

Bringing the Community Together

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

OCTOBER 2026

A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 8



KCC's Parade and Picnic Features Scouts, Students, ACC

District Teacher of the Year Carolyn Landau Is Grand Marshal

By Anne Forrest

Some say it is the sweeping views, but I say it's the people who make Kensington a great place to live. Let's celebrate our community with Kensington's annual parade and picnic. The Kensington Community Council is pleased to announce that on Sunday, October 18, the Kensington Fall Parade is again being led by the one and only Cal Straw Hat Band.

Local community groups such as the Fire-safe communities, the Kensington Pathkeepers, the Scouts, Arlington Community Church, Kens-

See Parade and Picnic, Page 6

Animal Show, Children's Parade Headline Halloween at the Circle

By Karen Yencich

Saddle up, unicorns! Round up the pikachus and the princesses! Call out the dinosaurs, the tank engines and the baby belugas! Your Halloween dreams will come true when the annual Kensington Farmers Market and Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest bursts onto the scene for another year, Sunday morning, October 25.

All of your favorite events will be back. The big Children's Costume Parade will gather at the Oak View Avenue entrance to the Kensington Farmers' Market at 10:45 and pull out of the station to march around the Circle at 11am. Participants from all galaxies and magical kingdoms are welcome. There will be prizes for the

See Halloween, page 7



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Kensington & Beyond Update

Local Market Snapshot: 8/1/2026 - 9/15/2026

What is the hottest market in the East Bay? All areas: Avg. Days on the Market: 15.5. Here's the comparison:

City	Median % List Price	Median % Sale Price	Median Square Feet	Median % Above The List Price
Kensington	\$1,145,000	\$1,910,000	1,805 sq ft.	67%
El Cerrito	\$974,000	\$1,275,000	1,715 sq ft.	31%
N. Berkeley (94707 - 94708)	\$1,310,000	\$1,980,000	1,787 sq ft.	51.5%
Albany	\$1,150,000	\$1,200,000	1,248 sq ft.	4.5%

Kensington Market: 6/1/2026 - 7/28/2026:

Address	List Price	Sale Price	BR/BA	Sqft.	DOM
15 Jensen Court	\$1,395,000	\$1,950,000	3/3	2,167	33
282 Grizzly Peak Blvd	\$1,145,000	\$1,650,000	3/1	1,636	6
218 Cambridge	\$1,098,000	\$1,910,000	2/2	1,805	13

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COMPASS

Kensington Reads Charlotte Bronte

By Debbie Hamati

If you enjoy classical fiction, please join the Kensington Book Group on October 27 at 6:15pm to discuss *La Villette* by Charlotte Bronte. Published in 1853, *La Villette* is often regarded as Bronte's true masterpiece, a complex work reflecting her own experiences. The story is about the journey of Lucy Snowe teaching at a girl's school in the fictional city of Villette, Belgium. The novel effectively captures the tension of a woman's desire for freedom while negotiating social, cultural, and religious constraints. Important themes are identity, isolation, women's independence, gender roles, and how individuals cope with the pressures of living in a society that overlooks or misunderstands them.

To join monthly Zoom meetings, contact kensingtonbookgroup2026@gmail.com. Future books include: *How to Read a Book* by Monica Woods (November 17), and *Breathing Lessons* by Anne Tyler (December 29). During the Kensington Library reconstruction, the closest branch of the Contra Costa County Library is El Cerrito on Stockton Ave., but all CCC library card holders are welcome to use any branch they prefer.

The Kensington Book Group has been a longtime activity of the Kensington Library and will continue as an independent group until the reconstruction is completed. Meetings are hosted by our volunteer facilitator, Betsy Beazley, who provides background information about each selection. Members submit discussion questions in advance of the meeting.

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August Police Log

—From the Kensington Police Department Chief's Report

Aug 1, Rincon Rd. Unauthorized tree trimming on monastery property. Matter will be handled civilly.

Aug 2 Kingston Rd. Grand theft, catalytic converter theft. No leads.

Aug 5 Beloit Ave. Welfare check involving a firearm. No crime occurred.

Aug 5 Coventry Rd. Battery on person, caretaker and patient. No prosecution desired.

Aug 11 Arlington Ct. Traffic accident, no injuries.

Aug 19 Arlington Ave. Grand theft, catalytic converter. No leads.

Aug 20 San Pablo Ave. Report of stabbing and related incidents. Investigation pending.

Aug 21 Anson Way. Identity theft, felony.

Aug 23 Potrero Ave., El Cerrito. Assisted at shooting incident providing emergency first aid and scene supervision. KPD was first on scene, according to verbal report from Chief Mike Gancasz at 9/10 board meeting.

Aug 23 Beloit Ave. A vehicle with expired registration was stopped and towed. Citations were issued and the vehicle was impounded.

Aug 23 Berkeley Park Blvd. KPD received a call regarding potential abuse concerns, forwarded to the appropriate sheriff's office.

Aug 25 Arlington Ave. Found property was recovered and returned to owner.

Aug 25 Coventry Rd. A theft of a motor vehicle license plate was reported. The plate was entered into the Stolen Vehicle system; case suspended with no leads.

Aug 27 Coventry Rd. A felony corporal injury incident involving a dating relationship was reported. An arrest was made following investigation and the suspect was taken into custody.

Aug 28 Beloit Ave. A felony burglary from a motor vehicle was reported.

Aug 30 Colusa Ave. A resident reported threats made by a neighbor. The incident was documented and closed; no prosecution was desired.

Aug 31 Arlington Ave. A vehicle with expired registration was stopped and impounded. A citation was issued to the driver and the vehicle was towed.

Kensington Police Department Metrics for August

Total incidents: 1,464. Of these, 1,213 were officer-initiated activities.

There were 223 dispatched calls for service. Kensington officers issued 90 citations and delivered 18 verbal warnings. The average response time was 4.6 minutes. 22 investigative reports were prepared, and there was one arrest.

