



KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

DATE: December 11, 2023
TO: Board of Directors
RE: Board Vacancy Interviews of Candidates and Appointment of New Board Member
SUBMITTED BY: Mary A. Morris-Mayorga, General Manager

Recommended Action

Staff recommends the Board follow the Interview and Selection Process and appoint a new Board Member.

Background

At the Board of Directors Meeting held on November 15, 2023, the Board determined that the following would serve as the Interview and Selection Process to appoint a new Board Member. This was reviewed by legal counsel and confirmed that there is no violation of first amendment rights since the purpose is to establish a process which was approved by the Board.

Interview and Selection Process on December 11, 2023

1. Prior to interviews, place candidates in a random drawing to determine the order in which they will be interviewed. After the first question this will then rotate among the candidates where each candidate will have the opportunity to answer a question first.
2. Place Board Members in a random drawing to determine the order in which they will ask questions.
3. Candidates may be present during interviews of other candidates.
4. Board members will ask all candidates one question that has not been disclosed prior to the meeting for a total of four questions for each candidate. Board members are encouraged to bring a list of several questions to select from in the event their question is the same as or similar to another Board member's question.
5. Candidates may make a closing statement in the order established by the random drawing.
6. Members of the public will then be offered the opportunity to provide comment only.
7. The Board will have the opportunity to discuss and deliberate candidates.
8. Following discussion, each Board member will submit their nomination to the Board Clerk (email or preprinted ballot).
9. The Board Clerk will share the list of candidates displaying Board member nominations.
 - a. The Board would have the opportunity to motion that the candidate who received the most nominations be appointed to the Board vacancy followed by a second and voting.
 - b. If this motion does not receive a first/second, the nominations will continue until a motion is supported by a majority of the Board.
 - c. In the case above or if there is a tie, the Board will discuss followed by a second ballot.
 - d. If no candidate receives more nominations than any other candidate after Board discussion and second ballot, any Board member may move to appoint one of the candidates to the Board vacancy which would then require a second and majority vote.
 - e. The selected candidate will take the Oath of Office at the December 20th meeting.

Attachments: Applications Received for Appointment to Fill A Vacancy on the KFPD Board



KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Application For Appointment to Fill a Vacancy on the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) Board

Application must be completed and submitted to KFPD by **November 16, 2023 at 2 p.m.**

Application Process:

1. Candidates are required to submit an application and may include a candidate statement (maximum words 500). Applications are required, or the candidate will be disqualified.
2. All communications with board members shall strictly adhere to all elements of the Brown Act.
3. Applications may be withdrawn at any time; however, if not withdrawn prior to the KFPD website publishing date (expected to be November 27, 2023) will remain on the website and not be removed.
4. Candidate interviews will be held in person at a special board meeting on December 7, 2023. Board members will ask each candidate one question for a total of four questions. Candidates may make a closing statement.

Please complete the following information:

Date: November 16, 2023

Name: Danielle Madugo

Home address: [REDACTED]

Business or Mailing address: _____

Phone (daytime): [REDACTED] Phone (evening): same

Email: [REDACTED]

Are you currently at least 18 years of age, a registered voter, and residing in Kensington? Yes No

Note: Board members are subject to the Conflict of Interest Policy: [Policy 1040 Conflict of Interest](#)

Please answer the following questions on a separate page with a maximum of 350 words each:

1. Why did you decide to apply?
2. How do you consider the sufficiency of Fire District revenues for expenditures over the next five years?
3. What is your position on consolidating the two districts?
4. If appointed to the Board of Directors, what will be your priorities for the Fire District in the next year?
5. Consistent with the mission of the Fire District, what do you think needs to be done to prepare Kensington better for a catastrophic emergency (wildfire, earthquake, severe weather, landslide)?

I certify that the information contained in this application is true and correct.

Signature [Signature] Digitally signed by Danielle Madugo
Date: 2023.11.16 13:52:03 -08'00' Date _____

Vacancy Application for Kensington Fire Board Position
Application Questions
Danielle Madugo

1. Why did you decide to apply?

I am applying because the safety of Kensington's residents and people who work or attend a school in Kensington, is important to me. As a current public member of the fire district's Emergency Preparedness Committee, I see firsthand how the board manages, maintains and implements services, programs and initiatives towards that end.

