

Village will raise charge for chipping branches

Written by Mark Jaeger

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Village of Saukville residents will have to pay twice as much for village crews to chip their brush next year.

The Village Board accepted a recommendation from the Public Works Committee to boost the charge for the chipping service after learning the fee has not increased in more than a decade.

The village provides free chipping of branches and tree limbs left stacked and at the curbside, but a charge is assessed if that process takes more than 20 minutes.

Since 1998, that charge has been \$25 for each additional 20 minutes.

Public Works Supt. Ray deBruijn said the village has been losing money at that rate. Figuring the cost of equipment and manpower, he said the chipping service costs the village \$135.52 per hour.

“We are operating at a \$20 loss every time we chip,” deBruijn said.

To cover that cost, the committee recommended boosting the rate to \$50 per 20 minute block after the initial free time.

In most cases, deBruijn said, the results of routine yard work and tree trimming can be chipped during that first 20 minutes.

“It is not as if our guys are standing there with a stopwatch. You can get a lot through the chippers in 20 minutes if the branches are properly stacked with the butt ends facing the curb. These machines are voracious,” he said.

Property owners are told in advance when the village will begin charging for the additional service.

The rate adjustment will go into effect in January but is not likely to have a noticeable impact on the village’s 2010 budget. The village usually ends up billing four to six residents a year for added chipping time.

As a windfall of the chipping service, the village offers free, delivered mulch from those shredded tree limbs.

The only catch is residents have to accept the mulch in loads of five cubic yards.