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# Bringing the Community Together

# KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

MAY 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 4

## We Know You Missed It...Now It's Back! Carnival Time!



Kids mug for the camera at 2019's Carnival.  
Photo by Eliza Sarasohn.

By Eliza Sarasohn

After a two-year hiatus, Kensington families are thrilled for the return of everyone's favorite spring community event—the Kensington Hilltop Elementary School Carnival! Save the date: Saturday, May 14 from 11am-3pm. Join us in the yard at Kensington Elementary School, rain or shine.

Get ready to laugh, eat, play carnival games and catch up with friends under the maypole. We enjoy seeing so many of our Kensington neighbors at the Carnival and rely on local support to help make the event a success. There are lots of ways to show your support and help raise funds for our community.

Buy a raffle ticket! This year's grand prize for the 39th annual raffle is a stunning handmade quilt. Local businesses can still donate items for the other prize baskets by contacting Eliza Sarasohn at [editoreliza@gmail.com](mailto:editoreliza@gmail.com). Raffle tickets went

on sale in mid April. You can still purchase them from your local Hilltop family or just come to the Carnival and buy them on-site.

The ever-popular "Deals on Wheels" benefit bicycle sale welcomes your donations of all sizes of bicycles; child to middle school to adult-sized, including those needing a tune-up or small repairs by our Dads' Club volunteers. To drop off your donation in advance of carnival day, contact Drew McGaraghan, [house-ofmcg@gmail.com](mailto:house-ofmcg@gmail.com).

Check out the 10th annual Rhea Wilson Plant Sale to get a head start on your summer garden or grab the perfect gift for Mother's Day.

The Kensington Hilltop Carnival is a cherished Hilltop tradition that serves as the school's primary annual PTA and Dads' Club fundraiser. This year marks its 74th birthday! Dedicated teams of Kensington parents plan for months, spending hundreds of volunteer hours to create a successful event year after year. These parents conquer tasks such as planning, building, baking, grilling, planting, and running booths to name a few. Their commitment and hard work create a memorable day for their families and community while procuring the funds needed to support the efforts of the PTA and Dads' Club.

Proceeds from the Carnival are used to fund disaster preparedness supplies, school assemblies, recreation equipment,

[See Carnival, page 4](#)

## Architects to Review Building E, Annex, District News

By Linnea Due

The police board held two meetings in April, a special meeting on the 7th to authorize contracting with an architect to evaluate Building E and the Annex as housing for three possible "tenants": the police department, district administration, and the Kensington Community Council's popular summer camp and Kensington After School Enrichment Program (KASEP), which now occupies Building E at Kensington Park. The second was the regular board meeting on April 14.

Parents who use (or used) the after-school program, residents of Windsor Avenue, a cul-de-sac closest to Building E, and park lovers attended the special meeting to give public comment about the possibility of E or the park itself housing the police department. Over sixty people attended the Zoom call.

Interim General Manager Rick Benson reminded listeners that nothing about building use would be decided that night and that the proposed concept designs of Building E and the Annex would only explore possibilities. The architects (Swatt Miers), he said, would examine egress, parking, and other factors "important in the location of a police department."

This was what most in attendance didn't want to hear, and board directors Chris Deppe and Sylvia Hacaj attempted to mend fences. Deppe clarified that the evaluation was not just about "relocating the police department and administration into Building E, it's about moving KASEP and KCC into the Annex. It's all rolled into

[See Building E, page 5](#)



## Kensington | Market Update

May 2022 to Present



Detached  
Single Family

5

New Listings

Median List Price

\$1,698,000

Median Sq. Ft.

2,000

3

Pending Sales

Median List Price

\$999,000

Median Sq. Ft.

1,141

14

Closed Sales

Median List Price

\$1,701,500

Median Sq. Ft.

2,033

Median Sales Price

\$1,701,500

**Why selling now might make sense:** When selling anything, you always hope for strong demand for the item coupled with a limited supply. That maximizes your leverage when negotiating the sale. Home sellers are in that exact situation right now. Here's why—Sellers Are Seeing Unprecedented Sales Prices. Demand is very strong according to the Existing Home Sales Report from the National Association of Realtors (NAR). 618 million homes were sold in 2021 – the highest home sales in 15 years. Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist for NAR, explains: "Sales for the entire year finished strong reaching the highest annual level since 2006...." The good news is, demand is expected to remain strong this year as buyers rush to stay ahead of rising mortgage rates and increasing prices. As a seller, that means you can expect there will be multiple buyers eager to purchase your house.

**Supply Is Very Limited:** The same report from NAR also reveals the year began with the supply of available homes at an all-time low. NAR notes: "Total housing inventory at the end of January amounted to 860,000 units, down 2.3% from December and down 16.5% from one year ago (1.03 million). Unsold inventory sits at a 16-month supply at the current sales pace, down from 17 months in December and from 19 months in January 2021." You might already realize this, the current market is advantageous and enables sellers to achieve the best possible price, but it also means sellers can negotiate the ideal contract terms to suit their needs. And since demand is so high, there's a good chance you'll get offers from multiple buyers who are willing to compete for your house.

**Bottom line:** The current imbalance of supply and demand is good news for you. Let's connect today to discuss how much leverage you have, and why it's best to sell now instead of later, if you're ready.

