

More than \$2M earmarked for consultants

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As Great Park officials prepare to unveil the park's schematic design early next year, the park's board of directors on Thursday approved a budget update earmarking more than \$2 million toward more than a half dozen consultants.

The new expenditures will go toward a mix of new consultants, extended contracts, and contracts brought over to city control from the Great Park Design Studio, staff said. Great Park CEO Mike Ellzey said the changes will help lay the groundwork for construction of the park.

"We're really in a very general sense beginning to phase down the frontloaded design of the Great Park and are going to ramp up production of the park," Chairman Larry Agran said.

Great Park leaders are also moving the contracts the Design Studio has with Dudek, which is creating the park's agriculture and food program, the aircraft museum and WRNS Studio, which provides architectural review, directly under their control.

"We are able to move ahead as other developers – and lets face it, we are a developer here – are unable," Agran said. "We are able to move ahead in what is otherwise a very grim economic environment."

But Councilman Steven Choi questioned why the park continues to have several layers of public information employees. Along with Irvine's in-house public information department, the Great Park Corp., which essentially serves as a department of the city, has its own public information budget, as well as the design studio, which subcontracts with Forde & Mollrich.

"I know you are trying to separate the city and the Great Park operations," Choi said. "I just question whether these are necessary positions or whether they can be streamlined or combined."

Ellzey said the separate public information jobs are because of the complexity of Great Park planning, claiming the different departments complement each others work.

Among the expenditures:

\$80,000 for the park's ambassador program, including \$30,000 for a volunteer coordinator.

\$60,000 for an audit of the Great Park Design Studio's work.

\$100,000 to Henry Korn, who will serve as the Great Park's new arts and cultural program administrator.

\$125,000 for an environmental and geotechnical consultant.

\$50,000 for a sports park consultant.

\$150,000 for an enterprise consultant to explore partnerships with private companies.

\$700,000 for the Design Studios strategy and communications budget. The Design Studio subcontracts with Newport based Forde & Mollrich, which includes putting community presentations and creating the glossy Great Park mailers.

\$75,000 for a six-month contract with Kevin O'Leary for public information work.



The \$2 million plus will go toward new consultants, contract extensions and contracts brought over to city control.