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KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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MARCH 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

VOLUME 79 NUMBER 2

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New GM Eager to Get Back to the Bay—and to Work



By Linnea Due

Marti Brown, the Police Protection and Community Services District's new general manager (not an interim!) grew up in the Bay Area and returns by way of south Sacramento, Arvin, Marysville, and farther afield (and longer ago), Nepal. Brown was the city manager of Marysville from 2018-2020 until she was terminated without cause by a 3-2 vote. (The video from a special council meeting questioning her termination can be viewed on YouTube—it's a lesson in board dysfunction.)

Before that unhappy experience, 55-year-old Brown was executive director of a business improvement effort in south Sacramento. "It was very diverse," Brown said. "A poorer business district, and a very interesting place to work." She has also worked in housing redevelopment, as a community development director, and other private and public sector jobs. She also served as a city councilmember for Vallejo.

Brown was attracted to the GM job for several reasons. "I could see really quickly

that I could help with some structural things," she said. "There's always a challenge when you're trying to provide quality public service with not much funding. If you have a city that doesn't have to worry about capital, it's really different than when you have to watch the bottom line." She said that neither Marysville nor Arvin were flush with funds. "They're stable but you can't go crazy with spending," she said. "I tried to improve the finances. I spent the first two years stabilizing the organization. Lifting up the carpet and asking why we were doing it this way when we could be saving money by doing it that way."

Marysville took on a pension obligation bond to pay its unfunded pension liability, as Kensington did last June. "Kensington is on a smaller scale," Brown said. "I'm really hoping that I can bring more stability."

Brown's family moved to the Bay Area when she was ten. One sister lives in Berkeley, one in San Francisco, and her

See Brown, page 8

Help Your Neighbor Get Vaccinated

By Linnea Due

Covid-19 vaccines are now available at no cost to everyone who lives in Contra Costa County who is 65 and older. More than a quarter of Kensington residents are in this age group. You can make a vaccine appointment with the county health department with just a few clicks or phone prompts. But not everybody can download an app or navigate a web page—and then recognize the email that arrives a few days later with appointment information (I know at least two people who inadvertently tossed that email). Appointments by phone can also be tricky.



Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) is starting a Help Your Neighbor campaign. Everyone can help—residents, businesses, family members. Reach out to people who may need a hand. If you have friends or neighbors who are eligible, ask if they've made an appointment. If they haven't, see how you can help.

CCHS has a new Help Your Neighbor web page with videos and how-to resources that give you a guide to assisting those

See Vaccine, page 8

State of the Market

Real Estate is business as usual in an unusual market.

It is a sellers market and taking advantage of Proposition 19 may be worth considering if you are moving anywhere in California and are 55 or older or are disabled. Did you know you can transfer your low tax base to your new residence? Effective date is April 1, 2021. Let me know if you would like to explore if this would be beneficial to you.

January 31, 2021 - Present

Listings		Pending Sales	
Number of listings	2	Number of Pending Sales	10
Avg. List Price	\$1,275,000	Avg. List Price	\$1,224,000
Avg. Square footage	1,879	Avg. Square footage	2,090
Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$677.65	Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$665.28
Avg. Days on the market	15	Avg. Days on the Market	20

Sales January 2021 to present

Number of Solds	5 (Per MLS)	Avg. Square footage	2,043
Avg. List Price	\$1,275,000	Avg. Sales Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$771.69
Avg. List Price Cost Per Sq. Ft.	\$631.84	Avg. Days on the market	16
Avg. Sales Price	\$1,346,000		

My primary objective is to identify and provide the service my clients need to accomplish their real estate goals, whether they are purchasing or selling a home. I can share with you more information about our Compass Concierge Program. It is a hassle-free way to sell your home faster and for the highest possible price.