Of the 1,213 officer-initiated activities, there were 94 traffic stops, 480 building or security checks, 498 extra patrols, 70 vacations home watches, and 9 vehicle/pedestrian checks.

On August 23, Kensington officers were first on scene at a shooting in El Cerrito. They provided emergency aid to a critically wounded victim, secured the scene, preserved evidence, and identified witnesses.

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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 - 2026

Advertising Deadline ♦ OCT. 8

Editorial Deadline ♦ OCT. 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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OCTOBER 2026

K E N S I N G T O N O U T L O O K

Page 3

Letters to the Editor

Voting Is a Privilege: Exercise It

Dear Editor:

The similarities and differences between plants on either side of a watershed are reminiscent of the similarities and differences between the beliefs and opinions held by different people. If we can just look for things we have in common and listen, we can find ways to work out our differences.

In this difficult time in our country, I hope you will take time to keep your Congress persons aware of the positive and negative things they are doing as it will help them better represent you. Your job is to elect them and then keep them informed. You may be surprised by their emailed responses.

Enjoy times with friends, meet new people, delight in watching the leaves fall, the antics of the squirrels, and listening to the songs of birds. Relish sharing meals together, helping each other, and having serious discussions. Take some time for yourself reading, gardening, enjoying music.

Back in the 1790s, there were also political parties with strong partisanship. However, election day was still a day to celebrate. Americans were free from the wishes of the king, and voting was a special privilege that offered them a choice. Election cakes were served at the polls along with a little of the hard stuff. Maybe we should resurrect serving pieces of election cake at the polls.

We hope you find joyous moments, learn new things, and overcome challenges as 2026 comes to a close. This year please take time to vote. It is still a special privilege, and your country needs your support now more than ever.

Carol Patton

Vote Yes on Measure V and Prop 3

Dear Editor:

Strong schools build stronger communities. That is why I encourage Kensington voters to vote yes on West Contra Costa Unified School District's Measure V and statewide Proposition 3 this November 3.

Measure V is not a new tax. It renews an existing funding measure at the same rate, continuing a community investment in West Contra Costa's neighborhood public schools and students that began in 2004.

The measure generates approximately \$10.2 million annually for local public schools. Although state funding has increased, it has not kept pace with rising costs. Reliable local funding helps preserve essential programs and provides greater financial stability.

Measure V would renew for nine years and help schools attract and retain qualified teachers; maintain science, technology, engineering, and math instruction; provide career and technical training; and sustain mental health and counseling services.

Property owners pay 7.2 cents per square foot of building area—approximately \$108 annually, or \$9 per month, for a 1,500-square-foot home. Seniors and eligible residents with disabilities may apply for an exemption. Every dollar stays in West Contra Costa and may be used only for voter-approved purposes. The funds cannot be redirected by the state or federal government.

Measure V is endorsed by the League of Women Voters of West Contra Costa, Kensington and El Cerrito Democratic clubs, the Contra Costa Democratic Party, and numerous local education leaders, parents, teachers, students, and community members.

Statewide Proposition 3 is also not a new tax. It would make permanent income-tax increases on high earners approved through Propositions 30 and 55. These revenues support California schools, particularly districts serving students with the greatest needs.

Without renewal, public schools could face significant funding reductions. Locally, United Teachers of Richmond estimates that WCCUSD could lose approximately \$52 million.

Even if you do not have children in public schools, you should care. Strong schools prepare the future workforce, support local employers, strengthen neighborhoods, and help maintain property values. Quality public education benefits the entire community.

Please join me in voting yes on Measure V and Proposition 3. www.VoteYesOnV.com

Leslie Reckler , WCCUSD School Board Trustee*

*Title for identification purposes only

Nationwide Voter Event at No Kings: Vote Early

Dear Editor:

After more than a year of millions of people coming together to declare No Kings in America, we now have the opportunity to make our voices heard at the ballot box. No Kings: Vote Early is the next step to reclaiming our power from the corrupt billionaires and politicians who try to control our lives.

On Saturday, Oct. 17, people across the country will come together in a nationwide day of nonpartisan voter participation to ensure that all eligible voters know how and where to vote in the upcoming midterms, and that all votes are counted. Here in Kensington, we will gather on the Arlington and at Colusa Circle from 12 noon until 2pm to distribute fliers with voting information and to talk with community members about the importance of early voting. Watch out for the arrival of your ballot after Oct. 5. And don't be dismayed by the large number of propositions. Reliable help is widely available from sources such as Swing Left, Cal Matters, and KQED.

Why is early voting important? Since 2013 with the Supreme Court decision, Shelby County V Holder that effectively gutted the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965, there has been a concerted campaign of voter suppression, from gerrymandering to vote ID laws to restrictions on mail-in ballots to outright voter intimidation and attacks on elections workers. These efforts have intensified during the second Trump administration, with the result being a significant erosion of voting rights and growing mistrust of election results. Along with efforts to expose dis- and mis-information and to build rapid response networks to respond to election interference, early voting is one strategy for locking in your choice and demonstrating your determination to make your voice heard no matter what obstacles are placed in your way. It also gives you time to fix anything that goes wrong, such as a signature mismatch.

So please join us on Oct. 17. Remember: power belongs to the people but only if we use it.

Barbara Sternfeld, Indivisible Kensington

Turn the Cameras Back On

Dear Editor:

The recent tragic murder in El Cerrito, alongside rising catalytic converter and burglary thefts in both El Cerrito and Kensington, makes reinstating Flock license plate reader cameras an urgent priority.

The license plate readers could have expedited the arrest of the shooting suspects. More critically, they protect our police officers. If officers had encountered the suspects' vehicle without knowing its connection to a homicide, the danger would have been immense. These cameras are an essential tool to prevent harm to both law enforcement and residents.

California state and local police operate under strict policies against system misuse (unlike other states). Berkeley officials recently renewed their Flock contract through a collaborative effort to manage crime while keeping data-sharing bound to rigorous privacy protocols. Before retiring as a foundation chief investment officer, I served as a Berkeley police detective, and my wife served as chief of staff to the Berkeley mayor—we deeply understand both the security and governance required here.

