


**KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
MEMORANDUM**

March 5, 1997

TO: Janice Kosel, Board President  
Board Members of the Kensington Fire Protection District

FROM: Stephen L. Cutright, Fire Chief 

SUBJECT: Needs Assessment for Kensington Public Safety Building at 215 Arlington Avenue

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The Kensington Public Safety Building presently houses Fire Station # 65, the administrative offices of the Kensington Community Services District (KCSD), and the operational offices of the Kensington Police Department. The Fire District owns the building and leases space to the KCSD on a monthly basis.

The Public Safety Building was constructed in 1971. Up to 1995, the Fire District's administrative offices were contained in the building. Presently, the Fire District operates one engine company with three full-time firefighters out of the Fire Station. The designation number 65 was assigned to the Kensington fire station as part of an over-all Contra Costa County fire station and fire response unit numbering system sponsored by the Contra Costa County Fire Chiefs Association.

Background:

In 1989 when the Kensington Fire District Board was considering the removal of an underground fuel tank from the rear parking lot of the Public Safety Building, the firm Seidelman Associates, Inc. was hired to conduct a geotechnical investigation of the building site at 215 Arlington Avenue. Structural damage was noted in the front wall of the building prior to this time and Seidelman was requested to investigate whether or not there were geotechnical causes. In June 1990, Seidelman issued a progress report on the Public Safety Building, recommending the removal of the underground fuel tank and replacement of the gas line into the building with flexible piping. Regarding the structural damages to the building, Seidelman concluded, "In summary, the available data to date does not clearly reveal whether the existing structural damages are caused by unstable soil conditions, fault creep, and/or inadequate foundation design or construction." (Page 3, Seidelman 1990, Attached) Additional analysis by Seidelman was never completed due to a payment dispute with the Fire District.

After passage of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Fire District's Board became aware of the need to bring the Public Safety Building into compliance with the provisions of the ADA. The requirements of the ADA included making reasonable accommodation in public buildings to allow access by handicapped or disabled persons. Likewise, the KCSD at some point previous to 1996 had approached the Fire District expressing

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an interest in expanding their district's administrative offices to the ground floor of the Public Safety Building, space now occupied by the Fire District.

Board of Directors in late 1995 began investigating through two of its members (Egherman and Grant) the long-term capital needs of the Fire District, including the full scope of renovations or repairs needed for the Public Safety Building. In particular, the Board Members conducting the investigation sought to include in the building renovation project the following objectives: (1) compliance with the ADA; (2) seismic structural safety; (3) compliance with modern building and fire codes; and (4) meet the functional needs of the Police and Fire departments. A structural engineer was consulted to inspect the building. The Board of Directors of the Fire Board was provided a Facilities Report in January 1996 which outlined the scope of the project to renovate the Kensington Fire Station # 65 (Attached).

During 1996, the Kensington Fire Board went through a series of changes in membership, and further consideration of this project was postponed until the autumn. One of the events prompting the Fire Board to once again consider the Public Safety Building's future was the formation of a Park Advisory Committee to the KCSD and their request for comments from the Kensington community. At the early planning phase for the Kensington Park, it was very appropriate to alert the KCSD, the lessee of the Public Safety Building, that both the Fire District and the KCSD may have a prospective interest in relocating the Public Safety Building to the Kensington Park. Two factors prompted the Fire District expressing this prospective interest:

- a. The Public Safety Building may not be able to be renovated to the extent required on the present site due to space limitations. Accommodations for the ADA and the functional needs of the police and fire departments may not be able to be met on such a small site.
- b. The proximity of the Hayward Fault may foreclose the ability to conduct renovations sufficiently extensive to meet other legal and functional requirements. The ADA requirements for handicapped and disabled access are combined with Labor Code requirements for separate male/female facilities, and this holds true for both police and fire department occupants of the building.

It became clear to the Kensington Fire Board and the KCSD that a needs assessment of the present Public Safety Building was a necessary next step. What are the space and functional needs or requirements of the Police and Fire Departments for the building? Only after the needs of the facility are specified can we address the questions whether or not enough space is available to meet our functional needs, which needs will have to remain unmet, what legally must be done, and whether the expense of such a project would become so high as to trigger the

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provisions of the State seismic safety statutes barring the placement of an essential services building so close to an active earthquake fault.