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April 2022



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## ⚠ PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDER ⚠

Helping Neighbors During an Emergency

Most of us have at least one individual or family in our neighborhood that will need assistance in an emergency. If you have neighbors with ambulatory, medical issues, or young children, please consider proactively offering them assistance prior to an emergency. Items to discuss: Do they have go bags ready, including essential meds? Do they have a planned destination in the case of an evacuation? If needed, have they considered keeping a lightweight transport wheelchair ready to go? Encourage them to evacuate early if wildfire conditions are extremely threatening. In an emergency, call or check on them and offer assistance. Bottom line, be a good neighbor—especially when it's really needed! —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.*

**JUNE 2022 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.*

## KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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Kensington, CA 94707-1307

Published ten times a year by the nonprofit Kensington Community Council. (Monthly, except for the combined July/August and December/January issues.) Available online at [www.KensingtonOutlook.com](http://www.KensingtonOutlook.com), courtesy of [AboutKensington.com](http://AboutKensington.com). Non-Kensington residents can subscribe by mail for \$10 annually.

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## Letters to the Editor

**Recreation Building Is Vital to Kensington**

Dear Editor:

If the public's opinion means anything to Kensington's elected officials, the Recreation Building (also known as Building E) in Kensington Park will not become the new home of the Kensington Police Department.

As news circulated in our community of the plan to place a police station in the heart of Kensington Park, the response from the people of Kensington has been a resounding "No." The Recreation Building was included on the list of options in a presentation by KPPCSD board directors Chris Deppe and Rachelle Sherris-Watt in January 2020 (see "Options for Housing the KPD/KPPCSD" on the district's website). It was wrong then, and it remains wrong now.

In the 1990s, visionary citizens saved the Recreation Building from the wrecking ball. After remodeling, it became the home of the Kensington Community Council (KCC) with maintenance funded by KCC. KCC also helped KPPCSD with the Community Center. The history goes back to 1987, when community fundraising made possible the transformation of the "Youth Hut" into the Community Center we know and love. To help defray the district's recent Community Center remodeling expenses, KCC donated \$465,000.

KPPCSD has spoken of moving KCC to a remodeled or rebuilt Annex (the little neglected building above the tennis courts). But the district has not stated who would pay to make the Annex usable. Estimated at \$1.1 million ten years ago, an Annex remodel or replacement requires far more funds than KCC has ever raised. If removed from the Recreation Building and left with only the option to remodel or replace the Annex at our expense, KCC would be forced to close up shop.

Generations of Kensingtonians have trusted KCC to manage recreation programs. The move by KPPCSD to put a police station in KCC's home base threatens KCC, threatens recreation in Kensington, and threatens the invaluable integrity of the park itself. Please join us in resisting the KPPCSD's efforts to displace KCC from the Recreation Building. Email KPPCSD Board members and speak out at their public meetings. Help us to safeguard the future of parks and recreation in Kensington.

**Sylvia Elsbury**, board president, Kensington Community Council

**Balancing Assets**

Dear Editor:

Our park is truly a wonderful asset. So is our current police department, and the need to be housed in Kensington. Ideally, both police and fire are in the same building to deepen the working relationship. Consultants have advised that the Public Safety Building needs to be remodeled for seismic safety. Both federal and state laws impose limits and requirements as a result. Architects with expertise with public safety buildings have advised at several meeting that the space in the existing building is inadequate to meet current standards for fire and police. Space for police in the remodeled building will not be improved.

Fifty years ago, there was no need for communication systems, including secured cable lines. Computers and a dedicated computer room were not required. Evidence must be stored securely and in a manner that prevents cross contamination. Armaments must be securely stored yet easily accessible when needed. Confidential information must not be accessible to unauthorized persons. There must be space to interview minors and to have confidential conversations between superiors and employees.

In the past, we spent several hundreds of thousands of dollars on attorney fees for police discipline. We have invested much time and money to develop a police department with officers we can be proud of. The offices of two supervising officers currently are the size of a small closet. Nationwide, law enforcement agencies have shortages of officers, and I understand our officers receive frequent inquiries about other opportunities. Yes, Kensington is a wonderful place, but so are other nearby places. We need to find a space that can meet current legal requirements for law enforcement and is conducive for police officers to want to come to work and stay with Kensington.

The board is responsible for balancing many interests within the constraints of district assets and resources. The board must look at options in the park. Although I don't favor Building E for the police, it is appropriate to explore all options. The board will continue to keep an open mind and have public discussions on these options.

**Eileen Nottoli**, KPPCSD board director

**Reverse the Decision**

Dear Editor:

Even as the community rallies to preserve Building E (the recreation building) and KCC's recreation programs, it should be recalled that the problems at hand started with the fire board's vote to evict the police from the Public Safety Building. It is easy to blame the KPPCSD board for the mess we are in but factually wrong. This mess derives from the fire board's decision to evict the police. All consequences, including the threat to the park and recreation programs, derive from that decision.

The fire board needs to hear loudly from the citizens of this community that their vote to evict the police does not represent the will of the community. We are seeing the first consequences of their actions, but certainly not the only ones.

Putting the police in Kensington Park stands to destroy Kensington's recreation programs but also the quality of life we value so much. It will affect how the community feels about the police and relates to the police. It will divide the community against itself, to the detriment of our community.

The fire board must reverse its decision to evict the police from the Public Safety Building.  
**Ciara Wood**

**Police Presence Can Be Unsettling**

Dear Editor,

I oppose the plan to house the Kensington Police Department in Building E or any other property that directly abuts Kensington Park's beautiful recreational

grounds (e.g., its playgrounds, grassy fields, and sports facilities). Letters in previous editions of the *Outlook* have already mentioned the importance of the recreational activities housed there, and the sense of community fostered by the park. I agree with those concerns.

