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Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

OCTOBER 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 8

A Day to Remember



Photo by Lori Trevino

By Sylvia Elsbury

Kensington’s Fall Picnic is back, with bells on! Gather your friends and neighbors—and your companion critters too—and join the fun on Sunday, October 23, when the Kensington Community Council (KCC) will hold the annual Fall Picnic, a Kensington tradition for generations. The annual book sale by the Friends of Kensington Library, and the Blessing of the Animals presented by Arlington Community Church, round out what promises to be a wonderful day in Kensington!

At noon on the 23rd, the community celebration will commence with a color guard ceremony by Kensington’s Boy Scout Troop at the flag pole outside the Community Center, where many of the day’s events will take place. Running from 12 to 3 pm, the festivities will include food and fellowship, music from two great bands, and ... BUBBLES! Beautiful, ginormous bubbles to astonish and delight the whole family, courtesy of Sterling Johnson aka “The Bubblesmith.”

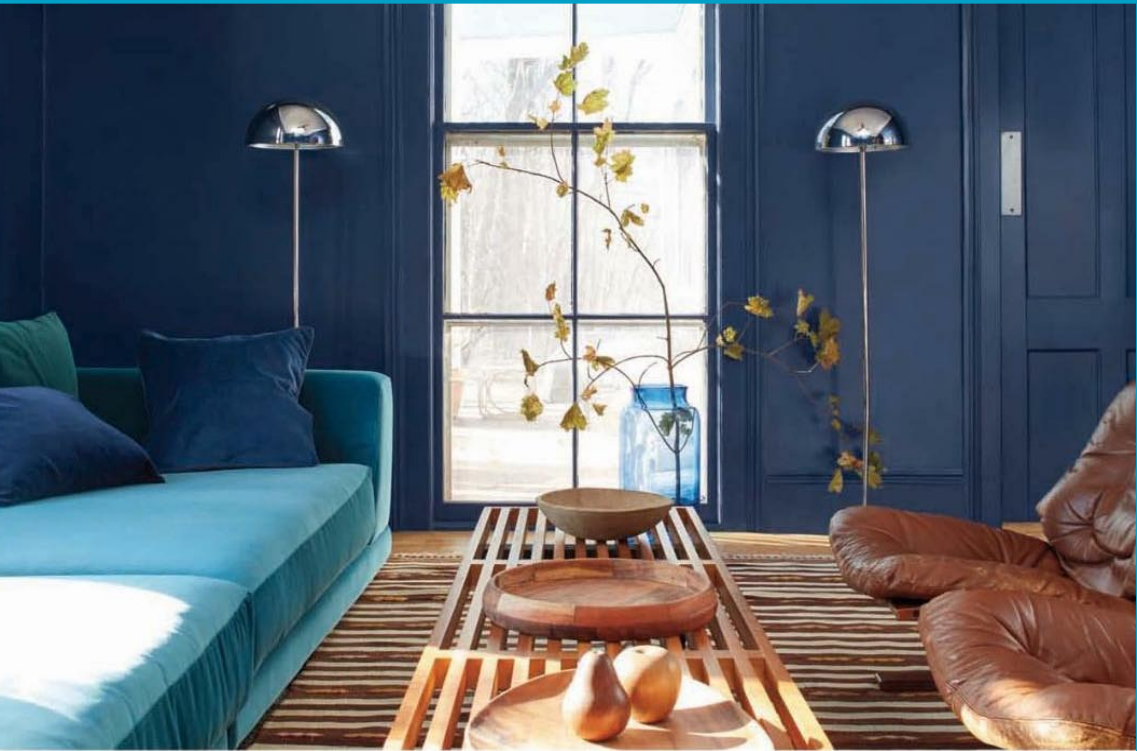
Picnic lunches will be sold—grilled burgers and Impossible burgers, hotdogs and chicken sausages—with seating provided indoors as well as outside the Community Center. Information tables will include the Kensington Pathkeepers, emergency preparedness coordinator Johnny Valenzuela, and our picnic partners and sponsors: The Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) and Red Oak Realty’s Leigh Schneider and Todd Hodson.

In keeping with longtime tradition, picnickers will enjoy music provided by the Fred T. Korematsu Middle School Jazz Band directed by Tiffany Carrico. When their awesome jazz set has concluded, the entertainment continues with music by the Great Space Coaster Band, a fun and talented band of professional musicians and Kensington Hilltop parents who lit up Kensington Park with their danceable tunes this summer.

Just after noon, come up to the big meadow at Kensington Park. Kensington’s

See A Day to Remember, Page 12

Special Election Issue: Candidates’ Q&A, starts pages 6-7.
Kensington Eats Out: New monthly column, page 5.



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Kensington and Beyond Update

October 2022



NEW LISTING | 1641 Arlington Blvd. El Cerrito | 4 BR | 3.5 BA | 3528 sq. ft. (+/-)
Built in 2019, inspired modern architecture, expansive home with golf course and Bay views. Open and airy floorplan with gorgeous finishes.

OFFERED AT \$2,150,000



SOLD | 233 Yale Ave. Kensington | 4 BR | 2 BA
Monterey Colonial Style with a beautifully terraced garden and Golden Gate views.

SOLD AT \$1,750,000

If you are considering selling or just wish to discuss real estate consider me your real estate resource. As an active full time real estate consultant for over 25+++ years I have navigated my clients through numerous market shifts skillfully, strategically and artfully providing my clients with the highest and best results. I specialize in residential real estate and trusts, it would be my pleasure to speak with you.

Ruth Frassetto, CRS | 510.697.8606 | ruth.frassetto@compass.com | DRE 00779030
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COMPASS



NEW LISTING | 44 Avon Rd. Kensington | 5 BR | 3 BA
Rural Marin Vibe, expanded charming cottage with great in-law area.

OFFERED AT \$1,375,000



NEW LISTING | 5449 Barrett Ave. El Cerrito Hills | 4+ BR | 4.5+ BA
Grand scale Mediterranean residence, gorgeous! Once owned by Reggie Jackson, MVP Baseball Hall of Fame.

OFFERED AT \$2,298,000



Kensington | Market Update

August 2022 to present



Detached Single Family

3

New listings
Median List Price
\$1,296,940
Median Sq. Ft.
2,323

4

Pending Sales
Median List Price
\$1,336,500
Median Sq. Ft.
2,139

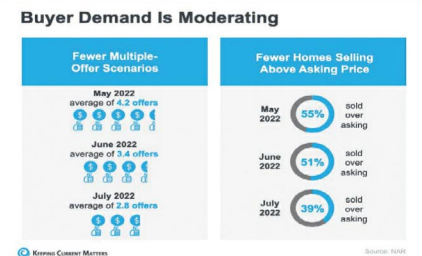
8

Closed Sales
Median List Price
\$1,274,000
Median Sq. Ft.
1,818
Median Sales Price
\$1,560,000
Cost Per Sq. Ft.
\$852.61

2021 Comparison
10 Closed Sales
8/1 - 9/9
Median List Price
\$1,264,500
Median Sq. Ft.
2,100
Median Sales Price
\$1,652,500
Cost Per Sq. Ft.
\$771.18

Fall Market is looking good for sellers.

If you're thinking about selling your house, and are concerned that the housing market has slowed down in recent months. It's still a sellers' market, values are still high. The peak frenzy the market saw over the past two years has cooled some. If you're asking yourself if you've missed your chance to sell your house and make a move, the good news is you haven't – motivated buyers are still out there. The right pricing strategy and market preparation are critical and here's why. It's true buyer demand has slowed over the past few months as higher mortgage rates made it more expensive to buy a home. The result is fewer bidding wars and less competition among buyers (see visual below):



If you're aiming to sell your house, be sure you have a strategic plan to price your home for today's housing market. As buyer demand softens, it's important to understand this isn't the same market as last year. It's not even the same market as just a few months ago. But it is still a sellers' market. Homes are still selling at or above the list price with days on market averaging 21 days.

Bottom Line: While the housing market has cooled from its overheated frenzy, it's still a sellers' market. Values have stabilized and they are still high.



Do you wish to know the value of your home? Call me, the appointment is complimentary and confidential.

Ruth Frassetto
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SAFETY SCENARIO



What Would You Do?

During the Mosquito Fire, the evacuation warnings escalated quickly to evacuation orders. If you were in this position, what would you do? Are you ready if you have less than 10 minutes to leave? Volcanoville homeowners woke up not knowing if that was the last night they would sleep in their homes. Others went to work and were unable to return home to pack up personal belongings. Take this moment to imagine an incident right now. Make a plan to retreat to a safe and comfortable place outside the community. Safety starts at home. Pack a go-bag and coordinate with neighbors to build a support system. Find more preparedness resources at www.kensingtonfire.org/prepare.

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.

NOVEMBER 2022 DEADLINES
Advertising Deadline ❖ October 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ October 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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Thank you!

Letters to the Editor

Not a Country Club

Dear Editor:

As a Kensington resident off and on since 1955, I have watched with growing dismay the increasing dysfunction of our local government. I find it very encouraging that two citizen groups are organizing in Kensington to bring positive change and look forward to support their efforts. For what it is worth, here are my opinions as to what needs to be done.

First and foremost, our two government entities need to be merged into one before we proceed with anything else. San Francisco has one government, so why does tiny Kensington have two?

All important future decision must be made by a vote of the people of Kensington. We need democracy in Kensington!

The fire building does not belong to the fire board, but to the people of Kensington. Police and fire problems have remained on the low side for many years, and the two bodies have lived together in the same building for many years. If they suddenly can't or won't do so probably means we are overstaffed, partially due to unnecessary duplication of administrative staff and no real increase in workload.

We are not running a country club here and expect police and fire departments to be busy in the field rather than hang out in the office. Since there are practically no fires to fight, much greater emphasis should go into fire prevention! Rather than issue the same laughable, annual printed fire prevention message, which most people don't even read because they are overwhelmed with mailed, printed junk, the fire department should physically audit all of Kensington's properties and actively advise residents how to remove or prune excessive brush and trees. Some areas of Kensington are dangerously overgrown, an accident waiting to happen if we ever (heaven forbid) have a wildfire here.

I feel both police and firefighters should continue to share the same building, and the new united government should make every reasonable effort to keep taxes at rock bottom.

Edward A. Spiller

PSB Tour

Dear Editor:

On a tour of the PSB, I noted it is so out of compliance that it's a joke when one looks at the open evidence room, cramped squad space. With no room to interview suspects, they are interviewed in the squad car, or on the street and released! No one is held at the station due to liability issues. The server is in a wine cooler! It requires its own room per the DOJ. They no longer have CLETS access (state data info) because they can't secure the computer.

The hallways are narrow and undersized. When the PSB is remodeled, space will be taken to widen hallways for compliance, soundproofing, and an elevator.

Right now the admin staff share space. If the GM comes in, someone moves with a laptop elsewhere. However, the finance director said if she has to print, she returns to the receptionist because she can't access the printer via her laptop. It's a dance they have been doing all year. The rooms are tiny, fine for a 5'2" lightweight female but add a few tall, muscular cops and any room is filled.

There is no space for reserves or volunteers. The chief wants to expand community programs to enrich services (not staff). Once they are fully staffed, they will have difficulty fitting into a combined space.

There isn't adequate space to store belongings, no break room, one ADA bathroom for everyone. There is a small conference room they juggle sharing its' use. The fire truck's clearance is so tight, 1-2" that they regularly wreck the overhead door mechanism.

That building is so ready to be remodeled, it screams out I'm not in compliance everywhere you walk.

It is very clear that police and fire need to be separate. Only 3 percent of fire and police stations are combined nationwide, it's just not a good idea. I hope the public will recognize it's time for each to have its own space.

