am forming a County-Community work group to explore whether the county should take ownership of the paths and maintain them for public use. This work group is intended to empower Kensington residents to work with the county to collect the facts needed to make an informed decision on a “path” forward.

Our work group will identify the specific paths worthy of public use, survey the paths, develop cost estimates for improvements and ongoing maintenance, gauge adjoining property owner support, identify legal options to transfer ownership, and identify funding options for improvement and maintenance. The county will fund the surveys and legal mechanism needed to transfer the paths to public ownership.

After the work group makes its recommendations, Kensington voters would make a final decision before moving forward.

The original early 1900s developers of Kensington built paths into their plans and offered to dedicate them to the county for public use. The county never accepted the dedication, and the paths remained in the developer’s ownership. The developer went out of business, and their successors in interest were never found.

These paths were intended to provide pedestrians more direct access to the Arlington Avenue streetcars, and while some are overgrown and not passable, others continue to be used as shortcuts and can also provide vital safety routes for access and evacuation after a fire or earthquake disaster.

This is a great opportunity to work together to see if it makes sense and if there is community support to take on public ownership of some or all of the paths and improve them for Kensington residents.

If you’re interested in participating, email me at john.gioia@bos.cccounty.us.

John Gioia, County Supervisor

A Path Forward

The Kensington Pathkeepers are very pleased with Sup. John Gioia’s plan to advance efforts that explore public ownership of the Kensington paths. While much work remains to be done, and it’s critical that we secure a source of funding for this effort, Gioia understands that the present situation is untenable, especially with the growing risk of wildfire in our community.

Kensington’s current situation is that for the past 100 years, the paths were planned and have been used by the public as access up and down the hills without any ownership by a public agency. As a result, efforts by good-willed volunteers to maintain and improve them have been thwarted due to legal liability and lack of clear ownership. This situation has allowed two of the paths to be blocked by adjoining residents. If we fail to resolve this question, more paths may be lost.

Stories

...from front page

and a program called StoryWalk®. For the first, Forrest mounted panels of a story called *Move* on the kindergarten yard fence. “Kids and parents could move to the actions in the book as they walk along reading the story,” Forrest said.

The other idea, dating from 2007, originated with Vermont educator Anne Ferguson. “She wanted to put a story in panels along trails and parks in her area,” Forrest said. “StoryWalk is now over 50 states and 12 countries. Lot of libraries and communities and schools are doing this.”

Forrest needed sign boards. Thinking outside the box, she called up school board director and Kensington resident Leslie Reckler. “I asked her if I could use some of her campaign signs,” Forrest said. “She pulled them out of her garage and brought them up to my house. I laminated the book pages on them.” Then Forrest installed the finished product at Kensington Park.

KCC recreation director Jenny Parks, who works out of the KCC office at the park, said that she loves watching the families walk up and down reading the story as they circle the lawn. “I knew a lot of parents were using the park and looking for outside activities,” Forrest said. “I really wanted to celebrate the importance of loving and reading good books.”

She said that excited kids followed her around as she was installing the signs. “I’m hoping that I can talk to the community about doing this as a permanent installation. We can slip in new books seasonally. I have hundreds of books that I’ve recommended to kids.” She explained that the project is perfectly legitimate so long as you buy the copy and don’t change anything. “It’s your book—you can do with it what you want,” she said.

The theme of Read Across America this year is creating and celebrating a nation of diverse readers. Says the NEA website, “Let’s read and grow together with 12 months of recommended books, authors, and teaching resources that promote diversity and inclusion.” If you’re looking for reading suggestions or presents for kids of all ages, the site describes a variety of wonderful books.

Passings

David Jenkins, a longtime fifty-plus-year resident of Kensington, passed away peacefully on March 6. He was a professor at Cal Berkeley in the Environmental Engineering department. Through the years, he was active in Kensington life, volunteering in Hilltop Dads’ Club, at carnivals, and for the zoning review board. He was an avid gardener, hiker, reader, traveler, pianist, soccer fan, problem-solver, and loving husband (Joan), father (Daniel and Sarah), grandfather and great-grandfather. His humor, knowledge, and conversation will be missed by family, friends, and colleagues throughout the world. He leaves a strong legacy and many great memories; David had a positive impact on the world.



New Community Group

Good Guest: Kensington

By Camden Richards

As I write this, I am struck by the riot of spring-time color, bloom and fragrance exploding from every nook and cranny of our little community: the leafing out of the lime green and deep red maples, the unfurling of fig leaves and calla lilies, of the heady perfume of blooming jasmine and citrus, and the sprinkling of sprightly poppies seemingly across every garden, hillside, path and planter of Kensington. A mix of wild and tended, these natural wonders remind me how lucky we are to live here and care for this land, especially after the challenges of the past year. If you, like me, have been observing and appreciating the bounty of spring here in town, you might have also noticed some new black and turquoise yard signs nestled amongst your neighbors’ gardens: ON INDIGENOUS LAND | GIVE SHUUMI.




As Kensington residents, we live on Lisjan Ohlone land. The land was stolen through colonization, but the Lisjan Ohlone people have always been here. Corrina Gould, tribal spokesperson for the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Ohlone, has a clear vision for how we can all live together on this land, in a good way. She says that her people want to be good hosts to non-Native people—but in order for her people to be good hosts, they need good guests. Given the past and current harms experienced by Indigenous people at the hands of non-Native people, Corrina’s vision is an extraordinary act of generosity. Being a good guest is an ongoing practice, not an identity that we can claim by taking any one action.

Inspired by our town’s history and Corinna’s vision of the future, a group of Kensington residents have formed Good Guest: Kensington. We are inviting all Kensington residents to take a step toward being good guests on this unceded land of the Lisjan Ohlone people by paying an annual, voluntary land tax, called Shuumi, to Sogorea Te’ Land Trust, an urban Indigenous women-led land trust based in Oakland. Shuumi, which means gift in the Ohlone language Chochenyo, is a form of acknowledgement and repair. The Shuumi Land Tax directly supports Sogorea Te’s work of rematriation: restoring a people to their rightful place in sacred relationship with their ancestral land. Shuumi funds support establishing a cemetery to reinter stolen Ohlone ancestral remains, building urban gardens, community centers, ceremonial spaces, and many other initiatives so that current and future generations of Indigenous people can thrive in the Bay Area. When the original stewards of the land are thriving, we all benefit. To learn more about Shuumi and pay, visit <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/pay-the-shuumi-land-tax/>

If you would like to learn more, you can visit our NextDoor group (Good Guest—Kensington) or contact Laura Callen lauracallen@gmail.com. We meet on the third Monday of every month from 7-8pm on Zoom; both newcomers and regulars are welcome.

