

Costa Mesa, county join to bid for fairgrounds

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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The city of Costa Mesa and the county of Orange are officially moving forward together to make a bid for the OC Fairgrounds.

City leaders have signed off on a memorandum of understanding that would push forward a working relationship with the county to submit a bid for the 150-acre site. County supervisors approved the agreement Tuesday morning.



The county and the city of Costa Mesa have both agreed to submit a joint bid for the fairgrounds, if the Governor does not rescind the sale of the the Orange County Fair and Event Center in Costa Mesa.

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“It sets the stage for a partnership, and a joint powers agreement down the road would finalize that,” said Assistant City Manager Tom Hatch.

According to the agreement, the county will take the lead in putting in a bid on behalf of the city-county partnership if the Governor does not rescind the sale. Costa Mesa, along with the backing of residents, the county and other Orange County cities, has lobbied the state to halt the sale of the fairgrounds.

If the county-city partnership wins the bid for the property next month, both parties will work with the state for six months or more to close on the deal, Hatch said. A joint powers agreement between the county and city would be established with details including the governance of the property.

Various cities have started to pass resolutions opposing the sale of the site, which was put up for sale to help shrink the state's massive budget sinkhole. The city is also working to develop the 2010 ballot initiative to confirm a general plan designation and also create a specific plan to keep the site as a fairgrounds.

Last week, City Councilwomen Katrina Foley and Wendy Leece traveled to Sacramento to lobby state officials and ask legislators to support AB 1590, a bill co-sponsored by Assemblymen [Jose Solorio](#) and [Van Tran](#), to halt the sale.

On Tuesday, Foley expressed her concerns about the lack of opposition voiced by Orange County legislators, who could have the ability to sway state officials to cancel the sale.

"If we use the same amount of energy and the same amount of resources collectively, we could possibly have some ability to cancel the sale before we expend a lot more money in engaging in a bidding process," Foley said.

"It is definitely unfair to the county and the city that the state has added these additional costs and added work at a time we are cutting our budgets, both the county and the city," added Foley, who also said resources have been diverted from working on city projects that were previously set as priorities.

Bids to purchase the 150-acre site are due to the state by Jan. 8. A voice auction will be held Jan. 14 among what the state deems as responsible bidders.

The state has the ability to reject all bids and cancel the sale prior to the deadline, according to city officials