Marilyn Stollon

Fixing a Historic Mistake

Editor:

I urge my fellow citizens to vote this November for those police and fire board candidates that will pledge to unite the police and fire boards into one entity. We need to get past the "turf wars" that have hobbled our ability to manage town affairs in timely, cost-effective ways. We cannot continue to have debacles like the recent public services building planning process (a needless, costly exercise that will dislocate the police and the after-school child program.) Think: If we were starting a new community of 2600 homes in East County we would have one town council that oversees all public services. Let's fix a historic mistake and make our government work better without likely tax increases.

Andrew Reed

Answering Arguments Against Consolidation

Dear Editor:

Recently, some have argued against consolidating the KPPCSD and KFPD. Here I address each of their claims:

No one combines police and fire districts. This is not true. Almost all California cities and several special districts have a single governing body that governs police and fire. Look no further than Berkeley, Albany, or El Cerrito for one board managing both departments.

Pushed by uninformed community members. The county agency (LAFCO) that gives our districts their authority regularly audits them for effectiveness based on finances and current services. In the most recent audits, LAFCO recommended consolidation as an improvement to both districts.

No savings from combining part-time positions into full-time positions. Full-time roles, even if nominally the same cost as multiple part-time roles (and they might be cheaper), will help reduce staff turnover, something we have struggled with in recent years. Less turnover means stronger relationships among staff, the community, and our first responders, improved efficiency, and lower cost as expertise and institutional knowledge can accrue. Moreover, the quality and quantity of the candidate pool for full-time professional positions is larger. Another benefit is that it may allow us to replace expensive independent contractors we currently use for certain administrative functions.

Will be done without care/attention paid to costs/details. This is false. The first step in

consolidation is a comprehensive/independent financial analysis and restructuring proposal. Literally all details and costs must be worked out before consolidation can begin and LAFCO has procedures for this.

It would be more work for the board. A consolidated board would no doubt form subcommittees to focus on specific topics. Kensington has a proud tradition of civic engagement and no shortage of volunteers to work through these issues with the aid of a full-time administrator. Current board dysfunction is a result of a structure that prevents holistic governance, not an inability to cope with the workload.

Consolidating our districts so that all town management, budgeting, and planning is handled comprehensively is a common-sense solution, supported by third-party analyses. It is a key ingredient in ensuring that Kensington continues to have a bright future.

Daniel Levine

Lessening the Tax Burden

Dear Editor:

In the September *Outlook* Dr. A. Stevens Delk's "Scrambled Eggs" letter accurately pointed out that it is incorrect and misleading to claim the two special taxes residents pay for police services are "fees." However, Dr. Delk was incorrect in stating that the police district (KPPCSD) levied those special taxes on property owners. The KPPCSD has no authority to directly levy taxes. Kensington residents voted to tax themselves presumably because they valued maintaining police services and were willing to pay for it. In addition, according to the KPPCSD 2021/2022 budget, the special taxes represent about 33 percent of KPPCSD's tax revenue, not nearly half as the letter claims.

More important, the letter raises an interesting question: Would KPPCSD have needed to ask residents to tax themselves in addition to their ad valorem property taxes if the KPPCSD and the fire district (KFPD) had been consolidated as one unified district? I think not or, at least, not to the level that presently exists. Based on LAFCO's past reviews of both districts, all of which recommended consolidation, one can assume that the tax burden would have been lessened had the KPPCSD and KFPD been unified into a single district.

Those reviews concluded that consolidation would offer opportunities to the community to exercise greater control over the share of local property tax dollars spent on fire, emergency medical services, law enforcement, and other services as well as streamlining local government and offering more options on allocating public safety funds within the community. That conclusion is even more valid now as both districts face significant financial challenges. Cities, towns, and special districts throughout California that provide police and fire services are governed by a single governance structure. It is time for Kensington to join the club.

David Spath

Is This What We Want?

Dear Editor:

It would be a fiscal disaster if a newly elected fire board would abrogate the renovation contract for the Public Safety Building that has been approved and signed, with work scheduled to start October 6.

1. The fire district would undoubtedly be sued by the contractor. Ca-ching! 2. It would cost a bundle to "re-do" whatever was torn out. Ca-ching!! 3. We would never in the future get the sort of favorable financing the board arranged for this project. Ca-Ching!!! 4. Any additional time delays would mean higher costs for everything in the project. Ca-Ching!!!!

And what would we end up with? 5. A ratty, old, unsafe building that does not meet anyone's needs. 6. No contractor would submit bids for any future building contracts.

Is this what we want for Kensington's future?

Mabry Benson

Long-Term Damage

Dear Editor:

The voters of Kensington have a decision before them. While we have a police department that most of us are now proud of, KPPCSD currently has no financial means to build a facility in Kensington, except in our beloved park. In contrast, the fire board, which has the financial means to rebuild elsewhere in Kensington, has instead chosen to rebuild in the existing Public Safety Building and evict the police department. Apparently the fire board's proposed solution is to move the police to a deserted building on San Pablo Ave. in El Cerrito, miles from Kensington. In an emergency, do not police and fire act in a coordinated manner?

So, who is most reasonably at fault for this dilemma of not having our own police and fire departments located in Kensington? Clearly it is the fire board. We need new directors on the fire board who will act in the best interests of all of the Kensington residents.

In their tone-deaf arrogance the fire board apparently will start construction on their dream fire-only house before the election. However, even if they move ahead with this unsupported plan, it does not mean that the Public Safety Building cannot be modified before the completion of the building, since most public building contracts have change orders before they are completed. If we have to proceed in that fashion to modify their plans, it can be expensive, yes. However, not more expensive than the long-term damage of having our police located within the Kensington park or outside of Kensington.

Richard Karlsson

Candidate Forum and Nonpartisan Clubs

Dear Editor:

This year's November election is attracting special attention from voters as it focuses on: the Kensington Fire Board's actions to occupy the entire Public Safety Building (resulting in the police department relocating to a different permanent location), whether Kensington Park must be maintained for recreation only, whether it is time to consolidate the two-district structure into one, among other issues. The Candidates Forum brings all office seekers together to respond in public to questions for each district, and is cosponsored by the KIC (Kensington Improvement Club) and KPOA (Kensington Property Owners Association).

The 2022 Candidates Forum will be held by Zoom from 10am-12pm, Saturday, October 1. Use: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83758404952>. Questions were solicited from all Kensington residents with a September 26 deadline. The moderator, who is a representative of the League of Women Voters, will select the final questions, which were provided to her without questioners' names or email addresses.

See Letters, page 5

Kensington is Ready for Change!

Save Kensington's Future

(SKF) endorses six candidates for Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) and Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) boards. They bring creative solutions and fresh ideas to lead Kensington out of the current crisis prompted by alarming decisions made by our divided and dysfunctional district boards.

• For KPPCSD •



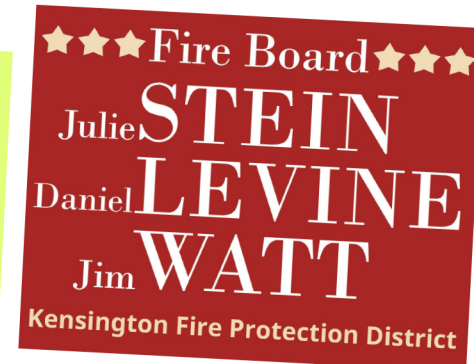
Alexandra Aquino-Fike
J.D. UC Berkeley, MPP Harvard.
Occupation: Philanthropic Professional.
"I love Kensington and want to help unify my community. If you trust me with your vote, I will ensure our community has a voice in key quality-of-life decisions, like where our police are housed, and our children will play. As a board director, I will rebuild trust and confidence in our local government."



Cassandra Duggan
M.S.W., UC Berkeley. Occupation: Therapist.
"Removing the police from the PSB and attempting to place them in the park are wrong decisions. I fix messy and difficult situations for a living. Your vote will enable me to do the same for Kensington."



Sarah Gough
J.D., UC Hastings. Occupation: Attorney.
"If you elect me for board director, I vow to find a permanent home for the police in Kensington that does not negatively impact our park or other services. I will work to preserve our recreation and open space and advocate for streamlining our government into a single board. Let's build a stronger, more unified Kensington for the future."



• For KFPD •



Daniel Levine
Ph.D. Chemist, UC Berkeley. Occupation: Research Scientist.
"Except for one director, the KFPD board incumbents have acted considering only the fire department's needs and not those of the Kensington community as a whole. We can do better. I will work to strengthen our fire prevention system and ensure we have a government that serves as a responsible manager of the taxpayers' dollars and guardian of our local resources."



Julie Stein
Ph.D. Mechanical Engineer, UC Berkeley.
Occupation: Incumbent.
"I am running for re-election in 2022 to work on a cost-effective and seismically sound solution to permanently house both fire and police in Kensington while protecting Kensington's open spaces and assets for community use."



Jim Watt
MBA SF State University.
Occupation: Finance and Real Estate Professional.
"The current PSB remodel will saddle the Fire District with long-term debt and little, if any, available cash reserves to prepare for fire and earthquake disasters. If elected, I will pursue an alternate plan, obtained from a licensed architect, that houses fire and police in the PSB and will remove the concerns of a separate and costly police station."

SKF is endorsing only these six candidates because:

- Each has an impressive record of leadership and real-world experience in managing change.
- Each will ensure community participation in decisions impacting our community assets and quality of life.
- Each will protect Kensington Park in perpetuity for recreation, children's programs, and open space.
- Each is committed to exploring options to house our police and fire responders in Kensington, including in a retrofitted and renovated Public Safety Building.
- Together, these candidates will create a sustainable fiscal path for Kensington taxpayers.
- All six candidates have pledged to unify our divided, bifurcated two-district boards through board consolidation.

**ELECT CHANGE!
ELECT THE FUTURE
OF
KENSINGTON!**

This November, vote for SKF's two endorsed slates to achieve a majority voice and effect change.

- ★ For KPPCSD: Alexandra Aquino-Fike, Cassandra Duggan and Sarah Gough.
- ★ For KFPD: Daniel Levine, Julie Stein, Jim Watt.

— Save Kensington's Future Steering Committee —

Derek Blevins • Paul Dorroh • Vida Dorroh • David Fike • Rob Firmin • Anne Forrest • Dane Gillette • Pat Gillette • Melissa Holmes Snyder
Sylvia Rosales-Fike • Steve Simrin • Chris Sorensen • Lynn Price • John Price • Clara Wood



Ad paid for by Citizens for Kensington's Future supporting Aquino-Fike, Duggan and Gough for KPPCSD Director 2022 and Stein, Watt, and Levine for KFPD Director 2022 FPCC #1452318
Not authorized by a candidate or a committee controlled by a candidate.



KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Sushi and Sake: A Perfect Pair

By Ittai Shiu

If you aren't already familiar with Kensington Eats, it's a small community program my family and I started to support restaurants during the pandemic. In this new column, we'll feature a dish at a local restaurant and then lean on Kensington experts to help us find wine or spirit pairings to compliment the food!

If you haven't already noticed, there's been a new addition to the quaint Monterey Market neighborhood called Asaka Sushi & Bar. Owned and operated by Nancy Lan and her family, the restaurant is conveniently located next door to the Monterey Fish Market.

When we recently visited Asaka, Nancy and her team were managing a busy weekday lunch crowd. Taking a more conservative, but optimistic strategy in this post-pandemic world, Asaka made its debut via a soft opening in January, and now more than halfway through this year, things for Asaka have been going, according to Nancy, "So far so good!"

With a modern and open layout designed by Nancy's daughter Jacquie, Asaka offers traditional Japanese staples like nigiri and tonkatsu and is attuned to its community, proudly featuring both a Berkeley Roll (spicy crab with salmon, tuna & eel) and a North Berkeley Roll (shrimp tempura w/ avocado)! If that's not enticing enough, Nancy recommended we try their Show Time Roll, which features spicy salmon, avocado topped with albacore, a creamy garlic sauce and torched jalapeno and macadamia nuts for a bit of heat and texture. How was it? The seafood was expectantly fresh, and the light crunch and bit of smoke we got from the macadamia nuts gave us a hint of Hawaiian nostalgia without taking us too far away from home.