“Shuumi is one small step toward acknowledging the history of genocide on this land and contributing to its healing.”—Sogorea Te’ Land Trust






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PSB

...from Front Page

agencies. He mentioned that the previous architects who had drawn up nearly all the plans, RossDrulisCusenbery (RDC), had been released, and he suggested going out for an RFP for a new architect. “We would be coming back with actual proposals to be able to do the work,” he said. He showed the slide of the fire district taking the whole building that was presented by RDC at the public meeting on November 16, 2019.

One chart RDC had developed showed optimal programmatic needs, which translated to 3500SF for police and 7000SF for fire. “We’re not arguing for optimal,” Hansell explained. “This is just to show how far off the building is.” (If fire takes the entire building and the deck is enclosed, fire would have around 5250SF.) Hansell said he wanted to emphasize that the two districts are working together “for a win-win solution... We’re not going crazy with square footage.”

At that point, the motion was read. Board president Larry Nagel had it on his screen because, he said, it was so complicated. The motion authorized Hansell to proceed with the development of the PSB to meet the current and future needs of the fire department. Director Kevin Padian added a friendly amendment—“Direct the GM to continue discussions with the GM of the KPPCSD to determine constructive arrangements for external housing of the police department and possibly some fire department facilities.” Padian said that they recognized this was taxpayers’ money, and that fire district money could help with another building that could serve both police and fire.

Board director Julie Stein said that she had serious concerns about the motion. “I attend all the KPPCSD meetings,” she said. “The last meeting was just last Thursday. My takeaway from that meeting was that Police Chief Schuld had adopted an out-of-the-box approach. If fire could be more flexible, he could make it work. I would have expected that both districts would negotiate a joint MOU to figure out a finance plan and a cost-sharing plan. We can’t say, ‘Oh, let’s get this started, and fire will give some money to help out the police department.’ That is not the formal way to start a project of this gravity. It needs to be read at two board meetings, and it should be a resolution, not a motion. I get the sense that [the police board] is just as surprised as the residents.”

Director Don Dommer suggested getting started by doing the seismic work along with all the engineering. “The interiors could be set later on,” presumably leaving a window for the police to stay.

Padian said that he was worried that with a report saying there could be loss of life in an earthquake, “if we suffer that, the lawsuits will wipe us out as a district. And we will not be able to rebuild at a time that we need to recover.”

The meeting moved to public comment. The first order was reading 31 emails (two were found during the meeting after director Stein asked Hansell to search for them). Clerk of the board Sasha Amiri-Nair read the emails into the record. One letter supported the fire board’s decision, another offered suggestions, and the rest said the fire board was acting prematurely and preemptively. Police board director Rachelle Sherris-Watt asked that the motion be delayed. “Far from being benign,” she wrote, “this will have a direct and dramatic impact on the KPPCSD. Our public action was to ask Marti Brown to continue to negotiate. No one mentioned that this was an item of consideration.”

After the emailed comments, residents spoke up on Zoom. The way the process had unfolded dismayed even those who might have supported a fire-only PSB. Said Richard Karlsson, “If you want to displace the police department, you have to pay for this new

building. This is a community problem, and it needs a solution that works for both.”

Linda Lipscomb charged that the motion is a euphemism for evicting the police from the PSB. “I’m suggesting that we change this perspective,” she said. ”How shall we serve all the needs of Kensington? Maybe it’s nothing short of consolidation.” The idea of having one board with five directors to manage both police and fire has been gaining traction, in the face of what some perceive as turf wars between the two boards, and now the proposal to oust the police.

Kensington Property Owners Association president Rob Firmin said that he was “grateful for the degree of debate, with a major exception: the GM’s proposal. It is premature to approve this. Julie Stein’s comments were incisive. The GM’s proposal is incomplete. The options have not been fully investigated.” Firmin made a point that others echoed later: Police in a leased or rented building would be vulnerable to “heavy degrees of inflation from a landlord,” and Kensington taxpayers would ultimately pay the price.

Jan Stensland said she had over forty years in design, construction, and architecture. “In my experience, people overestimate how much space they need,” she said. She suggested revisiting the space needs. “Kensington is not expanding—we have room for 5,000 people. Our needs are adequately met by what we have. I am of a firm belief that you can get both departments into that space.” She also mentioned that there are waivers for ADA compliance, such as it not being technically feasible. “A couple more public meetings would get us on the right track,” she said. “An MOU is critical.”

Pat Gillette noted that directors had to be responsible to their district and to the citizens of Kensington. “Those things should not be in conflict,” she said. “What the GM has suggested has put you in conflict with the community. Neither GM understands how Kensington operates... This isn’t the average community that rolls over and does what-

See PSB, page 6

Letters

...from page 3

We are looking forward to joining the county, Kensington Improvement Club, and any other interested groups or special districts to make long overdue progress on public path ownership. We welcome all interested persons to join the Kensington Pathkeepers mailing list (kensingtonpathkeepers.org/subscribe) and find out how to become more involved in this important community effort. While resolving this issue may not be easy, doing nothing is not an option for a safe and healthy community. We believe tangible progress can be made and look forward to forging ahead.

Mark Altenberg, Kensington Pathkeepers

New Trail from Kensington to Tilden

During a recent walk on our beloved Ye Olde School Trail (YOST), my kids and I discovered a new trail (to us) which leads directly into Tilden. To find the new trail, start walking north on YOST from Kenyon Ave. at Grizzly Peak Blvd. After a few minutes, in the broad, flat area, make a right u-turn, and you will be on the new trail. Follow the pink ribbons and shortly you will find yourself at the Upper Packrat Trail where turning right or left will take you to the Little Farm and Jewel Lake respectively.