It is for a professional architect to determine if the needs identified by the police and fire chiefs, and the needs generated by the applicable legal requirements can be met by redesigning the present structure. If there are needs and requirements which cannot be met, what are they and are there alternative solutions? This analysis, issue definition and identification of alternatives should precede and thereby provide the factual framework for a policy-level discussion by the Fire and KCSD Boards, and among the citizens at large.

Assessment of needs for present structure:

The Public Safety Building needs assessment shall focus upon five general areas:

1. **Inadequate parking.** The police and fire stations require parking for staff to accommodate shift change periods, for police vehicles, and for the public (including handicapped parking).
  - A. Presently there are four private parking spaces to cover five to seven police and fire personnel on duty each day with no additional space for parking private vehicles during shift changes.
  - B. There is inadequate vehicle turn-around space, particularly for larger van-type vehicles carrying disabled persons.
  - C. There is one time-limited on-street public parking space in front of the building for public drive up traffic.
  
2. **Restricted street access.** Fire and police stations are best located on fairly wide streets just off of main routes of travel. This allows a clear line of sight for drivers of on-coming vehicles and responding code 3 fire/police vehicles to safely pull onto municipal streets and avoid traffic and congestion.
  - A. Arlington Avenue has two narrow lanes of one-way traffic in each direction with a wide median traffic barrier. This arrangement presents a higher risk of traffic accidents and impeding the emergency egress of police and fire vehicles than if the fire/police stations were located on a wider street with less traffic.
  - B. Traffic warning devices may assist safe and prompt egress onto Arlington Avenue.
  - C. There is insufficient turn-around space on the fire station front apron (driveway), thereby requiring a fire engine to block Arlington Avenue each time it returns to Fire Station # 65 and backs into the apparatus bay.
  - D. Arlington Avenue is a major thoroughfare, carrying significant vehicular traffic

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during commute hours. While unavoidable, the heavy traffic condition occasionally exacerbates the already impeded egress conditions found on Arlington Avenue (noted above under "2.A").

- E. There may be no other adequate side street locations within Kensington that would allow unimpeded egress onto Arlington Avenue.
3. **Structural deficiencies.** A public safety building which houses a police department and fire station is considered to be an essential services building, and therefore should be capable of withstanding a major earthquake without sustaining structural failure or collapse. Essential services buildings which were constructed under less stringent seismic safety codes are usually retrofitted with structural bracing and other strengthening devices to improve their ability to withstand an earthquake.
- A. Current observations are that the lower west side wall is pulling away from the building, the apparatus bay columns are out of plumb, floors on the second level are out-of-level, and the rear parking lot shows signs of underlying soil subsidence.
  - B. While the 1990 Seidelman report noted structural damages to the Public Safety Building, it could not identify with any degree of precision whether the cause of these damages was due to fault creep, unstable soil conditions or inadequate foundation design or construction.
  - C. In the winter of 1996, the Public Safety Building's fire department spaces were inspected by a licensed structural engineer, Mr. Michael J. Curry (Interactive Resources) preparatory to submitting a formal bid for engineering and design work. Mr. Curry concluded his inspection by verbally reporting that the building lacked sufficient shear strength (Lateral Force Resisting Systems) to hold up the southern end of the main transverse beam over the apparatus room in the event of a moderate to major earthquake. His letter of March 13, 1996 (attached) provides a list of questions generated about the building and discusses a preliminary scope of services.
  - D. A cursory review of the USGS seismic maps of the Kensington area indicates a high degree of probability that the main fault trace of the Hayward Fault extends along Arlington Avenue in front of the Public Safety Building. In any event, much of Kensington along Arlington Avenue is contained within an Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone designated by California statute (1972 as amended) as an area which has the potential for surface rupture due to faulting.
    - 1) Buildings such as essential services facilities must be located more than 50 feet from a fault trace. We do not know if the Public Safety Building is located more than 50 feet from a fault trace.