I am writing to surface one further concern. Specifically, I ask the community to consider this question from the perspective of Kensington's residents of color. Kensington Park is and has been a welcoming place for all Kensington residents. But establishing a police presence directly beside the park will undermine that sense of community.

Let me be clear: I am not leveling any allegation against our hardworking and dedicated police officers. Every interaction I have had with our police force has been professional, respectful, and friendly. And they deserve a functional space in which to carry out their important duties. But it is also true (as has come into stark relief over the past few years) that people of color, including Kensington's residents of color, experience police presence, even just mere presence, differently. I firmly believe that having a police building look out over the park will contribute to a sense among at least some of our community members that they are watched, surveilled, and unwelcome. I know that this is not the intent of these proposals, which are a good faith (if ill-advised) effort to solve a difficult problem. But the effect of carrying out these plans will be to undermine the sense of community that is part of what makes our neighborhood so special.

We should find another home for the Kensington Police Department, one that satisfies the needs of our children and police officers, and one that continues to foster trust and community among neighbors and public servants alike.

**Khushali Narechania**

**Living Within Our Means**

Dear Editor:

There is a great deal of division in Kensington today about plans for the Public Safety Building and the possible use of Kensington Park to house it. Talk of kicking our beloved KASEP after-school program out of its building has thousands of residents up in arms. The widest gap in Kensington seems to be between our public officials and their boss: the Kensington community.

Never in Kensington history has it been so important for public leaders to ask themselves if they are truly doing the bidding of those who give them their power. It's become increasingly clear that Kensington's government is top-heavy, and officials are fighting amongst themselves, reeling around making overinflated plans, like loose cannons. Our ship is in danger.

The proposal on the floor to consolidate the police and fire districts seems very timely now, when our public officials are talking about spending a huge amount of money that we don't have. One district would be a lot cheaper than two. We could cut the administrative fat. A referendum should ask both whether we want one district, and whether we want one public safety building.

Let's not put our children into debt or increase our taxes in order to have two Taj Mahal public safety buildings. We have a lovely park that provides excellent recreation facilities for our community. How dare our public officials put that in danger!

There's currently no problem at all with the services of our police and fire departments. It seems unclear why they cannot continue to cohabitate in the soon-to-be-enlarged Public Safety Building. Fire district GM Bill Hansell needs to learn how to play with others and live within his means.

Sustainability is the watchword of the human race now. Stop planning to spend money we don't have, and start asking constituents what they want every election cycle.

If you are concerned about this issue and would like to sign a petition or referendum, please email [cass\\_duggan@yahoo.com](mailto:cass_duggan@yahoo.com). I am helping coordinate efforts among residents.  
**Cassandra Duggan, LCSW** (A version of this letter was sent to both boards on April 5.)

**Helping Ukraine**

Dear Editor,

I am organizing a benefit for Ukraine. Everyone is invited to attend, Covid permitting. People should know that there are many ways they can contribute. Most do not require attendance.

The benefit has come a ways in the three weeks since I sent an email to eight neighbors. The basics: It is scheduled for June 12, 1-4pm, outdoors, on a drop-in basis, at the Kensington Community Center.

Personally, what has been both gratifying and remarkable, is the near unanimity of positive, encouraging responses I've received. I'm now exploring the level of community support, which will determine the reach of the benefit. For those who would like to do a wee bit more than read this letter, kindly forward benefit information to your contacts and/or register to receive a few updates at [BenefitForUkraine@gmail.com](mailto:BenefitForUkraine@gmail.com).

For those who are motivated, volunteers are encouraged. Note: Volunteering should be thought of as no more than a three-hour commitment. Ultimately, volunteer support will determine the scope, quality, and effectiveness of the benefit. To volunteer, contact me at the email listed above (sooner is better). Most volunteer tasks do not require attendance the day of.

Regarding goals, I'm hoping that 100+ folks attend, and \$100,000+ is raised. Ten days ago, I would have thought these numbers to be delusional. FYI: A matching donor group has been established, \$28,500 has already been pledged.

See Letters, page 4



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# KPOA Annual Meeting Set for May 21

By Rob Firmin, President, KPOA

The Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) will hold its annual membership meeting by Zoom on Saturday, May 21, 10am. Planned topics and expert speakers include: LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) Executive Officer Lou Ann Teixeira on government reorganization into a single, efficient district; wildfire evacuation planning and alerts with Fire Chief Michael Pigoni and Police Chief Mike Gancasz (plus updates on their departments, Red Flag Day parking, and other security issues); wildfire risk reduction requirements/recommendations; and Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia on public paths, tree ordinance, and more. A link to the Zoom meeting and an invitation to join KPOA as a member will be mailed to each Kensington address. You can also find the link and invitation on [www.kpoa.net](http://www.kpoa.net). The meeting is posted on the Arlington signboard. All Kensingtonians are invited.

## Wildfire Preparedness Day

By Johnny Valenzuela, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

The Kensington Fire Protection District will host the Kensington Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on Saturday, May 7, from 11am-1pm, at Kensington Park. Kensington police and firefighters will be joined by Red Cross, Contra Costa County CAER (Community Awareness & Emergency Response), East Bay MUD, Mobility Matters, Contra Costa County Health Services, Diablo Fire Safe Council, and more.

Kids will have an opportunity to get up close and personal with our fire engine and police squad with the touch-a-truck activity. Community members can visit organization sponsors to learn how to prepare for wildfires and other emergencies.

