

Kensington Improvement Club

State of the Community

October 16, 2010

Friends,

Thanks for allowing me a few minutes to speak about our community. We have had a busy year!

First, I am happy that the KIC and the Kensington Property Owner's Association have sponsored this town hall meeting and the debates and discussions we will soon enjoy!

And this community owes much to our retiring District Board members, Pat McLaughlin, Bill Wright and John Stein, each of whom performed exceptionally well. Please join me in a round of applause as we celebrate their tenure and their service! We will miss you!

Please join me in welcoming a new group of citizens who will shortly provide you with their own vision on how to manage our community. I know that whoever is elected will do their best in meeting the challenges of our community.

I do hope today's debate and discussions help all of us judge their ability to govern and that they each give a truthful accounting of our issues and how they will address them. We don't need hyperbole—we need honest discussions. Let us see each candidate's approach to our town's pressing issues for ourselves—only then can we as voters measure their character and ability to serve us.

The Year in Review

Kensington has faced several major issues, including adoption of a new parcel tax, ongoing negotiations with the Police Officer's Association on a new police contract, major traffic safety concerns, and the management and development of our park!

The Parcel Tax!

The biggest single issue was our growing deficit. We decided that contracting out police was not cost effective. And the debate shifted to compensation and benefits issues for our police officers. We looked at whether or not the community should seek a tax increase or whether our benefits and total compensation were sustainable with cutbacks either in service or other costs in the face of declining revenues.

The Board wished to be fair and equitable, both to the police officers who provided an invaluable service and to the community who would ultimately bear the brunt of any tax increases. After much consideration, the board voted to put the issue of a parcel tax to the community to decide. After a spirited campaign which included several town hall meetings and a very robust public debate, the community passed Measure G allowing as it does a tax of up to \$200 per residential household.

And the Board acknowledged the obligation owed to our community to use these parcel taxes judiciously to manage its budget in a careful manner.

The Police Contract

The District is currently negotiating a new contract with our police officers in a spirit of cooperation and mutual assurance; our objective is to be fair and equitable both to our police officers who risk their health and safety on a daily basis as well as to our community who must pay for these services.

This year, based on a mutual agreement between both the Board and the Kensington Police Officer's Association, we have prepared a total compensation survey with the assistance of Koff & Associates, a professional benefits and compensations consultant to the public sector, which compares the total compensation paid to our officers with that paid to similarly situated communities. We will publish the results of that survey once we complete our confidential negotiations with the KPOA and a new agreement with them is ratified.

We believe this new technique will give each side an objective basis for fair and equitable negotiations and that at the end of this process we hope to reach an equitable solution that both fairly compensates our officers **AND** creates a sustainable and viable benefits and retirement structure which carries us forward over the next 25 to 30 years. Watch this space!

Traffic Safety

An ongoing issue in our community is traffic safety. Several concerned neighbors along the Arlington, Norwood Court, Highland and Colusa Circle are extremely concerned with traffic safety in light of several major near misses and increasing excessive speed in town. Our chief engaged the services of the County as well as the University of California, Berkeley Institute of Transportation Studies to look at this issue.

- The District has adopted many of the Institute's recommendations, including a zero tolerance policy for traffic violations.
- We have also made significant improvements to the flow of traffic along the Arlington, including painting new traffic lines and areas to slow down the speed of cars.
- And June found us purchasing a traffic speed safety sign to enhance public awareness of speeds in our town.
- Finally the Chief has recently met with concerned neighbors on Colusa Circle and officials of the County to prepare a series of recommendations regarding this high traffic area to protect pedestrians and residents alike. Look for several changes in that neck of the woods.
- Paramount to all of this is a mandate to make drivers aware of the need to respect the safety of our residents and pedestrians!

The Park!

After much public debate, a new park restroom is soon to be a reality. We are currently finalizing construction documents with a goal of putting this project out to public bid in the winter and construction hopefully will begin after the rainy season in the early spring. The projected cost of

\$150,000 to \$175,000 will be paid for with Measure WW funds which are our part of a huge recent bond measure for the East Bay Regional Parks District; the District will not spend any of its own monies on this project.

We are also going to create a new resources assessment plan for the three major buildings in our park. After much discussion we have accepted a recommendation from a public committee led by Board Member John Stein that we implement a critical study of the uses of our properties and what improvements may best enhance their value to the community.

This resource assessment will serve as a guide on how best to spend our precious financial resources and the generous donations from our community. Among other things, we can then decide what improvements may be made to the Annex, and whether it should be put to a public use for our community or possibly leased to another operator for a potential private use.

Likewise we will reassess possible improvements to the Youth Hut as part of our ongoing review of relations with the KCC, a long standing community group managing the Community's recreational activities.

- We have held a series of public and private meetings to decide how best to manage this process and what improvements were necessary.
- We also began to critically focus on the financial relationships between the KCC and the District. With luck our District will reach agreement with the KCC sufficient to enable the KCC to fund its generous donations toward the renovation of this building as well as otherwise share in the cost of upkeep and maintenance of our park.

Conclusions

It has been a dynamic and challenging year as we cope with the current uncertain economic times and challenges affecting all communities. With luck, a spirit of cooperation, honesty and mutual respect, we will come out at the end of these perilous economic times with a new vision of public engagement and an ability to provide public services in a fashion that is both sustainable and that reflects the resources available to our community.

And for you candidates—watch out what you wish for!

Seriously there is no higher calling than to serve this District and this community with honesty and with integrity and with the best interests of our friends and neighbors at heart--we all will be better for your service!

Thank you for your support here. And good luck in the debates!