With any good meal like this, you may be looking for the right pairing, and that's where Kensington Eats is here to help. Roger, from Arlington Wine & Spirits, says for seafood and sushi, a simple, crisp white wine does the trick. But for great sushi, you've got to go for the sake. He understands that large bottles of sake might be too much of a commitment and says there is plenty of variety in smaller 300-ml bottles.

Preferring chilled and filtered, Roger recommended Den, an Oakland-based sake brewery specializing in small-batch sake using traditional Japanese brewing methods with Cal-Hikari rice grown by Rue & Forsman ranch in the Sacramento Valley. Their aromatic sake pairs exceptionally well with Californian and Asian cuisines, making them a perfect pairing for Asaka!

At the time this article was written, Asaka had just established a social media presence that will likely take off given its very Instagram-able food served by friendly staff wearing T-shirts with phrases like "Wassa-Bae" and "You Make Miso Happy"! Trust us, Asaka is worth a visit!



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PROSPECT SIERRA

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Letters

...from Page 3

This year, unusually, one director each from the KPOA and the KIC have individually decided to run as candidates. Both organizations have enforced strict nonpartisan policies regarding candidate endorsement. To maintain nonpartisan integrity, both candidates have taken leaves of absence from their boards until after the election. Neither organization supports, opposes nor endorses candidates. The KPOA nonpartisan election policy states: "KPOA Directors may personally and publicly support any candidate for election they wish, just not in the name of the KPOA, and without identification as a KPOA Director." KIC has adopted the same language for the KIC board. Inclusions of "KIC" or "KPOA" attached to individuals' campaign endorsements are not authorized by the KIC or the KPOA.

Finally, a KPOA tradition is to ask all candidates running for Kensington board seats to sign a pledge to refuse all donations from entities that could have conflicts of interest with Kensington board actions. All nine have signed. Mark your calendars!

Rob Firmin, KPOA president, **Linda Lipscomb**, KIC president

"Halloween" Parade?

Dear Editor,

My name is Olivine Madugo and I'm 10. My mom just read to me from the September *Outlook* that the Halloween parade is "on hold." I'm in 5th grade and was hoping that this year the KCC could bring back the "Halloween Parade" for us kids. I have very fond memories of the parade, like the one time my whole basket was full of candy and I felt so lucky. I have some reasons why I want them to bring back the parade for this year. 1. We really want the candy again. 2. We like to get in costumes and go to the parade to have fun. 3. It's also like an early Halloween and we get extra candy. Well, that about wraps it up. Thank you for listening.

Olivine Madugo, a Kensington Candy-Craving Kid

See Letters, page 10

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Q&A Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District Candidates

Some believe that directors are elected to make tough decisions about which residents have little knowledge. How much input should citizens have in determining policy questions?

Alexandra Aquino-Fike: I believe that directors have a responsibility to interact with their constituents and relevant experts in a well thought-out engagement process. Community engagement in public policy is a proven practice all over the world and especially here in the Bay Area. Kensington's recent experiences, led by both the KFPD and KPCCSD boards, have proven ineffective and divisive.

Kensington residents want engagement, and taxpayers should not be surprised by decisions as wide-reaching as the unnecessary relocation of our police department. It is critical to plan for ongoing and transparent communication that allows residents to understand the challenges the district faces and the options being considered. Failure to allow for community input is a disservice, especially when decisions will impact families' and individuals' quality of life in the short- and long-term. A collaborative engagement with residents builds trust and confidence in the board's decision-making. I am highly experienced in designing and managing community engagement processes and brokering solutions from a diverse set of stakeholders. I am ready to use my experience in service of my Kensington community.

Cass Duggan: Kensington has a great tradition of volunteerism, and a very educated public, whose input and engagement should be sought by the board. When approaching a complicated decision, the board should research the subject in detail and post related documents on their site, to educate the public and increase transparency. During meetings, they should provide adequate time for all public comments and questions. Comments and questions should be responded to in person (if on an agenda item) or later on the board website, and relevant issues placed on the agenda of an upcoming meeting.

For controversial issues, the board should hold extra listening sessions with the public, if monthly meetings don't allow enough time. This will build trust and confidence.

When voters are split on important issues, or are being asked to fund a loan or property tax increase, the board should consider voter polls or referenda, to determine the will of the majority. But at times, directors may have to make a tough call without time for public input. That's part of the job.

Gail Feldman: I support citizen involvement in evaluating policy options and identifying solutions to district issues. We've had a lot of experience with this on the KPCCSD over the years. This includes creating committees on finance, solid waste, the park, and the ad hoc committee on government operations and restructuring. Most of these committees were composed of a mix of board members and citizens, but some, such as the park and ad hoc committees, were completely made up of citizens. Of course these committees are advisory to the board. But when their members are equally informed with accurate information, their involvement can play an important role in arriving at community-supported decisions. There are other ways to engage community opinion as well, such as through surveys and focused meetings. I encourage boards to seek input from knowledgeable individuals and community organizations. Ultimately boards must make the decisions as it is their legal and financial responsibility. In addition to being factually informed on issues before them, boards must be sure not to enact policies that might conflict with state or federal laws. That is where the rubber hits the road on making tough decisions.

Sarah Gough: Citizens should be encouraged to participate in local government, especially when big decisions with long-term consequences are being debated. Directors should listen to them and thoughtfully consider their perspectives. Nevertheless, directors are elected to make decisions in the community's best interest, consistent with their campaign promises. In that way, the responsibility ultimately lies with the directors, who should take a principled approach to decision-making, secure in their own leadership but receptive to community feedback.

Moreover, real community engagement results from transparent communication and a governing structure that is easily understood by the public. This type of governance invites participation and public trust. Only then can individual citizens become informed and involved. A government that works on behalf of and in alignment with its constituents will naturally flow from improved transparency and board consolidation, which is why I believe they are so crucial.

Mike Logan: The KPCCSD board is made up of residents of Kensington, not politicians or municipal professionals. We are elected by a majority of Kensington residents to represent the views of our community. While people will have different opinions on any given topic, I believe my responsibility as a director is to gather the facts related to any tough issue and then make a rational judgment. That includes hearing from Kensington citizens and getting their perspective on the outcomes they seek. At the end of the day, the board must make a decision about what is in Kensington's best interest. And it's here then that the great "Art of Compromise" comes into play. Ultimately, not everyone may be perfectly happy.

While the public safety personnel the districts oversee maintain high public confidence, recently the district boards and GMs have taken a hit. What steps would you take to enhance your district's reputation?

Aquino-Fike: I would first focus on community participation. I'd work with my colleagues to schedule listening and learning sessions with a diverse range of residents to clearly lay out the challenges, relevant information produced to date, and hear their questions and concerns. Too many residents still don't understand the current critical questions facing our community (such as the unsolved issue of where the police department will be located long-term) and they deserve to understand the long term implications of current decisions, without being pushed to accept them because "it's too late." As an attorney and policy advocate, I know that bold, creative solutions are always possible if there is political will.

Kensington enjoys an abundance of skilled professionals in many fields, including technology, public policy, law, architecture, and community safety and we must utilize that expertise. I am confident that a facilitated collaborative approach, rather than a top-down one, can invite new ideas, build consensus around the right path forward, and will serve to increase confidence in district decisions. Inclusive decision-making processes are not easy, but the alternative is what we have today - an erosion of public trust. Transparent community engagement is essential to win back the trust of our residents.

Duggan: Kensington's citizens are our boards' employers. It is the boards' duty to serve them with patience and civility. The current KPCCSD board has severely restricted public input, diminishing the trust and confidence of voters. Directors should set a positive and respectful tone in meetings, allowing more time for public comments, assuring that comments are listened to. I disagree with the recent practice of having a lawyer for the board at all meetings.

Board meetings should take place in person again, with "hybrid" virtual participation, as soon as safely possible. The current disharmony between Kensington's boards and its citizens has been amplified by the physical disconnection and highly controlled communication of Zoom meetings.

Kensington's Police Department currently has no permanent home, given its eviction from the PSB by the fire district. Our boards created this problem by failing to work together. Both boards collaborating and enacting the most fiscally responsible, safe, and optimal solution to this problem will greatly enhance the boards' reputations. Consolidation will prevent the boards from working at cross-purposes. As a therapist who fixes messy and difficult situations for a living, I'll help make this happen. SKF's six candidates, if voted in, can get this job done.

Feldman: I think the main reason public confidence is dropping is because residents don't feel heard. For example, with the Public Safety Building rehabilitation project, many people showed up at meetings and expressed concerns that were not addressed in meeting deliberations. I understand the argument that these discussions had gone on for years and it was time to act, but clearly that decision-making process didn't lead to public trust.

Steps I'd recommend to enhance trust include: directing staff to make information easily available to the public, accessible and transparent; staff reports to the board with detailed analysis, in language citizens can understand; avoiding calling special meetings unless there is ample time to notify the community; never rushing board decisions on major issues to allow for a thorough community information process. Websites must be easy to navigate and regularly updated, with access to all public documents. I'd pursue other community engagement strategies to try to broadly reach citizens, including those who don't attend meetings or pay close attention to local government. It also helps to demonstrate good public listening, and to acknowledge and follow-up on citizen input.

Gough: The first thing I would do to enhance the district's reputation is to get to work on my key priorities: (1) keeping the police in Kensington, ideally in the PSB (2) securing our park for recreation purposes only, (3) promoting board consolidation, and (4) enhancing board transparency. Obviously, none of these things will happen instantaneously, but I will take immediate steps to address them with active listening, consensus building, and creativity followed by fiscally responsible action.

I believe that improved transparency and communication will go a long way toward rebuilding the public's confidence and trust in the board. If elected, I will update and expand our online communications efforts so all information is easily accessed, timely, and relevant. I will grow the board's email distribution list for public meetings and propose new physical sites for public announcements. Most importantly, I will proactively approach and respect stakeholders before committing to new initiatives that directly impact them.

Logan: I've seen the KPCCSD make great improvements in a few short years and I'm proud of my service as KPCCSD director. The board hired Steve Simpkins as Chief of Police and began a complete turnaround of the KPD. The Kensington Police Department now boasts a staff of excellent police officers led by an outstanding forward thinking police chief, Mike Gancasz. New police policies and equipment have been implemented including body cameras, modern hybrid vehicles and non-lethal weapons. The Kensington Community Center renovation was completed on time and on budget and is now open for business. I voted for budgets with a rainy-day fund that will continue to grow our reserves. We have restructured our unfunded liabilities in a pension obligation bond for fiscal certainty. We now seek a new location to house our police and administration, and I look forward to the challenge of finding a location that meets their needs, our budget, and community acceptance.

Over the past few years, have the districts spent money wisely? What changes can you make to ensure responsible district spending?

Aquino-Fike: I am concerned about our ability to meet our future needs. Decisions taken by the KFPD with limited community input are now forcing the KPCCSD to rapidly make long-term plans for housing the police outside of the Public Safety Building. We may be forced to build not one, but two, updated safety buildings for a small community in a very limited geographic space.

We must ensure that our public safety personnel work in safe professional spaces, within our community's means. Entering into costly financial bond agreements without voter approval, when there are real alternatives to keep costs down and keep the core of our active police and fire professionals in one building, is not responsible public spending.

If elected, I would seek to pause the current plans for a fire district-only PSB until all alternatives are thoroughly vetted, with serious community input, to ensure a solution that both retrofits the PSB and meets our community safety needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

I would also seek to involve the community in sharing their expertise through an advisory finance committee. Ideas like this ensure greater civic engagement and transparency.