The Kensington Fire Protection District will have displays about local safety initiatives such as the evacuation drill, Firewise community pursuits, and replanting grants. There will also be take-home resources for home hardening and emergency preparedness. Community members in Kensington have been asking to get better connected to their neighbors. The Kensington Fire Protection District is committed to helping improve preparedness between neighbors to improve community resiliency. If you are interested in volunteering or training opportunities, that information will be available at this event. Details at [www.kensingtonfire.org/event](http://www.kensingtonfire.org/event)

### Carnival

...from front page



Susan Morford, a Kensington Hilltop grandmother, made the grand prize quilt, "Windy Day"; her team included Jennifer Ritter, Kin Foong, and Sherry Garcia. Photo by Eliza Sarasohn

### Letters

...from page 3

Obviously, I am not a professional event organizer. Simply put, the situation in Ukraine is so extreme that I just can't sit this one out. I'm hoping you feel the same way.

Before closing, there are already people to thank. One person stands out. I would like to personally thank Mr. Vladimir Putin, for creating the single most unifying political event of my lifetime. Mr. Putin: Your actions have not only succeeded in uniting the West and NATO, but are also providing our fractious community an excellent opportunity to come together. We wouldn't be at this point without you!

Please note that events are evolving. I expect some details will change.

Michael Baar

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**The Hillside Festival Appeals to Nature Lovers Everywhere**

By Clare Sheridan  
Another event returns to the fold when the 8th annual Hillside Festival kicks off Saturday and Sunday, May 14-15. As in the past, numerous offerings for hikers, plant lovers, history buffs, poets, and kids will grace the hills in El Cerrito's 200-acre Hillside Natural Area. Expect walks, informative hikes, and more. Hikes range from strenuous to easy. The El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and the city's Environmental Quality Committee spon-

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sor the free event. See [www.ectrailtrekkers.org](http://www.ectrailtrekkers.org) for the full schedule. Below are some highlights to whet your outdoors appetite.  
Saturday morning: The Insect Hike! Join Eddie Dunbar of the Insect Sciences Museum of California on a family-friendly hike to learn secrets about the Hillside's tiniest critters.  
At noon geologist Gary Prost introduces the wonders of rocks and earth; those with stamina can continue their geological education during the afternoon with two other geologists, who will discuss the specifics of the East Bay hills, slides, faults, and other fascinating

Photo by Clare Sheridan

**See Hillside, page 6**

**Building E**  
...from front page

one. We're not just kicking KCC out. It's a move for everybody." Hacaj tried to clarify *that* statement by saying that everything was on the table, and "We don't know how any of this is going to work."

KCC board president Sylvia Elsbury led off public comment. "We need to understand how you got to a consensus to put the police in the park... KCC has been excluded from your discussion, and the whole community has been excluded." She pointed out that the presentation about using either the Annex or Building E for police and/or administration at the March meeting "was completely uninformed by data from KCC. Please work with us, not around us."

Catherine de Neergaard summed up what many said after her: "Putting the police in Building E would wreck the park. The big grassy area is what people use. KASEP perfectly fits Building E. Please don't change Building E. Please consider putting the police in modular units where the Annex is now or in some other place."

Another repeated sentiment was anger that the special meeting was held during spring break when, said Danielle Madugo, "many families are out of town." Others said that they had bought in Kensington because of the park and KCC's sterling after-school program and summer camp.

Windsor Avenue residents came out in force. "I grew up on Windsor Avenue," said Kevin Price. "I'm so appreciative of the efforts... to turn this into a community park. A police station does not belong in a community park, period." Residents described the street as a narrow cul-de-sac, where the only turnaround is at the park boundary; if a delivery truck is on the street, drivers must wait to enter or exit.

Some speakers sympathized with the board and decried the decision to make the Public Safety Building fire-only. "I know how difficult this work is," said Sylvia Rosales-Fike. "especially when the fire board comes to the decision to evict the police..." The districts need to be merged and avoid these territorial decisions that are hurting the interests of our community... If there is renovation in the PSB, the police must be included."

Kevin Padian objected to the term "eviction," calling it "the big lie," and said that legally the two departments could not be housed in the renovated PSB. He suggested that Windsor Avenue residents park in their driveways to free space on the street. The next speaker pointed out that Padian is a fire board director and added, "I want to know if the public can do anything to open the dialogue with the [fire district]. I don't understand why this decision was made over the objections of taxpayers. I want to know what steps {to reopening negotiations between the boards} can be taken to that end by the public."

David Fike, a former KPPCSD board director, said that he was elected on a platform to purchase and develop Kensington Park. He said he was shocked that KCC had not been "informed, involved, and influential" in decision-making. "We need to engage the families with young children about why we're in this predicament," he said. "Why are we not talking to the people who made this decision, including Kevin Padian? We need a viewpoint from our leaders that is not siloed and find out why the fire board members are affecting us so broadly."

Vida Dorroh said she was baffled that "your staff cannot see that Building E is not a feasible police department." Windsor Avenue resident John Price finished up by noting, "Some architect will tell you it's feasible, and it's not. I can't get off Windsor Avenue to go to the grocery store."

After public comment, the board directors spoke. Deppe noted that egress is vital information; a road from Building E down to the Arlington was suggested, but Eileen Nottoli thought the slope was too steep: "[The architect's decision on the road] would help us eliminate an option that we're not in favor of anyway." Mike Logan wanted to make sure that attendees realized "that there's no preference between Building E and the Annex [for the police]. We're just getting an evaluation."

