

# CHRISMEARS

Irvine City Council Member  
Orange County Great Park Corporation Board of Directors, Chair

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, I have endorsed Mike Ward for Mayor, and Greg Smith, Mike House, and Steven Choi for Council – a team running together as “Irvine First” – because I believe these people have what it takes to restore integrity to Irvine City Hall.

I have witnessed firsthand the various ways in which private financial interests have been advanced at City Hall over the past several years. Most of us know the phrase “influence peddling”, and influence peddlers have secured a beachhead at City Hall through their relationship with, and support of, Larry Agran and Beth Krom. Chief among these peddlers is Ed Dornan, someone who has sought to make huge dollars through the proposed city utility and the development of the Great Park. Of course, Ed is Larry and Beth’s political pointman, pollster, and fund-raiser, and is also the owner of the “Hometown Voter Guide”. The “Hometown Voter Guide” is a political slate mailer which has collected hundreds of thousands of dollars – typically from people who want to do business with the city – and then uses the dollars to create and send mailers that support Larry and Beth and their slate of candidates. You do the math.

Unfortunately, there’s more, although it takes some telling. The genesis of my personal and political falling out with Larry has been re-engineered by Larry and Ed in order to try to diminish the message and the messenger. In truth, the beginning of the end of my personal and political friendship with Larry was my decision, in the spring of 2003, not to run for Mayor or for Council in November, 2004. Prior thereto, Larry and I had been political allies in the election of 2000, and formed the core of a formidable team on the council. Larry faced term limits as Mayor in November, 2004, and our plan was that I would run for Mayor at that time, which would free Larry to leave the council and do what he had wanted to do for some time: become the highly paid Executive Director of the Great Park Conservancy, a group that was an outgrowth of Larry’s grassroots political organization, Project 99, and a group that, prior to the passage of Measure W, wanted to design and build the Great Park. In Larry’s thinking, I would anchor a council majority as Mayor that was “Larry friendly”, and would hopefully view with favor the idea of providing at least interim funding, as necessary, for the Conservancy – with the Conservancy paying Larry a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year as its Executive Director!

My decision not to run for Mayor – based on personal and professional considerations, and just plain old fatigue with Larry’s continual manipulation of the process – created havoc with Larry’s plans, and he was furious with me, in part because he didn’t believe Beth Krom was strong enough to be Mayor and champion his agenda. Thus, Larry felt compelled to run for city council in order to preserve, and advance, his interests. Unwilling to abandon his goal of becoming the Executive Director of the Great Park Conservancy, Larry sought to find a legal way that he could serve on the council and, at the same time, work as the highly paid Executive Director of the Conservancy. In fact, Larry obtained a legal opinion that he could do both, so long as he abstained from voting as a council member on any action that might direct money to the Conservancy. It may be legal, but it hardly passes the smell test.

It is also important to understand that Beth Krom has known about, and supported, all of the influence

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