

Recycling remains important topic in Barry County



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The goals and objectives of recycling programs throughout Barry County are going through an evaluation phase that will continue until December.

Sarah Archer, a recycling coordinator with Iris Waste Diversion Specialists, and project specialist Sandra Porter attended the meeting of the Joint Planning Alliance Monday and spoke about the three phases of creating a new recycling plan for the county.

Phase 1 is an evaluation process, which has already begun. This phase includes Archer and Porter attending village, township and city meetings to introduce themselves and inform the community of actions being taken to improve the recycling process.

Through the evaluation, systems currently being used and their effectiveness will be summarized. The synopsis is expected to be completed in January of 2018.

The next step will be the early implementation phase lasting from January to June 2018. It includes providing a plan for improvement in February 2018. Changes will begin with a focus on public awareness and education about the new recycling system. A website and quick reference guides will be provided.

Phase 3, which is the secondary implementation plan, is expected to begin in July 2018 and continue through June 2019. This phase will explore strategies for expansion of the updated recycling system based on cooperative efforts of every Barry County community.

Based on recommendations of the Governor's Recycling Council and the Solid Waste and Sustainability Advisory Panel, new legislation should be expected by fall, Archer said. The intent of the legislation is to move from a focus on landfills and retaining capacity to a focus on sustainable materials management. The legislation also touches on establishment of facilities capable of putting recycled materials to better use. The recommendation reports can be found on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality website.

The possibility of a new sanitary sewer service in the Algonquin Lake area and the potential cost of the project are only in concept form, said Hastings City Manager Jeff Mansfield, and there is no need for anyone to jump to conclusions. The topic was broached to snub any rumors that a sewer project is in the works.

Recent issues at the Hastings compost site created a need to reduce the hours of operation, Mansfield said. Extremely large trees and tree trunks were being dumped there, most likely by professional tree-cutting services, along with residential non-compostable waste, such as painted cabinets, treated lumber and mattresses.

Reducing the hours has helped, he said, and there is a big improvement. The site is under frequent monitoring, and additional security measures are being discussed. The measures are being taken seriously by the city, and work continues to enforce proper dumping and preserve its use for Hastings residents. In the meantime, flexible hours of operation have been added to fit work schedules and better serve city taxpayers.