

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
CITY OF OAKLAND

CITY OF OAKLAND



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Office of the Mayor  
Jerry Brown  
Mayor

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Letter of Nomination

July 18, 2006

The Honorable City Council  
One City Hall Plaza, Second Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Councilmembers:

Upon nomination of the Mayor, the following person is hereby appointed as member to the following Board or Commission:

**Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Advisory Board**

Gordon Piper, Mayoral re-appointment for the term beginning July 1, 2006 and ending June 30, 2008, serving in the seat he currently holds.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

JERRY BROWN

A large, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Brown", written over the printed name.

## **GORDON PIPER -2003 MAGIC AWARDS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

Gordon Piper has been one of Oakland's most notable green thumbs. He chairs the North Hills Landscape Committee, a small band of 1991 Fire Survivors who have created a number of fire resistant gardens throughout the Firestorm area and work with local schools on garden projects. He co-chaired the Oakland School Districts Landscape Advisory Task Force in 1998 and 1999, and continues to work on school beautification policy issues as the superintendent's appointee to the District's Facilities Advisory Committee. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Oakland ReLeaf, the local tree planting affiliate of California ReLeaf. He was an active Kiwanian for 10 years, working with youth and members on community gardening projects. He recently joined Oakland Rotary Club and serves on our Youth, Senior and Community Services Committee.

### **BACKGROUND**

While Gordon always enjoyed gardening around his home, his passion for community gardening was spurred by the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm in which he lost his home. He decided then that if he and his family were going to rebuild in this fire-prone area that sits within yards of the Hayward Fault, he would need to "adopt" the Highway 24 corridor and work to reduce the fire load so that future disasters which are likely to occur would not result in such devastation as the 1991 Firestorm.

He founded the North Hills Landscape Committee which in 1993 completed the Firestorm Memorial Garden at the foot of Hiller Highlands, where Highway 13 ends at Tunnel Road. The garden was designed to inspire fire survivors who were just beginning to rebuild in the area. In the last decade, the garden continues to attract visitors (including tourists on the Grey Line Tour) with its lush beauty, unusual outdoor sculpture and simple dedication to the 25 neighbors who lost their lives in the nation's largest urban wildfire. Gordon continues to maintain the garden, relying on volunteers from schools, churches, youth groups, and people working off their parking tickets.

When the Oakland City Council began deliberations on its 2001-2002 budget, Gordon rallied officers of local homeowners associations and lobbied the City to make vegetation management a top priority. The City had not set aside funds for reducing the fire load on both individual and large public properties since the defeat of a special Fire Prevention and Vegetation Management District several years before. Through his leadership, the City Council designated \$2 million for vegetation management in its two-year budget. He has since worked closely with City fire inspectors to ensure that property owners reduce flammable vegetation, even going so far as to sit through a lengthy Planning Commission meeting to ask that a particular developer be required to clean up his overgrown property at the entrance to a residential neighborhood before receiving an extension to a development permit. His effort resulted in the developer hiring a team to clear the property of dead eucalyptus trees, Scotch broom and other flammable vegetation. They worked from sunrise to sunset over a two-week period.

Gordon's most recent project is the Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center & Garden that will be dedicated as a city park on May 10, 2003. This project was 8 years in the making, and would not have happened without Gordon's vision, passion and just plain doggedness. He raised \$750,000 in real dollars and in-kind services or materials to create a dramatic vista point overlooking Highway 24 and the San Francisco Bay. He persuaded fire survivor Peter Gray Scott, an architect, to design an observation deck that is strikingly beautiful in its austerity and symbolism—it looks like a house without walls or roof as it gracefully rises from the hill overlooking the freeway. Peter Scott provided all of his services pro bono. When Specialty Crushings donated 250 tons of granite boulders originally from Hetch Hetchy, Gordon persuaded landscape designer Chris Hecht to come up with a creative design affectionately called the mini-Stonehenge of Hiller. Together, the boulders and the deck beckon visitors to stop and take a look. While there, visitors will learn about the history of fires and earthquakes and what they can do as individuals and with their neighbors to prevent future disasters from occurring. He and his wife are now developing a web-site that will further the mission of Gateway project, by providing practical and inspiring information on how to prepare for emergencies and reduce loss of life and property from fire, earthquake and other disasters. Gordon's work on this project—from writing grants to seeking donations—was done night after night and on the weekends. His family calls it his "5 to 9 job," since he spends his days working as an administrator for the California Department of Fair Housing and Employment.

### **IMPACT**

There are many more examples of how Gordon has inspired others who want to make a difference in their schools or neighborhoods by planting and maintaining gardens. His efforts have inspired neighborhood groups to tackle huge vegetation removal projects in partnership with the City, Caltrans and other public and private agencies. He takes time before and after work to meet with the Garden Committee at the Luther Burbank Elementary School in East Oakland to develop landscape plans for their barren playground, and then guides them to the best sources for donated or discounted plant materials. He continues to serve as a watchdog when public or private developers propose projects that can have negative impact on the fire safety of the local community. Over the years he has mentored eight Eagle Scouts on projects ranging from building tables and benches to creating raised flower beds at local school sites. He has shown by example that one person CAN make a difference—and he has done it consistently for more than a decade.

# OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

**DRAFT**

2006 JUL - 6 PM 9:00  
**RESOLUTION NO.** \_\_\_\_\_ **C. M. S.**

**INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Resolution Re-Appointing Gordon Piper As A Member Of The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Advisory Board**

**Whereas**, Ordinance No. 12556 creates the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Advisory Board, which will provide oversight and program recommendations for the Assessment District, and will play a key role in the continued implementation of vegetation management programs and the development of fuel management strategies; and

**Whereas**, Ordinance No. 12556 specifies that the Mayor shall appoint two (2) constituents who live in the Assessment District, one of whom shall be a firefighter by profession, to serve as follows: Initially, one appointee shall serve for a term of two years (through June 30, 2006); the second appointee shall serve for a term or three years (through June 30, 2007). Thereafter, each subsequent appointment shall be for a term of two years; and

**Whereas**, Ordinance No. 12556 specifies that the At-Large Councilmember shall appoint one (1) constituent who lives in the Assessment District, and who shall serve for a term of two years (through June 30, 2006). Thereafter, each subsequent appointment shall be for a term of two years; and

**Whereas**, Ordinance No. 12556 specifies that each of the four (4) Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Councilmembers shall appoint two (2) constituents each, who live in the Assessment District to serve as follows: Initially, one appointee shall serve for a term of two years (through June 30, 2006); the second appointee shall serve for a term or three years (through June 30, 2007). Thereafter, each subsequent appointment shall be for a term of two years; and therefore be it

**Resolved:** that by appointment of the Mayor the following individual is hereby appointed as set forth below:

Gordon Piper, to serve the term beginning July 1, 2006 and ending June 30, 2008, to fill the position previously held by himself.

**IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,** \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_

**PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:**

**AYES-** BROOKS, BRUNNER, CHANG, KERNIGHAN, NADEL, REID, QUAN and PRESIDENT DE LA FUENTE

**NOES-**

**ABSENT-**

**ABSTENTION-**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**LATONDA SIMMONS**  
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council  
of the City of Oakland, California