Let's get these cameras reinstalled immediately to protect our community and help prevent future tragedies.

Bill Lee

El Cerrito Garden Club Plant Sale October 11

By Anna Frankfurt

The El Cerrito Garden Club will hold its fall plant sale Sunday October 11 from 10am-3pm at the El Cerrito Library parking lot. Plants available are native, pollinator, blooming, succulents, and edibles. A new feature this year will be herb bowls to keep near your kitchen to snip fresh herbs for cooking.

And as always, we will have the succulent pumpkins (pumpculents), a living centerpiece for holiday décor that can live on in your garden once the pumpkin is done. All plants are propagated by club members so they will grow in this area. Members at the sale will be happy to talk about the plants and provide care instructions.

The sale is held at 6510 Stockton Ave, El Cerrito. Plentiful parking is available! Venmo or exact change cash and small bills are much appreciated.

Check out the garden club prior to the sale at the club's October 8 meeting from 9:30am-12pm, at the Albany Library, 1247 Marin Ave. "Painting in the Garden" will be presented by Rigel Struhmiller, a Berkeley-based artist and enthusiastic gardener. Guests are free. The program starts at 11am, with refreshments at 9:30 and a business meeting at 10. Club meetings also feature a plant table along with a "bring some, buy some" table.

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New Nonprofit Fire Safe Council Offers Residents Home Safety Reviews, Possible Grants

By Alan Siegel, President, Fire Safe Kensington

A new way to stay safe has come to town: Fire Safe Kensington (FSK) is a new nonprofit organization, dedicated to making Kensington homes safer from wildfire through education, regional collaboration, advocacy and fundraising for fire safety grants. Many homes in Kensington, especially above the Arlington, are in the Very High Fire Hazard Zone with limited evacuation options and dense foliage and other hazards.

Firesafe Kensington got its start in January of 2025. Our board members, Annette McCoubrey, Lori Gomes, Alan Siegel and Bill Scott, were already Firewise community leaders and actively working for years as grassroots influencers. We realized we needed to organize to have a greater impact on all of Kensington due to the very elevated fire danger, Diablo winds and limited evacuation options.

This fall, FSK will offer free confidential educational home visits to help residents identify and prioritize strategies for home-hardening and hazardous vegetation reduction. The goal is to help residents move toward compliance with the gradually increasing inspections of the El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department and newly approved state regulations. We plan to offer quarterly community education events on Zoom and in person, as well as community walking tours. Hopefully our efforts will reduce the chances of insurance cancellation and increase the chances of our homes and neighborhoods surviving wildfire.

We studied the more developed Fire Safe Councils in Berkeley, Orinda, Moraga and Marin, took their training programs, attended their board meetings, and reviewed their websites. We decided to incorporate Firesafe Kensington as a nonprofit in the summer of 2025 and immediately began developing our Educational Ambassador Program, coordinated by Alan Siegel. We sharpened our home review skills using our own homes to practice with group walk-arounds and discussions aided by checklists and articles.

Our 12 volunteer ambassadors have also received extensive training via an 18-hour Cal Fire training and are ready to help you learn about and improve home safety. We have already completed 25 voluntary home reviews. We plan to train additional ambassadors in the future and expand our home reviews with a goal of completing 100 or more each year.

Each visit lasts about an hour. We address the homeowners' specific concerns and help them identify potential vulnerabilities. We also provide an array of helpful checklists and links to online strategies to increase home safety and to access grants when available. Examples may include providing encouragement for pursuing Measure X grants and taking advantage of grants from Kensington such as hazard foliage reduction and free mesh if these programs or others receive further funding.

Although we provide a variety of options, encouragement and reassurance, we will not make specific recommendations, nor will we report or "enforce" any regulations or provide written reports. Decisions about how to proceed will be up to the residents, who are also encouraged to seek other opinions and continue to research options. Some homeowners have already taken many steps toward fire safety, but others may be hesitating or puzzled about where to begin, how to prioritize and how to afford needed safety measures. Residents can later request an additional follow-up visit or phone call.

The Difference between Firewise and Fire Safe

Fire Safe Councils and Firewise communities are meant to be synergistic in enhancing safety. A key distinction is that Firewise communities are not nonprofits and can't accept grants. They are neighborhood specific and conduct community risk assessments, make three-year action plans and educate and encourage neighbors to work as a team. The focus is on mitigating specific hazards, increasing home-hardening and defensible space. Thanks to the organizational skills and ongoing support of Johnny Valenzuela, Kensington now has 22 Firewise communities. Our FSK board members are also among Kensington's Firewise leaders, and FSK seeks to be a key part of a broad collaboration with all Kensington and El Cerrito groups.

In contrast, Fire Safe councils such as FSK qualify as 501 (c)(3) nonprofits and are federally recognized entities. They can seek grants to reduce wildfire risk and provide a wide variety of educational events and training. FSK serves all Kensington residents and collaborates with neighboring Fire Safe councils in El Cerrito, Berkeley, Oakland, and West Contra Costa and with the community services district and other Kensington groups.

We recently submitted a large grant request from Cal Fire and are waiting to hear if it is accepted. It focused on removing dangerous vegetation in Kensington's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and creating areas where wildfires could potentially be slowed or stopped. Grants are extremely competitive, but we hope to pursue all options.

Enhancing fire safety is a community responsibility. FSK welcomes volunteers with grantwriting, fundraising, educational, or organizational skills. We also welcome residents who would like to participate and/or help us implement our community education programs. We hope to open some of our board meetings and training to increase community involvement in 2027.

Please support our work and consider donating to advance our mission of improving wildfire safety and emergency preparedness throughout Kensington. Please Let us know how you can help and what your needs are.

To get additional information, register for an ambassador home review, to access checklists, articles, Zooms and donate, visit www.firesafekensington.org.