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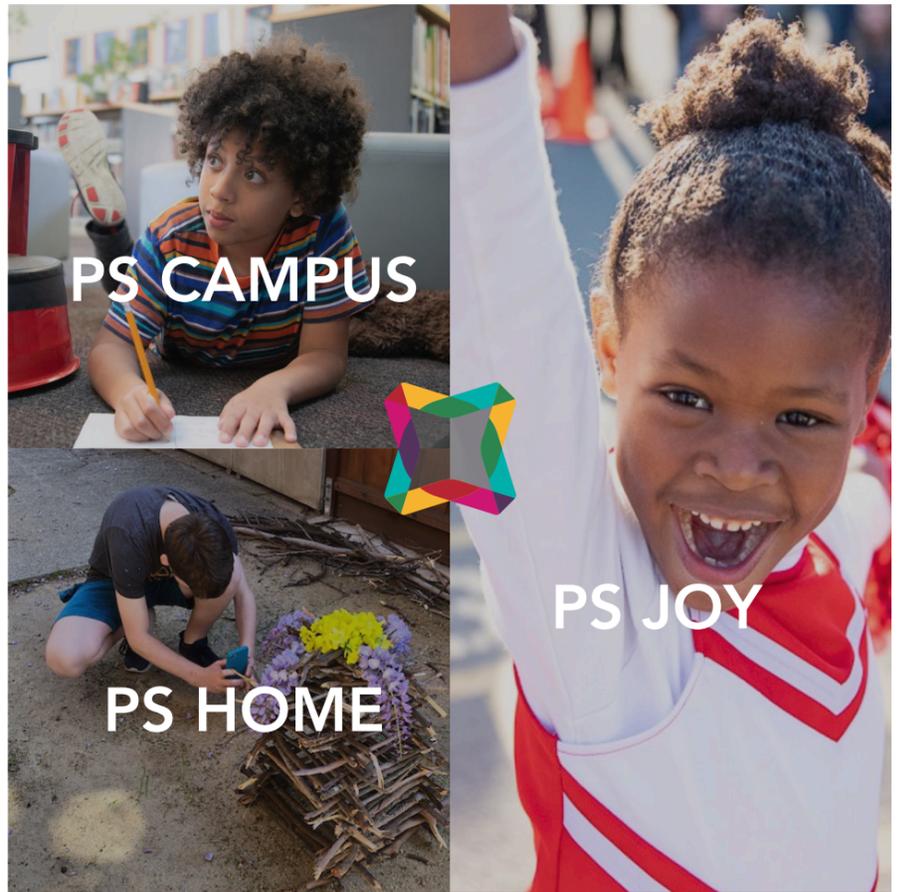


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Bay Area Green Business - NAIS Model School of the Future - Ashoka Changemaker School
US Department of Education Green Ribbon School

Kensington Update

JUST LISTED

1818 Arlington Blvd., El Cerrito Hills

3BR/2BA Mid-Century, all one-level living with two-car garage. Views of San Francisco and beyond. Post and Beam modern with inspiring views. Tasteful updates include fabulous kitchens and baths.

Offered: \$988,000

374 Vassar Avenue, Berkeley

4BR+/3BR Enter through private courtyard. The residence of a master gardener and an artist. The attention to detail and subtle refined elegance is reflected throughout. Simply gorgeous with a seamless connection to the expansive Bay views and beautiful grounds.

Offered at: \$1,698,000

COMING SOON

20 Block Kerr Ave., Kensington

4BR /3BA Custom 40's residence The architecture emphasis focuses on light, elegant clean lines and a connection to the expansive garden and views. Inspiring design + Sep. artist workshop.

Call for Price

30 Block of Sunset Dr., Kensington

3BR+++/ 3+ BA Kensington custom modernist residence, dramatic in architecture and design. Sited on a rare half acre parcel +/- . Separate out building was once occupied by a legendary rock band of the '60's.

Call for Price

PENDING / JUST SOLD

31 Arlington Blvd., Kensington

3BR/2BA Sophisticated modern design. Beautifully updated with gorgeous views of the Bay.

Pending

Offered at: \$1,098,000 with 10 offers!

109 Arlington Blvd., Kensington

3BR/2BA Light and airy c.1940, updated while retaining its original character. Partial bay views and inviting garden with mature fruit trees.

Offered at: \$879,000. Sold: \$1,315,000 with 13 offers!

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⚠️ PUBLIC SAFETY REMINDER ⚠️

If you haven't already done so, please sign up for Nixle alerts. Nixle is a text message-based system that the Kensington police and fire departments use to notify residents of emergencies and urgent situations (e.g., wildfires, red flag days, locally severe weather).

Nixle is an excellent adjunct to the county's Community Warning System (CWS), with the added advantage that residents can receive Kensington-specific alerts earlier.

To sign up, go to nixle.com or simply text your ZIP code to 888777. Sign up and stay informed!—Paul Moss, KFPD Emergency Preparedness Committee

The Kensington Community Council is dedicated to the improvement, development, and education of the community, and to the promotion of social welfare in Kensington. It enriches the community by providing educational and recreational programs for all ages and by publishing the Outlook, a monthly newsletter that covers local events and issues. KCC also provides a forum for all Kensington community groups to meet and coordinate their respective efforts toward the common good of the community.

APRIL 2021 DEADLINES:

Advertising Deadline ❖ MARCH 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ MARCH 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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Mail: For display and classified advertising, please contact our advertising manager by phone or email. Other mail to: 59 Arlington Ave., Kensington, CA 94707. Thank you!

K E N S I N G T O N

Community Education

Spring KASEP

There is still time to sign up for one of our Spring Virtual or In-person after school enrichment classes.