Casey Bowden

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Spring is a time to look forward, and for us that means focusing on a busy housing market and helping our clients prep their homes for sale. You may not be considering an immediate sale but making green investments now can help increase the value of your home when you are ready to sell. Below are a few of our favorite green prep tips to increase your future home value:

- Energy Efficient Features** A 2020 poll of home buyers showed that 80% were positively influenced by energy efficiency strategies including ENERGY STAR appliances, high efficiency windows and above code insulation.
- Mature Trees** A recent study found that mature trees often have an appraised value of between \$1,000 and \$10,000. Having mature trees on your property, as well as a landscaped yard, can increase its value by 7-19%. As a bonus, trees remove CO2 from the air making it cleaner for all of us.
- Green Materials** 40% of Millennials, one of the largest groups of current home buyers, say they want an eco-friendly home. If remodeling, consider water efficient features like tankless water heaters or greywater systems, sustainable materials like bamboo and other natural woods and low VOC paints and finishes.

“The first rule of sustainability is to align with natural forces or at least try not to defy them.”

– Paul Hawken

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PSB

...from Page 5

ever you think it should do.”

Gail Feldman wanted to see a comprehensive plan of housing police and fire before the board makes a decision. “The KPPCSD board members seem very blindsided by this coming forward at this time. They were not under the impression that the fire board would evict them.”

Police board director Chris Deppe said that Hansell had mentioned “nearby viable alternatives” for police housing. “There has been no board adoptions of these `alternatives,’” Deppe said. “Please don’t misrepresent what our board thinks. I was skeptical of getting ten people together [at the combined meeting], but I was pleasantly surprised. And I would expect that this proposal be brought up at a meeting like that. If you were going to kick us out of the building that would have been the meeting to talk about it. Making this decision without our board weighing in on it is completely wrong.”

Julie Stein said, “I would like to see our board direct our GM to work out a draft MOU with KPPCSD’s GM. The community has raised concerns about police going into a rental building. Taxpayer money would be going into the private sector.”

Fire board president Nagel said, “Most of the comments I’ve heard didn’t read the motion very carefully. We aren’t making any major decisions tonight. It’s directing our GM to begin the process of doing the research of planning the building for the fire department only. The impact of this motion has been greatly overstated.”

On that note, the vote passed 4-1, with Stein voting no. The second motion, which allows Hansell to negotiate with Marti Brown on real estate matters and the lease termination also passed 4-1.

Said Stein, “This is negotiating the end of the lease. That seems incongruent to your minimizing... the intent of the last motion.”

Linda Lipscomb agreed with this interpretation. “The end of a lease is a termination of the lease, commonly known as an eviction. I’m greatly disappointed that you would presume to do this to this community.”

By this time, the meeting had been extended twice, the last time for ten minutes only. Adjourning the meeting garnered a unanimous vote.

After the meeting, Stein was frustrated. She had been trying to get clarity on the necessity for an elevator for ages, mentioning that the county had suggested that there were grounds for a hardship waiver. She thought the board’s action, considering the outstanding questions, was premature. “I was stunned when I saw this agenda,” she said. “I don’t think the KPPCSD saw this coming, and I didn’t either. I thought we would have at least two more joint meetings. The community is putting their faith in us figuring out a joint solution.”

Questions seem to grow rather than diminish. An important example is the fire district’s Policy and Procedures Manual, which defines the PSB as occupied by both districts, with the building’s main functions police and fire service. According to the manual, the police are responsible for securing the building and monitoring access. Major work is to be planned and approved in concurrence with the fire chief and the KPPCSD. These policies chiefly relate to maintenance, but they form a definition of the building’s functions.

Also unclear is how (and whether) the fire district could help the police out financially. Police GM Marti Brown, on Tuesday before the meeting, said that the idea of having all the administrators separate from their agencies would lead to inefficiencies. Since everyone is working part-time and not necessarily on the same schedule as the people they need to interact with, tasks become fractured, and miscommunications multiply.

She also noted that most agency chiefs have an assistant. Fire Chief Michael Pigoni, for example, has Brenda Navellier, now based solely in El Cerrito. Schuld does not have an assistant, nor is there space for one. Brown also said that contrary to public perception, the police are not driving around all day: normally one sergeant, the chief, and whoever is on duty are in the building.

Brown said that she hopes that the board will let her do what she does best: negotiate with the fire district and with realtors or business owners. She said that she is increasingly uncomfortable with the public discussion of possible sites or financial deals. (Hansell’s PowerPoint even contained photographs of possible vacant buildings.) “They need to appoint me to do this and then report to them in closed sessions what I find out,” she said. “Otherwise we’re putting ourselves in a terrible position.”

The March 25 joint meeting of the KPPCSD and KFPD boards is summarized in an article available on the Outlook website (kensingtonoutlook.com). Click on May’s PDF and go to pages 9 and 10. That article was not updated but rather captures the intent of that combined meeting. Due to space, the police log is also on the PDF.



Anne Stewart says her Kensington garden “is a work in progress.” Photo by owner.

Art and Gardens Go Together

By Linnea Due

Two organizations are linking green thumbs to demonstrate how art can enliven gardens. The Berkeley Garden Club and the Arts and Crafts Cooperative offer a garden tour to benefit the garden club on Saturday, May 22, from 10am-3pm. There are seven gardens on tour, with one in Kensington.

The Kensington garden is a great example of how art and plants can combine to create a beautiful visual experience. Owner Anne Stewart says, “As both artist and gardener, this event was made for me. We have lived in our home in Kensington for fifty years, and the garden is still a work in progress.”

Ticket holders can see all seven gardens. Masks and social distancing are required. For details and to purchase tickets, go to BerkeleyGardenClub.org/tour.

Grab & Go at the Library

By Kara Sheetz

The Kensington Public Library is happy to see you again! On Tuesday, April 27, we opened our building to the public for the first time in over a year. We are offering limited Grab & Go Service, which has replaced Front Door Service. You are invited to come inside to grab items off the shelves; use a computer for up to one hour; make use of the printer & copier; and check out your own holds.

We continue to offer grab bags of children’s materials for families on the go. Those can be found on the table in the main children’s area. We now have two self-checkout machines: one next to the hold shelves and one in the children’s area near the computer. Get Crafty! Kits for kids and teens will also continue to be available to take home.

Please note that our small building has a temporary reduced capacity of twelve people to ensure the health and safety of everyone inside. There may be a short wait to come in, and your patience is appreciated. We encourage one representative per family whenever possible. Masks are required for entrance for everyone over the age of two, and there are no exceptions to this rule.