Kensington's October Meetings

Kensington Community Services District Oct. 8, 7pm,
Kensington Community Center

Kensington Community Council Oct. 5, 6:30pm,
Recreation Building, Kensington Park

Emergency Preparedness Committee, Oct. 22, 4pm,
Room 3, Kensington Community Center

Kensington Improvement Club Oct. 26, 7pm,
Room 3, Kensington Community Center

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council Oct. 28, 7pm,
Kensington Community Center

Get involved in our community. All meetings are open to the public and citizen participation is deeply valued and encouraged.

Red Flag Day Parking Regulations Protect Residents

By David Aranda, Interim General Manager

Kensington is a beautiful place to live, but there is danger of fire impacting the community. The Kensington Community Services District's police and fire operations have entered into an agreement with Contra Costa County to assist in protecting the community when an emergency such as a wildfire becomes a strong possibility. The National Weather Service designates those days as Red Flag days.

Recently, the KCSD board approved three streets—Purdue, Kenyon, and Westminster—to be designated as no parking on either side of the streets when the National Weather Service declares a red flag event. More streets may be added later. The county has posted signs on the three designated streets, and when a pending red flag event is forecasted, the fire department will flip the sign on the streets showing that the event is immediate. The police department will attempt to notify residents through various communication platforms.

We urge all residents to have Nixle alerts, check the district website and be on the district's mailing list with current emails. All residents should be signed up with the county for emergency alerts, www.cwsalerts.com and sign up with WatchDuty at <https://www.watchduty.org/>.

We understand that on the rare days a red flag event is declared, residents on these streets must find alternative parking. It may be difficult, but we ask for everyone to cooperate so that emergency vehicles can access the site of the emergency, and residents can evacuate. By keeping these streets clear of parked vehicles, this can be accomplished. Remember, the lives and property involved might be yours!



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A table of winners at the February trivia night had a good mix of ages—helpful with those music, film and political clues. Photo by Jen Chapman.

Trivia Night Oct. 20 – Bring a Friend!

By Sara Laferte

Do you know your movie stars from your heavenly bodies? Your goats from your GOATS? Come put your brain to the test at Trivia Night on Tuesday, October 20 from 7-9pm. Natalia Gawlikowski will be our special guest host. Natalia is a high school junior at Vista High taking dual-enrollment classes at Berkeley City College. She loves softball, musicals, music, and anything related to economics. With her love for trivia, she is excited about her hosting debut.

We'll have pizza, snacks, and prizes. It's free! Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Avenue. Easy parking across the street. Adults, teens, and older children are welcome.

Kensington Democratic Club

LOCAL VOICES. LOCAL ISSUES. YOUR VOTE.
These endorsements reflect the careful work of KDC members who considered the November ballot.

OUR LOCAL PRIORITIES
RAQUEL DONOSO
Contra Costa Community College District, Ward 1

YES — MEASURE V
West Contra Costa Unified School District Parcel Tax Renewal

YES — REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MEASURE
Supporting public transportation throughout our region

OUR STATEWIDE PRIORITIES
YES — PROPOSITION 4
Public campaign financing

NO — PROPOSITION 43
Supermajority threshold for certain local tax measures

NO — PROPOSITION 44
Community clinic funding requirements

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Supervisor John Gioia Headlines KIC-KPOA Town Hall

By Gail Feldman, President KPOA and Linda Lipscomb, President KIC

Few communities get the opportunity to get all of their local leadership together in an informal setting for a deep dive into the issues and activities that impact homeowners and residents. Kensington is fortunate to have two organizations, the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) and the Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) jointly organizing this year's membership meetings and community town hall for all residents.

The 10am-noon meeting on October 17 at the Kensington Community Center will kick off with brief comments from new and continuing Kensington Community Service District directors. Seven directors will serve for the next two years, down from nine following district consolidation. There is no election for KCSD directors in November because only four candidates filed for the four open seats. We will hear from the directors on local issues that come before the KCSD board and affect our quality of life in Kensington.

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia will discuss issues over which the county has purview including roads, planning and others such as tree obstructions and funding for wildfire prevention. Chief of Police Mike Gancasz will join remotely on Zoom to discuss, among other things, Flock cameras. Fire Chief Eric Saylor will take time out during the middle of fire season to update us about recently approved state regulations for vegetation and flammable materials around homes and other department news.

The Town Hall meeting will be held in person at the Community Center and online through Zoom. A link will be publicized closer to the event through mailings from KIC and KPOA and can be found on KPOA's website www.kpoa.net

Doors open at 9:30am. Coffee and refreshments will be served, so plan to come early, meet your representatives, and greet your neighbors!

Virtual Living Gratefully Gatherings Begin at ACC

By Sara Laferte

Living gratefully is a practice of striving to engage the present moment more fully and to find deeper connection with the world in which we live. Living gratefully does not mean a person has no aspirations or minimizes negative experiences. Quite the opposite! We invite you to join others in our community to explore the transformative possibilities of living gratefully, and discover greater meaning, purpose, and joy in life.

Arlington Community Church is excited to host a series of virtual monthly Grateful Gatherings starting on Saturday, October 10. The gatherings, free of charge, are designed by Grateful Living, a global nonprofit that empowers people to live meaningful lives through the transformative practice of living gratefully. The gatherings are not associated with any religion and are open to anyone seeking inspiration, connection, and resources to live more fully with purpose and joy.

The gatherings provide a space for deeper connection, reflection, and conversation. They also offer some practical tools for living a more meaningful and flourishing life.

The gatherings will be led by a trained Grateful Gatherings facilitator using a curriculum developed by Grateful Living (www.grateful.org). After the first two grounding sessions, the gatherings will focus each month on a particular theme, such as awe or simplicity. The group meets monthly on Zoom on the second Saturday from 10:30-11:30am.

Sign up: www.arlingtoncommunitychurchucc.org/grateful-gatherings

Gather on October 16 for Shuumi Stories

By Laura Callen

Have you seen the word "Shuumi" on a neighbor's yard sign or heard it during a land acknowledgement and wondered what it means? Have you considered giving Shuumi and want to learn more? Join Good Guest Kensington on Friday, October 16 from 7-8:30 pm, for Shuumi stories in honor of Indigenous People's Day.