You can register for an upcoming session now online at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/Kasep



KASEP Spring 2021

Each block is 6 weeks of class

Block B-Starts March 1st - April 16th

Block C-Starts April 19th - May 28th

Virtual Classes

- COOKING - FAMILY MEALS - Available Block B - Grades 2-6
- COOKING - ALL ABOUT TACOS - Available Block C - Grades 2-6
- CODING - Available Blocks B & C - Grades K-6
- MATH CLUB - Available Blocks B & C - Grades 3-6
- ORIGAMI - Available Blocks B & C - Grades K-6
- SPANISH - Available Blocks B & C - Grades K-6

In-Person Classes

- *New* ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE - Available Block B - Grades 2-5
- DANCE FITNESS - Available Blocks B & C -Grades K-6
- HANABI JUDO - Available Blocks B & C - Grades K-6
- TENNIS CAMP - Available Blocks B & C - Grades 3-6



KCC Summer Camp is back!

Kensington Summer Day Camp 2021

KCC Summer Camp is filled with outdoor team games, arts & crafts, dance, sports, Olympic week, cooking, tennis and much more! We hope to be enjoying the newly renovated Kensington Community Center this summer, add a kitchen, tennis courts, basketball courts, classrooms and large grassy areas to the camp's foot print - all in one area, no need to travel anywhere else!

Camp provides a positive and nurturing environment for students entering grades 1st through 6th in FALL 2021. Campers learn new skills, develop new friendships, and have an exciting summer!

Camp is from 9:00am - 5:00pm Monday through Friday

Camp Cost is \$350 per camper, per week

Registration Starts Tuesday, February 23rd at 7pm and is ongoing

Register On-line: KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/kcc-day-camp

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

COVID-19 Safety Protocol: KCC Day Camp will be following the current State and County COVID safety measures during this summer's camp program. This may include, but is not limited to, small groups of 12 campers per pod, mostly outdoor activities, and any mask mandate that is in effect during that week. We will continue with our elevated cleaning and sanitizing of bathrooms as well as practicing repetitive hand washing and social distancing when possible. We will be sending out health questionnaires to families prior to their week of camp.

Calling all Counselors!

We have openings for summer camp counselors. If you are a senior in high school or older, enjoy working with children, and want to be part of a fun, energetic team, please download an application at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/kcc-day-camp



KCC Adult Classes

Zumba in the Park
Saturdays 9:00-10:00 a.m.
Community Center Lawn

If there is rain the class will be cancelled and not relocated inside

Virtual Adult Exercise Classes

Easy Moving for Adults with Limited Mobility
Thursdays 10:00-11:00am

Stretch & Strength
Wednesdays 11:30-12:30pm

Pilates
Saturdays 9:00-10am

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.Org/adult-classes

Tennis Court Reservations: For weekends and holidays only, beginning at 9am. Call the KCC office for info. Court Fees: 45-min. singles reservation: Residents: \$2

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Bldg. E (Across the grassy field above the tennis courts in Kensington Park), Kensington CA 94707. E-mail: kccrec@yahoo.com, or call 525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.

Letters to the Editor

Because They Can...

Dear Editor:

At the January KPPCSD board meeting, the board directors decided to eliminate the board's finance committee. Why did they eliminate their last standing board committee? Because they can. My membership on that committee goes back almost ten years. Most of these years the committee was active and productive.

At the January meeting, some directors gave various weak reasons for voting to eliminate the committee. One reason given was "We are elected, they are not." One would think that board members know that appointed people almost always accomplish more than elected people.

Another reason given was "The committee took too much staff time." The finance committee worked with the same financial reports as were produced for the board and the public. No extra time there. The committee met quarterly for two hours each, not much time to do some financial planning for an institution with revenues of over \$3 million.

For the last year or so, more scheduled finance committee meetings were either postponed or cancelled than were held. It seemed that neither the past board president nor the last GM saw much value in the finance committee.

The board president determines the committee's agenda. Requests to agendaize such vital items as financial planning for a temporary police station location during the rebuilding/renovation of the public safety building were either ignored or rejected. So again, why was the finance committee eliminated? Did we ask too many uncomfortable questions?

Karl Kruger

Bring Back the Finance Committee Now

Dear Editor:

In a surprise move the KPPCSD board eliminated the standing finance committee on January 14, without consultation with its members and over objections by all public attendees. By eliminating this committee the KPPCSD board loses constituent expertise and perspective on critical financial matters.

The committee's highly qualified and experienced financial experts provided recommendations substantially improving reporting and the audit, devised a professional municipal budgeting process, created a reserves policy, made penetrating assessments of financial risks to the district, forecast CalPERS-returns effects on expenses, and more. The previous finance manager implemented most committee recommendations, expressing agreement with the rest.

Committee expertise included advanced financial analysis and executive experience. Its efforts went beyond elementary projections of expenses, to include predictive modeling and simulation to reveal critical variables, and possible short-and long-term consequences of board plans, in addition to reviews of budget process, budgets, and periodic results.

The board stated that ad hoc committees can fill the committee's role, but ad hoc committees are a poor substitute, including that they do not have a standing committee's knowledge that accumulates over the years.