We will continue to offer virtual programs until that glorious day when we can return to in-person events. Monthly calendars are available in the branch or visit ccclib.org/ events for more information. In the meantime, remember to bring those library cards, and head to the library for our Grab & Go Service.

Composting Made Simple

By Linnea Due

Composting isn't hard—it's even fun! The county’s Conservation and Development department can help get you going with a free virtual workshop on June 5, from 10am-noon.

Instructor Todd Sutton, with three decades of experience in environmental education (he has appeared on the Discovery and History channels) will help you start up or fine-tune your home composting project. And that’s vital for everyone, not just your kitchen or your garden.

Says the county site: “Food waste disposal is a national problem. Food waste is the largest discarded material category in the U.S. accounting for 14.1 percent of the municipal waste stream at 34.3 million tons per year. Food waste sent to a landfill is buried and decomposes in the absence of oxygen, which produces methane, a significant greenhouse gas. In terms of greenhouse gases, methane is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide.”

And as you’re helping the earth, you are also helping your yard. You add nutrients with everything you compost, and you also save water. There is no downside to composting, so sign up today. Kensington has had a big showing at past workshops. Call or email Maureen Parkes at 925-655-2909 or maureen.parkes@dcd.cccounty.us

ACC Soft Opening

By Rev. Nate Klug

Arlington Community Church (United Church of Christ) has missed you! We are slowly resuming in-person Sunday worship. Initially, pre-registration and proof of vaccination will be required, along with masks and distancing. Our first in-person worship will be on May 23, Pentecost Sunday. Please visit ArlingtonCommunityChurchUCC.org to learn more about how you can join us on that day, and in the weeks following. Worship will continue to be livestreamed and recorded, for people unable to join in person.

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See extra pages on the web for police log and breakdown of the combined board PSB meeting. Kensingtonoutlook.com.

K E N S I N G T O N

Community Education

KASEP

Dear KASEP families,

With some relief we are starting the final session of our KASEP year. I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on how we have adjusted over the past year to meet community parent’s needs during these unpredictable times. What a year this has been! I started as the KCC Recreation Director in March of 2020, just a week before everything shut down. Within the first months of my tenure, we made the devastatingly hard decision to cancel our Spring session and the 2020 Summer Camp.

As we learned more about COVID health requirements, we starting back with only online classes and adding tennis, judo and other outdoor classes as it became safe. With the number of cases decreases and the number of people being vaccinated increases, we have added a few in-person, indoor classes and plan to be back with a full schedule of in-person class offerings in the Fall. I want to thank the KASEP families for all their patience, understanding, and financial support during my first year on the job.

I am pleased to announce that **online registration for the Fall 2021 classes will begin August 31st** and the first week of classes will begin the week of September 13th. 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.

Thanks again to all of the parents and the greater community who have supported KCC and KASEP during the pandemic. We look forward to supporting you in the future.



CLASS OF 2021 SENIOR PHOTOS

As most Kensington residents know, the senior photo shoot is a long-held tradition. Seniors gather at Kensington Park to be photographed as a group, and the resulting photo is the featured on the cover of the June *Outlook*. Unfortunately, the pandemic is still upon us, so we are reverting to last year’s strategy. Please send in photos of the class of 2021 by May 5th (earlier the better!). Eligible are all high school seniors who live or lived in Kensington, or who attended Hilltop Elementary School for all or part of their elementary school years. Please submit student’s name, high school attended, future plans (college, undecided, gap year, etc), and a current photo to kccseniorphotos@gmail.com by May 5th for our June *Outlook* spread. Photos must be a solo photo of the graduate from the waist up and good resolution in jpg format.

Congratulate Your Senior The *Outlook* is offering “Senior Shout Outs” if you would like to share some words of encouragement to your senior. For the June issue, you buy a 3-line \$30 or 4-line \$40 ad. Email by May 8 to advertising@kensingtonoutlook.com The subject line of the email should read "Kensington Outlook Senior Shout Out."Checks can be made to KCC for \$30/\$40 and mailed to Kensington Outlook, PO Box 2212, El Cerrito, CA 94530

KCC Summer Camp

Registration is now open

KCC is offering 9 weeks of camp beginning June 14th - August
Camp is from 9:00am - 5:00pm Monday through Friday

Cost is \$350 per camper, per week
Register On-line: KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/kcc-day-camp

Kensington Summer Day Camp 2021

KCC Summer Camp is filled with outdoor team games, arts & crafts, dance, sports, Olympic week, cooking, tennis, and much more! We hope to be enjoying the newly renovated Kensington Community Center this summer, adding a kitchen, tennis courts, basketball courts, classrooms and large grassy areas to the camp’s foot print - 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 2021. Campers learn new skills, develop new friendships, and have an exciting summer!

Campers will be grouped in pods of 12 according to their age and friends (when possible). Teacher Vicky Brodt will host a craft project every week. We will be performing some cooking magic in the new community center’s kitchen and with our outdoor BBQ. Each week tennis instructor, Kim Roots, will have you swinging a tennis racket to improve your back stroke and improve your tennis game. Our enthusiastic camp counselors, many of them former campers, will engage the pods in a variety of sports and games making sure there is plenty of laughter, team work, and fun!

2021 KCC Summer Camp Director

We are excited to announce that Kelly Barry has been hired as the 2021 KCC Summer Camp Director. Kelly grew up in Kensington and has been a KCC camp counselor in previous years. She has returned home for the summer after graduating from San Jose State University with a degree in Dance. We are so pleased she has agreed to join us for the planning and coordination of this coming camp season.



KCC Adult Classes

In-person Yoga Begins April 19th
Monday and Wednesday 9:00-10:00am - \$15 drop in fee
Community Center Lawn
If there is rain or poor air quality the class will be cancelled and not relocated inside

Zumba in the Park
Saturdays 9:00-10:00 a.m. - \$15 drop in fee
Community Center Lawn
If there is rain or poor air quality the class will be cancelled and not relocated inside

Virtual Adult Exercise Classes

Stretch & Strength Wednesdays 11:30-12:30pm
Pilates Saturdays 9:00-10am

Register at 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, or call 525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.



