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Editorial: End Kensington intimidation; elect Nottoli, Hacaj

By [EAST BAY TIMES EDITORIAL](#)

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Kensington residents: Take back your town.

There are four active candidates running for the police and community services district board. Two represent the abysmal status quo, two promise change.

If you're tired of [scandals](#), mismanagement of town finances, [intimidation of dissenting board members](#) and [police retaliation against residents who speak up](#), then elect new leaders who want to restore rationality.

Elect environmental attorney Eileen Nottoli and leadership consultant Sylvia Hacaj. They're smart. They've done their homework, not only about the sins of the past but about the changes needed for the future. They get it.



Eileen Nottoli (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

They understand that the town faces serious financial challenges, with a precariously balanced budget. That police are not paying even their share of their pension costs. That those who work only five years receive retiree health coverage for them and their dependents for life.

Most importantly, Nottoli and Hacaj understand that many residents are legitimately angry. They understand that the concerns are not coming from merely a few disgruntled dissidents, as incumbent Chuck Toombs and his running mate, David Spath, dismissively claim.



Sylvia Hacaj (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

To be sure, it's taken time for many residents to realize how bad things are. When Toombs ran for re-election in 2012, we described [the systemic secrecy under his leadership](#) that enabled passage of the police chief's contract without the public or even some board members knowing what was in it.

Sadly, Toombs won re-election and things only got worse. Kensington police stopped an elected official in Berkeley and threatening her with arrest when she asked questions.

Board members used the courts to try to bury with legal fees those who questioned their authority. Residents who

spoke up at board meetings describe being followed home by police or officers showing up at their doors.

We expected Toombs, as he again seeks re-election, might be concerned about the reports of intimidation, which were highlighted on our front page in January. Not at all. He claimed he hadn't heard about them.

As for Spath, he's just as contemptuous of residents who speak up. Actually, he's worse. He blamed the discontent on "a small minority of individuals that come to every meeting."

And then he doubled down. "It would be helpful if they made constructive comments, but that doesn't happen." It's that sort of disdain that has torn the town apart. It doesn't have to be this way.

Voters should elect board members who will listen to all residents. They should vote for Nottoli and Hacaj to finally bring change to Kensington.