Duggan: Unfortunately, our two districts have not spent money wisely during the past few years. The fire board has contracted to retrofit the Public Safety Building for fire personnel and administrative staff only. This unilateral decision has forced the KPCCSD to look for a new police station. They have spent a great deal of money on architectural plans and lawyers. But can Kensington really afford two public safety buildings, without dangerously eroding our reserves?

We must avoid raising property taxes any higher. Even now, Kensington's likelihood of keeping a thriving community of young families here is threatened by property taxes of up to \$25K per year for new families.

Though we might have to pay penalties to amend any fire-only PSB contract that has been signed, this may be our wisest long-term move financially. It's clear that if we keep fire and police personnel in one retrofitted and enlarged building, we won't be forced to raise property taxes. Consolidating our two districts should result in substantial cost-savings. Careful financial planning by one consolidated board will serve Kensington well in the coming years.

Feldman: Most of the districts' annual spending is determined by contracts and employee compensation packages. This raises the question as to whether the districts do a good job controlling compensation and benefits and aligning the necessary classifications and number of positions. Capital projects are a significant budget item that need to be planned for and tightly managed. Reserve set asides are an essential budget tool for funding capital projects, including replacement costs and emergencies.

My career includes extensive experience in local government financial management. I believe both the board and the public need to have budget documents that are more than just numbers. This information must include explanations for changes, and how they reflect the budget priorities of the community. I advocate for financial reporting and budgets that break down costs and revenue by each of the KPCCSD divisions—police, parks, solid waste, and administration.

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Q&A Kensington Fire Protection District Candidates

Some believe that directors are elected to make tough decisions about which residents have little knowledge. How much input should citizens have in determining policy questions?

Jan Kosel: Kensington residents should have the opportunity for input in all decisions that affect them. Your thoughts and opinions are crucial, and I always welcome your input.

Daniel Levine: I welcome the input of community members who have different perspectives and ideas. It's important to listen to diverse viewpoints before making major decisions. Citizens deserve to have an opportunity to make comments at public meetings on public policy—and have those comments responded to—before such decisions are made. While the board may ultimately act in a different way than some community members want, the board must be able to explain clearly and coherently why they have chosen a different course and respond to good-faith criticism from the public.

Julie Stein: Input and expertise from residents are the most valuable resources that any elected body in Kensington could ask for. Long ago, instead of relying on the county for services, Kensington residents established a self-governing structure to manage its most important community services and assets.

This thriving structure continues to attract young families, working professionals, and retirees to Kensington. These residents have substantial experience relevant to the tough issues facing Kensington's elected boards.

Many policy matters coming before the board are routine and easily reversed if circumstances or board majorities change. In such matters, the board should encourage the input of residents, listen, and then make a thoughtful decision.

Other matters, though, will have a lasting impact on the quality of life in Kensington and the finances of Kensington taxpayers for years to come. Policy questions that rise to this level include putting the community into long-term debt and consuming irreplaceable recreational resources for non-recreational purposes.

Kensington has long a tradition of bringing high impact, irreversible issues to the voters as the most decisive way for citizens to have input. I support this tradition.

Jim Watt: Directors are elected to engage the community in consideration of the challenges we face. Sadly, this fire board has refused to listen to anything the community has had to say, such that the only way that I can be part of the solution and part of the discussion is to run for this board. Quite simply, I feel so strongly about keeping police and fire together in the public safety building that I invested in hiring an architect to design a solution that would accommodate both agencies.

Yes, directors make decisions on behalf of the Kensington electorate, but not before community engagement. The board should consider public comments before deciding on a course of action. Any major capital expenditures requiring significant long-term loan obligations or specific tax assessments should go to the voters for approval.

While the public safety personnel the districts oversee maintain high public confidence, recently the district boards and GMs have taken a hit. What steps would you take to enhance your district's reputation?

Kosel: I have heard your concerns about the public safety building. I know some of you feel that you haven't had enough time to think about the plans. We have discussed renovation of the public safety building at nearly every board meeting in the last few years. We have posted information about the renovation on our website. We have had several community meetings about it. The renovation has been covered in the *Outlook*. I am in favor of more community meetings.

Levine: As a board member, I would listen to and engage with the public at meetings. It's vital that the public be able to bring their concerns to the board and that the board actively pays attention to those concerns. Reasoning behind decision-making must be clearly articulated. Increased transparency will be key to rebuilding public trust.

I believe that consolidating the boards into one will also address this in two ways: 1) For the boards: by having a comprehensive mandate to consider the whole town's needs and budget, the actions of a consolidated board will take into account all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that buy-in from the community at large is obtained and all parts of planning issues are addressed.

2) For the GM: hiring full-time staff to replace the existing part-times roles will help to reduce turnover, allowing time for the GMs to form stronger relationships with the community which will help improve public confidence.

Stein: Reputation follows performance. An elected body can enhance its reputation by avoiding an adversarial relationship with the community and with other elected boards. I would engage, and not dismiss, the community before making major decisions that will paid for by residents for years to come.

Transparency and Accountability. I would ensure that all board decisions are made in public by a board majority, and restore the practice publicly appointing temporary advisory committees of two board members when issues must be discussed between board meetings. All board members should complete their legally required ethics and harassment training on time.

Public meetings. The board was elected to be in charge of its own meetings and agendas. Every board member should be able to place items on the agenda. The role of the board president is that of a chair among five equals, both in between and during meetings. The board presidency should be routinely rotated among the five board members, as is the practice of most local governing bodies. The public comment period should be administered fairly and consistently. I would do my part to promote this.

Jim Watt: The failure of both boards to work out an acceptable solution for housing both fire and police is a primary cause of public dissatisfaction. This could have been avoided if both districts had worked together to mutually solve the concerns of seismic upgrades and the combined use of the PSB. If elected, I would attempt to put the current PSB project on hold and finalize a cost-effective plan to provide joint occupancy of the PSB.

During the past few years, have the districts spent money wisely? What changes can you make to ensure responsible district spending?

Kosel: I think we spend district funds wisely. We review the annual budget at no fewer than three finance committee meetings and three board meetings a year. I try to keep my eye on all expenditures, especially attorneys' fees.

Levine: The KFPD has done an admirable job in the past few years of building up cash reserves to use for Public Safety Building renovation. Unfortunately, when the district was unable to obtain all the needed funds, the current board deliberately opted to take on debt in a manner that avoided a public vote, making an end-run around Kensington's taxpayers. As a director, I would vote that major borrowing be submitted to the voters before committing the district to decades-long debt obligations.

Stein: The fire board has explored new initiatives. Some have been expensive and should be evaluated by the next board, especially in light of the costly renovation of the public safety building (PSB).

Expenses are increasing at a faster pace than revenue from property taxes. In the current district budget, it is questionable whether there is any funding left over to fill the vacant staff position and to set aside annual contributions for the fire engines, maintenance of the PSB, or to pursue any other fire prevention and public safety initiatives that can only be initiated at the government level.

While the spending patterns of the past few years cannot be undone, we can change course now. Staff turnover has been costly but it is a national trend that the district must anticipate. I would prioritize full staffing of authorized positions to ensure cross-training and so that employees are paid at the appropriate level for the job scope. I would reduce corporate marketing approaches to grass-roots civic engagement, such as block parties and National Night Out, and return those activities back to community volunteers.

Watt: Both districts have incurred significant costs, starting with increasing the number of staff and consultants, complicating the planning for a shared public safety facility. The office space required to house the increase in staff has led both boards to exaggerate their space needs. They have spent money on plans for separate facilities while assuming there is no way to house both fire and police in the PSB. Proceeding down the path of separate fire and police facilities has significantly impacted the budgets of both boards and future expenditures on other important projects. Solving the PSB issue is critical to future plans. Whereas consolidation will provide some administrative savings, having an experienced full-time general manager will reduce the current trend of outsourcing assignments to expensive consultants.

What is your position on consolidating the two districts?

Kosel: I would like to see an analysis of potential cost savings from consolidation before taking a position on the issue. I want Kensington to have the highest quality of fire protection. I worry that consolidation might endanger that goal by the diversion of funds from fire protection to other purposes.

Levine: I support consolidating the districts. Cross-department budgeting and planning (since it has been made clear by the PSB renovation dispute that the actions of one board affect the other) is common sense. We can improve our efficiency by switching from multiple, part-time roles and expensive administrative independent contractors to fewer, full-time roles which should aid in reducing staff turnover and lower costs. We may also find economies of scale that will save even more money. The county agency charged with reviewing our local districts for effectiveness recommended consolidation to both boards in their most recent audits.

Stein: This is definitely something the community has to face. The displacement of the police from the PSB has catalyzed many residents, who had previously opposed consolidation, to consider it as the only solution now.

Some worry that the responsibilities of the two districts are too different to be governed by one unified district. An experienced city manager could oversee the full array of emergency services, along with parks, recreation and waste management.

Taxpayer dollars are currently spent duplicating infrastructure while leaving significant gaps unaddressed. Each district pays separately for its own audit, legal, email, accounting, and membership in the California Special Districts Association. This costly duplication would be eliminated in a unified district.

Money saved by eliminating duplication can be spent to close critical gaps. Neither district has human resources or procurement staff. HR matters and purchasing contracts are handled by attorneys, who are costly and do not necessarily specialize in these routine business functions.

An independent financial analysis is the first step toward evaluating the benefits of consolidation. I am in favor of taking this step.

Watt: Consolidation will save considerable money, now spent on duplicative staff positions, and will reduce turnover of part-time and interim employees. The consolidated district will have the advantage of being able to offer full-time staff positions, which tend to be more attractive to applicants and stable for the district. However, consolidation must recognize the need for financial reserves for fire engine and equipment replacement, building maintenance, and our contract obligations with El Cerrito. This is often called a rainy-day fund, which is something we all need.

Another architect has designed a retrofit of the PSB that accommodates both the police and fire departments. Are you willing to consider this plan or an alternative that would house only on-duty police officers and a shift supervisor in the PSB?

Kosel: We are all one community. I would have preferred to continue to house emergency services together. But I am forced to conclude that it is simply not possible. I value the input of the fire chief, police chief and our architects. All agree that both departments cannot fit in the public safety building and comply with state and federal requirements. I continue to remain open to considering alternate proposals that do not increase construction costs or trigger breach of contract.

Levine: Absolutely. I am willing to consider any reasonable plan to address our need to safely and effectively house our police and fire departments. The suitability of such a proposal would depend on the specific details. It is vital that we consider all options to find the best solution from imperfect choices, as we balance safety needs, available land and resources, and fiscal responsibility; create a positive workplace for our first responders; and plan for the future. Kensington is not growing in size, geographical or population-wise, so the parameters of the problem are clear. Moving administrative staff, which do not have the same specialty building requirements as police or firefighters, out of the Public Safety Building into standard office space is a reasonable proposal to improve and expand the usable space in the PSB for the specific needs of our fire and police departments.

Stein: I am willing to consider the new plan. Recent police chiefs emphasized "out of the box" thinking to make best use of the PSB for fire and police. Both agencies must act together in a disaster. My goal is to find the best affordable solution that scales to Kensington, which is not growing in population, footprint, or revenue sources. There is no other one-square-mile community that is forced to consider building two costly public safety buildings.

The district administrative personnel can be housed nearby in a "city hall" office, similar to Albany and El Cerrito. We learned from the pandemic that it does not take as much space to run a government agency as was once thought.