Reparations Start at Home

By Rev. Nate Klug

Thanks in part to generous donations from folks in the Kensington community, Arlington Community Church raised \$45,000 for our Black Homeownership Reparations Fund (BHRF) over Lent. We launched the BHRF to help repair a small portion of the financial damage of racism and white supremacist policies—in particular, the longstanding barriers to Black homeownership that have existed in our East Bay communities.

The BHRF will create a zero-percent-interest loan fund, to be paid back only when the home is refinanced or sold. Working through local organizations, the fund will identify potential Black homebuyers who are on the journey to home ownership but who lack a down payment.

Combined with the collections of five other local churches, we’ve now raised over \$100,000 to kick-start the fund! If you’d like to be part of this movement, please visit ArlingtonCommunityChurchUCC.org to find out more.

KPOA Townhall June 5

The Kensington Property Owners Annual Townhall will start at 10 am. This will be a Zoom meeting. More details in June *Outlook*.



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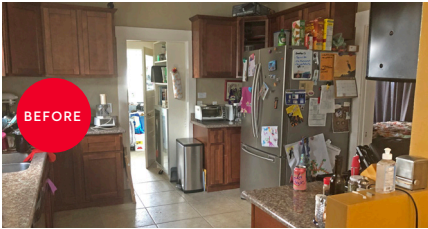


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New Owners Want Happy Customers

By Eileen McNally

If you’re down at Colusa Circle these days, you might notice the bright neon green light telling you there’s now an ATM machine in Colusa Market. And you might also notice the doors are open longer hours. That’s because the store is under the new management of Harry Pabla.

After running two grocery stores, a gas station, and a liquor store in South San Francisco, San Francisco, and Brisbane for almost ten years, Pabla found out through a mutual vendor that Ike Joh, longtime Colusa Market owner, wanted to retire. Pabla decided to buy the store.



Colusa Market is an important anchor to our community. For years, I’ve endearingly referred to this shop as our “lower pantry.” I was curious to find out a little bit about Pabla and his crew of nine. All originally from India, they are close friends who refer to each other as cousins. A photo board with their photos and names might be in the future, but for now we can just keep introducing ourselves.

Ike Joh set a high standard with his produce (in fact, Colusa Market was once chosen as “best produce in the East Bay” in the *East Bay Express*’ Bests issue). That is a lofty bar for Pabla to maintain. When I asked about the benefits and challenges, Pabla said, “The benefits are something I am familiar with but with this new store, purchasing the produce is a new challenge for me. I now have to get up very early in the morning, sometimes 4 or 5am to get it from the wholesale produce market in the city. I’m used to having vendors with my other stores. I just take inventory and have it delivered.”

I asked how he wants to connect with his new community. He laughed and said, “We want to go with what the customer likes. We will go with that flow.”

He explained that all his stores have unique customer bases. “The communities and tastes are different with many different items that they like,” he said. “With this new store, I’m familiar with some of the items, and some are new to me.” He said he would entertain requests. “I’m happy to help by writing it down or going online with a screen shot of the item. Then I can make the order, and I will put it on my shelves. It’s all about the customer. If the customer is happy, I am happy.”

Pabla said that he has noticed some surprising effects of the pandemic at all of his stores. “There are more customers coming in to smaller businesses making larger purchases,” he said. “Before the pandemic, it seemed many customers were going to the big chains and might stop in my stores if they run out of just one or two little things. Now everyone is shopping for everything, and we had to expand our hours in the other stores, making people very happy. It’s a bit of a risk, but we are all young.”



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Joint PSB Meeting Hints at Questions But Solutions Still Elusive

By Linnea Due

The marathon meeting March 25 between Kensington’s police district directors and their counterparts on the fire board started late and ended four and a half grueling hours later. The meeting was convened to find a way toward solving whether the fire or police occupy a renovated Public Safety Building. A flood of documents and slides appeared on the districts’ websites before the meeting to inform residents and directors about the problems involved in trying to shoehorn both departments into the building.

In the latest iteration of drawings, the police were reduced to a thousand square feet (SF) from an already miniscule 1200SF. Interim Chief Walt Schuld had warned that it would be nearly impossible for the now fully staffed department to function in that tiny space. Fire Chief Michael Pigoni said his department needed more space for a decontamination chamber, parking, more personnel, and office areas. At the meeting’s beginning, moderator (and past interim GM) Bill Lindsay suggested that the directors “ask hard questions and make bold statements.” He hoped, he said, that people would be creative and nonjudgmental.

Lindsay first led a group editing effort to adopt a meeting mission statement, which came up with this awkward sentence: “Develop a facilities plan for the KPPCSD and the KFPD that meets the long-term service needs of both agencies in a financially viable manner that best meets the needs of the Kensington community.” By the end of the night, it remained unclear whether this goal was achievable or possible.

Next on the agenda were a series of PowerPoint presentations. The most relevant was that of both departments listing what the chiefs deemed functionally necessary. Pigoni had nineteen necessary items, ranging from six parking spaces to three refrigerators, two fully accessible bathrooms, four separate bedrooms with a minimum of two beds each, dimensions complying with social distancing. The private living facility for fire-fighters had to be separated physically and acoustically from public areas. He asked for a conference room large enough to use as a departmental operations center, and office space on the first floor for the station captain to use for talking with vendors and the public.

Schuld’s list had seven fewer items. The police needed a booking area, several office spaces, secure space, computers and desk space, an armory, parking for seven vehicles, a dedicated room for a Department of Justice compliant server, and more. All this, police and fire, had to fit into 5,800SF with eight parking spaces behind the building. Because of the fault along the Arlington and the possible fault along the retaining wall in back (unconfirmed but assumed), the building’s footprint cannot be enlarged.

Still, the building can be brought up to the rigorous Essential Services Standard with a seismic retrofit. That level of renovation triggers ADA requirements. The requirement for an elevator was mentioned but went no further. Fire board director Julie Stein said she was frustrated that such issues had not been definitively settled with the county.

One of the fire chief’s needed items was a decontamination chamber, slated for the third engine bay (or perhaps a trailer in back). Turnout gear—the jackets, pants, helmets that firefighters wear—is considered hazardous because of cancer-causing material from fires. KPPCSD board president Sylvia Hacaj asked how the department was dealing with a lack of a chamber now. Pigoni said that the contaminated clothing was brought to Station 72 to be cleaned (El Cerrito and Kensington have three stations, 71 on San Pablo Ave., 72 farther out the Arlington near the golf course, and Kensington’s 65). “Which is illegal,” Pigoni added. “We’re bringing our dirt to another station.”

