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NOVEMBER 2020 PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOLUME 78 NUMBER 8

Elevator Woes for the Public Safety Building



These graphics show how two possible locations for the elevator (red rectangles) would impact the Public Safety Building. On the second floor (top graphic), the elevator at the rear cuts into the firefighters' fitness room; at the front, it lands between two bedrooms. On the first floor (bottom graphic), the front elevator knocks out the police interview room, while the rear eliminates the police locker room and staff bathroom. As the sharp-eyed will note, an elevator is already in these plans (gray at back), but that location may not be possible because the foundation for the retaining wall is cantilevered four feet under the building; the foundation could interfere with the elevator's hydraulics. The elevator cannot be placed on the north side of the building because the needed additions of a turnout room and a decontamination space have reduced the bays that hold the engines to their minimum. Architect Mallory Cusenbery cautions that these are only conceptual drawings. For example, Cusenbery would not attest to the cantilevered foundation, and elevator locations are preliminary. Plans courtesy of RossDrulisCusenbery Architecture.

By Linnea Due

Over the years, the seismic and ADA retrofit of the Public Safety Building, which houses Kensington's fire and police departments as well administration for both districts, progressed from not desirable to conceivable to certain. Along the way were many U-turns and roadblocks. Last fall RossDrulisCusenbery Architecture (RDC), the lead architects, submitted a plan that did not include the police department, saying that industry standards mandated that the fire department occupy a larger area with added upgrades. After gaining permission from the fire district (KFPD), the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) engaged RDC separately to eke out space for the police.

Plans were debated as Fire Chief Michael Pigioli and interim police chiefs Steve Simpkins and Walt Schuld met with the interim general managers of both districts and the architects. The architects lobbied the county to drop a requirement for an elevator to the fire department's second floor as well as a lift to access a mezzanine, with the argument that by law, only able-bodied individuals can be firefighters and EMTs.

"[The process] goes so slow it drives me crazy," said KFPD director Don Dommer in a phone interview. Dommer said that the general consensus now is that even though the county will not give a yes-or-no answer on the elevator, both the elevator and the lift will be required. "The county says you have to meet the code," Dommer said. "So we're going to have to have an elevator. That's going to up the cost, which is not in the current estimate."

The elevator will chiefly impact the police, reducing their square footage. (See graphics.)

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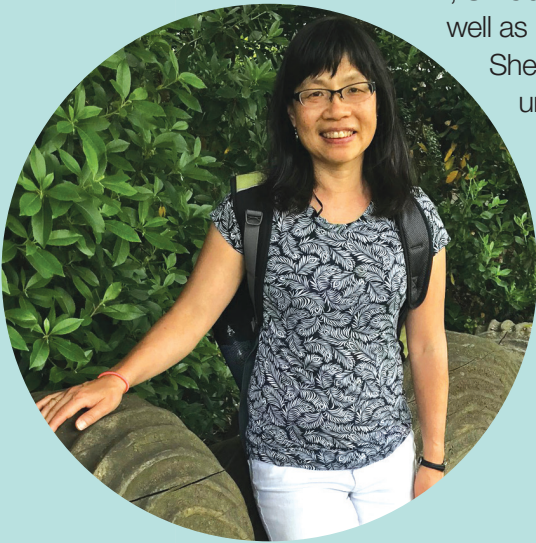
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Elaine Chu (Continuing Mandarin through Hands-On Art) is an artist and educator who has taught at KASEP over twelve years. She has offered in-person and online workshops at KALA, SF Center for the Book, Craft+Work as well as private sessions.



She loves working with kids to create unique pieces while they learn new concepts in language and art. Elaine received a B.A. in music at Yale University and a B.F.A. in graphic design at University of the Arts. View her art and her students' projects at Instagram [@egchu1](https://www.instagram.com/egchu1).

Adult Virtual Art Classes this Fall

We will be offering some new virtual adult classes this fall. Check our website for more information. www.KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-classes

3D Paper Art with April Schlanger



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Committee to Report on Kensington’s Paths

By Christopher Deppe, KPPCSD president

We’ve had citizens coming to our board meetings recently to discuss the possibility of public ownership of the Kensington paths. In fact this discussion has been going on long before I’ve been on the board. What got my attention recently is the apparent desire to use the paths as emergency evacuation routes, specifically as footpaths to escape a fire. Using the paths for occasional recreation is one thing, but depending on them for safety in an emergency is a completely different situation. I decided to look into the matter further. There has also been some reference to Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia’s position on the paths, which I wanted to get clarification on.

