

January 20, 2010 11:38 AM

Costa Mesa earmarks \$200,000 to preserve fairgrounds

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THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

COSTA MESA The city will set aside \$200,000 in its budget for costs associated with fighting the sale of the Orange County fairgrounds, with much of the money being dedicated to launching a ballot initiative.

The City Council has earmarked the money for incurred and future expected costs related to the fairgrounds issue. Staffers initially were going to ask council members to approve \$250,000 but dropped the figure down by \$50,000.



Representatives from Orange County and Costa Mesa, left to right, County Supervisors, [John Moorlach](#) and [Bill Campbell](#), Costa Mesa City Manager, Allan Roeder, and Costa Mesa Mayor, Allan Mansoor realize that their bid was not large enough at the state held public auction for the Orange County Fairgrounds and Event Center last week. .

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The city has already incurred costs in attempts to stop the sale of the 150-acre site, including shuffling city officials up to Sacramento to lobby the governor to halt the process.

It has also worked with the county to purchase the property, which the state put on the auction block Thursday. A pair of developers, Steven Craig and Dwight Manley, submitted the highest bid, \$56.5 million, for the fairgrounds.

At the Tuesday meeting, Mayor Allan Mansoor said the city-county partnership, which submitted a \$6.5 million bid, was prepared to bid higher but initial bids from others were too high.

Costa Mesa is working to launch a ballot initiative to lock in the land-use designation of the fairgrounds. The city also estimates that it will spend about \$130,000 in its efforts to place a ballot initiative on the June election ballot.

Councilwoman Katrina Foley asked city staffers to look into whether fund-raising could help cover some of the costs.

Revenue that was not originally appropriated in the last fiscal year – \$259,656 – will be reclassified for the fairgrounds costs, according to the city. The city's auditors and finance staff determined that some deposits made during the past couple of years were not recorded as revenue.

The city is already working with a slim staff to fill in a \$19 million budget gap. Fifty-three of its employees have retired early, saving the city about \$3.6 million throughout the rest of the fiscal year, along with staffers taking a 5 percent pay cut to save about \$3.6 million.