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Ravenna backs down on vicious dogs City scraps legislation that would have required pit bull registration

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Opponents of legislation that would have required pit bull owners to register their dogs with the city of Ravenna have scored a victory.

The city has scrapped the proposal, which was met with outcry when it was introduced in July.

Part of the reason for the proposed legislation was so police would know where pit bulls reside in the city, said Councilman Bruce Ribelin.

He said the dog warden will continue to be responsible for vicious dogs in the city. All aspects of the city's proposed legislation are the same as what is included in state law " except the state does not require pit bull owners to implant a microchip to track the dogs, as was the case in the city's proposal. Also, the "dangerous dog" portion of the ordinance will be dropped and handled through the dog warden's office.

"We don't need to duplicate a state law that would be very costly to us as a city to enforce," Ribelin said. "We do not need to over-legislate."

Dog complaints will be referred by the Ravenna Police Department, health department or individuals to the Portage County dog warden to be enforced.

Vicious dogs " pit bulls in particular " are required under state law to be insured for up to \$100,000. Vicious dog owners can be charged with a first-degree misdemeanor the first time the dog is loose, and a fourth-degree felony for the second offense.

"A lot of responsibility lies with the owners of these dogs, about how they're trained and taken care of," Ribelin said.

A public meeting still will be held at 6 p.m. Monday for residents who want to voice their concerns.

Dave McIntyre, the county dog warden, said there is a computerized list of all registered dogs in the city that he will share with the police and health department in a continued collaborative effort.

He said in more than two years, there have been a total of 17 dog bites " and only four of those were from pit bulls.

Currently, the city has seven registered pit bulls and three pit bull mixes, but he believes there are more that are unregistered.

McIntyre said working with the city police department and health department should cut down on the dog bites.

"I applaud the city for making an effort," he said. "I'd like to see what we can accomplish together."

He said in the past weeks he has been canvassing Ravenna, checking to ensure all dogs, not just pit bulls, are registered with the county, as required by law. McIntyre added that unregistered owners of vicious dogs will be given copies of the state legislation and given 30 days to be insured.

"Mostly, pit bulls are good dogs, but we don't know what kind of owners they have," he said.