I first had a zoom call with John Gioia so I could get some understanding of where he stood (and most likely the county.) His official position is that if the community desires to have public ownership of the paths then one of our two special districts is his preferred entity. He reiterated that the county has no desire to own the paths. He did not take a position on which district would be the better option, nor did he take a position on whether either district should take ownership. He is willing to help out on the transfer and potential surveys. In addition to meeting with Supervisor Gioia, his office also gave me a copy of their public file on the paths.

I went back and looked at some of the history of the paths as far as the KPPCSD is concerned, and when the paths last showed up as an agenda item. At some point a paths committee was formed, but I’ll start with the first effort I could find to acquire ownership, which was at the January 12, 2012 meeting. A motion passed to acquire Highland/Kenyon path, along with the desire to eventually acquire all the paths.

The next time (and the last time) the paths showed up as an actual agenda item was October 16, 2013 (there were occasional board comments about the paths in the interim). It was suggested that trying to start with the Kenyon/Highland path was not a good idea, and that the board should look at an easier path. There were concerns raised about liability, and it was mentioned that almost all of the paths have utilities easements. The board consensus was the paths are complicated. This was the last time the paths made it to the agenda. At the subsequent January board meeting where committees are created and assigned, there was no mention of the paths committee, nor was there any mention of the paths committee at any subsequent meeting. The path issue as far as the board is concerned has been inactive for seven years.

Because I feel it’s necessary to gather current information on all aspects of the paths, I’ve created a very short-term advisory committee of director Rachelle Sherris-Watt and myself. We will collect as much information as we can to produce a report on the paths at our November 12 meeting.

I plan for us to get more input from Supervisor Gioia, from Ann Danforth (our legal counsel) who has worked on similar issues, from the SDRMA (our liability insurance provider) who also know a lot about liability issues surrounding public property. We’ll talk to Fire Chief Michael Pigoni about emergency evacuation considerations. We’ll gather information from the Pathkeepers, and anybody else who might have pertinent information. We’ll then present the report to the board and let the board decide on how to proceed. (As director Sherris-Watt mentioned at our last meeting, we may need multiple presentations.) Supervisor Gioia has agreed to be present at the November meeting, and I hope we can get someone from the SDRMA there as well. The agenda item will simply be a presentation and a discussion on what the board would like to do next, if anything.

It’s important to set expectations, so here are few things to keep in mind: The agenda item will not be about taking ownership of the paths, simply what does the board want to do next. And even if one of the districts decides to attempt to gain ownership of the paths it will not be a quick or easy process, and there is no guarantee that either district will decide to take ownership. As was discovered by previous attempts, the paths are complicated.

Dads’ Club Presents Deals on Wheels

By Steven Chan

The Dads’ Club of Kensington’s Hilltop Elementary school has stepped up to address one of 2020’s multiple challenges: the retail shortage of bike and bike accessories. Members of our board experienced difficulty finding bikes and all things bike-related. We recognized this as an opportunity to have a bike sale, also known as Deals on Wheels.

This popular event is held each year at the Hilltop Elementary spring carnival. By moving it to November, we can help the community and address a larger challenge: parent group budgets. Each year the Dads’ Club provides a stipend to Hilltop teachers to help aid in their expenses. With distance learning, teacher expenses have increased, so they need community support.

Please take part in Deals on Wheels from November 8-14. For more information, visit www.kensingtonhilltop.org.



Police Support Evacuation Plan with Funds and Figures

By Linnea Due

On October 8, the Kensington Police Officers Association voted to donate \$500 to implement portions of the Kensington Emergency Evacuation Route plan. Wrote Officer Tamiko Fodor, “The officers unanimously agreed to donate portions of their own money in an effort to help pay for the total costs needed to enhance the safety of the residents in Kensington.”

In a follow-up phone interview, Traffic Officer Brad Harms, who has been spearheading implementing the evacuation plan, explained that Sunset View Cemetery had kicked off the effort by donating \$500, and the officers decided to match that donation. “Most cops became cops ‘cause we wanted to make a difference,” he said. “We wanted to donate money from our union to support the safety of Kensington residents.”

