

# Mayor Lee Announces That He'll Veto Sharp Park Golf Course Proposal

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San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee said today that he is vetoing a proposal passed by the Board of Supervisors that could lead to the closure of the Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica.

Lee said at an unrelated news conference outside City Hall this afternoon that he would be sending a letter to the Board of Supervisors later today indicating his plans to veto the legislation, which was narrowly passed 6-5 by the board earlier this month.

The proposed ordinance, authored by Supervisor John Avalos, had called on the city's Recreation and Park Department to offer a long-term management agreement to the National Park Service for the 417-acre Sharp Park, which is owned by the city of San Francisco and has served as an 18-hole public golf course since it opened in 1932.



But partnering with the National Park Service to include the land as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area would likely result in the course's closure since federal officials indicated they were not interested in managing a golf course.

Lee said he decided to veto the proposal after talks with Congresswoman Jackie Speier, D-San Francisco/San Mateo, as well as San Mateo County officials and San Francisco Recreation and Park Director Phil Ginsburg, all of whom opposed the ordinance.

"They've been making the effort, Rec and Park along with San Mateo County officials, to balance the natural habitat planning issues with the recreational users on the golf course," Lee said.

"This particular legislation, the way it's drafted is it immediately stops that, and exclusively requires us to deal with the National Park Service," he said, adding that Speier told him "in no uncertain terms" that the park service would not operate the golf course.

Avalos said in response to the veto that his legislation "is innocuous and only requires the city to look at closure of the golf course among other options."

He said the golf course is losing money for San Francisco--it has been operating at a \$1.2 million deficit over the past five years--and is the topic of a costly lawsuit by environmental groups who say golf-related activity is harming two imperiled species in the area.

The course "has been a financial and environmental liability for San Francisco," Avalos said. "The status quo is untenable and the city should be looking at all options for how to manage the land and protect the endangered species there."

But Lee, who said he has played the golf course "during the years I had a lot more time for that sport," noted its historical significance as a reason to keep it around.

The course was designed by Alister MacKenzie, who also designed several world-famous courses, including Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia.

"I know it to be a very historic course," Lee said. "And I remember the clubhouse very well, a lot of my friends went to the clubhouse to have some great dinners there in Pacifica."

He also mentioned a key ruling against the environmental groups in the federal lawsuit. The groups had sought an injunction to stop pumping and mowing activities on the course to protect the San Francisco garter snake, an endangered species, and the California red-legged frog, a threatened species.

But in a Nov. 29 ruling denying the injunction, U.S. District Judge Susan Illston cited data showing the frog population had actually increased in the area in the past 20 years.

"The judge also ... seemed to indicate there was a balanced approach to the maintenance of the golf course," Lee said.

The six votes the ordinance received from the board is two short of the amount required to overturn a mayoral veto.

Dan McMenamin, Bay City News

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