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- 2) Buildings in existence prior to May 4, 1975 are excepted from the provisions of the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone Act. The Public Safety Building was constructed in 1971 and presumably is excepted from the Act.
- 3) Alterations or additions may be made to a building within a Special Studies Zone without completion of a geotechnical study to identify fault traces as long as the value of such work does not exceed 50 % of the value of the structure;
- 4) If alterations or additions are made to the building which value more than 50 % of the value of the structure, both the specific requirement for a geotechnical study and the general requirements of the Act pertaining to the proximity of an essential services facility to a known fault trace apply to the Kensington Public Safety Building. Were the Act has become applicable, such as with an alteration costing more than the legal threshold for exception, there is a legal requirement for a geotechnical study of specified methodology to affirmatively rule out the existence of a fault trace within 50 feet of the structure.

E. A body of California law pertains to essential services facilities and how they are to be constructed and maintained for seismic safety. Relevant portions of the Uniform Building Code (within the Health and Safety Code), the California Labor Code, and the safety orders of the California Occupational Health and Safety Administration require that employees not be allowed to work within or otherwise occupy a structure which is unsafe due to a seismic risk of collapse or serious structural damage. It stands to reason that the citizens of Kensington likewise would expect their fire and police departments to be capable of responding to emergencies after an earthquake, and not to be buried with their apparatus under their own collapsed building.

4. **Building space needs.** At a minimum the public safety building for Kensington needs to contain a fully functional fire station, police department business offices, and training and small meeting rooms for both special districts (Fire and KCSD) to support on-going programs. Additional space needs include a functional Emergency Operations Center for disaster response, public meeting facilities to accommodate community outreach programs and public business meetings, offices for the Kensington *Outlook*, and offices for the Kensington Community Center (KCC). The site upon which the Public Safety Building is located must have sufficient parking spaces to serve all of the building's uses.

A. Some space needs are directly related to legal mandates. for example the ADA

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compliance and separate male/female facilities. If these legal mandates require additional space within the building, this space must be taken from existing uses or the building must be expanded on the present site (either with a larger footprint, or vertically).

- 1) Space requirements for mandated renovations must be determined by an architect.
- 2) Required additional space to cover mandated renovations must be taken from lower priority uses in order to maximize the functional utility of the renovated structure.

B. Some space needs are *not required* by legal mandates, but are important if the Public Safety Building is to remain adequate to house fully functioning police and fire departments. These needs are softer in a sense, and have more to do with the roles, missions and future programs of the fire and police departments in the future Kensington.

- 1) A minimalist building will tend to confine the departments into minimalist public safety roles. The traditional role of the fire department was to remain in quarters, out of the public eye, until called out to render emergency services. Police stations were business offices out of which officers patrolled, where briefings were held, reports were written, suspects were brought for interviews, and arrestees were booked.
- 2) An expanded facility will provide the physical plant resources needed for police and fire to engage in a new paradigm of public safety community services. This new paradigm is based upon the premise that government has limited resources and must rely upon the citizens it serves to take an active role in providing for their own safety and security. It is not a prescription for government abdication of authority and responsibility, however, but a "re-invention" of government as a partner with citizens in the task of governance. This involves an expansion of roles to serve in more of an interactive capacity with the Kensington community. It tends to blur the distinction between public servants and citizens. And it requires that public safety personnel are out in the public more often and the citizens are invited into the public safety facilities more often.
  - i) The modern fire department provides community-based first aid, fire safety and disaster preparedness programs which encourage direct citizen interaction with firefighters at their fire station.
  - ii) Community-based policing isn't just a technique used to handle

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gangs in Richmond, but is a fundamental commitment by government to empower citizens in safeguarding themselves and their property, and to work with the police as partners.