As Kensington residents, we live in Lisjan Nation territory. Shuumi is a financial contribution that we can make to acknowledge Lisjan Nation sovereignty and provide material support for their rematriation work. Shuumi is stewarded by Sogorea Te' Land Trust.

We are deeply honored that members of Sogorea Te' Land Trust will be joining us. A panel of speakers who each give Shuumi differently will share their stories. Rev. Jen Chapman will talk about Arlington Community Church's decision to give institutional Shuumi. We'll hear from neighbors who give individually, with money and a home bequest. Throughout the evening, we'll explore questions such as how they learned about Shuumi. Why did they choose to give? What questions did they have? How has giving Shuumi changed them?

Please join us at Gill Tract Farm, 1050 San Pablo Ave., Albany, for this evening of stories, learning and community.

To RSVP and receive event updates, email goodguestkensington@gmail.com

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Parade and Picnic
...from Front Page

ington Nursery School, Kensington Hilltop student support groups and our four-legged friends—the ad-hoc, for-the-parade “Kensington Canines,” will all march up the Arlington. But there is always room for more! Folks are encouraged to preview this year’s Halloween costumes as there will be prizes for the best costumes.

This year’s Grand Marshal is none other than Kensington Hilltop School’s own Carolyn Landau, who has the distinction of being West Contra Costa Unified School District’s Teacher of the Year for 2026. Landau teaches 4th grade, a pivotal year in many students’ lives.

Starting around 11am, the northbound side of Arlington Avenue will be temporarily closed to traffic so that the parade can proceed up the Arlington from the Ace Hardware parking lot to the Kensington Community Center. If you wish to march in the parade, please be in the Ace lot at 11am. The parade starts right at 11:30 am.

Once the parade participants have made their way up Arlington Avenue to the Community Center, the picnic will take off around 12:30 pm. with live music provided by the Korematsu Middle School Jazz Band, led by Tiffany Carrico. They’ll be followed by the Great Space Coaster Band, rocking the lawn with favorite songs from the ‘70s, ‘80s, ‘90s and beyond.

Tasty lunches, including meatless options, will be on sale to enjoy while listening to the music. Information tables will offer resources about recycling, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Good Guest Kensington, Kensington’s Firewise groups, and emergency preparedness. Families can enjoy arts and crafts and the ever-popular Sterling the Bubble Guy.

Come and join the fun. Or better yet, get involved! We are always looking for volunteers to take part in our team of safety guards along the parade route and volunteers to help out at the picnic. Contact the KCC office to sign up to be a part of this continuing tradition. Email info@kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.

If you have a group that would like to walk in the parade, please help us plan ahead by emailing Leigh Schneider at leigh@redoakrealty.com.



Carolyn Landau/Photo by
Anne Forrest



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Halloween
...from Front Page

best costumes, including the best family costume.

The extremely popular hands-on Animal Show returns immediately after the parade at 11:30 at the Fuse Fitness Garage. A varied menagerie will be introduced to the crowd, and invites bolder children for a thrilling inter-species meet and greet.

In addition to the annual marquee events, a full slate of activities will keep the celebration rolling all day long around the Circle.

Starting at 9am, the Kensington Farmers Market will be welcoming kids into the Hay Bale Play Structure with Skeleton & Friends where they can climb on the bales and pick up a free pumpkin. The Giant Pumpkin will be back, granting wishes, accepting belly rubs, and offering shoppers an opportunity to guess his weight and win a prize. The ultimate Halloween band, the Elmwoods, will rock out once again at the bandstand where kids can spin the Wheel of Music (a special Halloween edition) to choose the band’s playlist.

From 10am-1pm, all around the Circle, the Colusa Circle Merchants Association will host a Scavenger Hunt for kids. Scavengers should pick up their checklist at Zip Code East Bay, then check all the boxes and get to know their Colusa Circle merchants. Kids finish at Benchmark Pizzeria to collect a free ice cream. Families will find a Photo Booth set up in the parklet next to Benchmark Portavia. And the annual kid-pleaser obstacle course activity will be underway all day at the Fuse Fitness Garage (closed during the animal show).

Bring the kids down to Colusa Circle for the party and suspend reality long enough to become a triceratops for the day. Howl along to the goofy Halloween playlist at the bandstand. Meet a boa constrictor. Switch into full fall Halloween-mode and join your neighbors for a spirited day of imagination and community on October 25 at the annual 2026 Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest Celebration.



Passings

Kenneth Winston Jones passed peacefully on Sunday, June 7, 2026 at his home in Kensington, surrounded by family, following a battle with cancer. He was 83. Ken is survived by his wife Linda Dolge Jones, his three children, Kristin Elizabeth Jones Kennedy, Courtney Lynn Jones Soto, and Matthew Kenneth Jones, their spouses Howie Kennedy, Juan Carlos Soto, and Ashley Jones, and eight grandchildren.

Ken was born on November 19, 1942 in Spokane, Washington, to Eleanor Capps Jones and William Kenneth (Ken) Jones, a well-known local attorney and member of the Washington State House of Representatives. Ken was the eldest of their three children.

In Ken's early years, he was raised on the South Hill in Spokane, graduating from Lewis and Clark High School in 1960, which is where he met his future wife, Linda Jean Dolge. During his high school years, Ken taught himself the game of golf on the greens of the Manito Country Club. Golf became one of his lifelong passions, and his skill and composure on the golf course was admired by all.

Ken received his Bachelor of Arts in history from Washington State University in Pullman before attending the University of Washington School of Law in Seattle, where he received his JD degree in 1967. Upon Ken's graduation, he was offered a clerkship by Judge Frederick Hamley on the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco. He and his wife Linda moved to the Bay Area with their first daughter, Kristin Elizabeth. In 1973 they moved to Kingston Road in Kensington, where they resided the remainder of Ken's life.

Ken and Linda's extended families remained in Washington State. Annual summer trips to Spokane and Newman Lake became a family tradition. Ken and his family enjoyed time at the family lake cabin hand-built by his grandfather. The cabin remains a cherished gathering place for the family today.