Regarding the alternative, I do not have enough information to form an opinion. A

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KENSINGTON

Community Education



Check out KCC's new website at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org

KASEP classes began the week of September 12th with more than 65 classes offered to kids Kindergarten through 6th grade. Sandy Thacker is back in the carpentry room working her magic with hammers and nails, Vicky Brodt is cooking up delicious treats in the community center kitchen and the Baker family is back teaching gymnastics each Tuesday as they have for more than 30 years. We are so fortunate to have these and many more amazing and dedicated teachers working at KASEP. This year we have added Pickle ball and Track and Field to our outdoor sports classes and our art teachers April Schlanger and Elaine Chu have been busy creating fun new projects for the kids in Crafty Creations and Unicorns, Rainbows and Glitter class.

We are always working to provide a wide selection of diverse and engaging classes for students. If you did not get into your first choice class this time, mark your calendars for the winter registration on December 6th at 7:00pm for kindergarten and 7:30 for grades 1-6.



KCC is bringing back the Fall Picnic with ACC's Blessing of the Animals, the Korematsu Jazz Band, the local band "The Giant Space Coaster" and Sterling Johnson the Bubblesmith. **Sunday, October 23rd from noon to 3:00** at the Community Center



Parent Toddler Yoga Class is Back in October

Family yoga (for parent/caregiver plus kids)

- Tuesdays @ 10:00am (kids age 2-5) Recreation Building Lawn
- Saturdays @10:00am (kids age 2-5) Recreation Building Lawn
- Saturdays @11:00am (kids age 6-12) Recreation Building Lawn

Come join Lori Hess with Way to Glow Kids Yoga for some family yoga time where parents and kids will playfully explore yoga poses, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities together.

Adult Yoga Classes at the Community Center

Yoga for Strength and Balance

Tuesdays 8:30am
Teacher Anja Borgstrom
Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

New Gentle Yoga

Thursday 11:30-12:30
Teacher Anja Borgstrom
Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

Enjoy mellow, accessible gentle yoga, with many variations for the individual! Discover the artful use of yoga props, to aid in gentle stretching, strengthening, and range of motion. Explore supported, restorative poses, to develop a keen breath awareness and deep relaxation. Anja has been teaching yoga since 1994, and specializes in Gentle and Restorative Yoga.

Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays 9:30-11:00am
Fridays 9:30-11:00am
Drop-in fee is \$15

Class teaches Tai Chi for better health, improving students' strength, balance, flexibility, and dexterity. A gentle martial art, Tai Chi is a safe, rewarding activity for people of all ages and levels of health. Tai chi emphasizes the mind and body working in harmony. Relaxing the body and calming the mind help reduce stress and increase the flow of energy.

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes

Tennis Court Reservations: For weekends and holidays only.

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

Community Center and park rental info:
Please call Rosa at KPPCSD (510)526-4141

The *Kensington Outlook* can now be found at:
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: Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org, or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.



Police Q&A

...from Page 6

I support using widely accepted 5-year financial forecasting methods to help evaluate and control district spending. Forecasting tools indicate revenue trends to determine if expenditure growth is supportable over time. It should be standard practice to prepare realistic forecasts to aid in budget decisions, and in explaining these decisions to citizens.

Gough: I do not believe either district has spent our money wisely. The fire board's unilateral decision to take over the PSB for fire's exclusive use after a costly renovation, is irresponsible. There is no doubt the PSB should be significantly improved to provide adequate working space for both fire and police. However, Kensington cannot afford a project of the KFPD's scope for the sole benefit of its fire department.

The districts simply do not have the money to absorb the cascading costs that flow from the KFPD's drastic move, including: the forced relocation of the police into a poorly located rental with no determined permanent location, the exorbitant cost of the fire department's relocation, and the many architectural, legal, and consulting fees that will accrue.

Moreover, the KPPCSD has poorly stewarded taxpayer money by incurring high legal fees in contract negotiations against the KCC, a treasured longtime provider of recreational programs, and failing to commit adequate resources to maintain our parks. Kensington Park is riddled with noxious weeds, decaying structures, and vandalism. The little park on Coventry Road had been totally ignored for years until I led the KIC initiative to improve it. We can do better.

Logan: The expenditures in the KPPCSD is the very reason I decided to get more involved in the functions of our district. With a background in finance, I viewed as unsustainable the ever-increasing costs for police personnel as well as the very high cost of legal fees for investigations of police and discipline at that time. As a financial advisor, I was always concerned about costs that you have little control over. Since 2018, the district has achieved a complete turnaround on both of those fronts with improved police contract and a decrease in legal costs to a fraction of what they had been. The district has also acquired a pension obligation bond to address the then unfunded liabilities for police pension benefits into a lower rate that is locked in and therefore easier to budget for. The district recently passed its 2022-2023 budget which includes a reserve policy so the district has reserve funds for the unexpected expenses that are sure to come in the future.

Do you support housing the police in the Public Safety Building? If so, how would you go about initiating that discussion?

Aquino-Fike: I am in favor of housing the police in the PSB. Co-locating public safety services is a national and state trend and I believe there are possible alternatives to meet our goals of 1) seismic retrofitting for safety, and 2) renovating for a modern working facility that efficiently uses the available space for our first responders. I understand that some alternatives have been vetted and discarded, but not in a transparent manner, and other alternatives have been disregarded without any authentic community discussion. If elected, I would first convene a series of joint sessions between the KPPCSD and KFPD to review all possible options for the PSB, including their financial and other impacts, with well planned public engagement to ensure that residents understand the options on the table. A big question that hasn't been explained yet by our current KPPCSD directors is how do they plan to finance a new permanent police facility? Our financial constraints as well as public safety priorities are the starting place of a plan for where to house our police. I will listen to all ideas and possible solutions, but my hope is that we can avoid having to build two new safety buildings.

Duggan: Yes, I support keeping both police and fire in the Public Safety Building (PSB), if at all possible. All of our decisions must spring from careful analysis of all the financial obligations Kensington has, with foresight towards possible future emergencies, such as wildfires or earthquakes. I agree with the many Kensingtonians who are concerned that our two boards have overcommitted Kensington financially, in planning the construction of two new/remodeled PSBs in the place of one. It may cost us to amend the contract to which the fire board unwisely committed us. Ultimately, that may be our best plan.

To initiate the discussion, I would present options that have not been adequately considered by either board. We can investigate renting nearby commercial space for administrative functions and storage. I recently shared with Chief Gancasz info about Iron Mountain Co. file storage/retrieval service, which could save 80+ cubic feet of PSB space.

Candidate Jim Watt had an architect who designed 50+ public safety buildings draw up a plan which fits Fire and Police in the enlarged and improved PSB. The PSB must and will have seismic retrofitting and improved workspace design. Our first-responders deserve a safe and functional work environment.

Feldman: I supported this concept for several years. However, once the final design was selected by the fire board, the police chief determined there wasn't enough space for the department in the PSB. After touring the PSB, it is apparent that the office is cramped. The space must be sufficient for police operations, including requirements for a secure evidence room, interview area and DOJ compliant communications equipment storage.

Many options for housing the police have been examined. The KPPCSD is evaluating a potential site using a portion of the parking lot below the community center to place a modular police and administration building. This potentially viable option would save millions of dollars to taxpayers. We need to move the Police Department back to Kensington from El Cerrito quickly.

I'm open to reevaluating the PSB renovation for new ways of accommodating both departments. Even if a solution could be found, I'm concerned re-design costs and construction delays could make costs skyrocket—more expensive than two separate buildings. Given that PSB work is slated to begin in October, changing the plan is unlikely. I'm committed to pragmatic and creative planning for housing our police and district administration.

Gough: I would like the police to remain in the Public Safety Building (PSB), assuming it is still a viable option. Police and fire purchased the PSB together and for years, it worked. There is no doubt the building is old and woefully inadequate for today's needs. The building must be greatly improved, made seismically safe, and all systems modernized.

Fire and Police must have the resources they need to effectively do their jobs. Both departments perform a tremendous service to Kensington and they deserve a proper working environment. That said, the fire board has taken unprecedented steps by evicting the police and finalizing an expensive construction contract in the face of significant community opposition, before any permanent home for the police has been identified.

I commend the police for making the best of a terrible situation by improving their temporary location on a relatively lean budget, but the future costs of new construction are prohibitive.

The unfortunate fact is that we have few options that keep the police in Kensington and protect our parks and recreational programs, which is why an alternative design of the PSB that provides the necessary space for both departments is our best way forward.

Logan: This has been perhaps the main issue that has faced both the KPPCSD and KFPD

over the last couple of years. The PSB must be renovated for seismic safety and changes in laws and police operations over the past fifty years have increased demands on space. Upon coming on to the board in 2021, I've observed directly how the District services work in its space in the PSB and have concluded that the needs of the KPPCSD no longer work in the space available at the PSB. Significantly, the space allotted to police does not and cannot meet the Department of Justice requirements for dedicated confidential space for police communication including work on investigations and preparation of reports. Evidence must be stored in separate, secured space away from potential contamination sources. Officers must have sufficient space to work and store their equipment. I look at this as an opportunity to advance the state of our police department and set it up for success for the next 20 years.

Read more candidates' answers online at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org.
Click on October and scroll to the end of the PDF document for added pages.

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Letters

...from Page 3

Endorsements Galore

Highly Qualified
Dear Editor:
I'd like to encourage Kensington voters to consider voting for Gail Feldman, a highly qualified candidate for one of the open seats on KPPCSD. Gail has worked tirelessly for Kensington for many years, including a prior term on the KPPCSD in the 1990s and her 20+ years running the Kensington Property Owners Association. Lately she has been working with county and other local officials on wildfire safety concerns, including evacuation issues.
Professionally, Gail spent her career in local government management and has extensive experience developing and managing county and city budgets. Gail's experience conducting reorganizations of government agencies, including the incorporation of the City of American Canyon, would be invaluable in an effort to consolidate KPPCSD with our Kensington Fire Protection District, a goal she supports. Gail's top priority, if elected, would be to work to find and develop a new headquarters in Kensington for our police force.

Ann McDermott

Active Listening
Dear Editor,
The upcoming November election offers Kensington residents and taxpayers the opportunity to elect new directors to the KPPCSD board, directors who will work to protect Kensington Park for recreation and open space use, who will find a place for the Kensington Police, and who will listen to the community.
I grew up in Kensington and moved back in 1992 to raise my family here. I signed the petition to Save Kensington's Future because I was alarmed that the fire board evicted the police from the Public Safety Building and the current KPPCSD board proposed locating the police in Kensington's only park. We fought hard for that park and it is now such an important place in our community.

Therefore, I am encouraged that SKF has endorsed three extremely qualified, intelligent and capable women who are running for the three open seats on the KPPCSD board: Alexandra Aquino-Fike, a UC Berkeley lawyer, philanthropic professional with expertise in community engagement, Cassandra Duggan, a therapist with experience in listening to and solving complicated and complex issues and Sarah Gough, a UC Hastings lawyer who led the effort to transform the area at The Arlington and Coventry into a restful and welcoming park. All three candidates promise to protect the interests of property owners and taxpayers and work toward a consolidation of the two district boards.
Please join me in voting to elect Alexandra Aquino-Fike, Cassandra Duggan and Sarah Gough to the KPPCSD. It is time for change.

Cathy Travlos

Feldman and Logan for KPPCSD
At one of those "tipping points" in Kensington's history, we have a critical opportunity to make the best choice for the voice of experience.
I have worked with Gail and find her to always do her homework and come to any discussion thoroughly prepared. She has served in the past on the KPPCSD. She is not afraid to ask the tough question, and her career providing public service in government settings has given her deep knowledge of how to navigate through the complexities of local and state governance. She cares deeply about Kensington's future and has been knee-deep in the scenarios of housing our two most important services as well as what consolidation means and how to make it work. Her experience and passion to find answers in a fiscally responsible way makes her the best candidate for the position.
Likewise, Mike Logan brings his recent board experience and calm demeanor to analyzing the options and making a rational decision. His interesting background in film and finance presents a solid blend of creative thinking and realistic planning. He does not have to "catch up" with the long history of how we arrived where we are now to make a solid contribution.
We are fortunate to have these two experienced candidates who have the time and willingness to serve our community.

