

Brush & Leaf Level-Set

18 DECEMBER 2023

Background

During Fall 2022, with over 85% residents of engaged, the top concern in Fair Haven was the inefficiencies and infrequency of brush and leaf pickups

- In 2020, a survey captured 11.5% of residents (723/6269) feedback on brush with cleanliness of the streets and safety scoring the lowest (weighted averaged of 6.23 and 5.47 out of 10, respectively)

Responding, Mayor Halpern formed a committee (AKA Brush & Leaf Committee/BLC) that included 12 volunteers from the Community, which was led by Councilman LaBarbera

The BLC met for 10 months internally as a committee, as well as with Director of Communications, Director of Public Works & Engineering, & Code Enforcement

- Updates were provided frequently at GB meetings of the progress

The Borough's Brush Site Permit is clear regarding what can be placed at the brush grinding site (and its overall use); there are also residential factors to take into consideration when using this site

Framing the Problem

Brush and leave materials are consistently on Fair Haven's streets

There is an increase in locations brush and leaves are placed conflicting with bike paths and parking spaces

With the frequency of debris on the street, more debris and sediment are making into the stormwater infrastructure

Whole tree removal are not considered brush removal

The enforcement guidelines are not severe enough to deter non-compliant behavior

Brush and leaves pick up can be more efficient, especially leaves in the Fall

22% of taxes only contribute to the municipal budget, providing certain budgetary constraints

BLC Review Process

Brush and leaf policies and procedures of over 10 different towns

Town wide survey providing additional perspective of the brush and leaf process

Master data logs that demonstrated consistently April was the month where the most brush was picked up

Discussing practical considerations

- Ratio of property owners who use landscapers versus do not
- Inconsistent falling of leaves
- Varying lot size that can impact volume

Practical considerations of DPW, to include responsibilities throughout the year (field maintenance and lining, snow removal, etc...)

Applying certain assumptions:

- Leaves require more attention in the Fall
- Brush requires more attention in the Spring
- “Acts of nature” potentially require ad-hoc pick-ups (based on DPW assessment of storm impact)
- If pick-ups were more frequent, the volume would be less

There were three primary perspectives the current process was evaluated from:

- Schedule
- Communications
- Enforcement

The BLC recognized that two other significant factors to take into consideration were safety & stormwater, as well as education to residence

The BLC recognized the need to adopt the Zone 1, 2, 3, 4 approach for alignment verse Zone A, B, C

Three Primary Changes

The BLC recommended changes in the schedule, communication, and enforcement taking the following into consideration

- Increased Service
- Safety (Bike Lane, Parking)
- Clean Streets
 - In Fall 2023, over 110K pounds of debris was removed from Stormwater infrastructure
- Alignment w/ Other Municipal Services
 - In June 2024, the trash and recycling contract requires a renewal
- Stormwater Management
- Street Sweeping
- Staff Efficiencies
- Resident Efficiency
- Budget Neutrality

Proposed Changes

Communication

- Increased lines of communication, with a focus on education, reach, and resonance, will support the overall action plan
- Both vegetative and yard waste topics require attention provided the lack of awareness regarding disposal

Enforcement (mandatory court appearance required)

- Enforcement is a critical component to ensure compliance and adherence that requires a balanced approach in an effort not to alienate Fair Haven residents and provide grace in those appropriate moments
- However, enforcement must be relied upon when residents take advantage of said grace or blatantly disregard the ordinances

Schedule

- January: Christmas Tree Pick-Up

- April: Spring Clean-Up (street, no can))
- May – September: Twice/Month Zone Pick-Up* (more than doubles current service, with caveat)
- October: Fall Clean-Up (street, no can)
- November – December: Rolling Leaf Pick-Up (more than doubles current service; street, no can)
- Materials placed to street allowed to start two Saturdays before pick-up time

Can

- *Requires resident to purchase approved container (no limits on the number of cans to purchase)
- Working with Fair Haven Hardware for procurement and logistic process
- Potentially work with another group, such as Fair Haven Foundation, to have an application process if someone cannot afford the can
- Store accordingly aligned with current ordinance