

Veterans Cemetery Facts Supported by Documents

This must be read before any discussion!

JAN 14, 2014: Press Release: “Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva, Chair of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee, introduced legislation [AB 1453] that would direct the California Department of Veteran Affairs to establish a Southern California Veterans Cemetery...to construct a state-owned and state-operated Orange County Veterans Cemetery.”

FEB 7, 2014: Councilmember Larry Agran, Bill Cook, Harvey Liss and others meet with Sharon Quirk-Silva at her District Office in Fullerton to discuss the process for establishing a Veterans Cemetery in Orange County.

MAR 11, 2014: Irvine City Council Meeting: Council adopts Councilmember Larry Agran’s proposal to **1) support AB1453, and 2) expressed the City Council’s “strong interest”** in identifying and designating a site **at the Orange County Great Park** for conveyance to the State for purposes of creating and operating a State Veterans Cemetery.

JUL 22, 2014: Irvine City Council Meeting: “ITEM 5.3 CONSIDERATION OF COUNCILMEMBER AGRAN’S REQUEST TO CONVEY SPECIFIC CITY PROPERTY TO THE STATE FOR PURPOSES OF CREATING THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND CEMETERY” in furtherance of AB 1453, putting the City “one giant step closer to the earliest possible realization of the Southern California Veterans Memorial Park and Cemetery at the Great Park.” Adopted *unanimously* was Agran’s motion (seconded by Councilmember Jeff Lalloway) resolving to convey to the State the 125-acre “ARDA Transfer Site” at the Great Park.

This meeting was attended by a large contingent of veterans organized by Bill Cook and others, who spoke movingly of their service and the need for a Veterans Cemetery at the Great Park (the former MCAS El Toro) which was described as the “perfect site.”

SEP 27, 2014: Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 1453, establishing what would be the first veterans cemetery in Orange County on 125 acres of Irvine’s Great Park, also appropriated \$500,000 for the State Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to complete preliminary design work and directed CalVet to seek federal funds to help cover the cost of construction.

JUN, 2016: Concept Plan for the Southern California Veterans Cemetery is released by the State’s Department of General Services, a **333-page report covering site design, plantings, grading, site demolition, hazardous materials removal, roadway systems, architecture, building program, soil boring logs, and cost estimate (totaling about \$78 million).**

APR 4, 2017: Irvine City Council meeting: Motion made by Councilmember Lalloway, to: “Authorize and direct the City Manager to take all necessary steps in cooperation with Cal Vet, and the U.S. Veterans Administration, to accelerate the processing and final approvals for expedited construction of the Southern California Veterans Memorial Park and Cemetery on

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the State and City designated 125-acre parcel of land known as the ARDA Transfer Site within the Great Park, with the goal of commencing memorial park and cemetery operations on or before Veterans Day 2019.

The City Manager is further directed to: ... Convey to the Governor's office and the California Veterans Administration, ... (...and the U.S. Veterans Administration), **the City's offer to guarantee local funding of up to \$40 million from Account 180 at the Great Park** toward completion of design, demolition, grading and construction in order to commence operation of the Veterans Memorial Park and Cemetery within the Great Park by Veterans Day 2019

This motion first carried 3-2, with Fox, Shea and Wagner voting YES; then, Councilmember Fox suddenly said she made a mistake and wanted to reconsider her vote. In the reconsideration, Lalloway's measure was replaced by one limiting the City's contribution to \$38 million; requiring that the balance of the cost — \$40 million — come from the State and Federal governments; and **introducing a land-swap alternative in case the State failed to appropriate the funds. With Fox's changed vote, this new motion passed.**

MAY, 2017: Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva successfully inserted into the pending 2017-2018 State budget, a \$30 million grant to CalVet to commence construction of the Veterans Cemetery in the Great Park, beginning with demolition, removal of hazardous waste and site clearing.

JUNE 6, 2017: City Council meeting. Even though Councilmember Melissa Fox's requirement of State funding was met, this special meeting was called on 24-hour notice by Mayor Don Wagner and Councilmember Fox, just 10 days before the State budget was to be adopted by the Legislature. At this June 6th meeting, on a 3-2 vote (Mayor Wagner and Councilmembers Christina Shea and Melissa Fox voting YES; and Councilmembers Jeff Lalloway and Lynn Schott voting NO) the Council rejected the \$30 million in pending State funding, abandoning the Great Park Veterans Cemetery project in favor of a vaguely described land exchange with FivePoint Communities that would put the Veterans Cemetery at the "Strawberry Fields."

OCT 10, 2017: City Council approved, in concept, a transfer of ownership of the 125-acre originally designated, City-owned, Great Park Veterans Cemetery site to developer FivePoint Communities, along with a zone-change ordinance entitles FivePoint to build 812,000 square feet of office and commercial development on that Great Park property.

OCT 13, 2017: Citizens launch a Referendum Petition to overturn the October 10th ordinance and Council action. On this day, a lawsuit was filed challenging the Council action and its failure to adhere to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NOV 9, 2017: Volunteers from the Save the Veterans Cemetery Committee turn in 19,125 signatures of Irvine residents (far in excess of the 12,000 required), petitioning the City Council to reconsider and repeal its Great Park zone-change ordinance or, alternatively, put the matter on the ballot for Irvine voters in 2018.