

Perry Twp. trustees eye end to recycling center

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Residents in Perry Village and Perry Township are facing their last months of free recycling as the county winds down its recycling grant program and township trustees calculate how many days left it can keep its recycling center open.

The center, at the township's road garage at 4720 Webb Road, is more than five years old, but township trustees have discussed ending the service since Lake County commissioners began phasing out its Residential Community Recycling Grants in 2011.

At Tuesday's workshop, Trustee Rick Amos said a decision needs to be made soon on whether, and more importantly when, the program should end.

"Suddenly getting something for free isn't a bargain anymore," Amos said after the workshop.

In 2010, Lake County gave Perry Township \$25,236 to subsidize the township's recycling program. Since then, the county has been reducing grant amounts by one-fifth every year to the 23 Lake County communities, including the township. This year, the

township received \$10,094 and is slated to receive half of that amount next year, which will be the last year of the county's grant program.

Coupled with reduced local government funds from the state, township officials have had to cut monitoring hours at the center to balance its budget. Perry Village contributes its recycling grant to the center every year. Despite giving \$2,376 this year, the township is estimated to spend \$4,000 to keep the center running, said Township Administrator Wally Siegel.

"Next year, if we keep this program going, most of it would come from our money," Siegel said.

Perry Township has until Dec. 15 to apply for next year's grants. Only three communities have thus far opted out of grant program — Fairport Harbor, Painesville Township and Leroy Township.

Lake County began contracting out curbside recycling two decades ago after the passage of 1988's House Bill 592, which among other things, asked communities to reduce the volume of garbage dumped into landfills by promoting recycling programs.

After a competitive bid process in 2005, the county

moved to the drop-off centers, which Perry and other communities use today.

Chris Hodges, the solid waste district coordinator for the county, said all of the money spent on the recycling program came from revenue generated at the county landfill, and by 2011, it needed to pull that money back.

"We did it as long as we could until financially we couldn't do it anymore," Hodges said. "We've told communities up front there is no law that says counties are suppose to subsidize recycling programs."

Hodges said communities are also better situated to contract out recycling because many local governments have contracts with garbage haulers and can negotiate discounted deals for recycling.

"We don't do garbage pickup so we can't entice haulers to do recycling pickup," Hodges said.

None of Lake County's five townships have a contract with an exclusive hauler, and although attempts have been made to bid out for one, many township trustees across the county agree it's an unpopular idea among most residents. In all five townships, residents negotiate their own curbside

hauling contracts, often paying more than double what people in cities such as Mentor pay.

Amos said he is willing to pay \$4 extra a month for recycling pickup, a deal offered by Major Waste Disposal. But he said he can't speak for everyone.

He and the other trustees are worried whether residents will add recycling to their curbside pickup contracts or avoid the added expense and move recyclables to their garbage can.

"I hate to say it, but in our civilization, we don't have a lot of people who are really gung-ho," Perry Township Trustee Phillip Haskell said. "I mean if you make it so easy for people to not avoid recycling, they'll recycle. But there's still people who will walk up and throw a pop can into a trash container when there's a recyclable container right next to it."

Township trustees have until Dec. 15 to apply for next year's grants. Amos said the township will likely apply for the money and keep the center open for a few months next year up until grant money from the township and village is used up.