Sylvia Hacaj said, "I understand the value of the KASEP programs. I have two kids, Rachelle [Sherris-Watt] has five kids... We've spent at least a year of looking at options. It would be wrong not to look at these options now." She noted that using the parking lot across from the library was a possibility. The district owns the south end of the parking lot, while the Arlington Community Church owns the north end. Hacaj worried that it would be expensive to bring utilities into that area, but in the end, the board added \$1,000 so the architect could also assess the parking lot for the police. The motion carried 4-0 (Sherris-Watt was unable to attend the meeting).

**Fire Board Also Attracts a Crowd**

Sandwiched between the two police board meetings was the fire board meeting April 13. Over 32 residents attended. A long meeting, coupled with a long GM report on the progress of the Public Safety Building, transpired before residents could comment. Comments, as well as emails read into the meeting record, asked the fire board to slow down the demolition of the Public Safety Building in order to reevaluate the project, either to find space for the police or another location for the building.

Several people brought up Building E and the KASEP program, provoking board VP Kevin Padian, chairing the meeting in the absence of Larry Nagel, to remind speakers that the KPPCSD owned the park: "We don't have control over the park. This should be brought up with them." A comment that the plans to oust the police had happened "in the dark" caused Padian to point out that all documents are posted on the district website and meetings noticed per the Brown Act.

These statements provoked pushback from residents. Said Laura Chick, "What you're hearing tonight and what you'll hear in the days to come is that we want you to take a pause. We don't want to hear about documents online... People were not watching the last few years. They didn't understand all the ramifications."

David Fike noted that, "There's been an inability by our elected officials on both boards to address the very significant ripple effects of this project. It's disingenuous to separate the impacts. Please hit pause."

The board decided at the tail end of the three-and-a-half hour meeting not to proceed with the GM's suggestion to begin the loan process, in the interest of locking down a lower rate. Whether this was out of exhaustion, the fact that the proposal was not agendized, or a prelude to a pause was unclear.

After the meeting, GM Hansell sent an email to KPPCSD GM Rick Benson and Kensington Police Chief Mike Gansacz, urging them to convince the KPPCSD board to lease 303 Arlington as a police station. The email is on the extra page of the online edition, along with police news and the police log for March. See [www.kensingtonoutlook.com](http://www.kensingtonoutlook.com) and click on May 2022 to scroll to page 9.

**KCC Gives a Presentation**

Fifty people attended the regular KPPCSD meeting by Zoom. Public comment for items not on the agenda opened the door for supporters of the Kensington Community Council's recreation programs to speak. Commenters praised KASEP and the camp, while others,

speaking for dog owners, birthday party celebrators, and more, called the park the hub of the community.

Said Leigh Schneider, "I have a senior in high school and a sixth grader. But it's not just about the children, It's people who bring the dogs, people who take tennis lessons, people come from all over Kensington to use the Community Center. Having the police department there would not be good for the community."

Tejs Narechania noted that for people of color, police in the park could undermine the

**See Building E, page 6**

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### Building E

...from page 5

welcome that people experience there now. “People of color experience a police presence differently,” he said.

Peter Bluhon said that he was on the committee that helped develop the 1995 master plan for the park. “Never in the wildest imagination of that committee would we think a police building would be in that plan. That plan went out to the community for the vote to buy the park. A police presence would be inconsistent with the vibe of the park.”

KCC board president Sylvia Elsbury gave a PowerPoint presentation later in the evening. Readers can access the slides in the April 14 board agenda packet on the district website. Elsbury said that taking Building E for the police “poses an existential threat to our recreation program. This move would degrade forever the most precious asset this district owns.” She talked about the reach of the KASEP program: offering 54 weekly classes with 441 spaces filled. The summer camp serves up to 540 campers during its nine one-week sessions. Elsbury pointed out the Annex, without an office, with two classrooms versus E’s three, would force KCC to reduce class offerings and camp enrollments. She noted that KASEP classes are so popular that some fill within seconds of the registration portal opening.

In an unfortunate juxtaposition, also on the agenda was an action item to terminate the contract the district has with KCC. Board counsel Ann Danforth explained that the contract was long out of date, in three separate documents, and that it would benefit both groups to agree to a new contract. The motion, to terminate the existing contract and have interim GM Benson and Danforth present an updated contract to the board by June 30, passed 4-0 (Eileen Nottoli was absent).

(Editor’s note: The Kensington Community Council publishes the *Outlook*.)

### Evacuation Drill a Success

By Kevin Padian, Kensington Fire District Director

On April 9, Kensington’s police and fire departments coordinated a simulated emergency evacuation drill in two neighborhoods in the southeast quarter of town. Residents in Zone 8 were alerted at 9am to drive to the El Cerrito BART parking lot, where safety personnel and volunteers solicited information on routes the evacuees took and their experiences. Residents of Zone 7 (between Zone 8 and the Arlington) were alerted at 9:15am to simulate preparations and to plan routes, but were asked to shelter in place.

Evacuees were urged to go down Sunset Avenue through Sunset View Cemetery’s gate to the BART station. The fire district and Kensington Police worked with the cemetery for permission to open the upper gate in an emergency. The traffic study commissioned by the fire district estimated that a third of Kensington’s traffic could be funneled through the cemetery during an emergency. The drill could test that route.

Alerts came from the county’s Community Warning System (CWS) to devices including cell phones, land lines, and through text messages. Officials estimated that some 5,500 devices were alerted; some residents reported alerts on multiple devices. (2,127 people live in the two zones.)

Around 114 vehicles, out of 339 identified in Zone 8, participated, a 33 percent rate. “These numbers exceeded our expectations by a lot, especially for a first drill,” said KPD Lt. Brad Harms. He praised the efforts of police and fire personnel, especially emergency preparedness coordinator Johnny Valenzuela, who produced most of the publicity.