2. How do you consider the sufficiency of Fire District revenues for expenditures over the next five years?

Because the current PSB renovation has taken a toll on the district's reserves, it should now be a priority for the district to look elsewhere for external funding opportunities for projects imperative to improving the safety of our community.

3. What is your position on consolidating the two districts?

Consolidation deserves full consideration and investigation. My position, in part, depends on whether the investigations show it's financially feasible. Additionally, I believe that prior to the current renovation, the police/fire housing issue would have benefited from increased communication between both districts; a situation that consolidation would remedy.

4. If appointed to the Board of Directors, what will be your priorities for the Fire District in the next year?

To support: 1) any fact-finding task towards investigating the viability of consolidating the two districts, 2) the installation of Sirens/LRADs in our community, 3) the reinvigoration of the CERT program, 4) a deeper collaboration between our police and fire departments towards implementing yearly evacuation drills and more.

5. Consistent with the mission of the Fire District, what do you think needs to be done to prepare Kensington better for a catastrophic emergency (wildfire, earthquake, severe weather, landslide)?

In addition to my priorities stated in #4, I'd like to see our district apply for Measure X funding to fortify our wildland urban interface from the threat of wildfire, increase the safety of our evacuation routes, and establish programs to offer house hardening supplies to residents, e.g., fine mesh screens, more chipping days. More broadly: 1) to continue and expand the information campaigns run by our Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, to every hazard Kensingtonians face and how to prepare for each of them; 2) support currently existing programs and monitoring campaigns (e.g., our local Firewise Communities and Wildcat Watch), and 3) to use my background in earthquake geology and geologic hazard assessments to help our community better understand and manage the risks we face.



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Please complete the following information:

Date: Nov 15, 2023

Name: Ciara Wood

Home address: [REDACTED]

Business or Mailing address: [REDACTED]

Phone (daytime): [REDACTED] Phone (evening): same

Email: [REDACTED]

Are you currently at least 18 years of age, a registered voter, and residing in Kensington? Yes No

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I certify that the information contained in this application is true and correct.

Signature [REDACTED]

Date November 15, 2023

Candidate Statement. (354 Words)

My name is Ciara Wood, and I have lived at [REDACTED], overlooking Tilden Park and Wildcat Canyon for more than forty years. Hence, I am well aware of the fire hazard of the fuel load behind us in the East Bay Regional Parks and that a wildland fire coming out of the Parks District represents the greatest threat to Kensington and could potentially destroy our town.

Indeed, I remember the day of the Oakland Hills Fire vividly, with hot dry winds lashing the branches of the redwood trees, and to the southeast, a massive column of black smoke as homes in the Berkeley Oakland Hills burned. Having worked on fuel reduction for so many years, that fire focused me on our community's need to expand our efforts to save Kensington from the potential of a similar wildland fire.

In addition to my long-standing involvement in fuel reduction work, I have direct experience with multiple aspects of Kensington governance and political issues. I have seen some issues come and go as trends; other issues became unwavering principles of self-governance. For example, having been active in Kensington politically since 1994 and having served as a KPPCSD Director from 1998 - 2006, my position on consolidation has been fairly consistent. I briefly favored consolidation last year, and I remain open to considering the current proposals for the fiscal analysis. I will expand upon my current position on consolidating Kensington's two Independent Special Districts in Question #3.

In summary, I strongly support the mission statement of this Fire Board: to provide the highest level of service to Kensington in order to protect the lives, property, and environment (of our community) from the devastating effects of fires, natural disasters, and other hazardous conditions. Given that Cal Fire has designated almost all of Kensington as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, I am running as a means of adding my many years of fuel reduction experience and what I have learned from almost fifteen years as a director of the Diablo Firesafe Council (DFSC) to the efforts this Board makes to protect our community from wildland fire.

1. Why did you decide to apply? (350 Words)

I believe a wildland fire coming out of Tilden Park or sweeping down from the northeast to be the greatest threat to Kensington and a threat that cannot be underestimated, and as such, a threat that we as citizens need to be addressing in the ways that we can. For well over thirty-five years, I have been doing and organizing fuel reduction efforts in areas along Kensington's interface with the Regional Parks.