Candy Capogrossi

28 Years Is Enough
There is a reason term limits have been adopted at so many different levels of government. These limits ensure turnover that brings new energy into the political arena and also sparks creative thinking and innovation.
Janice Kosel is running for reelection to the fire board she has served on for 28 years. We as a community thank her for her service. But even though we don't have term limits here in Kensington, the time has come for her to step down. This isn't personal, nor is it a reflection on Ms. Kosel's contributions to our community. It is simply time to bring different voices, with new ideas and perspectives, into the leadership positions in our community.
So in this election, let's thank Ms. Kosel for her service and vote in Stein, Watt and Levine. With this slate, we get the experience on the board and sharp analytical skills that Julie Stein brings, the years of experience with our finances as well as professional expertise that Jim Watt brings, and a new analytical thinker who has done his homework on the issues facing our town and represents the next generation of leaders that Daniel Levine brings. Let's see what these folks, who aren't invested in or wedded to the past, bring to our discussions about the critical and difficult issues facing our town.
Vote for Stein, Watt and Levine for the fire board.

Betty Ann Engel

Unique Insight into Local Government
Dear Editor:
I'm supporting Gail Feldman for the KPPCSD board based on my experience working with Gail on Kensington issues over the past 24 years. I've found Gail to be committed to finding effective fact-based solutions to improve services for residents. Her experience working for local government gives her unique insight into how to get things done in real ways to benefit the community. She would be an asset to the KPPCSD board at this critical time.

John Gioia, Contra Costa County Supervisor

Community-Based Solutions
Dear Editor,
I think we are lucky to have Alexandra Aquino-Fike, Cass Duggan, and Sarah Gough running for the KPPCSD Board in the fall. They bring fresh energy with them and are intent on engaging with the community, even including the community in the discussion of choices the

board must make going forward. They value the park and the many recreation programs that KCC provides our community. If elected, I believe they will work with KCC to renew the contract between the two boards and step back from the adversarial position the board has taken both with the KCC and the larger community. I believe they will be much more open to engaging with the community to find creative, community-based solutions for the challenges we face, and that is certainly important to our civic life, going forward. Please join me in voting for them.

Ciara Wood

Fix Our KPD Endorsements
Dear Editor:
The members of the FixOurKPD Steering Committee are writing to express our enthusiastic support for Gail Feldman, for KPPCSD director. She is exactly what we need at this time, an independent thinker who has fiscal and board experience, and is well versed in Kensington's issues.
We also support reelecting Mike Logan to KPPCSD, as well as Janice Kosel for KFPD, experienced directors who are open to hearing multiple viewpoints on complicated projects.
Marilyn Stollon, John Gaccione, Tom Dean, David Bergen, Andrew Paul Gutierrez, Marina A.P. Gutierrez, Craig Rice

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Fire Q&A

...from Page 3

similar idea was raised years ago in the Matrix study of police services and was rejected. This needs to be entrusted to the next board who will, hopefully, honor the fire district's own longstanding policy that the PSB is a secure building for the benefit of both fire and police.
Watt: We need to consider seriously the new retrofit design, by the independently engaged architect, that accommodates both fire and police in the PSB, unlike the current plan advanced by the fire board. Keeping fire and police in the PSB is imperative to control Kensington's costs for public safety. We have a small police department, and it should be housed in Kensington at the PSB. The suggestion that we create a small space in the remodeled PSB for on-duty officers and their shift supervisor, while housing the rest of the Kensington Police Department at another site, makes no sense.

What should the fire district do to help residents reduce fire risk? Can the district help with vegetation management on private properties or is that outside the district's purview?

Kosel: Four years ago I proposed a fire safe demonstration garden with the assistance of the community services district and community members. A good deal of the work was to be performed by Eagle Scouts. I would like to resurrect that project. I initiated our newsletter, The Fire Plug, several years ago. I favor continued education and modest grants for fire safe planting.
Levine: The largest wildfire danger affecting our community is the interface with Tilden Park. The fire district should work with East Bay Parks to mitigate fire danger by engaging in wide-ranging vegetation management where it touches Kensington. There are untapped grant funds available for this purpose, and the fire district should pursue those. Moreover, there are other funds for emergency warning systems, for example, of which our district can and should take advantage.
The district already assesses fire danger on private properties, and only a handful of properties are found to be non-conforming every year. The district is empowered to ensure that these properties are mitigated in a timely manner.
Stein: The district can help with vegetation management on private properties and along our eastern border by engaging East Bay Regional Parks (EBRP). The district website can be a resource, linked to other fire safety and fire prevention resources, to educate residents about dangerous plantings, especially along crucially important evacuation routes. By providing replanting ideas, residents can make better choices for their landscapes. Helping residents does not mean doing this for them but educating them on what needs to be done and providing a pool of matching funds to encourage their own fuel reduction projects.

The district can educate residents on home-hardening by raising awareness and encouraging participation in local webinars and in the Firewise USA program, a grassroots effort to actively reduce wildfire risks at the local level. As few as eight homes can establish a Firewise "community" to identify improvements to attics, crawlspaces, roofing, decking, and other home components.
Watt: Kensington contracts with El Cerrito for fire services. The contract requires the El Cerrito-Kensington fire department to educate the Kensington community on fuel reduction and defensible space, which we commonly think of as weed and brush abatement. In the past, public workshops were held in Kensington and led by personnel from El Cerrito Fire Department at which citizens could ask questions about their specific needs. The property inspection program, which is conducted annually, was explained. There are limits on the fire department's right to enforce fire safety measures on private property. This highlights the importance of educating homeowners to take responsibility for vegetation on their own property and to help their neighbors do the same. The fire district can also educate the public on the importance of emergency alarm systems, warning devices, sensible evacuation plans, and parking modifications.

Changing parking configurations, encouraging residents to help neighbors with mobility or hearing impairments in emergencies, and more takes active community outreach and buy-in. Should this effort be part of the board's vision?

Kosel: Our emergency preparedness coordinator under the supervision of the board is working on evacuation planning and community education and involvement. Neighbors will need to help each other. Our narrow streets and deep gutters pose threats to timely evacuation and we must focus on ameliorating those difficulties.
Levine: The board should take an active role in promoting effective emergency preparedness procedures and should consider whatever tools are available; such community involvement would be a great boon to our responsiveness in the event of disaster. Fostering this kind of community engagement is something that the district has an interest in and therefore should be a goal for the board as well. Resuming CERT training is one way in which the district can help improve both community outreach and involvement as well as emergency preparedness.
The board should be especially focused on large-scale emergency preparedness that extends beyond the local neighborhood level. Last year's evacuation drill proved enlightening for both the district and residents. Further drills would help clarify and refine our current evacuation procedures.

Stein: To be successful in these areas requires community involvement. A "top down" approach will not be as effective or enduring as grassroots, self-motivated efforts. While raising awareness can be part of the board's vision, the board's most important role is to focus on fire protection initiatives that can only be orchestrated at the government level with significant infusions of funding and by partnering with other government agencies.
The board's immediate focus has to be on the PSB and on getting its spending in order so that it can continue to save for its next fire engine and consider further investments in new technology, such as emergency warning systems, and partnering opportunities to accelerate undergrounding utilities.
Even with these priorities in place, the district can encourage community preparation with its Fire Plug newsletter and its website. Awareness of parking off-street on red flag days is critically important. Encouraging neighbors to help one another goes beyond the fire district as a matter of our civic culture. Kensington's volunteer organizations such as the KIC, KPOA, and the Kensington Public Safety Council can implement detailed plans at the grassroots level.
Watt: The board's vision should certainly include lessons learned from the Oakland Hills Fire, especially in regards to evacuation. This is where people died. As a community, we need to consider rearranging parking on red flag days to expedite evacuation, and we will need public education and community buy-in to achieve that, especially for those whose own residential parking is directly affected. It is important that the board encourages and supports neighborhood planning for evacuation from narrow streets, provides recommended evacuation routes, and encourages neighbors to help evacuate disabled neighbors in an emergency.

Read more candidates' answers online at kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org. Click on October and scroll to the end of the PDF document for added pages.

Living on Indigenous Land

By Pastor Celestine Fields
Arlington Community Church and Good Guest: Kensington invite the public to a presentation about how we can live in right relationship with Lisjan Ohlone people, the original stewards of the lands we call home. Speakers will share information about the Lisjan Ohlone people, past and present, and offer ideas for how we can live together in harmony. This program will be held at 52 Arlington Avenue in Kensington on Thursday, October 20, 7-8:30pm.

Read It on the Web: Be sure to go to kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org to find so much more! Late letters, the police log, and more questions put to candidates for the police and the fire boards. Scroll past page 12 for additional pages.



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Fall Book Sale Always a Hit

By Jim Fisher

The annual Fall Book Sale of the Friends of the Kensington Library (FKL) will be held the same day as the Kensington Community Council's Fall Picnic and the ACC's Blessing of the Animals—on Sunday, October 23. The popular book sale takes place from 10am-4pm in the employee parking lot behind the library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Bag sale 2-4pm.

This fall, the FKL sale will include a large collection of scholarly and popular books donated by the family of two beloved Berkeley educators: Seymour Benjamin Chatman (1928-2015) was a Professor of Rhetoric and Film at the University of California, Berkeley; his wife Barbara Blomer was a Montessori teacher in Berkeley.

“Barbara is pleased to give new life to the couple's 40-year collection by donating it to the FKL,” writes stepdaughter Emily Chatman Duffy, who delivered part of the collection to the FKL book shed in the hatchback of her eye-popping art car, VainVan. News of the vehicle's arrival spread quickly through the library, bringing out children, adults, volunteers and staff to chat with the artist and write thoughts about beauty on the fully functional rear wheel chalkboard.

The FKL sale also features over 10 boxes of books and 1000 quality CDs from a newly donated collection of Henry L. Snyder (1929-2016), professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Riverside, and the former director of the Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research. Noted for directing the English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC), a bibliographic database of books published in the British Isles or its territories from the early 1470s to 1800, Snyder was also a lifelong patron and producer of opera.

“I know he would be pleased that his collections are being sold to support the local library,” says his son David Snyder, whose family has been in Kensington for over three generations. “He was a pioneer in the library community, developing technologies and databases that are being used around the world.”

The sale offers a wide variety of genres including nonfiction, general fiction, mysteries, cookbooks, art books, children's books, and more. FKL volunteers speak about the “miracle of the FKL book shed,” which is filled to bursting by the time each twice-annual book sale comes around.

Come join your neighbors, knowing that your purchases and tax-deductible contributions fund programs for all, while also providing funds for book purchases, periodical subscriptions, and physical upgrades.

Pancake Breakfast, Shred those Documents!

By Johnny Valenzuela

On October 9, enjoy a pancake breakfast with firefighters and new fire chief Eric Saylor. 8:30-11am, Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, 1 Lawson Rd., Kensington. \$8 per person, children five and under free.

Paper Shredding & Pharmaceutical Collection Saturday, October 29, 10am-1pm, in the parking lot across from Arlington Community Church. The KPPCSD, in coordination with the DEA, will safely dispose of all unused or expired medications, including narcotics, pills, syrups, inhalers, etc. No household hazardous waste. Please don't flush medications down the toilet as they pollute water and soil.

A Day to Remember

...from front page

beloved pets and their human companions will gather for the Blessing of the Animals, offered by Pastor Celestine Fields of Arlington Community Church. This popular event was first paired with the KCC Fall Picnic in 2019, our last such event before the long pandemic hiatus. All well-behaved pets are welcome—whether in fur, feathers, or scales—to gather under the shade tree outside the Recreation Building, KCC's home base (just above the basketball courts, at the north end of Windsor Avenue). This will be Pastor Celeste's first Blessing of the Animals—let's make it one to remember!

