

City Council says no to Los Angeles golf developer

LOS ANGELES — In what is considered a stunning victory for environmentalists and a union local, the Los Angeles City Council recently denied a permit to a developer looking to build an 18-hole course on the environmentally-sensitive banks of the Big Tujunga Wash. The decision comes after nearly 10 years of

emotional debate about the site and proposed golf course development there.

An attorney for the project developer, Foothill Golf Development Group, told the *Los Angeles Times* it is very likely his client will sue. He said the council's decision, which rejected unanimous approval by

the Planning Commission, violated the developer's rights to use the property for economically viable reasons. The Foothill group and the property owner, Cosmo World Corp., has struggled with federal and local officials for nearly a decade to build a golf course. Cosmo World is headed by Japanese golf magnate Minoru Isutani.

If the case does go to court and a judge finds in favor of the developer, it's possible the city would be forced to approve the project or buy the land, and possibly, pay damages.

Environmental supporters, including the California Department of Fish and Game, the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society, strongly opposed the 352-acre project, mostly on the

grounds that it would reduce an already precious amount of truly open space in the area and destroy one of the last remaining habitats of the endangered slender-horned spineflower. The developer eventually made several concessions to increase the amount of open land, but ultimately failed to sway the council.

Some observers, including the developer, said the council's decision was strongly influenced by pressure from a local union of hotel employees and restaurant employees. The 7,500-member group opposed the project largely because the golf course project would benefit a large lien holder on the property, Kajima International, which is involved in a prolonged dispute with the union that is trying to organize employees at Kajima's New Otani hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Kajima was actually the original developer of the project, but was replaced by Foothill Golf after a financial dispute with Cosmo World. Kajima put an \$18-million lien on the property, claiming Cosmo World still owes the firm money.

Dubsdread to undergo yet another major renovation

ORLANDO, Fla. — The beleaguered 18-hole Dubsdread Golf Course, which has struggled in recent years and already undergone millions of dollars in renovations, is headed for another major project that could cause a troublesome drop in golfers this fall.

City engineers plan to tear up a third of the holes at the 75-year-old course to improve drainage. The project, expected to cost more than \$378,000, could begin in October, about the same time the city is expected to pick a new management team to run the facility.

City officials have become increasingly unhappy with Dubsdread because it has lost more than \$2 million since a \$4.5 million makeover in 1991. Earlier this summer, the city council decided to seek bids from private management firms to operate the course, which the city has run since buying it for \$1.2 million in 1978.

The new project is aimed at relieving stormwater runoff problems for homes along the course and improving course drainage. The project is expected to be finished by December, although temporary greens and tees will be set up on many holes, which may cause a dropoff in golfers and revenue from greens fees.

