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Board members take legal action against Great Park Corp.

Christina Shea and Steven Choi file complaint in hopes of seeing CEO candidate documents.

By ELYSSE JAMES
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Great Park board members Steven Choi and Christina Shea filed a complaint Wednesday against the Great Park Corporation in Santa Ana Superior Court saying they have a right as board members to information about candidates in the search for a new board CEO.

The complaint alleges that the nine-member Great Park board, not just the search committee, should be allowed to see resumes, e-mails and other documents pertaining to the search for a new CEO.

Choi and Shea are questioning whether a nationwide search for candidates actually took place. The top two candidates for the position had ties to Great Park Board Chairman Larry Agran, according to the complaint. Shea and Choi allege that fact was not shared with the rest of the board.

In the complaint, Choi and Shea allege the first top candidate, Kurt Haunfelner of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, is a longtime friend of Larry Agran and had a brother, Mark Steven Haunfelner, who was a former aide to Agran. The second candidate, Rod Cooper, is currently the Great Park manager of operations.

As of Wednesday night, Agran said he was not aware of the complaint but said that with the Great Park Corporation as a defendant, Shea and Choi are "suing themselves and shows what kind of thinking goes into it."

Choi said he and Shea believed they had nowhere else to turn. The two allege they requested documents from City Manager Sean Joyce and interim CEO Sharon Landers but were not given any of the resumes or information they asked to view.

The two said they are using their own money to pay for the legal action.

Shea said she thinks they are not being allowed to see resumes and other candidate documents because the search committee does not trust them to keep the information confidential.

She said their intent is not to make the information public, but to ensure that a nationwide search for a CEO was actually conducted and to make sure the candidates were chosen because they were actually good candidates.

Choi said it would be fair to form a new search committee considering that both candidates have had ties to Agran.

The attorney, Benjamin Pugh of Enterprise Counsel Group, could not be reached Wednesday night.

Great Park Corporation spokeswoman Marsha Burgess said the corporation has no comment at this time.

City Hall spokesman Louie Gonzalez said the city would not comment on pending litigation.

An update on the Great Park CEO search is planned for Thursday's board meeting at 1 p.m. at City Hall.

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