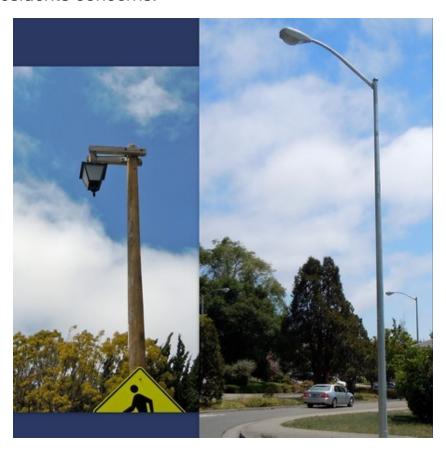
## **ElCerritoPatch**

## Public Works: Decorative Lights Too Dim for Traffic Safety

The project to replace Arlington Avenue's streetlights remains halted due to residents concerns.



By Laila Kearney | August 28, 2012

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia hosted a meeting Monday with Contra Costa County Public Works employees, Pacific Gas and Electric representatives and Kensington residents to discuss residents concerns surrounding Arlington Avenue's newly erected streetlamps. No decisions were made on how PG&E will proceed with its halted task of replacing dozens of wooden streetlamps along Kensington's main drag and replacing them with new, steel "cobra head" lamps. "(The meeting) was just about having all the info out on the table," Gioia said.

When construction on the new lampposts commenced last month, Kensington residents became aware of, and unhappy about, the new style of lamps being installed on Arlington. Some asked why the lamps weren't the decorative "acorn-style" ones neighboring Berkeley had on its stretch of Arlington.

After replacing most of the poles, PG&E stopped work early due to residents' complaints.

According to county public works, there are several problems with replacing the lamps with anything other than the "cobra heads," Gioia said:

PG&E is authorized by the Public Utility Commission to use only three different styles of lamps in projects like the Arlington one — a 250 watt, 32-foot-tall "cobra head" style, a 14-foot-tall decorative "acorn" style or a 16-foot-tall decorative "teardrop" style lamp, both the "acorn" and "teardrop" are about 150 watts. Public works said the "cobra heads" are the only style with enough height and wattage to provide the light needed for traffic safety on Kensington's piece of Arlington, Gioia said.

In order for the roads to be safely lit with the decorative lamps, PG&E would need to install as many as 50 percent more lamps on the avenue than planned. "That would be a construction nightmare," Gioia said.

The costs of the additional lamps and construction would have to be undertaken by the county, which it cannot afford, Gioia said.

Gioia said county officials will speak with the city of Berkeley to gather more information about its lighting plan.

County public works will also look into the 30-year-old Kensington lighting plan to ensure that decreasing lighting would be a traffic hazard. Construction on the streetlight replacement project will remain suspended for the time being.