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Irvine makes it clear: Council controls Great Park money

Two councilmembers wanted greater authority for Great Park Corp. board.

By **JEFF ROWE**

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Irvine made it clear late Tuesday who controls the money to be spent on the Great Park.

The City Council does.

On a 3-2 vote, the council adopted a four-page resolution clarifying its governance role and responsibilities regarding the Great Park Corp. board, which is charged with overseeing the development of the 1,347-acre section of the old El Toro base. The vote came near midnight after two hours of discussion, accusations and basic bickering.

At issue: The degree of separation and authority of the Great Park board, especially regarding financial decisions.

Councilmembers Christina Shea and Steven Choi argued that the park board ought to control financial decisions regarding the park. Shea says the Great Park Corp. can do that more responsibly because of its broader representation. In addition to the five council members, the corporation board includes four outside directors.

But both City Attorney Phil Kohn and Great Park general counsel Rob Thornton said the clarifications were consistent with law and the council's ultimate responsibility for the Great Park, which although it is to be called the Orange County Great Park, is wholly within the Irvine city limits.

City manager Sean Joyce concurred with Kohn and Thornton.

Here's how the council members saw the issue:

Larry Agran: "This agreement puts into writing rules we have been operating under since Day 1."

Steven Choi: "This reduces the Great Park Corp. board to an advisory role."

Sukhee Kang: "This clarifies roles as the council intended."

Beth Krom: "We were moving so fast (when the base sold) that we didn't take time to delineate authority."

Christina Shea: "Yes, the city has had oversight (but) we envisioned a firewall, an independent Great Park board."

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