To begin, I worked with Gil Bendix (formerly of this Board) to write a grant proposal through DFSC for \$15,000 from PG&E to fund additional fuels work along the 'Olde

School Trail.' Our project, submitted by DFSC, was one of only two projects PG&E funded that year, the other being in Marin County.

Also, I was instrumental to the creation of the Right-of-Entry Permit with East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD), negotiated by Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) about 15 years ago. Additionally, I helped organize Kensington applications for grant funds from DFSC in 2010, resulting in Kensington Projects being awarded \$30,000 of the \$100,000 set aside for Contra Costa County Projects. At this point, we convinced the EBRPD to expand the original R-o-E to include the entire Kensington interface with the Regional Parks from the Berkeley line in the south, to the El Cerrito line in the north.

At a time when DFSC had more grants funds to award than now, I secured \$10,000 in grant funds to reduce juniper in Kensington, and thus the 'Kensington Juniper Removal Project' was born. These funds supported juniper removal for more than twenty Kensington properties. I learned that juniper burning could melt cars and that if juniper next to your home burned, your home would be lost as well; this information helped persuade more and more Kensington residents to remove juniper from their properties.

My background with fuels reduction and my well-established connections with the DFSC and the EBRPD convinced me that I could be of service to this Board as well as to the wider community of Kensington, and that is why I decided to apply for this position.

2. How do you consider the sufficiency of Fire District revenues for expenditures over the next five years? (350 Words)

This will depend to large extent on the Fire District remaining an independent entity, the degree that property tax revenue increases, but also how the cost of the contract with El Cerrito increases. I would also expect that the cost of rolling stock, which must be built to order will also continue to increase.

Fire vehicles cost upwards of a million dollars each, must be made to order, and those costs will only increase. Similarly, the cost of our contract with El Cerrito is increasing.

This is a very important question. The best information that I have available is the budget adopted in September 2023 with its five-year financial projection of revenues and expenditures. Clearly this will help the board make financial decisions going forward.

The fire district has historically set aside reserves from its operating surpluses to fund the Public Safety Building renovations, to maintain the El Cerrito contract reserve, and to ensure that funds are available to purchase new fire engines and vehicles. Our commitment to excellence requires the fire district plan for other specialized needs as they occur.

The 2023 financial forecast shows that the KFPD's "unrestricted" operating reserve will shrink in the next several years as expenditures come close to and may even exceed revenues. Indeed, by 2028, it is projected that expenditures will actually exceed revenues. It is the Board's responsibility to plan for this and to maintain the excellence of Kensington's fire and emergency medical services as its first priority.

This requires thinking in terms of the effectiveness, both of the Fire Board and the delivery of fire and medical services, indeed a Board that carefully scrutinizes expenditures. Some tough decisions and cost-cutting measures may need to be considered sooner rather later, and it is essential that the board remains focused on that.

Considering this question further heightens my concern about the perils of dissolving our fire district through reorganization. I worry that under a reorganization the already strained fire district revenues could be diverted to police, parks, and recreation, and that the essential focus on fire services could be lost, to our detriment.

3. What is your position on consolidating the two districts? (333 Words)

I have firmly supported the independence of the Fire Board and Police Board from each other for many reasons over the years, including the vast difference in the work these boards do and in the services they provide. The agency/board cultures are so different that I imagine one culture being imposed upon the other, in a consolidated board. I also imagine the possibility of a power struggle between representatives of the Police Board and the dissolved Fire Board, which would cease to exist. That is hardly comforting in a town where the greatest threat to our lives and property would be a catastrophic, devastating windblown fire coming out of the East Bay Regional Park and heading downslope in a burn-to-the-bay scenario.

Both boards have a full schedule just taking care of their own agencies, their own finances, and housing their agencies. They have different retirement plans, and the Police Board may still have a large unfunded pension liability which would certainly impact budgeting considerations. I am particularly aware of this as a former director of the KPPCSD.

Much of the impetus for consolidation reflects that the Fire District receives a larger portion of the Ad Valorem property taxes; however, given the community's generous votes for additional taxes to support police services, the funding of the two districts is similar.

