

**Nina ramsey, interviewed in 2009, nov kfpd board pres.**

**3. The KPPCSD is facing almost a half a million dollar shortfall. Why is it that the Fire District has a surplus and the Police District has a deficit?**

Currently the KFPD provides fire services for Kensington which, in addition to responding to fire emergencies, includes a paramedic and a defibrillator on all fire engines for medical emergencies, and an extensive vegetation management program in which the entire interface between Kensington and Tilden Park, as well as each and every property in Kensington, is inspected annually to reduce the risk to loss of our lives and those of our pets and our homes and businesses.

KFPD pays for the maintenance and upkeep of the Public Safety Building, purchases and owns the fire engines and equipment that support fire services, pays for the retirement and medical benefits of our former firefighters, and pays for other improvements, such as the upgrade of our water system and the addition of 32 hydrants.

**In 1978 the tax rates for both agencies were set by Proposition 13. KFPD's rate was based, in part, on the high cost of maintaining fire services and the Public Safety Building.**

**4. When discussing this discrepancy, the question comes up for many people as to why the Police District should pay rent to the Fire District. Can you explain that from the Fire District's point of view?**

No district may give money to another district. A lease for space used by the Kensington Police Department that charged no rent or a token amount would legally constitute a gift of money. Under the law, even a lease that deferred the rent for 2 years would require that the deferred rent be paid at a later date, in addition to the then current year's rent.

In several communications to the KFPD, the KPPCSD has indicated it expects to pay a fair and reasonable rent based on square footage. KFPD is sensitive to the current difficulties facing the KPPCSD and has offered a lease with a minimum rent that is far below market rate. This rental fee will go towards maintaining a small portion of the building's expenses.

**5. Considering the widely regarded success of the Fire District, of what three accomplishments of the District are you most proud?**

KFPD is proud of the contractual partnership we have with the City of El Cerrito and their Fire Department. This mutually beneficial arrangement

provides Kensington with the best fire, paramedic and vegetation management programs available. KFPD is proud of the addition of the paramedic program and purchase of medical defibrillators that have improved the ability of the fire fighter/paramedics to provide advanced patient care. Over the last few years KFPD increased the water pressure and capacity of the water system in Kensington and added 32 fire hydrants; these improvements reduce our risk of a major conflagration coming from the wild land interface along Tilden Park.

**6. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing the Fire District over the next five years?**

Given the national and state economy, our focus is ensuring that we can continue to maintain and improve the services that we offer through careful planning and management of our funds and resources.

**7. In what ways do you think the Fire District is misunderstood by the residents of Kensington?**

Kensington residents are aware of the many services provided by the KFPD. In addition to responding to fires and medical emergencies, the Fire Department inspects every property in Kensington to provide guidance with vegetation management. Among the many fire services, we install smoke detectors, provide assistance to the elderly, inspect schools and business, visit with school children to educate them on fire safety, provide CERT training, first aid and CPR classes, and maintain a pharmaceutical drop-off to reduce medical emergencies.

**8. What has surprised you most about being on the Fire District's Board of Directors?**

I'm continually pleased at the high level of commitment the firefighters have to the community. I have a renewed appreciation for the often difficult decisions made by elected officials as we work to provide the best services to all residents. Ensuring that Kensington has the best fire and paramedic services and that we manage our vegetation at home and on the interface with the EBRPD to reduce the risk to our lives, pets, homes and businesses is a critical responsibility. I'm proud and humbled to serve on the KFPD and it has increased my appreciation of our wonderful system of government.

In the mid 1990s, KFPD was in a similar financial situation to the one KPPCSD has currently publicly identified for themselves. Not only was the KFPD facing bankruptcy because of the high expense of funding the Kensington Fire Department, other critical expenses had been deferred. After much research and careful deliberation, KFPD made the painful decision to contract out for fire personnel, as many small Districts have done. A thorough search for a fire department that could provide full and cost-effective services to Kensington led KFPD to award the contract to the

City of El Cerrito. The contract with El Cerrito requires 24-hour coverage of Kensington by firefighters housed in our Public Safety Building; EC Fire hired an additional 10 fire fighters to provide the coverage.

KFPD held several public hearings to receive input and the community shared its views on the pros and cons of such a move. Once the contract was in place, all Kensington fire personnel were offered positions with either the Contra Costa Fire Department or the El Cerrito Fire Department at their current rank.

The decision to contract out for services proved to be fiscally sound and allowed for stronger fire protection due to the larger, well-trained, and experienced EC Fire Department.

Because of the contract, KFPD was able to address obligations that had been deferred. KFPD added paramedics and medical defibrillators to all fire engines. We began extensive remodeling and seismic upgrade to the Public Safety Building. KFPD added 32 new fire hydrants and improved the system of delivery of water for fighting fires. We replaced the old, outdated and worn-out fire engines.

**Because of the contract, KFPD is now able to fund the \$1.7 million retirement liability of the former Kensington firefighters.**

Our present fire engines will outlive their maximum capacity for efficiency within four to nine years and require replacing; current estimates indicate the cost for both will be over \$1.2 million dollars. Within the next few months we will begin another phase of needed repair of the Public Safety Building to correct structural failure to the west side, replace 30-year old siding, replace the ADA ramp, and to correct problems with the driveway to the back of the building for the Police vehicles. KFPD expects to spend approximately \$400,000 on this project.