

**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
**AGENDA REPORT**

2009 JUN 11 PM 4:09

TO: Office of the City Administrator  
ATTN: Dan Lindheim  
FROM: Office of Parks and Recreation  
DATE: June 23, 2009

RE: **Resolution Renaming Dunsmuir House and Gardens to Dunsmuir Hellman  
Historic Estate**

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**SUMMARY**

Staff is requesting that Council adopt a resolution renaming Dunsmuir House and Gardens, located at 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, the Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate. The Hellman family is very interested in the safeguarding of the Estate and its preservation as a part of the Hellman family legacy. While the Dunsmuir family originally built the Estate, it was the Hellman family's 50 years of influence and development that made the property what it is today.

The request to rename the Estate was brought to the Office of Parks and Recreation by Dunsmuir House and Garden's Inc., the non-profit agency charged with managing the Estate. The Board of Trustees and the non-profit's first professional Executive Director agree it is a disservice to the Hellman family to not include the family name as a part of the Estate's name. After obtaining approval from the Hellman family, the non-profit organization changed its name to Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate, Inc. and is now requesting the renaming of the Estate.

The Park and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) reviewed materials submitted by the Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate, Inc. Board of Trustees and staff, and found the name change was appropriate and met the requisite criteria of Resolution No. 65024 C.M.S., governing the naming of City Facilities. PRAC voted to approve the renaming at its September 10, 2008 meeting.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The proposed renaming has no expected fiscal impact to the City. The estimated cost to rename the Dunsmuir House and Gardens is \$7,500 for facility signage. The Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate, Inc. has agreed to pay for the production and installation of the new signs.

**BACKGROUND**

Alexander Dunsmuir purchased the property of 600 acres in 1898 as a wedding present for his bride, Josephine. Architect Eugene Freeman was hired to design a large home that would sit in the middle of the valley surrounded by oak trees. The mansion was completed in 1899. Alex and Josephine were married, but unfortunately, Alexander died while on the honeymoon.

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Josephine returned to the property to live in the home for a little over a year before she succumbed to lung cancer. Josephine's daughter, Edna Hopper, inherited the Estate but could not afford to care for the property.

In 1906, I.W. Hellman, Jr., the President of Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco, who had rented the property at least twice from Edna, decided to buy the property for a summer home. Shortly thereafter, San Francisco was struck by a major earthquake that destroyed the city upsetting life for residents, including the Hellman family. The Hellman's packed their belongings and moved to the Oakland summer home they called Oakvale. The Hellman family lived at Oakvale full time while their San Francisco home was rebuilt. Oakvale was a special place for the Hellman family and they were at the house as often as possible. Significant improvements and changes were made to the property over the years and it is believed that John McLaren, the designer of Golden Gate Park, was hired to assist with the design of the gardens and landscape. Mrs. Hellman loved horticultural endeavors and made sure there were plenty of plants and gardens for family and friends to enjoy. The Estate was also self sufficient with produce and other food for the table. The Hellman family continued to occupy the property for over 50 years, until 1959 when Mrs. Hellman passed away.

### **KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS**

After the death of Mrs. Hellman, the family was not interested in retaining the Estate. Several years later the home was purchased by the City of Oakland with the intent of creating a retreat and conference center. In 1971, a group of concerned citizens formed Dunsmuir House and Gardens, Inc. to ensure the property received proper care and attention. In 1984, a contractual agreement was signed with the City of Oakland to allow the non-profit organization to manage the Estate.

Over the last 30 years, the Hellman family has remained quietly involved in the Estate. Various family members have provided historic information, stories about life at the Estate, and photos and items that were once in the home. The Hellman family is very much interested in the Estate, its preservation as a part of the Hellman family legacy, and there is a sincere desire to see the Estate returned to its former glory of the Hellman years.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

The proposed renaming provides no sustainable opportunities.


### **DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS**

The proposed renaming has no impact for disabled and senior citizens.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff requests that Council adopt the resolution renaming Dunsmuir House and Gardens, at 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, the Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Audree V. Jones-Taylor  
Director, Office of Parks and Recreation

Prepared by:  
Dana Riley, Assistant to the Director  
Office of Parks and Recreation

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE  
LIFE ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE:



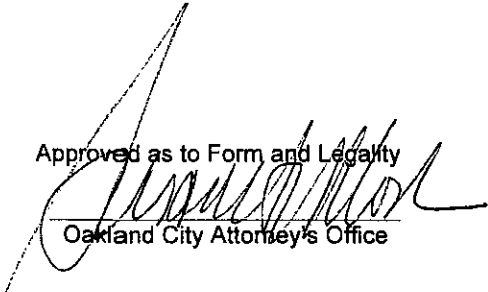
Office of the City Administrator

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FILED  
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK  
OAKLAND

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Approved as to Form and Legality

  
Oakland City Attorney's Office

## OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_ C.M.S.

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### **RESOLUTION RENAMING DUNSMUIR HOUSE AND GARDENS TO DUNSMUIR HELLMAN HISTORIC ESTATE**

**WHEREAS**, the Dunsmuir family originally built the Estate, but it was the Hellman family's 50 years of influence and development that made the property what it is today; and

**WHEREAS**, over the past 30 years, the Hellman family has remained involved in the preservation of the Estate; and

**WHEREAS**, Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate, Inc., the non-profit charged with managing the Estate has requested the renaming; and

**WHEREAS**, Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate, Inc. will provide funding for the production and installation of all signage related to the renaming; and

**WHEREAS**, the Park and Recreation Advisory Commission approved the renaming at its September 10, 2008 meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, the renaming adheres to the criteria of Resolution No. 65024 C.M.S., Designating Official Names for Municipal Facilities, item (b) an individual philanthropist, family, or estate name; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**: that the City Administrator or his designee is hereby authorized to rename the Dunsmuir House and Gardens, located at 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, the Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED:** That the Office of the City Attorney has approved this resolution as to form and legality, and a copy will be on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, \_\_\_\_\_

**PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:**

AYES - BROOKS, DE LA FUENTE, KAPLAN, KERNIGHAN, NADEL, QUAN, REID, AND  
PRESIDENT BRUNNER

NOES -

ABSENT -

ABSTENTION -

ATTEST:

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