- C. The fire department can work within the existing public safety building to maintain a high level of response services for the citizens of Kensington. That is to say, absent any massive space requirements needed to meet legal mandates, the existing fire station's overall space is adequate, but the space can be better utilized by rearrangement to accommodate needs.
- 1) *Apparatus room*: present size is 41' wide x 34' deep x 12' high, accommodating two full bays and one short bay with the extra space occupied by a 10' x 10' maintenance shop. Standard fire station apparatus rooms are deeper (36' - 38') and taller (16') to accommodate modern fire apparatus. With the possible deletion of one apparatus bay, movement and enhancement of storage cabinets, and modifications to equipment and systems, the existing apparatus room space can be modernized.
  - 2) *Emergency Operations Center (EOC)*: The present Public Safety Building does not have an EOC facility per se, but a 14' x 17' conference room shared by police and fire departments and an adjoining dispatch area. There are inadequate communications capabilities, maps, and planning space to serve as a fully functional EOC during a disaster. The overall space available in the building for an EOC probably does not exist. The existing area could be remodeled to better meet some critical EOC needs, but only a considerable space reduction in the fire or police areas would provide enough EOC space to improve its functional utility.
  - 3) *Second full bath (Unisex)*: The privacy requirements for female employees should be incorporated into the space needs. None of the existing bath facilities are handicapped accessible.
  - 4) *Kitchen*: A fully functional EOC and a disaster-capable fire station needs to accommodate food service for at least one dozen people. Even the holding of public meetings requires kitchen facilities to host the service of beverages and light snacks. The present kitchen needs pantry, appliance and service area upgrades to commercial kitchen standards.
  - 5) *Separate dorm rooms*: Similar to the comments on a second full bath, the privacy requirements for female firefighters mean the inclusion of three separate dorm rooms, ideally with three beds each. The proximity of the existing dorm room to police vehicle operation areas and the lack of outside ventilation could be addressed in a building remodel project.

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- 6) *Delete one office:* The fire department has need of less office space than presently available. This space could be used by police administration.
  - 7) *Conference/Meeting room:* Two public safety districts (police and fire) need more meeting rooms than the one second floor conference room. Access to this room from a public way would be preferable to access through police or fire station spaces. A 20' x 20' room is minimal.
- B. Additional police administrative offices should be located downstairs adjacent to public street access. The fire department should still retain a public reception and office area on the ground floor of the building.
5. **Building systems.** Modern public safety essential services facilities are built to remain serviceable for forty to fifty years and therefore need service systems which can accommodate both current and projected needs. Particularly acute for the Public Safety Building are the needs for fire protection, security, emergency power, communications, and self-sufficient operation (water and food storage) listed as follows:
- 1) *Safety systems:* fire alarm, fire sprinkler, and burglar alarm systems, centrally monitored to provide coverage when personnel are out of the building on service calls, training, inspections or other duties.
  - 2) *Emergency generator:* automatically capable of supporting modern radio and computer equipment power needs for critical functions of an essential services building.
  - 3) *Roof assembly:* will need replacement within five years.
  - 4) *Electrical and telephone system:* upgrades are needed to handle increased power and communications requirements. The building will require more battery chargers, an internal intercom system, additional lighting, additional power tools in maintenance shop, more radios and a greater reliance on computer systems.
  - 5) *Outdoor lighting:* particularly in the rear parking lot, adequate flood lighting is needed for employee and public access.
  - 6) *Maintenance shop:* The maintenance shop in the apparatus room needs additional work surface space and tools to accommodate those minor repairs to apparatus and equipment typically performed at a working fire station.
  - 7) *Compressed air system:* The need for period tire inflation, cleaning of equipment and parts on apparatus, and air-driven tool use requires an effective compressed air system. What is probably not needed is a fire station high pressure air compressor for filling self-contained breathing apparatus (available at Station 71), nor an oxygen tank cascade system for



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- refilling medical oxygen bottles (available at Station 71).
- 8) *Storage space:* Since the Public Safety Building is required to remain self-sufficient for a period of time after an earthquake, supplies and equipment need to be stored on premises well in excess of the quantities needed for routine daily operations. Likewise, firefighter protective equipment needs to be stored in closets, employees need separate lockers, a quantity of spare parts need to be stored in reserve, and maintenance/cleaning tools need to be stored in areas readily accessible. Existing storage space should be increased and, in certain instances, relocated to accommodate other space needs.
  - 9) *Air handling system:* A comprehensive air system is needed for the building, including a clear air separation between living/office spaces and apparatus spaces, and exhaust extractors for all vehicles within the apparatus room.
  - 10) *Office facilities upgrades:* Office space utilization, communications and work centers, wall and book maps, and run folders all require upgrading to improve emergency response planning and efficient use of staff duties.
  - 11) *House/yard functional items:* A larger diameter exterior hose bib is needed for the front of the building to expedite refilling fire engine water tanks. Depending upon the extent of building renovation, providing a larger water piping system to the building would be practical. Due to the likelihood of water service disruption to a building located so near the Hayward Fault, consideration should be given to installing an emergency water cistern with auxiliary pumping and filtration systems. The rear parking lot garbage area should be enclosed.

