

City to lose \$12,000 in state recycling money

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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Port officials will turn to contingency fund to keep program operating this year

The City of Port Washington will lose about \$12,000 in state recycling grant funding this year due to reductions in the Department of Natural Resources' budget for 2011, City Administrator Mark Grams said Tuesday.

But Grams said Tuesday he does not expect the city will eliminate or reduce its recycling program.

"I think we can scrounge up \$12,000 to take care of it," he said, noting the recycling program is something that residents consider important.

The city receives about \$30,000 in recycling grant money from the state each year — money Gov. Scott Walker has proposed eliminating completely from the 2011-13 budget.

But last week's announcement that grant money included in the city's 2011 budget was to be trimmed was a surprise, Grams said.

"I wasn't expecting that," he said. "I don't think anyone had any inkling it was coming. But, we'll just have to live with it."

The City of Port Washington, which spends \$137,000 annually to recycle, collected 891 tons of recyclables last year, much of it glass and newspaper. It also collected 2,185 tons of trash.

The grant money is paid to communities in late spring or early summer.

Grams noted that funds to cover the loss of the grant money could come from the city's contingency fund, which has about \$15,000 in it, or from savings in other line items.

"We'll look as the year goes on where our expenses come in under budget," he said.

Aldermen said Tuesday that they do not want to see the city trim or eliminate the recycling program.

"It's a step backward if we don't recycle," Ald. Paul Neumyer said. "Why would we choose to go backward?"

"We have to get rid of the stuff, and it would go in the landfills then. That just seems foolish."

Ald. Dan Becker concurred, saying, "We will recycle. We're not going to abandon the program."

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It's the responsible thing to do."

Mayor Scott Huebner said the city will come up with the needed funding.

"In the end, the cost (of disposing of garbage or recycling) comes out the same," he said. "It just makes sense to keep recycling. You've got to get rid of the stuff anyway.

"If the state cuts our funding, we're just going to have to find the money somewhere."