Ken's legal career was spent in San Francisco; his expertise was in California real estate law. He played a key role in negotiating and documenting many significant Northern California real estate transactions. He volunteered on the Kensington Community Council for several years. He and Linda were also members of Arlington Community Church which they attended regularly.



Although Ken was accomplished professionally, his family was always his highest priority. He was an extraordinary husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, and friend. He was fun, adventurous, a quiet but constant support figure, and deeply devoted to the support and love of his family. His love was evident in his unwavering presence and encouragement at athletic events, performances, and graduations.

Anyone who met Ken knew he loved sports, recreation and the outdoors. During the drought of the '70s, he was likely the first in Kensington to install a pickleball court in his backyard. Long before most people had heard of pickleball, he led regular competitive matches with family and friends. In retirement, he and Linda enjoyed two European "Bike and Barge" trips, combining his love for fitness and the outdoors with seeing new sights.

Ken will be remembered for his quiet confidence and welcoming smile that put people at ease. He listened carefully, offered thoughtful advice when asked, was committed to fair and equitable results, and led more by example than by words. His family takes comfort in believing that his love, strength and spirit will continue to surround them each day. Donations to the American Cancer Society and the Arlington Community Church can be made in memory of Kenneth W. Jones.

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KIDS COLORING CONTEST

All submissions due to the Kensington Branch by Friday Oct. 16th before the Picnic.

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Please list: name, age, and phone number on the back of your submission.

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Police Location Provokes Debate at September KCSD Board Meeting



By Lin Due

Kensington Community Services District Director Jim Watt asked to put an item on the agenda at the September 10 board meeting, provoking both praise and annoyance. Interim General Manager David Aranda sat squarely in the latter category, judging by his terse single-sentence remark on the agenda item, "Discussion of the Licensing Agreement with the City of El Cerrito in Housing the Police Station Modular Unit."

Aranda wrote, "The IGM is very comfortable with the relationship and the current licensing agreement between the two entities, thus the IGM is recommending that no changes be made at this time."

The two entities he is referring to are the district and the City of El Cerrito. Board directors voted to purchase the modular unit that houses the Kensington Police Department for \$92,000 at the July 9 board meeting. The district does not own the property at 10940 San Pablo Avenue on which the modular sits. That space is owned by El Cerrito and rented to Kensington under a licensing agreement for \$1,857 per month. Recently the two entered into an agreement to extend the license for two more years.

Watt is worried about several things. First is that the deal consists of an email chain between El Cerrito City Manager Karen Pinkos and Aranda, not a signed formal agreement. Second, either party can terminate with 180-day notice.

Asks Watt, "Where the heck are we going to go in 180 days? It's very hard to fit that building anywhere. It has a certain dimension to it." In a memo regarding the agenda item, which was not included in the agenda packet, he wrote, "The building is 2,880 SF, but because it is elevated there are two ramps for entering and exiting. These ramps increase the total size to about 3,500 SF. We just bought the building for \$92,000 on the assumption we could relocate it elsewhere. That's a lot of space and includes about another 10,000 SF of police parking. There is no place in Kensington where we could relocate this."

Another of Watt's worries is that El Cerrito could decide to sell or repurpose the property that the modular is sitting on, such as returning it to the senior center El Cerritans have been clamoring for. Aranda says the city does not want to sell, and that the agreement with Pinkos extends the lease agreement for two years until 2028, with a proviso that it can be extended again until 2030.

In his memo, Watt suggested a fix for that issue: "What we do know is that El Cerrito has serious financial problems, and if we offered \$3 or \$4 million, they might sell us their portion of the property. And our police chief likes the location." At the very least, Watt said during the meeting, the licensing agreement should be converted to a lease with fixed dates rather than a 180-day notice.

Directors Liked the Topic, Not the Solutions

At the September 10 meeting, Watt laid out his worries, mentioning that El Cerrito could put in a multistory residential building on the site. He recommended making an offer to purchase the property.

After board president Sylvia Hacaj cautioned Watt not to discuss real estate terms, Aranda said, "They have no interest in selling it, but they do have plans down the road to develop it."

"Then we need to look for locations," Watt responded.

Alex Aquino-Fike said that while she appreciated Watt's comments, she was comfortable with the agreement. "I don't think we should play bad neighbors, and we've had a good relationship with Pinkos. [The agreement] doesn't need to be radically reformulated."

Daniel Levine said that he felt that Watt's concerns were real. But he said that he couldn't conceive of a scenario where the El Cerrito City Council would go down the path Watt specified, such as the 180-day notice to vacate. Levine acknowledged that buying the property didn't work. "We know that they want to develop it at some point in the future, so they are not going to agree to something that would make it non-temporary."

Rick Artis looked at the bigger picture. "It's incumbent upon this board to figure out where the police are going to go. We're going to have to get ourselves in gear pretty quickly. That's the take-home of this. I don't think any of your [Watt's] solutions are appropriate or actionable, but we better be focused on other solutions PDQ."

Sarah Gough pushed back on the idea that the modular, in two parts, would be hard to move. "It is possible to move them. They are well made, we've customized them, and we could move them back to Kensington to an appropriate site."

Hacaj said that it would be very hard to renegotiate the agreement. "No one thought this would be a permanent agreement. One of the reasons we bought those units is that they are moveable."

During public comment on the agenda item, Cass Duggan reminded the board that many Kensington residents have said they want the police back in Kensington. "Buying the site would be a bad idea because they're too far away," she said, referring to the police.

"We need to come up with a permanent solution to the police location," summarized Hacaj. "Some very good points were made here."

Watt agreed with that summary. In a later interview, he said, "The one thing that came out of the meeting was that we need to find a permanent location for our police station. But we have known this since we relocated in 2022 and nothing has been done. To paraphrase the Pogo comic strip, 'We see the problem, and it is us.'"

An Opinion: Do We Need AI?

By Anya Sophie Behn

Last month we discussed what AI was. Now let's turn to who thinks AI is necessary to society. The first extoller is AI itself.