Those who wish to break out the Halloween costumes early for this event will be in good company. We are very sorry to disappoint all who miss the annual parade. With fewer hands on-deck than in previous years, KCC is not able to bring back this Kensington tradition. Like so many organizations, the KCC's Board of Directors is actively seeking new members to join the Kensington Community Council to ensure the smooth running and continuation of the institutions that the community has come to love. If you are interested in learning more please contact any board member via kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org. We will be happy to talk with you and hope to see you at the picnic!

The Halloween Harvest Festival Returns

By Camden Richards

After a two-year hiatus, the Halloween Harvest Festival will return to an in-person celebration in Colusa Circle on Sunday, October 30. The Colusa Circle Merchants Association and the Kensington Farmers' Market host this neighborhood event, which includes activities for the whole family.

Taking place from 10am-2pm during the Farmers' Market, there will be a costume parade starting at 11am; a costume contest for kids, families, and pets with prizes; an obstacle course at Fuse Fitness, a photo booth at Zip Code East Bay, free pumpkins at the market, and a scavenger hunt where participants will earn a free ice cream from Benchmark Pizzeria. The celebration will culminate with an animal show sponsored by the Kensington Veterinary Hospital.

For more information about the Colusa Circle Merchants Association or to find out about their upcoming events, visit: colusacircle.org/events.



Kensington's own Great Space Coaster cover band plays your favorite songs—from classic rock to folk to country to R&B and from Fleetwood Mac, Tom Petty, and The Police to Duran Duran and Dua Lipa. Get a feel for their sound at www.gpscoasterband.com



Photos by Nan Phelps

Additional Letters to the Editor

Seeking Consensus

Dear Editor:

As a result of the decisions of three fire board directors—Don Dommer, Larry Nagel, Kevin Padian—the fire department will take over the Public Safety Building, and the police department must move. The site proposed is the parking lot across from the library. What impact is expected on the entire community and specifically Arlington Blvd., the church, homes, and children streaming down the hill after school to the library, meeting rides, or hanging out with friends?

Is there a traffic report? Is a special light needed? How long will traffic be halted and how much of a backup is anticipated? How does the special traffic light impact children to and from school? How will the traffic on Rincon Road be affected? What are the impacts to the safety of the roadway next to the library? Is there an environmental impact report? Where is additional parking to be created and at what cost?

Many residents feel blindsided and worry about the financial burden. But the real change is to very nature of how we know Kensington, where our children are secure, the rustic nature of the library, park and play area, tennis and basketball courts, the elementary school up the hill and very few cars.

I was told the actions of the fire board are independent of the problems caused to KPPCSD because of its decisions. The KFPD general manager points to the ninety-plus documents on the website. Maybe we should have read more and gone to Zoom meetings. But in between the enormous disruption the pandemic caused—the myriad needs of children, holding down a job from a corner in a bedroom, illness and death, financial and emotional upheaval—somehow the fire board and KPPCSD's posted documents just slipped through our consciousness.

But we are paying attention now. I ask that we get a reprieve and a pause—so our community does not end up divided but strives together for consensus. We need one board for our public services with a shared concern for the community.

Laurie Schumacher

Fire Bill Hansell

Dear Editor:

It's time for KFPD to fire Bill Hansell. During the September 14 board meeting, he dismissed the legitimate concerns of nearly 900 Kensington residents who have signed a petition expressing concerns about the Public Safety Building renovation as “slogans,” in the course of a one-sided brush-off of a potential alternative plan. It is not only the taxpayer that Mr. Hansell disrespects, he displays the same condescending attitude toward directors who don't toe his line. This is not the first time Mr. Hansell has disparaged the taxpayers he is hired to serve. Search youtube.com for “Bill Hansell Marinwood” and see for yourself. Kensington can and should do better.

Vida Dorroh

Police Candidates Q&A continued from print edition

What is your position on consolidating the two districts?

Aquino-Fike: Given Kensington's population of just over 5,000, its geographic size, and the poor communication and coordination between our two governing districts, I am wholeheartedly in support of consolidating these two districts. This lack of effective coordination has produced the current state of dysfunction – where one board, the KFPD, can enact a decision (removing the police from the PSB) that will have long term financial and safety impacts they take no responsibility to solve. The KPPCSD then relinquished their responsibility to call for an inclusive community process and fight to renegotiate their place at the PSB. Instead, the board considers our park as an option to relocate the police, putting recreation, open space and childrens' programs at risk. We must ensure our public safety responders have the tools and space to effectively do their job and we must ensure that our families, our children, and our elders can enjoy public spaces free from potentially risky activities. We need governance that works on behalf of the whole community. A consolidated district would ensure much greater coordination between the two public safety departments and above all, ensure more transparent and effective policy making that does not prioritize one safety need over another.

Duggan: Consolidating Kensington's two districts is clearly the intelligent thing to consider at this juncture. We could save a considerable amount of taxpayer dollars in annual expenditures and reap other benefits by consolidating. Rather than having two part-time general managers, and their respective staff, duplicating services, we could hire an experienced and professional fulltime General Manager, whom we would have a better chance of retaining. Other staffing could likewise be streamlined and optimized. Consolidation will obviate having two boards working at cross-purposes in the future, wasting money, and bringing further embarrassment to our community. Our board would shrink slowly from 10 to seven or five directors (depending which number of directors we choose), while retaining directors with expertise from both districts.

Other benefits of consolidation include a less confusing, more transparent and accessible government for constituents, fewer meetings, better planned financial reserves for emergencies, improved access to public and private grant opportunities, and clearer planning and analysis. We will have funds to hire a diverse staff as needed, to help the one board and one General Manager keep Kensington safe, clean, well run, and beautiful.

Feldman: It is time to officially evaluate and initiate district consolidation. Most cities and towns are structured with only one governing board for police, fire and park services. Kensington will be better served under this model. One board will result in coordinated decision-making for our public safety services. It will reduce the costs of administrative duplication, and allow expansion in support/operations staffing—one administrative staff team working under one organizational umbrella.

A unified district would have control over the total amount of local property tax dollars allocated to Kensington, allowing budgeting based on priorities and needs. For example, public safety policies, such as disaster preparedness and emergency response, would be under the oversight of one district, improving coordination and use of resources. A single governance structure would make it more efficient for the community to engage on issues with the board, electing and engaging with one body.

I have deep knowledge of how the consolidation and LAFCO process works. My background includes preparing a report on district consolidation for the KPPCSD Ad Hoc Committee for Governance Operations and Restructuring in 2016, and working on reorganizations for other local governments, including the incorporation of the City of American Canyon.

Gough: I strongly favor consolidation. Consolidation of the KPPCSD and KFPD into a single board will increase board competency, efficiency, and cooperation. Consolidation will

also yield significant cost savings, ensure continuity of government, and improve public trust.

Right now, we have two boards representing the same constituency but using separate staff and consultants. These services are duplicative, resulting in unnecessary expense, complications, and delays.

A two-board structure also creates entrenched divisions, or the perception of division, which leads to conflict and expensive poor choices as we've seen with the Public Safety Building debacle. On the other hand, a unified board would have a much stronger voice as it advocates Kensington's needs to the county, utilities, and other community partners.

Finally, our current two-board structure is so opaque and confusing that community participation is needlessly difficult and therefore limited. The community's interests will be better represented with one board. Simply put, consolidation is the best way forward for Kensington and I will fight to see it happen.

Logan: I'm open to the idea of consolidating our two districts. If there's something that became very apparent in the last few years, it is how difficult it is for two district boards to work together on a single issue. Each board member has a fiduciary duty to advocate for their district and that in turn can make concessions difficult. With respect to the Public Safety Building, I doubt that having a single board would have resulted in a different outcome but perhaps the decision would have been easier for the community to accept. Spatial needs for both police and fire have both significantly increased over the past fifty years and state law puts constraints on expanding the building. As desirable as it may seem to have both located in the PSB, both the fire and police chiefs have stated that the available space does not allow for fire and police to operate in compliance with federal and state requirements. There are advantages of a combined governing body in combined administration with the ability to attract qualified professional staff interested in full-time work.

Would you consider contracting out police services due to financial pressures or lack of housing for a police station?

Aquino-Fike: If we seriously address the question of housing the police and fire services in the same building, the issue of contracting out may not be a question to ponder. If we address the financial capacity we have to support a police force for a population with our size and crime rate, we may find a plan that doesn't equate to substantial increased costs. If we consolidate our two districts into one, then we will have a new overall budget that will save significant expenses in personnel. I am very concerned that building an entirely new building for our police will have the long-term impact of forcing Kensington to contract out our police services due to the increased financial burdens on our community.

It is my utmost goal to ensure that Kensington maintains its high level of public safety. I am committed to seeking and maintaining our own safety professionals as long as fiscally as possible. I would only consider contracting out our police in the case where it is abundantly clear that it is no longer fiscally possible to maintain them over the long-term. And, if it comes to that, the voters must have a say in that decision.

Duggan: No, I would not. Our current Kensington Police Department is serving the community very well. Our crime rates remain among the lowest in the state. Several years ago, the KPPCSD with the assistance of the Matrix group spent significant time and resources analyzing and testing the concept of contracting out police services. Not only was it determined that contracting out police services would cost far more than what Kensington currently pays to maintain its own force, there was no interest from neighboring communities or from the county sheriff's office to take this on. Our nearest neighbor, El Cerrito, with whom Kensington contracts for fire services, flatly declined to submit a proposal to provide police services. We learned a tough lesson that financial pressures are not relieved by contracting out police services.

The current lack of housing for the police department derives directly from the fire board and is not a legitimate reason to rekindle the debate over contracting out police services.

Feldman: If elected, I do not plan to pursue contracting out the police department during my tenure on the board. We have a police chief who is trying to rebuild the department and I support giving him a chance. Obviously, a lack of a permanent police station in Kensington raises the question of whether it makes sense to continue operating a police department versus contracting with another city or the sheriff. I think we will resolve the police headquarters location problem with a community-acceptable solution and I'm ready to work diligently on this.

I am very concerned about the financial condition of the district, so budgeting for police services needs to take priority. The district needs skilled negotiators to help secure compensation packages that are competitive but are within the district's financial capacity.

Gough: No, I would not consider contracting out our police. Contracting out threatens Kensington's independence, and I will always fight to keep Kensington, Kensington. Equally important is that Kensington is a safe community because our police are located within our borders and can quickly respond to incidents. We must ensure they remain here.

Given our few good alternatives and very limited resources, Kensington's best option is to keep the police where they've always been, in the Public Safety Building. Yes, let's greatly improve it and therefore meet the actual needs of both departments within a budget we can afford. If we do this, the police can continue to provide excellent service without the need to contract out.

In the end, the community will have to bond together and demonstrate some flexibility and creativity to guarantee the police remain in Kensington.

Logan: Contracting out police services had been a major issue for years. The district undertook a study of the police department and a financial analysis of costs for needed improvements and contracting. The district received no responses to its Request for Proposal for contracting and has subsequently made substantial investments in its police department. The district has taken steps to better address its pension obligations and retiree health benefits, which have relieved financial pressure and improved the long-term financial picture for the district. Most significantly, improvements in hiring new police officers have resulted in reduced legal fees for investigations of police and discipline from the tens of thousands annually to a fraction of that.

Do you believe the park should be restricted to recreation and open space? If so, how do you propose to protect it?


Aquino-Fike: Our gem of a park should absolutely be restricted as open space and for recreational use only. The upper park by Building E and the lower park area with the playground, tennis courts, and small grass area are the only recreational open spaces officially within the boundaries of Kensington. It is a gathering space that helps neighbors build friendships. It's the place where many parents, like me, have taught their children to swing or ride their bikes. It's where my children and so many children have birthday parties, or watched a movie under the night sky. It's a place of meditation and

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME


FALL UPDATE FROM ZIP CODE EAST BAY

WE LOVE KENSINGTON!