About five of six motorists evacuated through the cemetery, underscoring its importance. Fewer than 10 percent of motorists changed course en route, usually because they encountered traffic or thought they could find a better way.

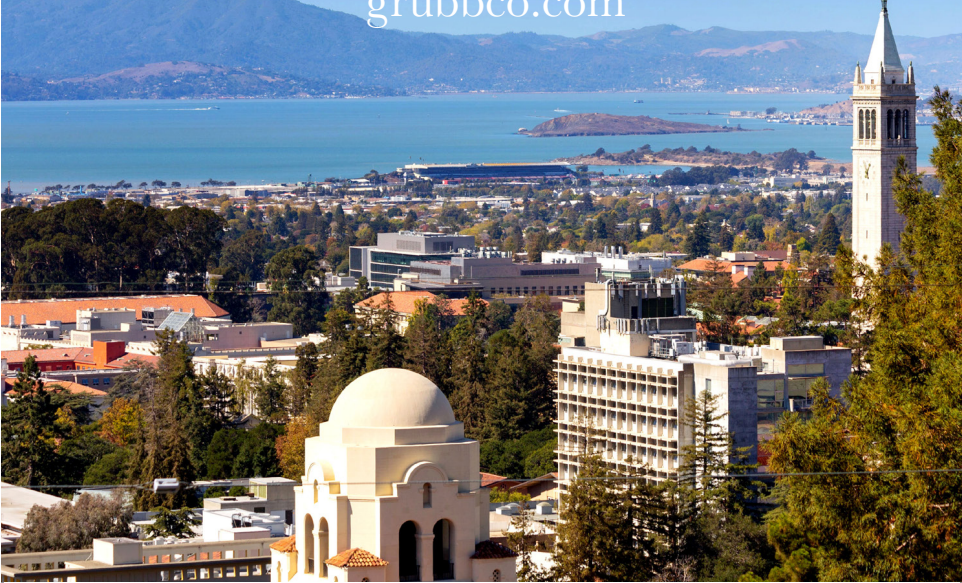
Three fire departments, five police departments, and the county’s Office of Emergency Services participated. Police Chief Mike Gancasz and the entire force were scattered through the zones. Fire Chief Mike Pigoni deployed three engines at strategic places in case a real emergency arose. Other units assisted, as did a cadre of about a dozen volunteers, including five from the Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Register your devices for CWS alerts at <https://cwsalerts.com/>. Over 440 residents subscribe to receive notifications of Red Flag days ([www.kensingtonfire.org/subscribe](http://www.kensingtonfire.org/subscribe).) You can find your Zonehaven zone at <https://community.zonehaven.com/>.

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### Fire Department Awarded ISO Class 1 Rating

By Michael Pigoni, Fire Chief

The El Cerrito- Kensington Fire Department is pleased to announce that it has received the Insurance Services Office (ISO) top rating of Class 1 for the community. ISO is an organization that independently collects information and evaluates fire protection efforts in communities across the United States, and then assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating. Previously, Kensington’s PPC rating was a Class 2.

Achieving a Class 1 rating is an accomplishment equaled by only one percent of the nation’s fire departments. The ISO currently evaluates approximately 40,000 fire departments nationwide, with only 459 earning a Class 1 designation. In California, El Cerrito/ Kensington joins only 41 departments with the top rating

The ISO evaluates more than 1,000 factors to rate how well a fire department can respond and extinguish fires in its community. Rating factors such as department staffing levels, training, location of fire stations, water supply, location of hydrants, communication systems, community outreach, and fire prevention are all used to determine this score. Achieving this rating was only possible through the work our firefighters perform throughout the year— including hydrant inspections and flow tests, occupancy inspections, hose testing, pump testing, ladder testing, and constant training, all of which are major factors in the assessment.

A Class 1 rating benefits the community in a number of ways. Not only can residents feel assured that their department is well equipped to put out fires, but many insurance companies use the ISO rating when calculating insurance rates for homeowners and businesses. As fire chief, I believe this is a true testament to the department’s level of commitment in providing excellent service to Kensington and El Cerrito. This rating builds on our mission of providing the highest level of emergency protection to the residents of Kensington.

If you would like more information on the rating, please contact the fire department at (510) 215-4450 or email at [fire@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:fire@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us)



### Hillside

...from page 4

based walks, one about edible and medicinal plants found in the hills. The evening’s just getting started—see the full list of evening activities.

But rise early for the bird walk that starts Sunday at 8:15, then swing along with the Girl Scouts as they lead a Leave No Trace hike. Let’s have some alliteration with the Haiku Hike. Some steep sections here, but an easy nature walk follows, led by the knowledgeable Susan Schwartz, head of Friends of Five Creeks. Rest up as historian Richard Schwartz gives an open-air talk on early California Indian Life in our hills, and then enjoy the views with everyone who appreciates our magnificent setting.

While the event is free, maintaining the hillside is not, and donations are gladly accepted.

KENSINGTON MARKET UPDATE



\$1.73M

MEDIAN SALE \$



13

DAYS ON MARKET



34%

% OVER ASKING

Kensington broke several records in Q1 2022: Median sales price reached an all-time high of **\$1,730,000** and homes sold an average of **34% over the list price** in an average of just **13 days** - both of which were records for the quarter.