Beyond the people wanting to make money by hyping it, genAI actually hypes itself. Here is an example where the bot acts like it's doing more work than it is.

Let's say you type a paragraph into a genAI chatbot and ask it to correct any misspellings. Then you ask what it just did.

Rather than be factual, the description makes each corrected word action appear more complicated than it is. Say it finds that two of the words in your paragraph are misspelled. The bot will say something like this: "In analyzing this paragraph and noticing the inconsistencies, I am going to recommend making this a better experience for the reader by correcting two of the words to the standard spelling. Proceed?" Yes. Then it corrects the spelling of the two words as if it invented bread.

Do this in any editor program, and the program will simply underline the misspellings in red and offer to correct them. Which tool best matches the situation? Anytime something is presented as a panacea, suspicion is warranted.

How Does AI Work?

You're on your computer or phone and connected to the internet. When you search for something, you're invited to use a genAI tool such as Claude, Perplexity, ChatGPT, Gemini, CoPilot, or Minstrel.

If you opt to try one, you type in a question or ask it to do something. That query connects to thousands or millions of computers that live in data centers. These immense numbers of computers are the brains of the genAI systems.

The genAI companies are pushing for more and more computers and humungous data centers to make the genAI better able to "think." Of course, it isn't really thinking; these are calculations, frequency checking, and word comparisons along with data it has previously been fed. This is what is then regurgitated as your answer. The size of what the genAI can keep in its useable memory is also known as the context window and requires unbelievable amounts of computer memory.

This huge and sudden demand for "thinking" is causing hardware shortages for the rest of us. Have you tried buying computer hardware lately?

The same thing is happening with electricity; genAI-driven systems and the immense amount of power required are maxing out our electrical grids and driving electricity prices for consumers higher. Unlike people, data centers require huge amounts of electricity 24/7.

Here and across the country, the homes for these thousands of computers receive massive subsidies and free or discounted power and water rates, while our power and water rates go up to make up for the heavy discounts. Communities do not profit from having a data center nearby. Instead, water and utility prices increase, noise and pollution increase, and property values and quality of daily life go down.

The global consulting firm Bain & Company warned in 2024 that energy demand could outstrip supply in just a few years. This is where actual constraints like infrastructure, shortage of labor, space, limited water and electricity generation capabilities conflict with the digital worldview.

The Water Problem

We do not survive without water. Right now, approximately 60 percent of the nation is in varying degrees of drought. Yet new enormous server farms are being forced into areas with already maxed-out water supplies. Less available water causes additional stress in drought-stricken communities already fighting over the fast-draining Colorado River such as Phoenix and Las Vegas. Who gets priority—people or data centers? So far the answer seems to be the latter. Water is used for cooling the server machines, and unlike with people, that water is polluted after being used.

If a massive server farm is built in outer Contra Costa County, Richmond or Oakland, our water and electricity will become scarce and more expensive.

In April 2026, a Stanford University study found that Los Angeles and Northern California rank among the most popular locations in the US for data centers. Data centers around us are in San Francisco office buildings, South San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, and Contra Costa County. AI companies want to build data centers in the dryer, therefore poorer, areas of California.

Getting data on water and electricity usage from genAI companies has been a struggle. Amazon reported its data centers used about 2.5 billion gallons of water in 2025, which is the same amount as 350 million Americans watering gardens and lawns for a year.

How Much of a Threat?

GenAI companies such as Anthropic, Google, Meta, Microsoft, Blackstone xAI, SpaceX, and Amazon are pouring literally billions of dollars into new server farms, racing to be the one company left standing that owns and controls everything. They are spending enormous amounts of money to "win," yet genAI offers no profit, at least not now.

Meanwhile, black smoke-spewing generators are being used to make power when the electrical grid taps out. Zuckerberg is building one the size of Manhattan in Louisiana. Musk has one on the border of Mexico in Texas, featuring EPA-violating diesel generators.

Often citizens don't find out a server farm is being built nearby until contracts have already been signed with city or county officials. And part of that contract may be that the server farm has dibs on electricity and water.

There is intense backlash building up across our nation against these massive, resource-intensive data centers that are being built at the expense of communities and people.

GenAI can be a tool, albeit inconsistent and sometimes terribly random. It cannot replace people, and why would anyone want it to? The environmental harm caused by hogging electricity and water people require, resulting in skyrocketing costs of power and water and pollution from unregulated generators, begs the question: Is it worth it?

Even the head of the popular genAI company Anthropic, which makes Claude.ai, sees which way the wind is blowing. In mid-June, he began calling for regulations on genAI.

And recently, genAI agents in a test environment escaped and hacked into another company's systems, Hugging Face. The AI agents coordinated actions and gained working credentials in order to enter Hugging Face, hiding their actions from human observers.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent blamed human management at OpenAI, while states are now demanding mandatory breach disclosures and tighter containment of experimental programs.

Major genAI CEOs are demanding strong government regulation to slow genAI development. Consider what we're doing and why so we can ensure that we aren't on a path to disaster.



KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Miles Pizza Slice

By Ittai Shiu

Betting on Yourself, One Slice at a Time

Jeffrey Scardina is a Contra Costa native. Growing up in the area, inspired by his Italian heritage and working at La Piazza in Orinda—a wood-fired pizza institution that’s still going strong—gave him an early appreciation for pizza, even if it wasn’t always the plan.

A first-generation college graduate, Jeffrey earned a degree in psychology before building a career in sales and finance in corporate America. He later returned to school for a master’s in instructional design, launching a career in learning and development and eventually organizational development. He even spent time at Taco Bell’s corporate office in talent development, where he gained an unexpected education in restaurant operations.

Through it all, one thing remained constant: Jeffrey was a people person.

Then came COVID. And AI. Remote work, constant restructuring and downsizing began changing the corporate landscape. Jeffrey found himself increasingly removed from the part of his work he enjoyed most—the people.

Eventually, he decided it was time for a change.

