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Confusion over recycling prompts trustees to search for solutions

Joan Demirjian May 2, 2019

The fast-changing rules on which materials can be recycled is causing concern and confusion among residents and township officials throughout Geauga County.

At the Bainbridge Trustees meeting on April 22, resident Bill Clark said everyone seems to have a different interpretation of what's recyclable. "We have a problem and we need to do something," he said.

Every county in the state is under the direction of a waste management district. In Geauga County, it's the Geauga Trumbull Solid Waste Management District. Waste districts have different rules when it comes to what recyclables are collected.

Though glass is recyclable, the Geauga waste district stopped accepting it in its single-stream recycling drop-off centers. The district in Geauga has not said exactly why the change was made, but other centers across Ohio have indicated that glass is heavy, can break while being collected and has different colors that must be separated. Also, glass is cheap to manufacture lowering the demand for recycled glass, other centers have indicated, and there are fewer companies that accept used glass for recycling.

Trustee Lorrie Benza said that those attending a recent Geauga County Health District Advisory Council meeting discussed the new hazardous waste recycling center being planned by the district on Merritt Road off Ravenna Road (Route 44) in Munson Township. The new center will include regular recycling as well, prompting a number of area townships to consider closing their recycling centers in the near future and use the one in Munson instead, she said.

"A lot of us are looking for guidance from the Geauga Trumbull Solid Waste Management District," Mrs. Benza said. Bainbridge has signed a three-year contract with the district and trustees want to know why terms of what is accepted have changed.

Recycling is a learned behavior, she said, and changing habits is not easy.

Trustee Jeff Markley noted that residents are perturbed that recycling is “changing in midstream.”

Trustee Kristina O’Brien, who is on the policy committee of the waste district, said she hopes the district can find a hauler that will accept glass.

The district board of directors is made up by three representatives from Geauga County and three from Trumbull County.

In a related matter, Bainbridge trustees indicated that they want to look into the feasibility of the township contracting with a single trash hauler for the township versus multiple haulers.

Mr. Markley said there are currently three or more waste haulers serving residents and going to one hauler could be met with opposition by those who want to choose their own.

“Some see contracting with one hauler as a monopoly and knocking other haulers out of business,” he said. With no competition, a single hauler could raise rates in the future, Mr. Markley said.

“We would want the single contractor to provide choices,” he said, such as curbside recycling and one trash pick-up a month for some who don’t need weekly service.

The Lake Lucerne community in the township currently contracts with one hauler which provides curbside recycling, a service the hauler could choose to stop, Mr. Markley said.

The recycling matter “is a mess,” he said, prompting trustees to look for a hauler to do it all.

“I think it would be cheaper for most residents with a single hauler,” he said. A committee of five to six residents is being put together to discuss the matter and present options to township trustees.

Joan Demirjian