The evacuation plan was formulated after an extensive study by three graduate students at UC Berkeley, funded by the Kensington Fire Protection District. The trio discovered that simply opening up the cemetery at the top could drain off thirty percent of emergency traffic. That has now been accomplished along with other high priority fixes: in four locations, bollards have been altered so that anyone can remove the chain and posts so cars can escape down normally blocked streets. Harms says, “Now citizens have the option to escape down those roads; they won’t be trapped behind posts.”

Another high priority item is to alter parking on streets in which cars now face uphill or into a cul-de-sac. So far, six streets above the Arlington have been identified to start this effort. “This all depends on citizen buy-in,” Harms emphasizes. “It’s not official yet. We need to do comprehensive community outreach to discuss how this can save lives.” To change parking from one side to the other is surprisingly pricy: the county owns the streets, which means county workers must make changes, erect the signs, paint the curbs and more. On those six streets alone, Harms estimates the cost upwards of \$9,000.

Harms has done a great deal of figuring how to keep residents safe. He measured the length of streets inside the cemetery. “It’s open there. We want to keep the cemetery a thoroughfare in an emergency, but if necessary, it could also become a refuge.” Harms figured that over 600 cars would fit on the two and a half miles of cemetery roads, and twice that number if the cars double up.

And by the way, residents taking only one car rather than two in an emergency would reduce the traffic jams on Kensington’s narrow, twisty streets by 17 percent. “Designate the car you’re going to take,” advises Harms. “And put your go-bag right by the door.” With only minutes to escape, these calculations could save lives.

Residents on the six first-identified streets may soon see a pamphlet on their doorsteps detailing the proposal. After the changes, Purdue residents would park facing downhill, which would avoid those residents attempting a U-turn or stalling in an intersection during an emergency. Kenyon would also be impacted, as would the cul-de-sacs of St. Albans, Windsor (south only), and York. “On those three streets, if you’re parked facing out towards Westminster, you can just pull out and drive,” Harms says. “That’s the rationale, make it quick. It could save lives. On St. Albans they even gain two parking spaces.”

The police had a grand plan, as Harms puts it, to hold meetings to discuss these possible changes with the residents on those streets. Then the pandemic happened. Now he plans to drop off the pamphlet with his business card attached. “We’ve also created an email address so people on those six streets can ask questions,” he says. Harms is the contact person at evac@kppcsd.org. He is eager to hear from people: “Lots of people have a historical perspective of their streets. We can all grow and work together to make it safe for everybody.”

Keeping Community During a Pandemic

By Keiki Fujita

This has been a historic year, and we’ve still got two months to go! Many of you know that we started our CommUniTea at Raxakoul Coffee & Cheese shop (in person before the Pandemic), with tea-tasting and treats. I saw that Raxakoul could be more of a hub for the town, a place for people to gather, hang out, do some work, get to know one another, uplift one another and more. CommUniTea hosted live music from local musicians, tastings from local vendors, and artisan one-of-a-kind hand-crafted wares from resident artists.

Although we are not able to gather in person like we used to do, I am still putting out the monthly CommUniTea news so people can keep in touch with what’s happening around town. Mairie and staff have been responding to people’s needs during the pandemic, and there is always something new to discover and try. For example, Mairie has some vegan-baked goods and vegan bits for your creative cooking.

We are so lucky to have our local stores and eateries where we know one another, places where we care and look out for each other. One mother told me that if she is running late from work, she can tell her child to meet her at the coffee shop, knowing she will be safe there. Another neighbor said that she was happy to see that Raxakoul was stocking flour, yeast, and sugar for her baking needs. One day as I was walking past Young’s Market, Bob was telling a kid to park his bicycle closer to the door, in front of the fire logs so that he could keep an eye on it for him. These are the things that make our town special, cozy, and unique.

We all miss seeing one another, as strolling about town, noshing on some treats or drinking tea and talking are intrinsic parts of the fabric of our community life. Since I started CommUniTea, it has given me more opportunity to get to know people, letting them know what we are doing so they can join in if they choose.

The spirit of the holidays are about sharing and caring, giving and receiving. This season, let us unite in Kensington to raise up our community together, to lend a helping hand, and indeed share, care, respect and love one another. After all, this town is our home, and we are in this world together.