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\*Source: MLS, Kensington Q1 2022

MAY 2022

K E N S I N G T O N   O U T L O O K

Page 7

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

### Community Education

We are halfway into the Spring KASEP session. This has been a fantastic year with over 150 classes taught during this academic school year. KASEP is lucky to have a great group of dedicated and creative teachers to teach such a variety of classes each week. I admire and value their enthusiasm and hard work each day they come to class.

As we near the end of the session, I want to thank you families for a tremendous year. Thank you also for your help and understanding as we navigated and continue to navigate through this pandemic. It has been a challenge to say the least but seeing the kids back in classes and beginning to see the smiles on their faces again is priceless.

**Important Dates- mark your calendars**

No KASEP Classes Monday, May 30th

Last day of Spring KASEP June 3rd

Fall KASEP Registration August 30th

**High School Senior 2022 Photo**

For all high school seniors who live(d) in Kensington, or who attended Hilltop Elementary School for all or part of their elementary school years – you are invited to join other alumni for the annual Kensington School

Senior Photo. The photo is scheduled for Sunday, May 1st at 3:30pm. Location: KCC Office /Recreation Building. Come early to catch-up with old friends! The photo will appear on the cover of the June Outlook.

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

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

The *Kensington Outlook* can now be found at: [KensingtonOutlook.com](http://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: [kcrc@kccrec@yahoo.com](mailto:kcrc@kccrec@yahoo.com), or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: [www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org](http://www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org).

### KCC Summer Camp

We are ready for another great year of camp this summer at the Kensington Park and Recreation area. Many of our camp counselors were KCC campers themselves and then became CITs (counselors in training) and now get paid to carry on the traditions of KCC summer camp.

Our summer camp offers a fun and nurturing environment for children entering first grade through 6th grade in the fall 2022. We still have space available in several of the weeks this summer. You can find more information at [Kensington-CommunityCouncil.org](http://Kensington-CommunityCouncil.org)

**KCC Summer Camp Activities & Schedule**

**\$375 per week**

**Week 1 June 13- June 17**  
Theme: Pod Pride Specialty: Pickle ball

**Week 2 June 20 – June 24**  
Theme: Superheroes Specialty: Skyhawk Sports

**Week 3 June 27– July 1**  
Theme: Western Specialty: Carpentry w/Vicky

**Week 4 \*July 5- July 8 (no camp Monday 7/4)**  
Theme: Stars & Stripes Specialty: Cooking Creations

**Week 5 July 11 – July 15**  
Theme: Going Green/Recycle Specialty: Dance Fitness

**Week 6 July 18 - July 22**  
Theme: Reptiles Specialty: Pottery

**Week 7 July 25 – July 29**  
Theme: Circus Specialty: Olympic Week

**Week 8 August 1 - August 5**  
Theme: Space Specialty: Legos

**Week 9 August 8 - August 12**  
Theme: Beach Week Specialty: Skyhawk Sports



## Zip Code East Bay's Colusa Circle 5k Returns

By Rae Quigley

Zip Code East Bay (ZCEB) welcomed participants to our 4th annual Colusa Circle 5K run on March 19. This year's 5K was particularly special as the previous two years were either canceled or held virtually. Despite the rain, a festive crowd gathered to run together and contribute toward an important local organization.

"For this year's race, we raised money for Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an Indigenous-led organization returning land to Indigenous people," said Josh Dickinson, ZCEB president and broker. "We recognize that we live and work on Ohlone land and feel it's important to be a good guest by paying Shuumi, a voluntary land tax."

The Kensington and El Cerrito communities showed tremendous support, with 120 registered runners, 22 volunteers, and 9 neighborhood businesses donating goods and services. Those businesses included The Arlington, Benchmark Pizzeria, Fuse Fitness, Ian Mullen Private Chef, Lift + Sprint, Orange Theory Solano, Semifreddi's, Sports Basement, and ZCEB.

Event registrations totaled \$3,000, which ZCEB matched dollar-for-dollar for a total of \$6,000 for Sogorea Te' Land Trust. The funds raised will contribute to their Rematriate the Land Fund, which supports growing medicine gardens, creating emergency response hubs, and distributing fresh food to elders, among many other important initiatives.



Photo by Satria Santos

## Hiersoux Gallery Re-Opens with Double Show

By Karen Yencich

The Catharine Hiersoux Gallery space re-opens Sunday, May 1 for a month, hosting an exhibit featuring the work of Kensington artist Joelle Provost. The gallery has been closed for over a year due to ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hiersoux 's daughter Karen, who works with her mother managing the gallery, felt it was time to "throw open the doors and bring the space back to life."

Catharine Hiersoux was one of the 37 artists chosen by First Lady Rosalyn Carter to create table settings for the White House Senate Ladies Luncheon; Hiersoux's ceramics then toured the United States in an



Photos by Joelle Provost



Joelle Provost, 34, a graduate of Berkeley High, earned her BA in Art at UC Davis when Wayne Thiebaud was active there, and her MA from Brooklyn College where the faculty included Mark Rothko. Her art explores environmental issues and other modern dilemmas. Besides the Bay Area, she has exhibited in the Museum of Northern California and in shows in New York and Japan. Her commissioned works hang in private homes across the United States, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, and Great Britain.



Provost hopes, "is to provoke us to cherish what we still have, in order to preserve it."

Hiersoux's own magnificent work will be on display as well. Although the first edition of her book has sold out, copies may be ordered through the gallery.

"I'm SO Happy I'm Still Alive" opens May 1 on Sundays from 10am-2pm, the same hours as the Kensington Farmers' Market a few steps away. The show is also open Fridays and Saturdays through May from noon to 4pm. The public is invited to a formal reception May 15 at 2pm.