A staff finance manager is needed, but KPPCSD has benefited from the deeper, long view of financially educated and experienced citizens whose directive was to advise the board, its GM and finance manager. The committee was free from daily staff work and reporting—it had more time to analyze long-term risks, policy effects, and outside forces that may threaten or enhance district solvency. Staff preparation required to attend committee meetings is in fact minimal, requiring dissemination of precisely the same reports already required, plus about one hour of attendance. Meetings could be held every other month.

Tapping volunteer community financial training and expertise to improve transparency and fiscal responsibility in management of district budgets and financial management lends credibility and accountability to the board.

The finance committee must be reinstated, including mandatory reporting of recommendations at public board meetings. We expect the community members of the just eliminated finance committee be reinstated. Community benefits are substantial.

Rob Firmin and Directors of the KPOA Board

Finances in Hands of Professionals

Dear Editor:

The Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) fortified its administrative and governance reforms with the hire of Ms. Marti Brown in January as our second permanent independent general manager. We also welcomed back the district's first finance and business manager, Katherine Korsak, after an absence of several months.

As the district enhances its professional staff, we continue to adjust other elements of our governance accordingly. In January, the board also voted to eliminate its last standing committee, the finance committee, following the expiration of its members' annual term. The committee served our community well by volunteering experience in finance at a time when our administrative staff lacked such capacity. We owe a debt of gratitude to its long-standing members for their service.

Today, however, the district has professional staff with expertise in public finance. The areas of the former committee's jurisdiction are now squarely the responsibility of the general manager and the district's staff. Your elected representatives on the board provide oversight, with community input. For long-term forecasting on specialized questions we bring in experts with great speed and efficiency.

I want to assure residents that as president of the board, it is my intent to open up more opportunities for public input. At the last board meeting, we passed a policy that requires a first reading of the budget a month before we vote on it, providing residents with two chances to comment. In addition, I will be working with GM Brown to hold at least one budget workshop to provide a forum for a detailed explanation and discussion of the budget.

Looking ahead, Kensington faces a challenging fiscal environment with uncertain housing for our police and administrative staff, a desire among some residents for the district to take ownership of public paths, an underfunded park maintenance budget, on top of recent investments in our police department.

See Letters page 6

SUPPORT LOCAL
community services

WITH ZIP CODE EAST BAY

In this time of COVID, connecting isn't as easy as it used to be. But there are still plenty of ways we can support each other safely. This month, we're highlighting some of the great free local services available in our community.

Little Free Libraries There are 100s of these neighborhood book exchanges, where everyone is invited to take or leave a book, throughout the community. With several right here in Kensington, free knowledge is always close at hand. Zip Code East Bay also offers its own digital library. If you're interested in specific information on green homes, greywater systems, ADUs or buying and selling, contact us and we will share our e-booklets for free.

Seed Libraries If you're starting to think about your spring garden, look into using a seed library. These libraries provide vegetable, herb and flower seeds for free to the public. If you're a more experienced gardener, consider donating your extra seeds at the end of the season as well.

Buy Nothing Groups Established in 2013, they now exist in 30 different countries and all across the East Bay. These groups allow neighbors to offer goods they no longer need to their community for free. Buy Nothing Groups keep unwanted items out of the landfill while also saving its members money.

For more information

about free local services,

check out our blog post at

ZIPCODEEASTBAY.COM/LOCAL.

We hope you'll support these

great local groups just as

they support us.

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Passings

William "Bill" McNab, December 30, 1930–October 8, 2020. Bill and his wife Gloria lived in Kensington for fifty years. He was active at Kensington Hilltop Elementary and volunteered for various activities such as Scouts and Dad's Club. He always supported the police and fire departments.

Most of all, Bill was fond of railroads, including the Swanton Pacific Railroad in Daventport (north of Santa Cruz). He planted redwood trees near the tracks at Swanton: this was called the McNab Grove.

Unfortunately the recent wildfires created chaos at Swanton, almost destroying the site. Donations may be made in Bill's name. Write checks to "Cal Poly," with "Swanton Railroad" in the memo field. Mail checks to Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, Attn: Advancement, 1 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

Bill is survived by his wife Gloria and their two children, Luanne and William, and many grandchildren.



Zeke Anello, a 21-year-old Kensington resident, died on January 23. He sang beautifully. His eyes were bright black. You'd think it was the best feeling in the world when he landed with a soft thud on your shoulder. But really it was when he trusted you enough to put his head down and lean his crown towards you, letting you get close enough to gently, slowly, kiss him. In those moments, you could smell his delicious, clean scent.

Zeke loved mirrors. He'd sing to the bird in the mirror with all his heart. When you whistled a song to him, he'd run to a mirror to share the music with the mirror bird. Towards his last days, he'd make a circuit around the house, singing to each mirror. He sang a lot. Probably five songs a day. Loud, sincere, beautiful. He let his beak hit something, like a mirror or newspaper, so that his music had a beat. He seemed infinitely joyful.

Alene adopted Zeke when he was sixteen years old. Her other bird, Conrad, needed a companion. The second she saw Zeke, Alene loved him. He flung himself towards the near wall of his tiny cage, to get as close to Alene as possible. He put his eye right up to her face, and started speaking, quietly, in bird language. Zeke was a soulful, badass bird. He will be missed forever. Zeke leaves behind Robert and Alene and Conrad (his fellow cockatiel). If you're interested in a bird family member, go to Mickaboo.org or PigeonRescue.org to find adoptable birds in the Bay Area.

Arlington Community Church Starts Black Homeownership Reparations Fund

By Rev. Nate Klug

Like many institutions over the past year, Arlington Community Church has been examining its complicity in structures of white supremacy. We've held discussion groups and read books on anti-racism, but we've also been looking for more concrete, public ways to respond.

This Lent, in partnership with other local churches, we are launching the Black Homeownership Reparations Fund (BHRF) to help repair a small portion of the financial damage of racism and white supremacist policies—in particular, the longstanding barriers to Black homeownership that have existed in our East Bay communities.

For many Americans, owning a home is their major source of wealth. But because of segregation, redlining, adverse (or nonexistent) mortgage terms, and loan application rejection, the Black community has been shut out from this major wealth-building tool. Addressing Black homeownership is a way to make long-lasting, systemic change in how Black communities can build wealth and pass it along to their heirs.

A major barrier to homeownership, especially in the high-priced Bay Area, is lack of a down payment. This is especially true for Black homebuyers, who may have good incomes but no access to the additional capital they need for a down payment. The BHRF will create a zero-percent-interest loan fund, to be paid back only when the home is refinanced or sold. Working through local organizations, the fund will identify potential Black homebuyers who are on the journey to home ownership but who lack a down payment.

"The price of privilege," Isabel Wilkerson writes, "is the moral duty to act when one sees another person treated unfairly." ACC will be donating the entirety of our plate offering during Lent to this project, and we have seeded the fund with an additional donation of \$15,000. We invite the local community to join us in this work of repair.

Individuals can contribute to the BHRF directly by writing a check to Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Ave., Kensington, 94707, noting Black Homeownership Reparations Fund in the memo line. All contributions are fully tax-deductible. To find out more about the project, and to share your ideas, please visit ArlingtonCommunityChurchUCC.org.

Looking for an off-roader? Try Engine 365.



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84 Norwood Ave, Kensington
Originally offered at \$1,295,000
3+ Bed | 2 Bath

172 Ardmore Rd, Kensington
Originally offered at \$1,189,000
4 Bed | 2 Bath

60 Avon Rd, Kensington
Originally offered at \$1,185,000
3 Bed | 2 Bath

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The KFD's new type 3 engine is a 2020 International 4-wheel drive with seating for up to four. It has upgrades that improve its performance and protect the environment. These include a fuel-efficient diesel engine with DEF exhaust that makes it a certified clean idle motor.

Upgrades include air bag/curtain restraint systems, 360-degree cameras to see all the way around the engine, LED lighting to lower the power drain on the electrical system, better ground clearance for off-road traveling and dual fire pumps to provide redundant water systems.

While it is considered a wild land engine, the new apparatus is also very capable of attacking a structure fire as well as responding to medical calls. It is shorter than our old engine to make maneuverability better on our tight turns. The fire district banks a set amount each year towards replacing each of our two engines on a recurring schedule.

Letters

...from page four

President Joe Biden is fond of saying, “Don’t tell me your values. Show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value.” I look forward to working with all our residents to meet our challenges responsibly in a way that reflects our best aspirations.

Sylvia Hacaj, Board President, KPPCSD

Policy Changes in the Dead of Night

Dear Editor,

On January 14, 2021, Kensington lost one of its most valuable community resources, the KPPCSD finance committee. This committee had been a fixture of our local government for decades, providing access to budgetary developments four times per year. Meetings were publicly noticed so that members of the community could attend or read the minutes to gauge the status of our current financial affairs. While this citizen group had no authority to make decisions, it functioned as a watchdog, protecting your tax dollars by making recommendations about acquisitions and other financial decisions. This group could request budgetary information and make it available to the public.

When the last annual budget was prepared by finance manager Katherine Korsak and presented to the June 2, 2020 finance committee, there was no balance sheet, no salary listed for the officers, and no cash flow sheet. Without the finance committee, we would not have known about this deeply troubling situation.

If you were unaware that eliminating the finance committee was even an agenda item, don’t count yourself alone. The KPPCSD board obfuscated its intentions by calling it “Item 10—Amending the Policy and Procedure Manual.” When this important agenda item was finally taken up, late at night, many community participants had already left the meeting, completely unaware of what was at stake.

President Hacaj asked her legal counsel to be the harbinger of the sad news that a substantive policy change was under consideration. Some reasons the board gave for eliminating the finance committee are: it takes too much time for staff to prepare the agenda and minutes to inform the public of the district’s financial affairs, a finance committee of seven members is too exclusive (no community involvement is more inclusive?). And our personal favorite: President Hacaj should be able to exercise her right to change important public policy without public involvement.

If you feel as we do, that there was a complete lack of transparency in this matter, please contact your KPPCSD officials and ask them to take up this matter again with full public notice.

Catherine de Neergaard, Peter Liddell

Paths Connect Past and Present Community

Dear Editor,

As a Kensington resident since 1976, professional trail planner, and parent of a third grader at Kensington Elementary, I have urged the KPPCSD board to support our community by acquiring the Kensington paths. They are not owned by any entity and are at stake of being lost over time. The board has the opportunity to protect in perpetuity this critical community benefit.

The board’s caution in accepting path ownership, primarily due to liability concerns, is understandable. However, the benefits well outweigh the minimal risk. As a trail planner for a land trust, I protect land for community trails and navigate liability matters. Path ownership would safeguard an existing passive recreation and transportation amenity, and carries less risk than community amenities the KPPCSD offers like Kensington Park. In fact, path ownership comes with greater agency and ability to manage them for safety.

The greatest risk would be to not protect the paths. Paths from my childhood are now gone as adjacent property owners encroached them, seeking bigger backyards or wider driveways. What a tragedy it would be to lose even more!

Here are some community benefits at stake in the board’s decision: Paths are good for our health and well-being—they encourage foot rather than vehicle travel and get us outside. Paths support our youth—kids use the paths to walk home from school and to each other’s houses; it keeps them off the busy roads.

Paths create connectivity—they literally connect neighbors to town amenities and to each other, a rare resource in a hilly town. Paths improve our town economy—proximity to paths is a community amenity documented nationwide to increase property values.

Paths are a historic legacy—they tell the story of Kensington, how our town was developed with connectivity to the rail line in mind. Paths are a safety measure—they can be used (as-is) for quicker evacuation. And paths shape community character—as a network and individually, the paths make Kensington unique and shape our identity.

I believe the board seeks to protect our community, and I hope they do so by making the paths our paths!

Rachael Fox Faye (née Egberman)

Mapping Public Sites

Dear Editor,

While reading the *Outlook* December 2020/January 2021, I was pleased to find the double-spread in the middle of the paper depicting our Kensington business corridors. However, I was disappointed that you left out our public service points of interest, including our police and fire building, our Kensington Library, our Kensington Community Park, and our recently renovated Kensington Community Center.

Along with businesses, these public service sites are of great importance to our residents, especially those who have recently made Kensington their home. During this pandemic, it’s helpful to remember that our town has facilities for the entertainment, education and safety needs of our families, children, or other individuals. I would like to suggest you include these important public sites next time you do a new and updated rendering of our business corridors.

Sylvia Rosales-Fike

Hang Up the Phone

This is a list of known scams and tips from County Supervisor John Gioia’s office:

COVID-19 vaccines are free. Be suspicious of anyone selling vaccines or charging for vaccination. You can’t pay to get on a vaccine list or to get early access. These offers are scams.

To get vaccinated, work only with your familiar, trusted medical provider. Do not order or sign up for a vaccine advertised on any websites or from emails that aren’t from your familiar provider.

JANUARY POLICE REPORT

1 SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE, Norwood Ave. Subject reaching out from red van, pulling on door handles of parked vehicles l/s going towards Highgate. An officer attempted to contact the vehicle, two subjects fled on foot and were not located. The vehicle was impounded.

2 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Franciscan. RP was in the kitchen, heard a noise that sounded like a gunshot, sounded like it came from the south. RP saw nothing.

3 BURGLARY, Highland Blvd. Cold. Auto. Veh was locked. Unknown access to back of camper. Take was 3 go bags (value \$300+) electric bicycle (\$300).

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Kenyon Ave. Gold or tan Honda sedan passed w/a WMA passenger 20s, brn curly hair, threw a couple of objects at RP. A water balloon hit her.

4 PETTY THEFT, Arlington Ave. Rubber tree.

PETTY THEFT, Franciscan Way. Rear plate taken.

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Cambridge Ave. RP is landlord. Tenant hasn’t come home in weeks. RP is unsure what to do or if she should even report it.

5 PETTY THEFT, Franciscan Way. Rear plate stolen.

7 WELFARE CHECK, Exxon on Arlington Ave. Per RP subject asked him for a ride, RP told him that he could not give him a ride because he is in his work veh. but he would contact someone. RP is concerned because it is cold outside, and the subject is elderly.

DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Lawson Rd. Male subject yelling at RP and throwing glass on the floor—WMA, 30s, medium build, brown/tan striped cardigan brown hair no weapons in hand broken glass around the area.

9 PERSON SEEKING ADVICE FROM PD, Stratford Rd. RP is upset about the number of turkeys that are coming onto her property. She believes a nearby resident is feeding them, which is causing more turkeys to return to the area. Referred to Outside Agency.

11 VEHICLE TAMPERING, Sunset Dr. Catalytic converter taken.

13 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Highland Blvd. Threats.

14 SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE, Amherst Ave. Saw truck with camper stopped in the middle of the street, unk person used a flashlight to look into neighbor’s vehicle.

16 WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE OF COURT ORDER, Coventry Rd. Elderly woman violating order for stay-away of 100 yards; she is on the sidewalk ifo the RP’s residence.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON/S, Berkeley Park Blvd. RP saw a subject on EBMUD property. When RP asked why he was there he said he was checking what EBMUD was doing. When she said that he wasn’t supposed to be inside the gate, he said, “I can do whatever I want” and departed, unk direction.

18 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Berkeley Park Blvd. Loud yelling and items being thrown.

26 DISTURBANCE OF PEACE, Kingston Rd. Loud party.

Do not give your Medicare number, social security number, credit card or bank account information to anyone offering to help you get a vaccination.

Medicare will never call you asking for your Medicare or Social Security number.

Beware of anyone unfamiliar offering you any COVID-19 related treatments, medicines, contact tracing services, hospice care, services, or products. Work only with your familiar medical provider.

If you are an undocumented resident, beware of anyone calling, emailing or reaching out to say they can get you a vaccine for payment. Legitimate vaccines are free for people of any immigration or health insurance status.

Be wary of organizations calling or emailing you asking for donations for victims of COVID-19, even if they have legitimate sounding names. Check all organizations on Charity Navigator and its easy online tool.

If you are confused by any offers related to COVID-19, hang up the phone. Shut the door. Don’t answer the email. Reach out to a friend or family member if you need help understanding the communication.

Report scams to the California Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at 1-855-613-7080. Suspicious offers or solicitations should also be reported to the Contra Costa District Attorney’s Consumer Fraud hotline, by calling (925) 957-8608, or emailing DA-Report-Fraud@contracostada.org

How to Prevent Catalytic Converter Theft

Kensington is not immune to the uptick in catalytic converter thefts. Catalytic converter thefts are taking place because converters contain several types of recyclable materials that can be “scrapped” for a quick profit.

Catalytic converter thieves generally target high profile vehicles like trucks or SUVs because the higher ground clearance allows for easier access underneath the vehicle. Currently we are seeing Toyotas being targeted, especially Priuses. According to police reports and nearby muffler shops, 2004-2015 Toyota Priuses are targeted the most.

What can you do to protect your vehicle? Here are some prevention tips:

If you have a garage, consider parking your car inside. Park in well-lit areas and if possible near security cameras.

If your catalytic converter is a “bolt-on” model, you can have the bolts welded shut and have extra metal welded to the exhaust system. You can also install a catalytic converter protection device that will clamp around the converter. This can be done by nearby muffler shops for around \$300-\$350.

Etch your converter with your vehicle’s license plate in several locations. This will help police track your property if it is stolen. Calibrate your car alarm to alert when it detects vibrations.

These tips can’t guarantee your converter won’t be stolen—but they can help safeguard your vehicle. Invest in security systems that capture the general area of the front of your home or where vehicles are parked to assist in the identification and apprehension of persons involved in this type of criminal activity. But above all, do not contact or confront potential suspects. Please report any suspicious activity to our dispatch at 510-525-7573.—Advisory from the KPD

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Let's Rethink How We Manage Police and Fire Services

By Jim Watt

We have reached an impasse on the upgrade of the Public Safety Building. Five year ago the engineering firm, Biggs Cardosa, completed a seismic assessment of the Public Safety Building (PSB) that outlined necessary upgrades to bring the PSB up to current seismic safety codes. Total construction and soft costs were estimated at about \$1.0 million, requiring both fire and police relocating during construction at an additional \$2.0 million, for a total cost of \$3.0 million.

Instead of proceeding with this work and eliminating the risk of collapse or serious structural damage, the fire board embarked on numerous studies to enlarge or upgrade the existing facility or relocate it to a larger facility in Kensington Park with total costs in excess of \$10.0 million. In the last five years, the cost of architectural plans has exceeded \$500,000—and a solution satisfactory to both the fire and police agencies appears to be as distant as ever.

The biggest problem preventing a solution has been the fire district's determination to enhance the upstairs living space for the three on-duty fire fighters. These enhancements either eliminate or significantly reduce the space for the police department.

The fire board has taken the position that since they own the PSB they are entitled to make whatever changes they want even though historical and legal evidence indicates the PSB was built for the use of both fire and police. For fifty years the PSB has adequately served the needs of both agencies, and there is no justification for reducing police space to expand firefighter living quarters—all at Kensington taxpayer expense even though 40 percent of Kensington's firefighter calls are to residents of El Cerrito.

The current plans have been driven by a fire board with at least \$4.0 million in surplus cash and an apparent belief that expensive enhancements to the upstairs living space are necessary. These enhancements are promulgated by the El Cerrito fire chief, who would like the upgraded living space for his firefighters paid for at Kensington expense.