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Passings

Ann Metcalf, of Kensington, died September 13, at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center. Born on March 18, 1940, Ann was raised in Muscatine, IA, and graduated valedictorian from Muscatine High School in 1958. After earning a BA in anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1962, she moved to Washington DC, where she married William Rosenthal in 1963 (divorced 1975). While in DC, Ann worked as a research assistant under Alice Rivlin at the Brookings Institution and took graduate courses at Howard University. She earned her PhD in anthropology from Stanford and enjoyed a long academic career, including positions at UC Berkeley and the University of Washington before joining the faculty at Mills College in 1984.

While at Mills, Ann was named Edward Hohfeld Endowed Chair in American Studies (1998-2001) and twice awarded National Science Foundation fellowships. Her research and teaching interests included women’s status, child development, social inequality, and Native American studies. She published articles and made numerous presentations to professional organizations, but was never more fulfilled than when working with her students. She retired from Mills in 2016.

A loving parent and grandparent, a mentor to many, and an avid reader of Jane Austen, Stephen King, and everything in between, Ann is remembered for her sharp intellect, fierce independence, and abundant kindness. She is survived by sons Stephen Rosenthal and David Rosenthal, adored grandchildren, Molly, Lucy, and Christopher, cousins Russell and Ian Miller, nieces Lisa and Diane Sesko, and many dear friends and in-laws. Memorial donations may be made to Navajo Nation COVID-19 Response Donation Fund (www.nndoh.org/donate.html) or the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (www.dscc.org).

Hermine Marshall died peacefully at home in the company of family on September 11. She was a remarkable woman. Born in South Orange, New Jersey in 1935, Hermine (Halprin) Marshall graduated from Wellesley College (AB '57) and Bank Street College of Education (M.S. Ed '58) before moving to Kensington in 1964 and earning her PhD from UC Berkeley in 1967.

She rose to a long and successful career, with most of her research centered on the development of self-concept and motivation for learning. She published many books and articles that are still referenced today. She headed the Early Childhood Master’s Degree Program at San Francisco State University, taught as Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley, and served as associate editor of the Journal of Educational Psychology.

Upon retiring from formal academic duties, Hermine became a popular Storyteller for the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, where she delighted countless schoolchildren with traditional tales from across Asia, providing inspiration for children viewing art. She also fostered her own creative passions by mastering Japanese flower arranging and Chinese brush painting. Her proudest accomplishment was raising three sons—Randy, Gregg, and Brad—with her loving husband Sumner. She will be deeply missed by Sumner, her sons and daughters-in-law, brother and sister, eight grandchildren, and many more relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and students.



Help Out Your Community With Donations to KCC

By Becky Stephens, KCC president

The Kensington Community Council (KCC) thanks all of our generous donors! We appreciate every dollar donated and are especially grateful for your support during these very trying economic times. Your donations help us to provide high quality enrichment programs for the community, such as the Kensington After School Enrichment Program (KASEP) and our Summer Day Camp. We also publish the Kensington *Outlook*, our community newspaper that covers important local news, issues and events.

For those of you who would like to donate, there is still time! Please send a check made out to Kensington Community Council to 59 Arlington Ave, Kensington, CA, 94707. Or you can donate on our website by going to www.Kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org and clicking on the SUPPORT KCC link.

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Maintaining the Kensington Park Restrooms in a Covid-19 Era

By Bill Lindsay, Interim General Manager, KPPCSD

I would like to begin this article with a thank you to the Kensington community for making my assignment as interim general manager for the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District so rewarding. I have (virtually, for the most part) met many people who have been gracious in their welcome, and very patient as I learn about issues in Kensington.

As county health orders in response to the coronavirus pandemic have evolved to become somewhat less restrictive, I have received a substantial amount of communication requesting the district to open the restrooms in the park. The concern expressed in this communication is that, with the park experiencing greater socially distanced usage, it follows that restrooms are much more in demand than they were several months ago. There is also a particular, current health concern that park users may be “freelancing” adjacent to—not inside of—the restrooms.

I acknowledge (and, in fact, the CDC acknowledges) that it is ideal for restrooms to be open if a park is open to (socially distanced) use by the general public. However, local public health orders related to Covid-19 require a change in the district’s operating standards that will take some time and money to implement. As I understand it, restrooms have, in the past, received a full cleaning once each week by an individual contracted by the district to complete this work. Current Covid-19 health standards require that restrooms be disinfected at least once each day using EPA-registered products that are effective against the COVID-19 virus. This new public health standard requires seven-day per week coverage, with the practical need to retain at least one additional person to provide the service, and the need to procure disinfecting cleaning products.