After Pigoni mentioned that it was preferable to deal with in-house administration rather than at another location (it has long been assumed that fire and police administration will not be housed at the PSB), Chris Deppe spoke up. “The large issue is trying to distinguish between strong desire and absolute need,” he said. “For instance, having administration in the same building might be a strong desire. But what is absolute need and what is a strong desire? If we wanted to put everything that we desire in the same building, it’s not going to work. For the fire department to say it has to have a place to meet the public and that it has to be on the first floor might be getting ahead of the game a bit. We both need space for administration, I would argue that it doesn’t need to be in the same building. It’s not ideal, but it is functional.”

Sylvia Hacaj wondered about duplication of some necessities. For example, the emergency departmental operations center would run out of El Cerrito, not Kensington. “I’m surprised that we’re [asking for an operations center] here. Some of the benefits of contracting with El Cerrito are not being realized. How much do stations 71 and 72 meet the optimum standards?”

Pigoni explained that 71 was built in ’65 to get away from dorm-style sleeping. “Sadly, we still only have one bathroom and a shower that serves four people,” he said. “But 72 meets standards. Three bedrooms, a training room, a separate workout area—it was built in the ‘90s to better standards. “ He said that 71 has a decon chamber, but lockers were removed to install it, and that station’s workout equipment is in the apparatus room. Because of 72’s deep driveway and space behind the engines, it has more apparatus space than 65.

The next segment explored the constraints: that the building’s footprint could not be altered, ADA requirements, and more. The cost of renovation cannot go over half of the building’s replacement value, which means that the price tag cannot go over hard costs of \$4.8 million (this does not include architect fees, permits, and more). Then came more board comments before the public had an opportunity to speak.

Fire board member Janice Kosel brought up the fact that the seismic report has been in front of the fire district for five years—a report that warns there could be loss of life in an earthquake. “We need to proceed [with seismic strengthening],” she said. “We have been lax in that regard.”

Hacaj asked again what could be trimmed or otherwise addressed. The fire board’s Julie Stein said that she supported the comments of Hacaj and Deppe. “We need to do what’s feasible and still safe for the community,” she said. “I’ve been following this since 2015. There’ve been so many changing requirements. A year ago, [interim Chief of Police Steve] Simpkins took me around the building, and he was absolutely convinced that both agencies could fit within the building. As recently as last August, the county affirmed that we don’t need to do anything at all. Perhaps we could get some clarification on that. We are not experts, but we can try to evaluate the facts and data put in front of us.”

Fire board member Kevin Padian agreed. “I think Julie is right. We’ve been subjected to a number of different assessments that seem to be driven by the people asking for them. This is a coalition of pretty independent people. If you’re all agreeing on the problems we have, that says a lot. Part of tonight has not been talking about the financial

structures. We need financial planning and how this could be financed. We need more than this building. Let’s see what we can do. This is far from over.”

By this hour, 54 attendees were left of the 65 attendees who had signed at the beginning. It was finally time to hear from them.

Several residents, among them David Bergen, Sylvia Rosales Fike, and others spoke against building a new PSB in the park. Only two weeks earlier, the GMs of both districts—KFPD’s Bill Hansell and KPPSCD’s Marti Brown—had presented a joint report listing three options if the police cannot fit in the PSB. Option three was for the police district to build a new structure in the park, with or without the fire district.

Said David Fike: “We are very confused and concerned that this continues to be a shifting discussion and shifting set of requirements. The community is extraordinarily concerned about open space. You cannot approach this problem by listing all your needs. We will resist that, we will organize against that [building in the park].” Rosales-Fike said, “It’s a red flag for all of us families that the only park in Kensington and the little land we have may be taken freely without any input from our community.”

Other residents talked about lack of financial planning and the delays in correcting the seismic issues. Gail Feldman said, “There is a life-threatening situation. We need to do the seismic upgrade of the building and do it now. The biggest issue is the financing. What is the condition of either district financially? What financing is available and what are these projects going to cost? Will there be one project or two? All services come from property tax. We pay a lot for police and fire service.”

Linda Lipscomb echoed the needs for public involvement and action. “Why are you waiting?” she asked. “Why is this project expanding? There are 2,400 properties and 5,200 residents. We need real figures. Not only is the park near and dear, but also a large part of that park is in the [earthquake] study zone. Fix the PSB seismically. That is well within the budget you have right now.”

Danielle Madugo, who works as an earthquake specialist, advocated building a new PSB in the park. She believed the park is outside the earthquake zone. A. Stevens Delk wanted to know why the lobby was increased in the current plans when space was at such a premium, especially since there would be no receptionist. And would the fire department’s planned BBQ in the parking lot take up a coveted parking space? She also noted that the fire department has a shift change every 48 hours, when three members take the place of the three leaving their shift. Why do they need six spaces when all six are only there for a shift change?

Pat Gillette said it was time to consider consolidation of the districts. “Why have two districts, two GMs, two financial people? We should delay decisions on what we’re doing until we figure that out. And it should be cleared up whether 72 is being closed.” (El Cerrito is in such financial straits that closing station 72 was suggested. According to Pigoni and others, closing 72 is off the table.) “And finally I want to echo what Deppe and Sylvia [Hacaj] said, this is not a time to build the Taj Mahal,” Gillette continued. “It’s the time to do what we can do. That means we need to start thinking out of the box.”

Rob Firmin asked if some of the fire equipment (such as chainsaws) could be maintained in El Cerrito’s larger facilities. David Bergen pointed out that we can’t delay action to combine the two districts. “It will take years to accomplish,” he said. “You need to solve the problems here before combining the districts.”

The directors then jumped back into the fray. “This has been going on for over a year now,” said Deppe. “The key question that we need to answer is can the police fit into the building. It’s going to be a circular discussion until this is decided.”

Fire director Janice Kosel said, “There is not an easy solution and likely not even a good solution You can’t shoehorn both departments into that building with any success. And we should have eliminated the park [as an option] long ago.” She advocated looking at alternate sites for the police.

