

City of Hilshire Village Council Meeting 5/19/2026

Staff Memo: Discussion on Electric/Invisible Fences and Potential Signage Requirement

Summary Recent resident concerns and ambiguity in the City's definition of "restraint" have prompted a review of whether electric or invisible fences should be allowed as a sole method of containment. These systems rely on deterrence rather than a physical barrier, and their effectiveness varies with equipment reliability and the dog's training. Without a visible barrier, pedestrians and joggers may feel unsafe when a dog charges the property line, increasing the risk of dog-on-dog conflicts and startled reactions. Equipment failures such as dead batteries, power outages, or malfunctioning transmitters also increase the likelihood of a dog becoming loose without the owner's knowledge.

Purpose of Discussion After reviewing publicly available municipal codes, staff did not find clear examples of other Texas cities that explicitly distinguish electric or invisible fences as noncompliant with their restraint requirements. Because these systems are not visibly verifiable, enforcement becomes difficult; officers cannot easily determine whether the system was functioning at the time of an incident. Given this ambiguity, Council may wish to consider whether electric or invisible fences should qualify as "restraint" under Article 2.100.

Rather than redefining the ordinance at this stage, staff recommends discussing whether properties that rely solely on an electric or invisible fence along a street-facing property line should be required to post a small sign indicating that an electronic containment system is in use. This approach maintains flexibility for property owners while alerting pedestrians and passersby that an electronic system is present and that they should remain attentive when approaching the property line.

Recommended Sign Specifications for Council Consideration

Sign Size

- Minimum size: 5" × 7"
- Maximum size: 12" × 12"
- Must be made of weather-resistant material (metal, PVC, or durable plastic)

Font & Visibility

- Lettering at least 1 inch tall
- High-contrast colors (e.g., black on white, white on blue)
- Must include clear wording such as: "Electronic Pet Fence in Use" or "Invisible Fence in Use"

Placement

- Sign must face the street and be visible to pedestrians approaching the property line
- Installed outside the public right-of-way but close enough to be easily seen
- Mounted 24–48 inches above ground level
- Must not be blocked by vegetation, parked vehicles, or decorative elements

Number of Signs (Options for Council)

- Option A: One sign per street frontage

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- Option B: One sign on each street-facing side where the electric fence is the *only* method of restraint

Maintenance

- Signs must be kept legible and upright
- Replacement required within 14 days if damaged, faded, or obscured

Examples:

