

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ray Roschmann
Phone: (949) 854-4793
Email: rayroschmann@cox.net

Council and Citizens' Group Continue to Move Forward with Veterans Cemetery Project

Irvine, CA (May 19, 2020) — One week after the Irvine City Council voted 4-1 to adopt the citizens' initiative to rezone the 125-acre ARDA site at the Great Park for a Veterans Cemetery, the Council and supporters of the Build the Great Park Veterans Cemetery committee have issued statements in support of their commitment to continuing to move the project forward – even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Irvine City Council members appear committed to moving forward...

Although Mayor Christina Shea was the lone dissenting vote at the May 12, 2020 Council meeting, a day after the vote, Shea sent a memo to City Manager John Russo, writing, *"I am committed to moving forward and implementing the Council's decision."* In remarks at a May 17, 2020 meeting of the Democrats of Greater Irvine, Councilmember Melissa Fox stated: *"We can move into an agreement with the state immediately, and we should."* At the same meeting, Councilmember Farrah Khan expressed her desire to avoid further divisions within the city, telling club members: *"(I) want to bring everyone together. Moving forward is important."*

City Council and citizens' committee begin planning next steps...

It is now up to the City Council to take the next important step to begin work on an agreement that will transfer the ARDA site to the State of California. Councilmember Melissa Fox — a recent, strong proponent for the Veterans Memorial Park and Cemetery at the ARDA site — will serve as community liaison for the project. Public interest attorney, Larry Agran, who served as author and official proponent of the citizens' initiative addressed concerns that have been raised over funding for the Veterans Cemetery in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an article published in the *Irvine Community News & Views*, Agran wrote: *"Now that the people of Irvine have decided this land-use matter once and for all, it's time for Governor Gavin Newsom and our Orange County legislative delegation to muster the resources in Sacramento — even in these hard times — to do the right thing. These political leaders should keep their promise to fund, build, and operate the Veterans Memorial Park & Cemetery on the City-owned, 125-acre ARDA site at the Great Park. The total cost of the construction project, budgeted over the next 3-4 years, is officially estimated to be \$62.7 million. For the record, that's less than the cost of one railroad underpass in Irvine — and we have three! Measured otherwise, the Veterans Cemetery project is just 1/20,000th of the annual State Budget."*

Critical details for the Veterans Cemetery to be discussed at upcoming Council meeting...

Mayor Shea has requested that City staff begin gathering information regarding coordination efforts with Sacramento, plans for demolition, grading and maintenance at the ARDA site, and identifying funding sources. Michelle Johnson, a volunteer who helped collect the 19,790 signatures for the citizens' initiative, said: "Hopefully, the Council will also provide details for the transfer agreement."

Ray Roschmann is a volunteer press liaison, writing on behalf of the Build the Great Park Veterans Cemetery committee. The campaign website is <https://buildtheveteranscemetery.org/>

If you would like more information, videos or photos on this topic, please contact Ray Roschmann. Call or text Ray at (949) 854-4793, or email him at rayroschmann@cox.net