KPPCSD president Hacaj said that she wanted to dispel the notion that the boards have not worked together well. “The boards have been working through a difficult and thorny process. I’m here to represent what I’m hearing from members of the community. The desire of the community is to fit the two departments together. It’s still not clear to me that it’s not possible. And we can’t come up with financing plans before we know what we’re building.”

KFPD president Larry Nagel said that he thought it was “obvious to everyone that the entire PD and the FD and the administrative staff cannot fit into the building. We’re going to need two buildings one way or the other.”

Moderator Lindsay, likely tiring, asked if it would be helpful for staff to develop a two-building plan.

Fire board GM Hansell said that he’d love that opportunity. “It would be different in nature than trying to address the joint occupancy. I feel we’re been hitting our heads against the wall with that.”

Chris Deppe said that he rejected the notion that it wasn’t possible to have both agencies in the building. “We came close to a real design. Having the administration in the same building is not a need. We’ve got to come to some finality. Let’s not be lazy. This is what we’re elected to do.”

Rachelle Sherris-Watt said that the community wanted both departments in the building. “It’s not sentiment,” she said, responding to the accusation that people were wedded to tradition. Hacaj agreed. “I’m not comfortable going to our community and saying we’ve abandoned the idea of the two departments in the building. “

Stein said that perhaps she was the holdout on the fire board still looking for a joint solution. “We have a lot of options for [housing] administrative services.”

Lindsay said, “So is the co-location option still being considered?”

Heads in their Zoom windows nodded. Hacaj said, “I want to see some give here. There’s not much more we can do. Our finances are very lean.”

Stein said, “Your board has taken some very bold steps. You spent a lot of money to hire Chief Simpkins. He turned the department around. That tremendous improvement had nothing to do with the facility.”

A confusing interchange asked the GMs to identify ways to cut square footage to absolute need. At that point, interim police chief Walt Schuld spoke up. “Every time something changes, it gets taken away from the police department. I’ve given as much as I can give. But oh, by the way, now you’re sharing the downstairs conference room. You only get a thousand square feet. It’s not good for the police department, it’s ridiculous. I can’t give up any more space. Right now it’s not working for the police department. You just don’t want to hear the truth. If the GM says too bad, then I follow her orders. My recommendation is the four of us meet and if the fire department cannot give up any more space, then I’ll come up with the best plan I have with a thousand square feet.”

No one spoke for a long minute. Then Stein said, “We had option D, which was fire upstairs, police downstairs. We were two weeks away from having a solution that both

Meeting

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chiefs could live with. Then all of sudden things got turned upside down. I think you’ve expressed your frustration very eloquently. When we left off with option D, were we close?

“I felt that architect was not working with the police department,” Schuld said. “That architect didn’t even know we needed a computer room. That’s 110SF, that’s a major issue. That architect worked for the fire department.”

Sylvia Hacaj said that the police had no space to give. “And if Chief Pigoni says he cannot give anything up [either], then we have to deal with that.”

Both Hansell and Marti Brown said they wanted direction from their respective boards before calling another joint meeting. That meant that a second joint meeting could be no sooner than May. (Check district websites for dates.) Could the 200SF that had most recently been knocked off the police side be restored? Bill Hansell had a pessimistic view: “This is not a problem of 200SF. It’s much bigger than that.”

A few hints emerged from the seemingly endless meeting. Larry Nagel asked if the departments were planning for greater needs in the future. One department is. Pigoni wants to add another bedroom to the existing three, each with two beds in addition to a workstation. This would fit eight firefighters (Kensington currently has three people on 48 hour shifts). Pigoni has explained this is necessary for high fire risk days, when the crew may double. The fire department is planning for climate chaos, drought, and long and disastrous fire seasons.

The police have no opportunity to do such planning. The department is fully staffed, and it wants to run a volunteer program. There is barely room for a shift. These are questions that could be framed for the community to weigh in on. Looking at a grim future, the community might want to invest in a more robust fire department. It might decide that it makes sense to upgrade the PSB for fire-only, which could lead to more staffing, perhaps even a bay for the brush wagon if the decon. chamber is located in a trailer in the back. Or the community might decide that it cannot afford a separate space for the police, and the departments must be housed together.

If the community decides that it wants that bigger fire capability, then the police must go elsewhere, which opens up a whole new set of questions. If the police district buys or leases, is it better for tax revenue purposes to lose one of Kensington’s commercial spaces (COVID won’t last forever) or a residence that could be purchased and repurposed for the police? Should it be located on the Arlington with its fault zone or should it be elsewhere in Kensington, in a safer area? These are issues that beg for community comment.

And then there is the financing question—not how to finance whatever we decide, but how the finances will be split. Will the KPPCSD receive credit for housing the fire district’s staff in the Annex if that’s what transpires? Will El Cerrito give some credit on the contract moving forward if Kensington is supplying housing for more than double the firefighters it houses now? Since the amount that can be spent on the renovation of the PSB is capped, will the wealthier fire district help re-house the police? All these questions beg answers.

March Police Log

1 WELFARE CHECK, Arlington Ave/Rincon. Older male wearing boxers carrying pants folded up looking lost or confused s/b west side of the street toward Community Center.

VEHICLE ACCIDENT - No Injury, Yale Ave. Parked federal govt vehicle.

ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY, Bank of America, Solano. Alarm company 5 ago. Subject was last seen leaving out front door. BMA 50s, bald on top, dark color jacket, pants, carrying a white sack.

2 MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC ASSIST, Stanford Ave. Smaller dk brown commercial box van from the shade store partially blocking driveway. Unable to Locate.

GRAND THEFT, Yale Ave. Catalytic converter taken the night of 2/25.

911 CALL Someone signaling with a flashlight inside Tilden Park. Referred to Outside Agency.

3 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Ardmore Rd. RP said that she received a PG&E scam call. She did not provide any financial/personal information to caller. She has already notified PG&E and confirmed her account has not been compromised.

5 CITIZEN ASSIST, Coventry Rd. Elderly male having mild heart attack. Assistance Given to Outside Agency.

WELFARE CHECK, Purdue and Kenyon. RP says that a female has been going back and forth between blocks yelling and singing for the last 2 hours unknown if she is under the influence never seen her before. WFA 30s workout clothing, blonde ponytail and backpack no weapons seen.

HAZARD, Purdue and Beloit. Large tree branch in the road.

