

Date of Hearing: August 16, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Chris Holden, Chair

SB 475 (Min) – As Amended June 19, 2023

Policy Committee: Local Government

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill allows the City of Laguna Woods to use a portion of its City Centre Park property for a new fire station, contingent upon the city making capital improvements in the remaining park property and meeting other conditions.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Authorizes the City of Laguna Woods, until January 1, 2026, to remove from public recreation use City Centre Park property improved with grant moneys from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40).
- 2) Subjects the authorization described in 1, above to the reinvestment of \$212,000 in capital improvements in the remaining City Centre Park, which must be used for park purposes, and meet all applicable requirements of the grant funding received under Proposition 40, at no cost to the state.
- 3) Requires the City of Laguna Woods to develop a plan for capital improvements to be made to the remaining City Centre Park that meets specified requirements, including the plan must be approved by the city council and submitted to the state Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) for approval by January 1, 2025.
- 4) Requires the plan specified in 3, above, to be approved by the Department before any of the capital improvements identified in the plan are made to the remaining City Centre Park.
- 5) Requires the City of Laguna Woods to complete the capital improvements identified in the plan specified in 3, above, within three years of the Department's approval of the plan.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Negligible state fiscal impact. The bill requires the Department to approve the city's capital improvement plan for the remaining park land and specifies there must be no state cost.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill provides necessary legislative authorization to the City of Laguna Woods to use a portion of City Centre Park for a new fire station. According to the author:

[This bill] will allow the City of Laguna Woods and OCFA to build a new fire station that will enhance the delivery of services to residents, while also maximizing underutilized City Centre Park land. A new OCFA fire station will improve response times and accommodate the growing public safety demands of Laguna Wood residents and neighboring areas.

- 2) **Background.** State law generally restricts the use of property acquired and developed with state grant funds to the purpose for which the grant funds were originally requested, unless the Legislature grants specific authorization for another purpose.

**Proposition 40 of 2002.** As approved by the voters in 2002, Proposition 40 authorized the issuance of bonds to finance state parks, local assistance programs, land, air, and water conservation, and historical and cultural resource preservation. As part of Proposition 40, the Per Capita Grant Program provides for the acquisition and development of neighborhood, community, and regional parks and recreation lands and facilities in urban and rural areas. Grantees receive funds based on population, and are required to use the property only for the purpose for which the grant was made and to make no other use or sale or other disposition of the property, except as authorized by a specific act of the Legislature. The Department is responsible for developing and administering the program, providing technical assistance to all grant applicants and ensuring that grant recipients adhere to the program requirements.

In 2004, the City of Laguna Woods was awarded a \$220,000 grant by the Department under the Per Capita Grant Program to make a number of capital improvements to City Centre Park, including construction of a concrete walking path and various landscaping enhancements. The receipt of state grant funding restricts the ability to use the land for non-park purposes.

This bill provides authorization to the City of Laguna Woods to use a portion of its City Centre Park property to construct a new fire station. Since 2016, the Legislature has granted at least four similar authorizations to other local communities for park land transfers.

**City Centre Park Site.** City Centre Park consists of approximately 0.56 acres and serves the city's 17,644 residents, as well as visitors. The only fire station located within the city is on its eastern border. According to the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA), there has been an increase in call volume in recent years that has led to longer response times for the western portions of the city, which include residences, wildland-urban interface areas, and two 13-story residential towers. The city and OCFA assert there is a significant need for a second fire station strategically located within the city to better respond to increased call volume, community growth and traffic.

The OCFA reports a 2019 analysis of undeveloped sites that could physically accommodate a new fire station determined the park to be the best location to serve the western portions of the city. As a result, the city wants to allow for approximately 0.32 acres of the park property to be used to build a new fire station. In 2022, the city had the portion of the park proposed for use as a fire station appraised. The appraisal estimated the fair market value of that portion of the park at \$212,000.