We are currently working to implement this new disinfecting standard through implementation of a revised service contract and acquisition of appropriate cleaning supplies. Although some revenues to the district have been reduced due to the lack of fee-supported use of the Community Center, there are some cost savings in other program areas that can fund this enhanced service standard. I ask for your patience as we make this service modification within budget constraints, and in a manner that maintains public safety. Thank you again for your interest and support of the Kensington community.

Letters

...from page 2

2. She did the district payroll manually, a labor-intensive process. She would assume how many hours officers would work through the close of the pay period, making corrections to pay and CalPERS accounts the next pay period, adding to the labor costs and presenting more opportunity for error.

3. She was an at-will employee, one who could be let go for any reason. When the district identified its needs and reorganized its personnel, she was invited to apply and chose not to. Instead she filed a claim for wage theft and received a settlement.

I question her commitment to the needs of the district and the taxpayers.

Mabry Benson

Changing to Save Lives

Dear Editor:

While delivering election signs for Nottoli, Hacaj and Watt above the Arlington, we noticed how narrow the streets are in Kensington, how thick the vegetation was, and then how difficult it was for us to turn around on the one-way streets. Noticing how much of a bottleneck there was when exiting onto the Arlington, we then realized how impossibly backed up this would be in a disaster.

Having discussed this with our neighbors on our dead-end street, we decided to park facing out of our driveway and facing out to our main road, Coventry, and to meet with Officer Harms, the traffic officer, if possible. The chance of a wildfire is undeniable, and we must all face the fact that there is increasing potential for us to be burned out.

So, we ask why not do what is efficacious, reduce fuel around our homes, and create an easy escape out of your neighborhood by parking facing outward.

It’s a change, I know, and it is hard, but it is a change that can save seconds, and ultimately save lives. Keep in mind also that it has been “good trouble” and good change that has improved Kensington governance for the better, and a reason to vote for incumbents Eileen Nottoli and Sylvia Hacaj for KPPCSD directors.

Marilyn Stollon
John Gaccione

Let There Be Light

Dear Editor:

I’m sure many Kensington residents have noticed that the park is being used extensively during the shelter-in-place. As the hours of daylight grow shorter, people are visiting the park at dusk and even later. Recently, all the lights outside the Community Center have been turned off, rendering the north part of the park completely black.

In addition, the outdoor lights of the recreation building have also been turned off. The entire upper portion of the park is very dim; likewise the lower part of the park. Avid basketball players shoot hoops in the dark.

Barring installation of additional lampposts (which would be ideal), is there any way the outdoor lights of the two park buildings can be left on for those of us who use the park in the evening?

Eyleen Nadolny

Clearing Up Confusion

Dear Editor:

The architects representing KFPD met a number of times with the Contra Costa Building Department staff to discuss the various code issues. There is confusion in the community about some of these issues.

A 2016 geotechnical survey found a possible fault along the rear of the property. The only method to ascertain whether a fault existed was to trench, which was too dangerous and expensive. A fault line also runs down the Arlington. If we were more 100 feet away from the faults we could build a new building, but the fault is only 50 feet away.

The closeness of the building to faults creates major limitations on what we can do. We can renovate the existing building but cannot add additional space. However, we can close in the front deck to give more useable space upstairs. The county did not vary in its requirement that we must adhere to the strict California Accessibility requirements throughout the building, including installing an elevator.

The maximum cost of construction cannot exceed 50 percent of the cost to replace the building. We determined by our cost estimator that replacing the building would cost around \$8 million. The building department has accepted this estimate. This means that we cannot spend more than approximately \$4 million for renovation.

Those costs are “hard costs” only. They do not include architectural and engineering fees, project management, permits, and more. We will make cost adjustments as needed; at present, we have included generous cost contingencies.

At this late date, some still say that that we should build a new building in the park. This concept was rejected by KPPPCSD and opposed by some residents who worked on the park bond.

The department will be temporarily housed at a parking lot at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley for about 22-24 months starting about April. We don’t have enough information for the cost of the temporary facility and are holding on \$1 million or less for now.

