



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Leaf Mulch Program Grinds to a Halt Curbside Leaf Collection to Continue**

After years of noise complaints from residents who live near the Town's Beulah Road leaf mulch facility and declining interest from residents in using the free mulch, the Vienna Town Council unanimously voted at its regular meeting, Monday, July 11, to disband the Town's leaf mulch program for the next year. Instead, the Council approved a motion made by Councilmember Steve Potter to eliminate leaf grinding and allow the public works department to continue its curbside leaf removal program, temporarily store the collected leaves at the facility on Beulah Road, and then use the most efficient means, either commercial or Town trucks, to haul the leaves out of town for disposal.

"The lowest common denominator is cost," Potter said. "If we look at the round-trip cost of using our fleet and our own employees, the cost of hauling 25 cubic yards of leaves is \$192.81. The cost of using a rental fleet with larger trucks is \$138.02, which is a 40 percent difference." Potter noted that many rental trucks have higher capacity than Town-owned trucks, which would require fewer trips to and from disposal sites and likely result in a reduction in transportation costs to haul leaves.

The Council's decision to stop the Town's leaf-mulch operation gives the public works department the needed flexibility to develop a leaf-removal solution that would be most efficient and cost effective in the long run. The solution could include using a combination of both Town-owned and rental fleets to haul leaves to disposal sites. The public works department will report the results of this year's leaf-removal efforts to the Town Council next year.

For decades, the Town collected leaves and ground them into mulch that was available for residents to use at no charge. Residential demand for leaf mulch declined in recent years, and a recent public works survey of mulch users confirmed waning interest. The declining interest and feedback from several public hearings, emails and phone calls helped inform the Council's decision to end the leaf mulch program.

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