

# Galena voters against taxpayer-funded, lethal deer cull

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GALENA, Ill. -- A majority of Galena voters cast ballots Tuesday against spending taxpayer money to kill deer if the animals are found to be overpopulated in the city.

There were 797 votes, or 55 percent of votes cast, against the proposal, compared to 640, or 45 percent, for it. The lethal cull would have occurred if an annual count of deer within the city limits showed the species was overpopulated by state standards.

Results of the non-binding referendum will advise the city's deer committee and City Council on the preference of residents.

Deer committee chairman John Cox Jr. said the vote results will be discussed during a meeting tonight at Galena City Hall.

Cox said that, while he couldn't speak on behalf of the entire committee, the vote totals mean citizens are pretty evenly split on the issue. The committee will make recommendations to the City Council on the issue at a not-yet-determined time.

"Obviously, the full committee needs to discuss what happened," Cox said. "But for the vote to be that close in an advisory referendum, I think it leaves the City Council open for whichever way they want to go."

Cox noted the deer committee was unable to obtain a full count of deer this winter due to a lack of snowfall. Snow-covered ground makes it easier to count the animals from a helicopter.

Both Cox and City Council Member Jerry Westemeier noted there was some concern over the language on the ballot.

"The City Council changed the language we recommended to be very specific about extending taxpayer funds and using lethal means to control deer," Cox said. "That may or may not be what we recommend to the council."



GalenaVote1NK.jpg

Residents of Jo Daviess County vote Tuesday at Turner Hall in Galena on issues including the latest Galena School District referendum.

Westemeier said the deer population needs to be culled, but that he hoped as few taxpayer dollars as possible would go to the effort. He suggested looking at issuing permits to hunters to avoid a more expensive cull.

Westemeier also noted the referendum fell flat in the eastern part of the city, where he said the presumed deer overpopulation is not as prevalent.

“Why would they want to use taxpayer money if they don’t have a problem over there?” he asked. “We’re never going to get 100 percent agreement. We have to look at how the majority wants it and come up with a solution and a way that is going to be safe, effective and isn’t going to cost a lot of money.”