In summary, the most important needs for the fire department probably can be met through the available space on the site and in the existing building. This assumes that such legal requirements as exist for ADA compliance, seismic retrofitting, and separate employee facilities can be completed without an appreciable loss of presently available overall space. It also assumes that the Fire District is not forced to comply with the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone Act. If the building is forced to comply with the Act, it is highly likely that an alternative site will have to be found for a Kensington police and fire facility. If an actual geotechnical study is conducted and confirms the existence of an active fault trace within 50 feet of the building such that the building is determined to be seismically unsafe, the Fire District and the KCSD would probably be compelled to vacate the building promptly.

As pointed out above in the section covering building space considerations, there are additional needs which pertain to a broader role for public safety within the community of Kensington. These broader needs are not likely to be met on the existing site and its building. If we remain at

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215 Arlington Avenue, citizen and firefighter training, public meetings, disaster preparedness and response, and other community outreach programs will not be based out of the Public Safety Building and near the support facilities of police and fire personnel. Such programs serve as a vital link between the community and its public safety personnel, and they represent to a great degree the new paradigm for the public safety services of the future. If physical space limitations cannot be overcome, other location arrangements can be made to accommodate some program needs. Remaining on the present site, absent any legal prohibition, will require the Kensington public safety agencies to forego meeting at least a portion of these broader program needs and shall thereby tend to define more narrowly the role police and fire agencies will play as an integrative force in the community's future.

Consideration of Alternative Station Locations:

The possibility that the present site may be deemed to be inadequate or seismically unsafe for the Public Safety Building logically raises the question as to where the facility might be relocated. The Kensington Park property at 59 Arlington Avenue is *one possibility* since it is just about the last vacant public property of sufficient size left in Kensington. The many issues surrounding the acquisition of a site on the Park property are outside the scope of this memorandum.

The Kensington Park siting issues notwithstanding, it is prudent for the Fire District to consider alternative sites for the Public Safety Building. From a fire department perspective, and beyond the needs discussed above, an alternative building location at the very least should minimize emergency response times to all Kensington locations, be achieved at a reasonable cost, and remain standing after an earthquake. We shall address these priorities by analyzing three factors affecting the Kensington fire station location: (1) emergency response times, (2) local vacant parcel availability and suitability, and (3) Hayward Fault location.

1. **Emergency response time analysis.** Fire Station # 65 as presently located is the closest fire station to respond to any Kensington address. Indeed all of Kensington and portions of the El Cerrito hill neighborhoods are reached by Kensington Engine 65 within five minutes of the alarm.

Moving Fire Station # 65 to 59 Arlington Avenue, the Kensington Park site, would not change the fact that the Kensington fire station is the nearest fire station to all Kensington addresses. What would change in this move to 59 Arlington Avenue is that a portion of the lower Coventry area approaching Colusa Circle would be marginally outside the five minute response time for an engine company. The fire department's overall standard would still be met of responding within six minutes for 90 % of all emergency calls. Because 59 Arlington Avenue is located well north of its present location (215 Arlington Avenue), we could expect more hill neighborhoods of El Cerrito

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to be covered within Engine 65's five minute response time.

If the Kensington Public Safety Building were completely shut down for a period of time, the Kensington Engine 65 could be temporarily relocated to Arlington Park in El Cerrito (where temporary Station # 72 is now located). This could take place after August 1997, when the Arlington Park building becomes vacant. In this case, we would anticipate that about 25 % to 30 % of the community of Kensington would remain outside of an eight minute response time for Engine 65. If this substandard response time is to be endured because of a temporary fire station relocation, it should be endured only for a short period of time.

