

Petition for Moscow Paid Parking Referendum Not Submitted

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Paid parking places began appearing in central Moscow last year. **D. Abramov**

Plans for what could have been Moscow's first referendum were canceled Saturday as the Just Russia party backed away from asking for a vote on the city's paid parking plan.

Party leader Sergei Mironov said that Just Russia would not take more than 140,000 signatures that had been collected to the Moscow Elections Commission after discovering large numbers of falsified entries.

While the petition was close to the required number of supporters, organizers found that more than 24,000 signatures were invalid, Lenta.ru reported.

Calling the false signatures a "Trojan horse," Mironov said that the petition had collected more than 140,000 of the 143,531 signatures (2 percent of Moscow voters) required before Sunday, but that the documents would not be submitted because of the falsifications.

The referendum was supported by the Moscow City Duma, though a recent program broadcast on the state-financed television channel NTV alleged that students were paid money to make fake signatures.

Beginning the initiative in December, Just Russia had offered to ascertain the attitudes of Muscovites towards the system of paid parking in the city center, which was instituted last year to various reactions of complaint and approval.

The collection of signatures became complicated at the end of last year, however, as the required petition form was changed on Dec. 30 and organizers were forced to recollect 12 days' worth of signatures, Interfax reported.

A Mail.ru poll about the paid parking system found 75 percent of online respondents against paid parking inside the Garden Ring. Further expansion of the parking system outside of Moscow's central circle, currently being proposed by the city's transportation authorities, was opposed by 88 percent of respondents.

The potential referendum would have asked Muscovites about parking both inside and outside the Garden Ring in addition to questions about allowances being made for residents to park near their homes and a possible role for local authorities in administering the system.

Analysts have said that Just Russia is [moving closer to the Kremlin](#) as a means of political survival. In the past year the party has seen the departure of several opposition deputies and the reinstatement of Mironov, who is close to President Vladimir Putin, as chairman.

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