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exhibition entitled "American Crafts in the White House." Her work is included in the Renwick Gallery in Washington, DC, the American Craft Museum in New York City, and museums in Osaka, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The recently published book, *Herein Lies the Magic*, is a 60-year retrospective of her work. For years, her gallery, just south of the Kensington Circle on Colusa Avenue, has been a touchstone for Northern California art lovers and ceramicists.

## Police Department News

The Old Guard Reaches Out: Early in March, Lieutenant Brad Harms, an alumnus of UC Davis, and Sergeant Amit Nath, who took numerous classes at UC Davis before graduating from college, visited their old campus. The pair came to recruit prospective candidates from the school's police cadet program. Harms said that after talking to students, several expressed an interest in working for the KPD.



**March 2022 Kensington Police Patrol Log**

- On Tuesday, March 1, at about 1231 hours, officers stopped a company truck at Arlington and Amherst avenues for failing to stop at the stop sign. An investigation determined that the company owner allowed his employee to drive without a valid license. The driver was cited for violation of CVC 12500-Unlicensed Driver and the company owner was cited for CVC 14606(a)-Employ Unlicensed Driver.
- On Wednesday, March 2, at about 0942 hours, KPD was dispatched to a disturbance in the 100 block of Highgate Road between an extremely frustrated resident and the EBMUD construction supervisor. Both parties were contacted and separated before the situation escalated.
- On Friday, March 4, a resident in the 100 block of Highland Blvd was almost scammed \$11,000, after abruptly stopping the wire transfer to a bank account in Hong Kong. However, the social security number and bank account information was compromised.
- On Wednesday, March 9, at about 1800, while on routine patrol an officer recovered a blue Honda Accord that had been previously reported as stolen out of Berkeley. The vehicle was searched, and burglary tools and drug paraphernalia were recovered, before the vehicle was safely returned to the owner.
- On Sunday, March 13, at about 1120 hours, KPD and KFD responded to an unresponsive person in the 100 block of Arlington Avenue. CPR was performed prior to PD arrival and the person was declared deceased by paramedics on scene. There were no signs of foul play, and the case was turned over to the coroner's office.
- On Wednesday, March 16, at 1727, Berkeley PD was dispatched to the intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd and Spruce Street on a report of a Hit & Run Collision where the stop sign was knocked over. KPD also responded and located the suspect vehicle nearby an hour later, eventually arresting the driver for CVC 20002(a)-Misdemeanor Hit & Run.
- On Thursday, March 29, an elaborate online scheme was reported to the police department that determined over \$170,000 had been fraudulently obtained by an international online trading company that was later determined to be fictitious. The US Securities Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigations was notified. The investigation is ongoing.

### Email from KFPD GM Bill Hansell to KPPCSD Interim GM Rick Benson and Kensington Police Chief Mike Gancasz

From: Bill Hansell <bhansell@kensingtonfire.org>  
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 12:22 AM  
To: Rick Benson <rbenson@kppcsd.org>; Mike Gancasz <MGancasz@kppcsd.org>  
Subject: KFPD - Facilities

Hi Rick and Mike,

Following the public complaints we received at our board meeting regarding the considerations of changing the park structures, which I imagine you will hear repeated at your meeting, I'd like to suggest that you try to get your board to reconsider 303 Arlington. Despite the rental situation and any associated construction costs, it's going to be much easier, much faster, and much cheaper than the park options. I know all the resistance to the rental concept, but it is certainly not unusual to invest money into a space that is under a long lease. Businesses do it every day. Even if you can overcome the wave of resident complaints, it's still not going to pencil out for you financially. You are going to have to go through very long planning approvals to renovate either of those buildings and will find that the delays are just piling up the construction inflation and loan interest rates (since you would have to go that route as a tax increase would be denied.) Look at my financial projections for the PSB to see how quickly things are changing. We're barely going to make it work if we get under construction by October.

I know the 303 owner has been difficult but that is because she was jerked around for so long.




Anyway, I hope you will consider the suggestion because the majority on our board is going to plough ahead despite people trying to blame KPPCSD decisions on the KFPD. The fastest way to resolve this is to get back on the easiest track, which is 303.

Respectfully,  
Bill



## CHECK OUT THE LATEST SALES FROM ZIP CODE EAST BAY

**At Zip Code East Bay, we are a purpose-driven real estate brokerage and certified B Corp located in Kensington. We help our clients navigate the home buying and selling experience with deep local market knowledge and a creative, human-centered approach. Here's a snapshot of our recent sales:**



**SOLD** 96 Ardmore Road, Kensington - 4BR, 2BA - \$1,888,000

**SOLD** 709 Wellesley Ave, Kensington - 3BR, 2BA - \$1,850,000

**SOLD** 646 Kains Ave, Albany - 3BR, 3BA - \$1,460,000

**SOLD** 1615 Acton Street, Berkeley - 2BR, 1BA - \$1,331,000

**SOLD** 2300 Edwards St, Berkeley - 2BR, 1BA - \$1,200,000

**SOLD** 7813 Eureka Ave, El Cerrito - 3BR, 2.5BA - \$1,760,000

**SOLD** 1522 Madera Court, El Cerrito - 3BR, 2.5BA - \$1,700,000

**SOLD** 6417 Raymond Street, Oakland - 2BR, 2BA - \$1,355,000

**SOLD** 6012 Thornhill Dr, Oakland - 3BR, 3BA - \$2,000,000

**SOLD** 640 Humboldt Street, Richmond - 3BR, 1BA - \$1,075,000

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