While it is important for the board to consider requests by the fire and police chiefs regarding space requirements, it is also the responsibility of the board to proceed with only those changes that are absolutely necessary in order to protect the cost to Kensington residents.

It's worth noting that these upgrades were not requested by El Cerrito when a new ten-year contract to provide fire personnel to Kensington was entered into a year ago. It is time for both the Kensington fire board (KFPD) and police board (KPPCSD) to work in the best interest of the Kensington taxpayer and not let the chiefs, either fire or police, control the process—or the checkbook.

Operational costs for police and fire have skyrocketed. For the last three years the small town of Kensington has been supporting a general manager and support staff for each agency. This has significantly increased operational costs, which are now running at about \$250,000 annually for police and over \$300,000 for fire. These costs are likely to further increase because personnel stay only a short time, then need to be replaced, requiring recruitment costs to find worthy replacements. This duplication of costs is borne by Kensington residents and adds to the bifurcated and costly nature of operating our fire and police departments in a coherent and economically feasible manner. No incorporated city would operate with two different general managers and support staff. Kensington and its mere 5,200 inhabitants should certainly not be the exception.

It is time to consider consolidating fire and police under a unified board. For over sixty years we have operated separate fire and police departments and did so with a minimum of staff support. This has changed in the last three years with both districts ramping up overhead costs and failing to reach agreement on a mutually acceptable solution to the PSB. By consolidating these issues under one board, that single entity would have to consider the operational costs of both departments—and the overall impact on Kensington taxpayers. Instead, now our boards often operate at cross-purposes, each with its own agency as its sole focus, while Kensington taxpayers bear the economic consequences.

The public meeting of the combined boards of the fire and police districts to discuss the PSB was postponed to late March. As of press time, the meeting date was not firmed up, though it will occur after each district's regular board meeting (March 10 and 11). A proposed date is Thursday, March 25, at 7pm. Check district websites for confirmation of date, time, and for the Zoom link.

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Brown

...from front page

brother and his wife are moving to Half Moon Bay. Her mother lives in Point Reyes Station. "My family is here," said Brown, who still lives in Marysville. She hopes to sell her house there and move to Vallejo. Meanwhile she's working out of one of the smaller rooms at the Community Center, which is still closed to the public. Until she is able to move, her working hours are Mondays and Tuesdays in town and two days from her home.

"I would love to live in Kensington, but I don't think I could afford that," she said. "Still I would like to move significantly closer." She spends quite a bit of time on Zoom, but she is not a fan. "I know a lot of people are enjoying working remotely. I'm not like that. I want to meet people and walk the neighborhoods, walk the paths." Brown sports a Masters in geography in addition to an MBA, so walking around Kensington could prove illuminating. "I want to see what people are passionate about and deliver on that," she said.

Her contract was approved at the January 14 KPPCSD meeting, and she began work January 25. "I have been going through agendas and minutes," she said, and she commented on the finance committee being eliminated as a standing committee, also at that January meeting. "I was pleased to see how many people are interested in the budget," she said. "I want to find other ways that the public can be involved in the budget without it being a committee. I like to engage people. Here I am, standing in the Community Center's big room. I can envision a public workshop on the budget. I would rather be in here than trying to do that on Zoom."

Her biggest priority is dealing with the multitude of issues surrounding the Public Safety Building—whether the police can find a home in the renovated building, where they will be housed in the meantime, how much the district must pay to have all that happen. "That and the budget," Brown said. "The mid-year budget is on the February agenda. Attention needs to turn to building the next year's budget." (The district is on a fiscal year.) "My third priority is studying all the contracts." Besides the police, the KPPCSD manages Kensington Park, of which the Community Center is part, and the garbage and recycling contract with Bay View Refuse. "I need to understand all the financial and legal aspects of the job," she said. "The quicker I can get that under my belt the faster I can help the board be effective."

Vaccine

...from front page

who might be having trouble: www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/appointment-guide.

Compared to other county sites, Kensington has room to improve. As of press time, according to the CCHS website, 12.2 percent of Kensington residents (pop. 5,595) had received the first shot. That sounds good, right? Walnut Creek took top honors with 27.7 percent, while in Danville, 22.7 percent had rolled up a sleeve. El Sobrante had 22.6, followed by Lafayette with 21.8 percent. El Cerrito managed 18.2 percent. So we can do better, but that will take each of us being a little more intrusive with our friends and neighbors than we might normally be.

Consider this mission urgent: 82 percent of people who have died of Covid-19 in Contra Costa County were 65 or older, according to CCHS. And helping your neighbor can help end this pandemic.

Questions? Contact John Gioia's office via email, kate.rauch@bos.cccounty.us or James Lyons at james.lyons@bos.cccounty.us. You can see updated figures for yourself at www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine-dashboard.



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