

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
REPORT FOR THE VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2013 AGENDA

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
Discussion of Referendum Questions Regarding Fowl Management Regulations	Resolution Ordinance Motion ✓ Discussion Only	David Fieldman Village Manager

SYNOPSIS

At the request of Commissioner Waldack, a report for discussion under New Business has been prepared regarding the placement of two advisory questions on the April 9, 2013 consolidated election ballot. Pursuant to Village Council policy, this topic shall be a discussion item only to allow for the Council to direct whether staff and legal counsel should further research the issue and prepare the appropriate form of action for consideration at a later date.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The goals for 2011-2018 identified *Exceptional Municipal Services*.

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND

Commissioner Waldack requested that the Council discuss the placement of the following advisory questions on the April 9, 2013 consolidated election ballot. The deadline for authorizing the placement of advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution to the DuPage Election Commission is January 22, 2013. Therefore, if the Council would like to submit referenda questions, the Council would have to vote to approve the questions at the January 15, 2013 Village Council meeting.

The proposed questions are as follows:

Shall the Village of Downers Grove amend the ordinances allowing for the expansion of fowl, specifically chickens and/or backyard chicken-raising in Downers Grove?

Shall the Village of Downers Grove amend ordinances to reduce property line setbacks to allow for the expansion of chicken-raising in Downers Grove?

Commissioner Waldack submitted the following text to be included in this staff report:

This issue of expanding backyard chicken farming is controversial to say the least. While proponents raise arguments in favor, they tend to be dismissive of the issues raised by those opposed to expansion of chicken raising/farming in our community. There have been actual complaints nationwide of all the concerns raised, such as smell, health issues, attraction of predators, costs associated with enforcement

and other issues. The opposition arguments cannot be just dismissed. In fact, the issues raised by the opposition may be found in a plethora of articles, studies, and laws that support the backyard chicken farmer. For example, pro-chicken articles that name the top ten predators and how to tell which killed your chickens (including neighbor dogs). The thought that while the chicken coop may be protected, the neighbors' yards may become host to these predators as they try to get onto the chicken-owners property, thus putting the neighbors property and pets in jeopardy.

No Council member admittedly owns chickens and there are no staff that currently own chickens. More neighbors are affected than actual owners. I believe that an expansion of chicken farming is an issue that our residents should be able to weigh-in. This Council has issued two referenda that called for action by governmental bodies that the Village Council could take no action - pension reform at the State level and the elimination of other governmental entities such as townships. If we were willing to poll the residents on these type questions, it should be incumbent on this Council to poll our residents on a quality of life issue such as this. Precedent has been clearly set.

On December 4, 2012 the Village Council directed staff to conduct further research on proposed amendments to the Village's fowl regulations found in Chapter 5 of the Village Code. A staff report to the will be published on or around Monday, January 14, 2013.