Kensington is a very unique community in maintaining government by a volunteering citizenry, which by historic definition has been low on bureaucracy. For example, our EC-K Fire Chief attends Fire Board meetings where he is accessible to the board and accounts directly for the work and needs of the Fire Department. He is available to the community, directly, which I have always found hugely important.

Our fire boards have always behaved responsibly with regards to KFPD finances, planning ahead to have the funding to purchase new equipment when the time comes, and being open to interact with the Kensington community.

I value that, and I would not risk any part of that through consolidation.

4. If appointed to the Board of Directors, what will be your priorities for the Fire District in the next year? (348 Words)

1. **Supporting** the independent status of the KFPD, as opposed to consolidating the Fire District with the Police District.

2. **Leveraging** my strong relationship with Captain Patrick McIntyre of the EBRPD Fire Department. A goal is to prioritize work with Fire Chief Saylor and EBRPD Fire Officials to expand our efforts to reduce the flammable vegetation along our shared interface with the Regional Parks along Wildcat Canyon.

3. **Educating** residents on home hardening strategies and fuel reduction:

Home hardening. This education campaign will add to work already recommended to strengthen homes to withstand the stresses of an earthquake. This community education can be done by presentations to the community that can be recorded for easy reference by all members of our Kensington community. A wealth of information from DFSC and Fire Safe Marin is available on-line and can be posted on the KFPD website.

Fuel reduction and juniper removal. This campaign will focus on the space around homes and adjacent to roadways, to help the community get a sense of landscaping without juniper, which is sometimes referred to as the "gasoline bush". The campaign can include showing images or a garden map so that people can visit examples of juniper free landscapes in Kensington and nearby in Berkeley. It will discuss the availability of plants throughout the year, noting that nurseries sell plants when in bloom. The focus will be to help people past the daunting question of how they will replace their juniper, which was ubiquitously planted as low maintenance landscaping decades ago without regard to the fire danger it poses.

4. **Bringing back** the annual "Fire Safety" presentations, which are a great opportunity for the Fire Department to educate the community. Our Fire Department Staff interacts with the community about fire dangers and actions they can take to make their home landscaping safer, e.g., to explain what ladder fuels are and how removing them reduces fire risk. Homeowners can ask and receive advice on specific questions directly from fire professionals.

All in all, these efforts will stand us in good stead and need not be daunting.

5. Consistent with the mission of the Fire District, what do you think needs to be done to prepare Kensington better for a catastrophic emergency (wildfire, earthquake, severe weather, landslide)? (342 Words)

To begin, I truly commend the work of the KFPD Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC) since 2019, which has done marvelous work disseminating information on wildfire and earthquake preparedness and on evacuation. I hope to add my areas of expertise to their ongoing work.

I have worked at fuel reduction on the ridge adjacent to Tilden Park for many years. This work has defined my sense of fuel reduction: first as defensible space, one property at a time, extending to the idea of defensible neighborhoods, and subsequently to the idea of Kensington as a defensible community. This is particularly important given the small size of many of our lots, how close one home is to another, and how easily a wildland fire could spread from house to house especially where fuel reduction has not been done by a series of neighbors.

Part of the skillset I offer is my ability to communicate easily about the reality of wildland fire danger to Kensington, and about how easily high winds can spread fire as seen in the Oakland Hills Fire and more recently in the fires in Santa Rosa (2017) to the Paradise Fire (2019).

Working with Diablo Firesafe Council and attending workshops sponsored by the California State Firesafe Council, I have learned how easily embers create spot fires and take advantage of a home's vulnerability to ignite; also, how home hardening may protect from ember intrusion.

I've learned how flammable juniper is, should an ember or cast-off cigarette land within it; how juniper burns with a flame length and an intensity out of proportion to the size of the plant. This makes the juniper that abuts our roadways a major evacuation hazard. If selected for this position, I will work towards community-scale education about the hazards juniper poses, encourage juniper removal, and help create a list of plantings to take its place, whether adjacent to roadways or impinging on structures.

As to the dangers of severe weather or landslides, those are topics that I think the EPC and KFPD directors should be considering next.