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City bans alcohol from all parks

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Alcoholic beverages will not be allowed at Ramsay Park, the Watsonville City Council decided last night, making all the city's parks alcohol-free.

The ban was put in place on the recommendation of the city's Recreation and Parks Commission, which wants the parks alcohol-free because of problems caused by people who abuse alcohol.

Pedro Castillo said allowing alcohol in some parts of some parks would send "a mixed message to the population."

The commission also recommends an increase in police pa-

trols at the park to enforce the ordinance. There was some debate last night about where the funds will come from to pay for the extra enforcement.

Some council members argued that the money should come from recreation and parks funds, and commission members argued that it should come from the general fund. In the end, the council decided to work out those details later.

Even though the council had previously indicated it would approve such a ban, Councilman Al Alcalá said last night he was going to vote against it.

He said parks are among the

few places poorer Latinos can get together to have parties after baptisms and other events and banning alcohol would shut them out. He said their interests weren't represented and weren't being taken into account by the council, the commission or last night's audience.

He also said legislation won't stop alcohol abuse and Prohibition was a miserable failure.

Councilman Todd McFarren said since the commission was appointed by the council, if it isn't representative, "we have no one to blame but ourselves."

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And, he argued, legislation does change people's behavior. Bans on smoking, for example, have made people more aware and many have stopped, he said.

"The same thing is going to happen, and is happening, with alcohol," McFarren said.

Councilwoman Betty Bobeda voted with Alcalá against the ban, but she said she did so because she was concerned about the cost of extra patrols at the park.

After the vote, the council went outside for a cigarette break.