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Great Park postpones hiring CEO

A top candidate withdrew from consideration hours before meeting.

By ELYSSE JAMES STAFF WRITER

The Great Park Corp. board postponed the anticipated appointment of a new CEO at its meeting last Thursday. Interim CEO Sharon Landers told the board she was premature in putting the appointment action on the meeting's agenda. She asked that the item be moved to a later date after the board's search committee reconvenes.

The postponement came two days after news stories reported that the previous CEO, Marty Bryant, in 1989 pleaded guilty to accusations of embezzling public money while he worked for the city of San Juan Capistrano. Bryant retired after just four months as CEO of the Great Park Corp.

Christina Shea, councilwoman and Great Park board member, noted Thursday that the "second candidate" for the position had withdrawn from consideration for the job just 24 hours before the Great Park board meeting.

Shea said the top two candidates were "no longer able to participate" due to personal reasons.

Board Chairman Larry Agran, who said he believed this was the first national search to fill a vacant position in the city's history, stated that most job candidates had requested their names remain private. Agran, along with fellow councilman and board member Sukhee Kang, stated that more information on the candidates should not be made public.

No further explanation was offered when councilman and board member Steven Choi asked why the CEO appointment was placed on the agenda and then postponed.

More than 150 candidates applied for the position. Five were interviewed by the search committee in September.

The Mills Group conducted a nationwide search for CEO candidates with help from the board's search committee. The committee was formed on July 12 to manage recruitment efforts. Members include Agran and board members Kang, Bill Kogerman and Miguel Pulido, City Manager Sean Joyce and interim CEO Landers.

Investigators alleged in 1988 that Bryant diverted about \$22,000 in fees for personal use when was an engineering official for the city of San Juan Capistrano, where he worked from 1977 to 1985.

The Los Angeles Times reported last week that Irvine officials did not run a criminal background check on Bryant before hiring him as CEO of the Great Park Corp. because he had been working for the city since 1985 with a clean record.