There are several areas in Kensington which should be avoided as prospective alternative sites for Fire Station # 65 due to their increased response times to significant areas of the community. Locating the fire station high on the hill ridge line would add significant response times to areas lower in Kensington (the Colusa Circle area, the Sunset corridor including Franciscan and Anson). Likewise, if the fire station were located along lower Sunset Drive on the Cemetery or Mausoleum property, the response times would be very long to the hill ridge line and lower Coventry and Colusa Circle areas. Finally, the inverse is also true: locating the fire station in the lower Coventry and Colusa Circle areas would create excessive response times to lower Sunset and the hill ridge line areas.

In terms of maintaining adequate emergency response times, the most suitable fire station locations for Kensington are probably along or immediately adjacent to Arlington Avenue, the main arterial street for the community.

2. **Vacant parcel availability and suitability.** An inventory has been taken of all vacant lots in Kensington to ascertain if any of these, perhaps in conjunction with developed lots, could be used as an alternative site for Fire Station # 65. The attached list of vacant lots shows that there are no lots of adequate size for a fire station. Furthermore, the streets upon which these vacant lots front are invariably too narrow for fire engine side access off a driveway.

There are private properties in Kensington which could be considered as alternative sites, but very few are large enough to accommodate a Public Safety Building. Of course, it is possible to acquire multiple single family residential properties, raze the existing structures, and then construct a new Public Safety Building. The Fire District would acquire such private property sites only by condemnation, involving payment to the property owner(s) of fair market value for land and buildings. Given the market value of Kensington homes, condemnation is likely to be a very expensive alternative.

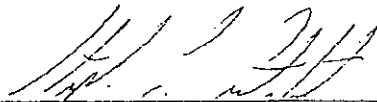
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3. **Hayward Fault location.** United States Geological Survey maps indicate that the main active trace of the Hayward Fault extends on a roughly north-south axis along the east bay hills, and bi-secting the community of Kensington along Arlington Avenue. At 59 Arlington Avenue, however, the Hayward Fault is believed to be located near Norwood, approximately 500 feet west of the Kensington Park property. If the most suitable fire station location from a response time perspective is adjacent to Arlington Avenue, then it is clear that the Kensington Park property may be one of the only locations along Arlington Avenue sufficiently removed from the main active fault trace to be considered as a viable alternative Public Safety Building site. About 1/4 mile north of 59 Arlington Avenue, the Arlington and the Hayward Fault again converge.

It should be kept in mind that simply because the Kensington Park property is somewhat removed from main trace of the Hayward Fault, it is still well within the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone. Thereby any site within Kensington Park is subject to the requirement to prove by a conclusive geotechnical finding that no fault trace of any kind exists within 50 feet of any prospective location for an alternative Public Safety Building. Side trace spurs undoubtedly exist off of the main fault trace and it may be possible that there are no acceptable sites for an alternative Public Safety Building within Kensington Park.

This memorandum should be considered as a planning document and is not intended to reach a conclusion in recommendation either for remaining at 215 Arlington Avenue or for obtaining an alternative site for the Public Safety Building. The primary purpose here was to provide a needs assessment of the existing facility, and a preliminary exploration of alternative sites for the facility. While I have attempted to address the general needs of the KCSD in my needs assessment, Chief of Police and General Manager James M. Bray has provided me with a more detailed assessment of the KCSD needs (attached). His analysis has identified needs he would like to see fulfilled at a new site which are not met or only partially met in the existing building. I stated earlier in the memorandum, it is probably now appropriate for an architect to analyze the needs assessments and then explore conceptually renovation design alternatives for the Public Safety Building.

Presented by:

  
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Stephen L. Cutright, Fire Chief

ATTACHMENTS: 1990 Seidelman Report  
Facilities Report: January 1996  
March 13, 1996 letter from Michael J. Curry, SE  
List of Kensington Vacant Lots  
Memorandum of February 12, 1997 from Chief Bray on the KCSD needs

cc: Mr. John Ream, President, KCSD.  
James M. Bray, Chief/General Manager, KCSD