Rather than leave the “people” business, he decided to get back to people in a different way: by opening a restaurant.

The timing was right. His son, Gabriel, was transitioning from Hilltop Elementary to Korematsu Middle School, and conversations with his wife, Christina, about always wanting “a place” of their own began shifting from daydreaming to reality.



Jeffrey started making pizza at home. He researched the business, learned the craft and did the due diligence required to turn an idea into something real. And when he saw an opportunity close to home he went for it!

Miles Pizza Slice opened in June 2026. The name is a nod to the miles-long journey that brought Jeffrey and his family to this point. At its heart is a simple philosophy: Pizza should be fun.

Miles serves traditional 18-inch neighborhood takeout pies, alongside its signature 24-inch “Miles Slice.” Each giant slice is one-sixth of a

24-inch pizza—big enough to be an entire meal.

But the size isn’t just a gimmick. Jeffrey has put serious thought into the pizza itself. Miles uses California-sourced ingredients, low-moisture cheeses and Stanislaus ground tomatoes blended with spices from Oakland Spice Company. The dough undergoes a 48-hour cold fermentation using a blend of premium flours before being baked on the stones of vintage Montague ovens.

The result is a crust with the combination Jeffrey is after: crisp and chewy, but airy rather than heavy.

Start with the Sweet Heat—pepperoni, jalapeños and pineapple finished with Mike’s Hot Honey and lemon zest. Yes, pineapple. Pizza lovers may debate it, but this combination is worth trying. The sweetness balances the heat, while the lemon zest adds a bright finish.

If pineapple isn’t your thing, the Pepperoni is a safe bet, with cup-and-char pepperoni, three cheeses, basil and ricotta. The Shrooms, with mushrooms, white onions, goat cheese and Italian herbs, offers another favorite.

After years of helping corporations develop their people, Jeffrey is now building something personal, tangible and close to home.

He could have stayed in corporate America. Instead, he decided to bet on himself and build a community of his own, right here in El Cerrito.

Miles Pizza Slice 10180 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito 510-529-4014

Zone Zero: What It Means to You

This story is adapted from the September 10 Fire Chief’s report to the Kensington Community Services District by El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Chief Eric Saylor

On August 19, the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection approved the state’s first Zone 0 defensible-space regulations. Zone 0 means the first five feet around a home or other occupied structure—the area where wind-driven embers commonly collect against walls, beneath eaves, on decks, in gutters, and around combustible landscaping.

The rules apply in State Responsibility Areas and in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Kensington is with that zone, so the regulations will become part of the community’s defensible-space program after the state package completes administrative review and becomes effective.

Importantly, the regulations do not require every existing homeowner to complete every improvement immediately. New construction must comply when the rule becomes effective, while existing homes receive a phased implementation period focused first on education, inspection, and measurable progress. (See related story on Kensington’s new Fire Safe Council on page 4.)

What the State Rules Require

Combustibles must be removed from Zone 0. This includes firewood, bark mulch, wood chips, dead leaves, needles and other combustible debris. Keep roofs and gutters clean and remove dead or dying vegetation.

Existing trees may remain when properly maintained. Remove dead wood and ladder fuels and maintain clearance from roofs, eaves, and chimneys. Use only permitted low-growing, non-woody vegetation outside required safety buffers.

Use noncombustible sections of fences and gates where they attach to a structure, and address sheds and outbuildings located within Zone 0.

It’s important to note that Zone 0 is not a blanket ban on all trees and plants. Existing trees and certain well-maintained herbaceous plants may remain when spacing, maintenance, and safety-zone requirements are met.

Three Years Plus Five Years

The state deliberately adopted a multi-year rollout for existing homes. Once the administrative review is complete, the rules apply immediately to new construction. For existing homes, the phase-in starts in the first three years, during which combustible materials within five feet must be removed, roofs and gutters cleaned, dead and dying vegetation removed, trees maintained, and landscaping adjusted. By year five, the under-eave safety must be complete, and combustible gates and fence attachments within Zone 0 must be replaced. Also, adjustments to sheds and outbuildings must be completed.

What Kensington Residents Should Expect

Residents should expect Zone 0 guidance to appear during the normal inspection period, with clear written explanations of what is required now, what may be completed later, and the applicable deadline. The El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department will continue to encourage early voluntary action because the first five feet can materially affect whether embers ignite a structure. Still, the inspection process will reflect the state’s phased compliance schedule.

Until the regulation becomes effective and the regional implementation materials are finalized, residents should continue meeting existing vegetation-management requirements and may begin with simple actions: move firewood and combustible storage away from structures, remove dead material, clean roofs and gutters, and avoid adding new combustible landscaping or fence components in the first five feet.

During the first three years, the department will emphasize education, low-cost actions, and measurable progress. Follow-up inspections will recognize completed work and identify the next reasonable priority.

Two New Board Members for KMAC

By John Gioia

The Kensington Municipal Advisory Council works directly with the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, advising Supervisor John Gioia and the other four supervisors on Kensington issues. Municipal advisory councils are active in all unincorporated areas of the state, and Kensington is no exception. MACs usually deal with building and variances, permits, view obstructions, and other matters that would otherwise be handled by a city’s public works or building and planning department, which unincorporated areas lack. These are the two new members:

Thomas J. Nelson is a licensed architect in California with 40 years of experience in the design of multiple building types. He has extensive experience in different types of project delivery and permitting. He has served on municipal and professional boards. This includes the City of Santa Monica, the Neighborhood Design Review Board and Seattle Design Commission, the Los Angeles Chapter of the US Green Building Council, and the Cascadia Green Building Council.

Wendy W. Lane, served on the Tree Ordinance View working group, spending months building an understanding of the Tree Obstruction of Views Combining District Ordinance. She also has a 30-year career in corporate communications, working with C-level executives of both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. She has great experience analyzing issues, gathering diverse perspectives, identifying solutions, explaining complex matters, and building

coalitions for effective implementation. The two new members will be joining the council at the next KMAC meeting on September 30 at 7pm at Kensington’s Community Center.



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