

Bedford considers future leaf removal methods

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Even while this year's fall leaf season was still in progress, discussions started at Bedford Government Center as to how to help property owners handle pickup and removal in the future.

Bedford Township Trustee Michelle Bork has been researching options, and Supervisor Paul Pirrone said it is a topic he is interested in, as well.

Ms. Bork has expertise because her husband has worked many years in the lawn-care business. As a result, she's seen how some northwest Ohio communities clear fallen leaves out of the neighborhoods. She's also aware of complaints residents have about the smoke caused by burning leaves.

"You can't take something away from people without having a solution," she said.

Although there are alternatives, she's looking for ones that the public will find so attractive that leaf burns will diminish in number. If all goes as expected, she expects to provide a recommendation to the township board by spring.

Currently, the options for township residents are:

- Leaf pickup as part of a waste disposal contract. In Bedford Township, each property owner arranges for his or her own trash service.
- Leaf removal as part of a lawn care contract.
- Mulching leaves when mowing the lawn.
- Dropping off leaves in paper bags when leaf bins are available behind Bedford Government Center.
- Burning the leaves and other yard waste in open fires.

Under the current rules, leaf burning is permitted in Bedford Township on Friday afternoons and during the daytime hours Saturdays and Sundays during April, May, October and November. But this is not without controversy, given how common leaf burning ends up being.

Ms. Bork said township officials hear complaints from residents who have health problems when smoke drifts through the neighborhoods. And while no burning permit is required, the fire department often is called to investigate reports of illegal burns.

Both Mr. Pirrone and Ms. Bork said the practical details of the burning ordinance are a hurdle for some residents. The open leaf burn piles must be at least 25 feet away from any structure and at least 15 feet from the lot line or paved surface, according to the regulations.

Ms. Bork said she'd like to find an option that is provided at no cost to residents, although to make room for the equipment and labor in the township budget is a discussion all its own.

Some Ohio communities, she explained, have a leaf pickup truck that sucks leaves from curbside and compacts them for future compost. For a community the size of Bedford Township, the routes could be completed in two weeks. In Toledo, there are signs posted in advance in each neighborhood as to when the leaf truck will travel through; in Ottawa Hills, residents call the village officials when they have moved leaves into place.

Where the leaves would be taken is another question that needs to be researched, officials said.