6 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Five Little Monkeys on Solano. Male caller stated there was a vehicle driving around the area with a person screaming and mentioning something about monkeys...had to place caller on hold, once the call was picked up again, he had disconnected. Unable to Locate.

MISC PUB AUTO, Cambridge Ave. Tall gray camper van parked across neighbor's driveway for 1 1/2 weeks occupied by WFA 40s dk hair relative of homeowner appears to be living or sleeping in vehicle. Miscellaneous Violation - Warning Given.

ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY , Amherst Ave. An elderly male walked away from rehab center in Oakland but lives in Kensington.

WELFARE CHECK, Coventry Rd. An Elderly male tall thin 70s carrying a long tree branch with branches stuffed inside his sweater disoriented says he has been walking around for hours.

GRAND THEFT, Purdue Ave. Catalytic converter taken last night.

ABANDONED VEHICLE, Coventry Rd. Hasn't moved for about a week. Warning Given.

ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY , Blake Garden. Gardener advising 2-3 unknown age/description subjects seen on second floor patio of closed facility, were asked to leave, but did not.

7 WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE OF COURT ORDER, Colusa Circle. Restrained party elderly WFA black clothing flower print skirt and grey socks standing across the street from the

farmer's market.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Coventry Rd. Questions about concert venue and afternoon jazz practice session last Sunday.

8 WELFARE CHECK, Arlington. Elderly female fell at bus stop, no known injuries, on foot.

ENTER & OCCUPY PROPERTY W/OUT CONSENT OF OWNER, Coventry Rd

ENTER & OCCUPY PROPERTY W/OUT CONSENT OF OWNER, Stanford Ave. Gardeners are doing work on the neighbor’s property but continue to trespass onto his property. Would like an officer to speak with them.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Avon Rd. Female heard neighbor screaming. Unknown reason.

9 GRAND THEFT, Arlington and Oberlin. Catalytic converter.

10 SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S, Kensington Mechanics Bank. WMA was seen sitting in car watching, seems to be talking to himself. Subject got out of vehicle and was walking around talking to himself. Arrest Made.

WELFARE CHECK, Cambridge Ave. Elderly male left the front door and gate open all night. Officers located subject on the floor, and he was transported to the hospital and the house was re-secured.

WELFARE CHECK, Lenox/Kingston. Male passed out in his car, his vehicle is in the middle of the street. The subject was arrested for DUI. Arrest Made.

WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE OF COURT ORDER, Colusa Ave. Report regarding ex-husband who called her landline twice and on the second call asked her where she was and she told him she was in her room and then began to ask everything was OK and that he heard the baby at the front of the house. Her ex then said he wanted to talk to her and said he was at the residence and she warned him he was not supposed to be there. Her ex then departed after speaking w/the neighbor. RP says that he sounded like he was under the influence because of history of paranoia and her ex also visited her father and began speaking about delusions about her.

11 VEHICLE TAMPERING, Yale Ave. Looked like someone attempted to take the catalytic converter.

911 CALL, Fairmount Ave. Smell of gas, possibly due to pouring Drano down the drain.

WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE OF COURT ORDER, Colusa Ave. Ex-husband violated restraining order by coming by the residence and then knocked on the door and tried to contact their children.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Amherst Ave. Re scam phone calls...from a MS 13 gang member who made a comment about contacting his girlfriend and something about paying him \$990.00.

12 SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S, Coventry Rd. RP says she received an alert from her security camera and saw a subject going into the backyard WMA blue shirt stripes .

13 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Colusa Circle. RP saw someone (unknown description) with a black and white umbrella looking into cars.

14 CORONER'S CASE, Kerr Ave. An elderly male who was not breathing, call transferred to Confire.

15 ARREST FOR OUTSIDE AGENCY WARRANT.

GRAND THEFT, Norwood.

VEHICLE ACCIDENT - No Injury, Arlington Ave. Vehicle into parked vehicle.

SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Arlington Rd./San Luis. A juvenile said she was followed by a subject in a green pickup truck.

16 ASSISTANCE TO AN OUTSIDE AGENCY, Kenyon Ave. Water main break in the middle of the road that required the road to be closed for a potion of the day.

18 BURGLARY, Lawson Rd. Subject smashed passenger front window- lunchbox and other items taken.

19 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Garfield. RP received a phishing scam call.

20 911 CALL, Cowper Ave. Caller said her nephew needed help.

21 BURGLARY, Anson Way. A cold report of items taken. Case Report Taken.

22 CORONER'S CASE, Amherst Ave. Elderly male.

SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Kenyon Ave. Truck parked in the red zone for a week.

23 CITIZEN ASSIST, Elderly male who was missing. Subject later returned home safely.

ABANDONED VEHICLE, Tulare Ave. Vehicle parked for over 5-6 days. Warning Given.

24 IDENTITY THEFT, Coventry Rd. An Ipad and cellphone were missing between Jan-March 2021 and personal and financial information compromised.

WELFARE CHECK, Colusa Ave. WMA appears to be having a mental health episode.

25 CITIZEN ASSIST. RP wants to speak to an officer regarding a NextDoor post for a possible hit and run that went unreported near the Exxon gas station.

ABANDONED VEHICLE. Old pickup truck parked on Arlington between Sunset and Ardmore for almost two years. Citation Issued.

IDENTITY THEFT, Richardson Rd. Lost CC and now \$2,400.00 has been charged to his account.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Coventry Rd. Rear neighbors are having a gathering and are being very loud.

26 CASUALTY REPORT, Purdue Ave. Man fell from a bicycle.

27 BURGLARY, Highgate Rd. Auto via driver's side window smash, loss is key and miscellaneous other items.

28 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Highland Blvd. Four guys hanging out and subject seems upset.

29 ANIMAL CALL, Anson Way. Report of a lost dog.

IDENTITY THEFT, Vassar Ave. Someone opened an account with 2 debit cards using RP’s information.

THEFT, Anson Way, dog taken from backyard.

30 ANIMAL CALL, Anson Way, barking dog.

Petty Theft, Arlington Ave. Packages taken from the front porch, there is a video of them on the Ring camera as well as a picture of them driving away.

31 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Colusa Ave. Loud drumming coming from the street behind RP’s house.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Lawson Rd. Suspicious white Ford van.