Don Dommer, director, KFPD

New Oak Tree Pest Moving South

By Linnea Due

A new oak tree plague, which first appeared in Sonoma County’s Calistoga, is spreading across Northern California. It may attack multiple species but has concentrated in the north counties on valley, black, and blue oaks, magnificent oak trees that have few pests.

The Mediterranean oak borer is a small beetle that can do big damage. “This beetle is affecting one of the most prestigious trees in the world,” said Davey Tree’s Jess Running in a late July phone interview. “These tenacious little bugs are overtaking huge valley oaks and killing them. And it’s on the move.”

This is not great news for Kensington residents. If you live on or near a canyon filled with live oaks, which includes nearly every household, you should be on the lookout for the beetles.

Running explained that the male beetles don’t fly. “The female beetles are the ones that leave the affected tree and fly to new hosts,” he said. “It’s an ambrosia beetle. It burrows so deeply that a massive amount of sawdust is produced.”

What should people look for? “It’ll first land in the upper canopy of the tree and begin girdling the most tender branches.” Running said the beetles move from the upper crown down into the trunk. “There is uniform branch dieback, and by the time they get into the trunk, the tree is falling apart and breaking up. Branches weaken and fall.”

What should you do if you see this kind of damage? “First thing they should do is call a local Davey office or someone well versed in this beetle and have the trees inspected,” Running said. “There are certain injectable insecticides, though nothing has been approved yet. Meanwhile keep prominent oaks as healthy as possible. Take dead wood out. You might think about fertilizing on an annual basis. You normally don’t fertilize native trees. But some products, such as Reliant, boost immune systems of trees.” We could all use an immune system boost—so watch out for your trees.

PSB
...from front page

“For [the fire department], putting it at the back is much better. All the dorm rooms would have to be chopped up if it’s in the front,” Dommer said. He explained that the elevator could not go flush against the back wall because the shaft would run into a four-foot-wide foundation cantilevered off the retaining wall. Some wondered if the elevator could be mounted on the outside of the building, but that would likely violate code that the building footprint cannot be enlarged because of nearby earthquake faults.

Lead architect Mallory Cusenbery affirmed this. “An elevator would be considered integral to the building’s function, so if it were mounted on the exterior it would be viewed as increasing the footprint.”
“An elevator shaft is ten foot by ten foot,” Dommer said. “We could take some of the equipment and put it on the roof. We’re trying to work our way through getting a package that we can get the board to approve.” He paused. “No one’s going to be happy with where the elevator goes. It can’t go in the apparatus bay. It has to go on the police side, either front or back.”

Cusenbery of RDC pointed out that plans depicting possible locations for the elevator are still extremely preliminary. “We are calling this a feasibility study,” he explained. “What we’re doing here is seeing what gets displaced and how impactful that displacement is as opposed to designing its final location. This is still highly conceptual.”

Last fall it became obvious that there would no room for either district’s administrative staff. Dommer pointed out that the police have storage space on both floors and that with the administrative staff gone, the police have more room than they do currently, though the police department has multiple privacy requirements that are not easily accommodated. Costs will rise for both districts as staff will be housed elsewhere—the two most frequent suggestions are the Annex, a long-unused building at Kensington Park or commercial offices on the Arlington or at Colusa Circle, likely shared by both districts.

"No one's going to be happy with where the elevator goes."
—Don Dommer

Dommer is certain that the elevator will not scotch the entire project, which must, as a remodel rather than new construction, not exceed fifty percent of the building’s replacement value. It will, however, trigger further ADA requirements, such as work under sinks and changes to the bathrooms. “We were at 4.3 million,” Dommer said, citing the most recent figures for the hard costs. The building’s value is estimated at over 8 million. Only hard construction costs count into the fifty percent calculation, not architects’ fees or permits or plans. “If construction costs keep going up, the building replacement cost also goes up, so they keep pace with each other,” Dommer said.
Added into the total cost will be temporary housing for both fire and police during the renovation, which is estimated to last 22-24 months. No one expects that raising taxes or floating a bond measure will be necessary: the fire district has been saving for years for the project, and as at least one KFPD director pointed out during the last board meeting, borrowing “money now is cheap.”

