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County critical of council decision

BY JEFF ROWE IRVINE WORLD NEWS

The City Council will reconsider its vote last month to assert ultimate financial control of the Great Park, reopening an issue that ignited a twohour debate at the last council meeting.

Council member Christina Shea placed the issue on the agenda for the May 9 meeting. Earlier this year she had asked the city to clarify the council and Great Park Corp. board responsibilities.

Last month, on a 3-2 vote, with Shea and Steven Choi dissenting, the council accepted a resolution affirming the city's control over the Great Park, the mix of wilderness areas, athletic fields, houses, shops, schools, farms and museums planned for the old El Toro air base. The resolution was drafted by Councilmember Sukhee Kang and Mayor Beth Krom – its four pages endeavoring to resolve questions that had been raised about the governance of the Great Park.

On Tuesday, county supervisors asked the City Council to reconsider the April 25 vote. A resolution introduced by Supervisor Bill Campbell said the council's decision "has undone the safeguards put in place to protect the public investment in the park, jeopardized the consensus-building efforts that have surrounded the redevelopment process, and threatened that the park will no longer be the regional asset promised to voters."

Campbell said he was disturbed that the park board had, in effect, become a department of the city, stripped of its ability to act independently. However, the park board has made arguably the most substantive decision thus far – choosing the park designer.

Campbell was a finalist earlier this year to fill a vacant seat on the Great Park Corp. board, which in addition to the five council members, includes four outside directors.

Lawyers for the city and Great Park board said the council merely clarified what had been in place all along – that the city has ultimate authority over the Great Park. Although the formal name of the park is the "Orange County Great Park," it is within the city limits.

The controversy has its origins in the sharply divided City Council, where Shea and Choi often find themselves on the short end of 3-2 votes. But Shea said that on the Great Park Corp. board, the dynamic is potentially different given those four outside director votes.