Our love for our community is central to our mission. Here are a few updates about what we've been up to in Colusa Circle this fall.



2022 BEST FOR THE WORLD COMMUNITY AWARD




We're happy to share that ZCEB has been recognized as a Best for the World™ B Corp of 2022! This means we scored in the top 5% of all B Corps our size for our positive community impact. B Corps are businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.



ART RECYCLING DRIVE

Thank you to everyone who participated in our annual used art supplies recycling drive to help divert plastics from landfills & oceans. We collected more than six cubic feet of materials that can't be recycled through traditional means and will be processed at a zero waste facility for future use.



UPCOMING COLUSA CIRCLE EVENTS

This fall, we are looking forward to participating in Colusa Circle's annual events. Stop by the ZCEB office during the Halloween Harvest Festival on Sunday, October 30th and the Tree Lighting on Sunday, November 27th.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN BUYING, SELLING, OR FINDING OUT YOUR HOME'S VALUE, GIVE US A CALL OR STOP BY THE ZCEB OFFICE.

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comfort with its stunning natural beauty. I’m proud to be the daughter of two Kensingtonians who fought to establish our park and I hope to save this park for my kids and all Kensingtonian’s children.

I will seek to protect this special place by exploring options for modifying the relevant zoning and related legal documentation to ensure the parkland is restricted to recreation and open space in perpetuity.

Duggan: What makes Kensington special is its beautiful green open space: its parks, views, gardens, canyons, and trees. We are so lucky to have them! They give us a feeling of freedom and relaxation. Some nearby cities have failed to protect their open space and trees, and people there feel more boxed-in and anxious. Let’s not let that happen to Kensington!

As a licensed clinical social worker who has worked with children, families, the elderly, and the disabled for 40 years; and a former Hilltop and KASEP after-school program parent, I’d like to see Kensington expand its recreational services, rather than decreasing them. I love my tai chi classes in the Community Center. Perhaps the Annex could be used for activities or volunteer programs to engage and support our elders (25 percent of Kensington’s population is 65+) or disabled. Let’s ask the community what they want.

If elected, I will protect Kensington Park for recreation and open space in perpetuity. I propose we codify language protecting the park’s use and development for these intended purposes so this issue will never arise again. I will work to save Kensington Park!

Feldman: I believe the recreation sites and open space areas of the park should continue for those uses. The park was paid for by Kensington property owners over a 25-year period for that purpose. Thousands of dollars were expended by each taxpayer to purchase the property. Kensington voters would likely want a say on any elimination of open space or recreation in the park. Protecting the park is dependent on finding money to support the park infrastructure and facilities. The Park Operations and Maintenance Fund has never been adequate. That is the fund paid for by property owners at \$19.62 this year. That will only raise \$44,000 and expenses are projected at over \$177,000. I believe forming a group such as a “Friends of Kensington Park” would be an extremely valuable community commitment to generate additional funds for the park. That will help enhance and protect our park.

Gough: Yes, I believe the park should be protected for recreation and open space in perpetuity. I will always vote to guard our park and to improve it where needed.

We are incredibly fortunate to have so much beautiful open space within our small border and we must take care of it. The park is well used by residents of all ages and the recreational programs of the KCC are deeply important to a community that has come to rely on them.

More specifically, we can protect the park by codifying language that will limit its use to recreation purposes only. We can also protect it by ensuring that none of the facilities or green spaces are used for anything other than recreation, such as housing our police.

In my view, we should explore ways to expand our recreational offerings while supporting existing providers rather than threatening to degrade them or the park space. The idea of housing our police in the park never should have been proposed, let alone pursued, as a possibility.

I will always vote “no” on any plan that harms our park or recreational programs.

Logan: The park property is a jewel that should be treasured. The district is committed to finding a suitable location for the police recognizing the very limited choices that are available within Kensington that would allow for the police department to operate in compliance with federal and state requirements. Some suggestions of splitting operations of the police may result in less efficient operations and place more burdens on police personnel, both of which would be undesirable.

The district has run through several permanent and interim general managers in the last few years. At its current funding, how can the district hire a competent, permanent GM?

Aquino-Fike: I believe the most cost-effective solution for this challenge is the consolidation of Kensington’s two districts. In my opinion, the current two-district governance structure duplicates various legal, financial, and administrative functions. Rather than having two part-time GMs managing two completely separate boards, a consolidated structure would create operational and financial efficiencies and open up enough funding to hire a full-time, highly qualified and experienced GM.

Rather than paying for duplicative administrative and professional services, including multiple attorneys and architects to report to separate boards about questions that should be interconnected and interdependent, we could save funds by hiring just one suite of advisors. This would not only give us better advice, it would free up funding that would enable us to provide a full-time GM position with a competitive salary and benefits.

Duggan: The funding challenges can be addressed if we consolidate our two districts. In a unified district, we can transition from having two part-time General Managers to one full-time position with better salary and benefits. Because we would save hundreds of thousands yearly by consolidating, we can afford a salary increase, thus attracting high-quality and experienced applicants. Consolidated boards will help Kensington function with less dysfunction, enhancing its reputation and further convincing great applicants to choose our position. We can rent an attractive nearby office for this General Manager – far better than the catch-as-catch-can space available to our current managers. Lastly, I think we should hire a headhunter to approach excellent local city managers with proven track records, who may prefer a smaller community to manage, if it comes with good salary and benefits.

Feldman: Based on my experience working with local government human resources professionals, I think a number of changes must be made to help hire a well-qualified, permanent general manager for the KPPCSD.

First the position will need to be full time. A part-time position isn’t attractive to many professionals in the field of municipal management, largely due to salary, with the exception perhaps of retired managers. But many retirees are restricted in how many hours they can work by their pension plans. Secondly, there needs to be a benefit package that most likely offers a pension plan. This is what is offered in most districts, cities and counties with similar positions. Third, there must be sufficient support staff to assist the manager with the work. Finally, the position must have sufficient workload to justify a full-time manager position. Consolidating the two districts (KPPCSD and KFPD) would provide the opportunity to have one general manager, instead of the two part-time managers, which is the current situation. With consolidated districts, the funding would be available to attract qualified general manager candidates without compromising funding for other budget priorities.

Gough: The most effective way to hire a competent permanent GM is by consolidating the KPPCSD board and the KFPD board into a single board. Consolidation would allow Kensington to hire one full-time GM and pay that person well. Consolidation would also

address the dysfunction and conflicts between the boards, which I imagine are not terribly appealing to prospective GMs.

Overall, attracting a qualified GM with the relevant experience is incredibly important and will save Kensington money by reducing salary costs, consultant fees, and careless mistakes that result from frequent turnover and a lack of institutional knowledge.

Let’s consolidate so we can hire a high caliber GM who possesses the core competencies Kensington needs—expert contract negotiation, project management, and budgeting.

Logan: The ability to recruit a permanent GM has been an issue for years and made more acute with changes to workforce due to the pandemic. Simply getting enough qualified applicants has been a struggle. The district has made significant strides in upgrading the administrative tasks such as more professional management of its finances. The paradigm of having part-time staff without benefits poses a significant challenge to find qualified candidates. The district has made the general manager position more attractive by adding benefits along with a competitive compensation. This issue, of course, makes a good case for a consolidation of the KPPCSD and KFPD. Both districts would then be able to consolidate the general manager duties of each district into a full-time position. This same approach could also be used for administrative roles as well.

Fire Candidates Q&A continued from print edition

Over the past few years, the fire district has gone from a half-time administrator to two positions at more than triple the cost, with yet another position authorized by the board. Is this ramping up of administration necessary? Must they be housed in the Public Safety Building?

Kosel: We currently have a part-time general manager and an emergency preparedness coordinator. We have no other employees.

Levine: Historically, two positions are authorized for the fire district: a general manager role and an administrative assistant/clerk. The latter position has been vacant for some time, which puts more demand on the GM. Having two positions allows the district to better function and be flexible when one employee is out of office.

As a general statement, while it would be ideal to house all administrative staff for both districts with their associated personnel in a single building, this is not strictly necessary. Unlike fire and police, which have very specific building requirements, administrators have simpler, typical office needs. Relocating our administrative staff to a standard office space would be relatively easy, enable both fire and police departments to remain in a single building with more usable space, and comply with the current codes and law.

Stein: The district requires a general manager and an administrative assistant (AA). Having two positions provides cost-savings by hiring at appropriate salaries. Presently, both are part-time positions. The AA position has been vacant and should be refilled. The administration has not been ramped up. The other position mentioned in the question is that of the emergency preparedness coordinator, who is not part of the administration.

The board now asks at least four or five staff and consultants to attend lengthy board and committee meetings. This could be simplified to make better use of staff time. Historically, a single half-time administrator staffed these meetings very efficiently, relying on the board president to conduct the meeting, take attendance, and call for votes.

These administrative positions need not necessarily be housed in the PSB. It is far more important, as the first priority, to retain fire and police services in one location. District staff members have the option of working from home or in rented space, and can employ modern technology to digitize most, if not all, of the district’s records.

Watt: In the current two-district structure, each board hires administrative support on a part-time basis, because neither board needs a full-time GM or full-time administrative staff. The problem is that part-time positions can be harder to fill and, with so many part-time positions, the two districts, combined, require substantially more floor space. Consolidation would create more full-time positions and reduce existing duplicative costs. It is certainly something the community must consider. Furthermore, administrative staff does not need to take up valuable space in the PSB, as this space should be used for fire and police.

August KPD Patrol Log

On August 1, a vehicle was vandalized in the 600 block of Wellesley Avenue. Sometime overnight the car window was smashed, and the inside of the vehicle appeared to have been rummaged through, yet nothing was stolen. Later that morning, KPD responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 100 block of Sunset Drive. It was determined that sometime overnight, the victim’s green Honda CRV was stolen. And while investigating the stolen vehicle on Sunset Drive, KPD noticed a suspicious vehicle nearby. When KPD investigated the silver Honda CRV, it was determined to have the stolen from San Bruno. The vehicle was recovered and eventually given back to the owner.

On August 4, between 12:45pm and 12:55pm, a family was loading camping equipment on the sidewalk next to their van in the 800 block of Coventry Road. While stacking the items for the family camping trip to Lake Tahoe, somebody stole all their camping equipment, food, and kids’ clothing, within minutes, while the family was momentarily inside packing.

On August 10, a vehicle was vandalized in the 300 block of Colusa Avenue. Sometime overnight the car window was smashed, and the inside of the vehicle appeared to have been rummaged through, yet nothing was stolen.

On August 12 at about 10:15am, a resident in the 100 block of Rincon Road was loading the trunk of his vehicle up to catch an international flight out of SFO. While going back inside to grab his luggage, a vehicle pulled up and stole his luggage, cash, and passport. A witness was located, and evidence was collected and DNA submitted to the Contra Costa County Crime Lab. The investigation is ongoing.

On August 20 at about 2:10am, a vehicle was traveling on Colusa Avenue near Curry Avenue when the right wheel fell off causing the vehicle to crash into two parked vehicles. Nobody was injured.

On August 26 at about 1:20am, KPD was requested by Berkeley Police Department to assist them in a sexual assault investigation. KPD responded and during the investigation, the jurisdiction was determined to be in Kensington. Investigators were immediately called out and a Ramey Warrant and Search warrant was written and granted by the judge. Within a few days, the warrant was served, evidence was collected, and the suspect was arrested and booked into the County Jail. The investigation is ongoing.

On August 28 at about 3:08pm, KPD spotted a suspicious vehicle and determined the white Honda Accord had been previously reported as a stolen vehicle from San Rafael. The vehicle was recovered and eventually given back to the owner.