What will the Home Rule ballot say?

A petition has been filed with the City Clerk to put the following question on the November 6, 2018 ballot:

"Shall the City of Batavia cease to be a home rule unit?"

Voters who choose to vote YES on this question want the City to stop being a home rule unit.

Voters who choose to vote NO on this question want the City to remain a home rule unit.

What is Home Rule?

Home rule is defined as the transfer of power from State to local governments for the purpose of facilitating self-governance. It is automatically granted under the Illinois Constitution to all municipalities with a population of 25,000 or more. Home rule can also be granted through referendum for communities with a population of less than 25,000. Home rule is widely understood as the authority for local governments control over local affairs. For more information on how the City of Batavia has used its home rule authority, visit cityofbatavia.net. Or, you can email your questions to lnewman@cityofbatavia.net.

Please consider attending the informational meeting being held at City Hall 100 N Island Ave, Batavia October 8, 2018 at 7:00 PM. On the November 6, 2018 ballot you will be asked whether the City of Batavia should cease to be a home rule unit of government. This question has very serious implications on local government funding and authority to enact local legislation. This informational newsletter is to provide you with factual information about home rule.

For more information you can visit our website at cityofbatavia.net. The City will have an informational meeting about Home Rule on October 8, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 100 N. Island Ave., Batavia. There will be a presentation and an opportunity to ask questions you may have about Home Rule.
Local control over local matters

A key attribute of Home Rule governance is the ability to enact local legislation regarding matters of health, safety, morals and welfare that address local concerns. One way that Batavia has used its ability to enact legislation with Home Rule is the 2011 implementation of the Crime Free Housing ordinance that applies to multi-family dwellings of six units or more. Crime Free Housing programs provide property owners and managers an effective tool to reduce the chance of criminal activity in individual rental units.

ARTICLE VII, Section 6(a) of the Illinois Constitution provides, in part, that: “[A] home rule unit may exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs including, but not limited to, the power to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals and welfare; to license; and to incur debt.” There are statutory limitations on a home rule unit’s rights, but they are generally granted broad latitude to act within those limits.

Home Rule Revenues

Batavia currently collects $5.2M in revenues derived from home rule sources such as home rule sales taxes and gas and liquor taxes, which are derived from both residents and other patrons from outside the City. This represents 19% of City revenues. The City has used home rule revenues instead of real property taxes to pay for city services and also to pay for the debt service on its bonds.

If the City loses these home rule revenues the City would need to raise real property taxes to continue funding existing services and/or discontinue some existing services.

What if I want a say in how money is spent?

The City must pass a spending plan each year. The budget is put out to the public in late October for review and comment. There is a public hearing where public comment is taken. The City Council also has weekly committee meetings and Council meetings twice a month that the public is welcome to attend and make their opinions heard. The City Council wants to know your opinion. If public speaking isn’t for you, City Council members and City Staff can always be reached via a phone call, email or regular mail. City Council and staff contact information is available at cityofbatavia.net.

Whether you are for or against home rule, please take the time to vote on November 6, 2018. It is a question of great importance to the residents of Batavia and will have significant effects on city governance and property taxes.

Questions on Home Rule can be directed to Laura Newman, City Administrator at 630-454-2050 or via email lnewman@cityofbatavia.net.

For each $1 of property taxes, 8 cents goes to the City.

The owner of a $300,000 home currently pays $698 for City Services each year. This includes street maintenance and construction, snow removal, cemetery maintenance, police and fire dispatch, police and fire protection and an ambulance on the east and west side, and various other services.

To learn more about Home Rule, we invite you to attend the informational meeting on October 8 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.