Plan Your Evacuation Now

By Kevin Padian and Larry Nagel, KFPD directors
All residents should understand that if a fire is rapidly approaching the Kensington hills, there may be only a few hours or less to evacuate. Diablo Wind Events (DWE) usually occur in the fall for several days at a time, with hot dry winds from the north that elevate fire danger.
When a DWE is predicted, which is usually several days in advance, if you will need help if you have to evacuate, you have to arrange this yourself. You cannot count on emergency services to evacuate you immediately. So don’t wait; make arrangements with your friends, relatives, or neighbors now. You don’t want to be looking out your window while your neighbors’ cars drive away without you, thinking someone else is taking care of you. (This has been known to happen.) A fire could arrive tomorrow, so please don’t delay. And everyone, look out for your less mobile neighbors!
Also, during fire season (which began this year in August and may last into December), please have your go-bag packed and ready by the door (search “go bag contents” for lists of what to pack). Someone may have to wake you to evacuate you, and you won’t have time to delay them looking for items to take.
We live dangerously close to a regional park with highly flammable grasslands, trees, and underbrush that has not seriously burned for a century. You may have very little notice if a fire starts close to our ridge. If you are not registered for the county’s Emergency Warning System notifications, please visit <https://alerts5.athoc.com/SelfService/CCCCWS/Register>.

Holiday Shopping Virtually

By Joe Pratt
Just in time for the holidays, Arlington Community Church at 52 Arlington Avenue, is promoting and sponsoring a Virtual Holiday Bazaar in early December to support the ministry and missions of the church. We will be featuring items donated by friends and members of ACC. Many of the items for sale have been created by church members, including hand-painted stationery, hand-quilted placemats, homemade metal crafts, hand-spun yarn, CDs of original music, a tour of the Botanical Gardens, and signed copies of reverend Nate Klug’s newest poetry book, *Hosts and Guests*, and Dr. Concha Delgado’s recent book, *Wings of a Firebird*. Items will be posted on the church’s website (arlington-communitychurchucc.org) starting Saturday, November 28.



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Candidate Forum Draws Over a Hundred

By Linnea Due

On Saturday morning, October 10, the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) and the Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) teamed up to put on a forum for candidates running for Kensington’s two districts, the police district (KPPCSD) and the fire district (KFPD). Six of the seven candidates (Elaine Stelton had a conflict) showed up on Zoom to answer questions. The average number of viewers was 123, according to KIC’s Sarah Paul.

KIC president Linda Lipscomb explained that a small committee of both community groups had formulated the questions in advance, some based on emailed suggestions by residents. The same questions were asked of all candidates for both districts.

Candidates had two minutes for opening statements, 90 seconds to answer questions, and another 90 seconds for a closing statement. KPOA president Rob Firmin held up cards, the first with a 30-second warning, the other telling the speakers their time was up. The big takeaway for anyone watching this affair was that each Kensington candidate heeded the time limits, a feat that seemed miraculous during this season of trampling norms.

There were few surprises. KPPCSD incumbents Sylvia Hacaj and Eileen Nottoli talked about their accomplishments, citing the split of the general manager/chief of police position, hiring popular Steve Simpkins, providing a full complement of police officers with upgraded computers, body cameras, new hybrid vehicles, as well as successfully completing the ADA and seismic renovation of the Community Center. Challenger Lynn Wolter warned that outsourcing could lead to annexation and a looming CalPERS payment; she also criticized unclear financial records.

The biggest surprise on the fire board side was Larry Nagel’s supposition that the county may not want the district to renovate the Public Safety Building because it is so close to at least one, if not two, earthquake faults. The other candidates, Jim Watt and Don Dommer, did not respond to this assertion, instead talking about how adding an elevator will make square footage tighter for the police. The general managers of both districts, as well as interim Police Chief Walt Schuld and Fire Chief Michael Pigoni, have been meeting with the architect to hammer out issues (see front page story).

Dommer later offered an explanation for Nagel’s claim: “He thinks we’re going to build a new building, but we can’t.”

All candidates for both districts supported housing the police in the Public Safety Building, and all agreed that there was no room for administration in the renovated building. Alternatives mentioned for administration are a possible joint rental of commercial property or renovating the long-unused Annex at Kensington Park, which is owned by the police district. All agreed that it is unlikely that taxes or a bond measure would be necessary because, as several put it, “It’s so cheap to borrow now.”

Residents can get a sense of issues by viewing the recording. KIC president Linda Lipscomb said that a cloud-based link could be obtained by emailing a request to KIC at KICpost@gmail.com. Links have also been sent by email.

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