

## **Festus, Arnold hit snags on getting voter input**

By Christine Byers

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Thursday, Jan. 14 2010

Festus City Council members could ban smoking in city restaurants, but first they want to know what voters think.

Arnold's city leaders are wrestling over the future of the red light cameras that document illegal turns at several intersections, and they want voter input.

The problem is Festus and Arnold are third-class cities, and state law does not allow them to poll voters on election ballots with the intent to change or keep existing laws based on the outcome, said Stephen Ables, assistant director of the St. Louis County Municipal League.

"Without the law, it would be like the town hall meetings in New England where everyone votes on everything," Ables said.

Third- and fourth-class cities had smaller populations and were less professionally managed when the state laws governing them were enacted, Ables said.

Festus leaders backed off the referendum idea after hearing from their city attorney.

But tonight could mark the second attempt in Arnold to win support for a ballot question on the cameras.

City Councilman Matt Hay has put an item on tonight's agenda seeking council approval to ask voters: "Shall the city of Arnold continue to have red light cameras monitoring traffic within the city of Arnold?"

In 2006, Arnold became the first city in Missouri to begin using cameras to catch drivers who run red lights.

A federal lawsuit filed against the city in 2008 alleged that the tickets are

third- and fourth-class cites the power of referendums. Previous efforts to do so have failed.

Festus, meanwhile, turned to a survey of residents by the Jefferson County Health Department. Councilman Sam Richards said the survey, showing 72 percent in favor of smoke-free workplaces, was enough of a referendum on public opinion. He hopes the new council elected in April will agree.

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