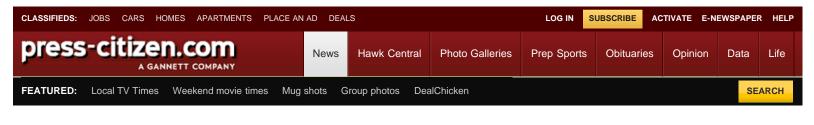
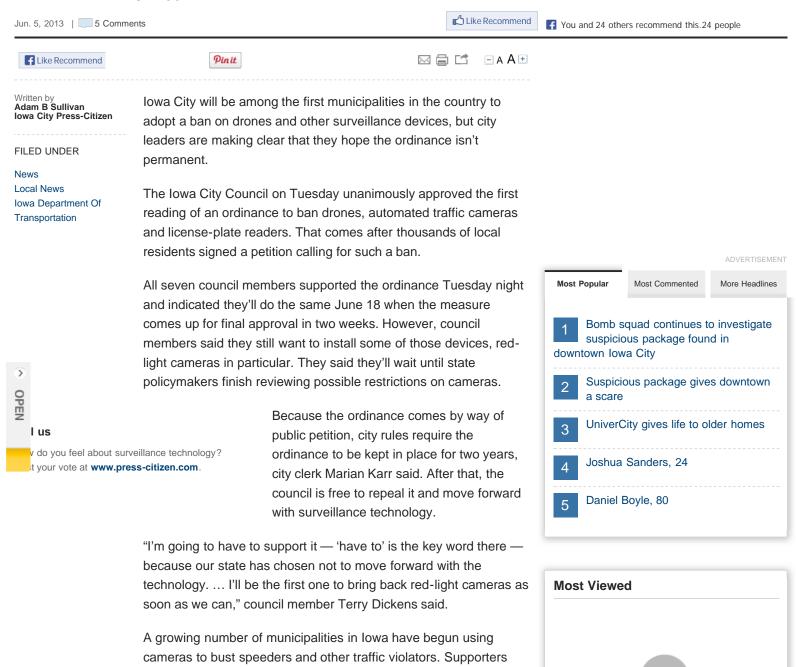
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Iowa City's drone ban may be first of its kind in the U.S.

Council reluctantly supports ban on drones, traffic cameras



say it boosts traffic safety and provides extra revenue for

municipalities. Opponents, however, say it constitutes an invasion of privacy and a slippery slope toward more surveillance.

The Iowa Department of Transportation is delaying new cameras on state roadways while officials study possible restrictions. Some state lawmakers have unsuccessfully pushed to ban the devices outright.

One constituent spoke against the camera ban at Tuesday night's meeting.

"You could get millions of dollars just by enforcing the traffic laws on our streets — it costs you nothing. There are companies that will come in and do it for you," said Jim Walters, who yelled during his time at the podium and interrupted the meeting after he took his seat.

Drones, meanwhile, have earned growing notoriety in light of the federal government's drone strikes overseas, but military-style unmanned aircraft aren't known to be in use in Iowa. That could change eventually as state and local governments elsewhere have started to use unmanned aircraft for domestic operations such as monitoring weather or, in a few cases, helping to locate suspects.

A small group of Iowa Republican legislators this year pushed for a statewide ban on weaponized drones and restrictions for peaceful drones, but that bill failed to gain wide support and Democrat leaders opted not to move the bill forward.

Ben Stone, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, which has worked with Iowa City organizers on the ban, said he doesn't know of any other municipalities with drone bans. Iowa City's drone ban will be among the first in the nation, he said.

"There are a lot of laws and ordinances against traffic cameras, but in terms of drones, it's just so early in the proliferation of that technology," Stone said.

Aleksey Gurtovoy and Martha Hampel — the two organizers who led the petition drive for the ban — were at Tuesday night's City Council meeting. They said afterward that they weren't surprised by the council's plans to move forward with cameras at a later time.

They said the council's decision to adopt the proposed ban was a political one.

"We had no illusions as far as their intentions," Gurtovoy said. "It's definitely in the city's interest do this, especially with three of them up for re-election this year."



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