

Council banishes drones from parks

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The City Council voted last night to ban drones and miniature aircraft from all city parks in Menlo Park — at least for now.

The vote was 4-0, with Mayor Pro

Tem Kirsten Keith absent. Twenty-four people spoke for and against the ban on drones and miniature aircraft and were about equally split on the matter.

While the ban covers all city parks, Bayfront Park is where many aircraft hobbyists have gone.

“I am delighted you are including all city parks in your banning of drones and other unmanned aircraft activities,” said Anne Moser, a 50-year resident of Menlo Park. “Bayfront Park has particular need of this ban due to its special
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nature as a park designed for passive use.”

Others were less delighted with the ban.

“Our use of the park is passive. We don’t require any infrastructure to (fly aircraft) there,” said Greg Ashbury, a Redwood City resident who regularly flies his model airplanes at Bayfront Park.

Council quickly decided after the public hearing to ban drones until the Bayfront Park’s master plan is reconfigured next year, when the ban might be lifted.

There was also an addendum to the ban of drones allowing the Menlo Park Fire Protection District to use its drones in city parks in the case of an emergency.

A complaint about drones in Bayfront Park first came to council in January 2013. Since then, the city’s parks and recreation commission has been attempting to resolve the issue. However during its most recent vote on the matter, the commission tied 3-3 on banning drones and miniature aircraft.