

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMON COUNCIL ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 20, 2023
BY VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Lisa Shanahan, Chair; David Heuvelman; Joshua Goldstein;
Nora Niedzielski Eichner (7:10 p.m.)

STAFF: Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel; Pedro Metta, Capital Access
Manager, Business Development Center

OTHERS: Diana Revolus, Common Council member

1. ROLL CALL:

Ms. Shanahan called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and called the Roll. A Quorum was not present.

2. PUBLIC HEARING (possible action on):

A public hearing was not scheduled this evening.

3. PUBLIC HEARING DISCUSSION:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Shanahan reviewed the public comment procedures.

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted. Speakers are Norwalk residents unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Diane Lauricella thanked the Committee members for engaging in this important issue. She said she was not sure it was ready for a final vote and reviewed sections of the Ordinance she would like the Committee to consider.

Ms. Lauricella asked the Committee to consider any incentives to help cover people with the cost to convert from the use of gas blowers to electric blowers.

Mr. William Wrenn asked if he could play a video showing why it is so objectional that gas blowers are allowed. Mr. Candela asked him to send the video to him for review and if ok, will present it at the public hearing.

Mr. Wrenn talked about the noise and stench from the gas powered blowers. He said that electric blowers is a good step, but feels people should be persuaded to not use anything. This would enhance the quality of life and would be a small cost to the businesses.

Ms. Betty Ball spoke in favor of the common sense limit on gas blowers.

Ms. Jess Parker spoke in support of the ban as written.

Mr. A. J. Cassuto, AJ. Landscaping Service said the time to do the job will be longer with electric blowers. He explained that the cost of a gas blower was significantly less than that of a battery blower. In addition, the battery life is an hour and a half. He expressed concern about fires when charging the batteries and about the disposal of the batteries.

Mr. Cassuto said there are 500 registered landscapers in Norwalk, but there are three on the call. He said he was notified last night about this meeting. He said a better job has to be done to inform landscapers rather than the general public.

Mr. Tyson Canevari, Signature Landscaping said he found out from a source that this meeting was taking place. He explained that he works all day with this equipment and this is how he makes his living. He said they do properties with 20 plus homes and asked how they could do that with electric equipment. He said this seems to be a feel good thing. He said he feels they are being attacked unnecessarily and said there is sewage spilling into Long Island Sound, but no one is crying about that. He suggested finding the people who run their blowers on Sundays. He said this is how he provides for his family.

Mr. Martin Devani, Countour Landscaping. He said everyone makes good points, but Mr. Wrenn and Ms. Ball did not mention the people killed from the lithium batteries. He said this is a problem. They are being asked to put battery backpacks on the men and in the truck and in the shop; they could blow up. He asked if Public Works and the golf courses are being allowed to use gas blowers.

Ms. Laura Mirra, Village Creek said they are in transition mode from gas blowers to electric equipment. She said it has been astonishing and they are very happy with the outcome. She expressed support for the ban.

Mr. Jeff Cordolac, Fairfield County resident said he runs a landscaping company that is all electric. This is their fifth season and said the health impact is significant. He said the equipment is strong enough and they have not had any issues.

Ms. Betsy Wrenn spoke in support of the Ordinance and said it is overdue. She said they are miserable all summer long. The blowers destroy any peaceful enjoyment in their yard.

There were no other speakers; however, residents had submitted letters that will be attached to the minutes.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

- May 16, 2023 – regular meeting of the ordinance committee

There was no action taken at this time.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- Discuss and vote on Leaf Blower ordinance.

Ms. Shanahan encouraged the Landscapers to stay on the call. She explained how this Ordinance came about and said they thought long and hard about the impact on landscapers. She said they also looked at a seasonal ban.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Mr. Candela shared his screen. Ms. Shanahan reviewed the Ordinance.

Mr. Goldstein said they need to be cognizant of the ban dates and how they are going to handle the situation three years from now if the technology is not there.

Mr. Metta said any business in Norwalk can reach out to him. He said he has multiple programs and information on how to obtain grants or loans. He added that the process works really well.

Mr. Heuvelman said he supports Mr. Metta's work and the Business Development Center. He added that he is in support of this Ordinance and feels the technology is closer than people think it is.

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED THE ORDINANCE TO A PUBLIC HEARING
BASED ON THE DOCUMENTED AMENDMENTS
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

5. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

- May 16, 2023 – regular meeting of the ordinance committee

With the arrival of Ms. Niedzielski Eichner a Quorum was present.

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Candela read letter submitted by Ms. Deanna D’Amore, Director of Health and Ms. Louise Washer. These letters will be attached to the minutes.

7. **NEW BUSINESS:**

There was no new business discussed this evening.

8. **DISCUSSION ITEM:**

There were no additional discussion items presented this evening.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

Candela, Brian

From: D'Amore Deanna
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 12:44 PM
To: Shanahan, Lisa
Cc: Candela, Brian; Livingston, Thomas P.; Daniels, Lamond
Subject: Re: Leaf blower safety language

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Good afternoon, Lisa,

Thank you for sending me the draft ordinance and for the opportunity to review and provide comments.

In terms of health impacts of leaf blowers, the [CDC](#) has reported that two hours of exposure to leaf blowers can cause hearing loss damage. I understand that OSHA has workplace requirements related to noise exposures, and NIOSH has workplace recommendations. The CDC does recommend the use of hearing protection devices when you cannot avoid loud sounds. In terms of regulating and/or investigating any potential occupational safety and health issues, we would defer to CONN-OSHA as this is beyond the scope of a local health department as defined in state statutes.

Thank you for all that you are doing to increase awareness of the health impacts of loud noise and the importance of workplace safety.

Best,
Deanna

From: Shanahan, Lisa <LShanahan@norwalkct.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2023 12:27 PM
To: D'Amore Deanna <ddamore@norwalkct.gov>
Cc: Candela, Brian <bcandela@norwalkct.gov>
Subject: Leaf blower safety language

Deanna...

We are preparing for our Ordinance committee meeting on Tuesday night, June 20, at 6:30. Following up on my email of last week, we are just wondering if you have any further comments on section 4, Required Safety Features .

Essentially, we want to require the use of noise canceling headphones and masks for landscape worker safety. If our language ought to be altered in any way, please let us know.

Thank you.

Lisa

Candela, Brian

From: Louise Washer <lbwasher@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, June 17, 2023 10:54 AM
To: Candela, Brian; Lisa Shanahan
Subject: Testimony re: gas leaf blower ordinance
Attachments: norwalk_GLB_letter.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Brian and Lisa,
Please see attached testimony from the Norwalk River Watershed Association regarding the proposed gas leaf blower ordinance to be discussed at the ordinance meeting Tuesday. I cannot attend the meeting, but hope my letter can be read into the record.
Thank you,
Louise Washer
Norwalk River Watershed Association



June 17, 2023

Dear Norwalk Ordinance Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association and its over 2000 members and participants in support of the proposed ordinance to restrict the use of gas leaf blowers.

In addition to the public health harms resulting from gas leaf blowers including dangerous noise pollution and increased air pollution, specifically of fine particulate matter, the Watershed Association is concerned about the effects leaf blowers have on climate change, soil health, water use, and pollinator habitats.

Climate change. Gas leaf blower combustion engines are extremely low efficiency; 30% of the gas and oil that they use is unburned and released directly to the atmosphere. It is estimated that just one gas-powered leaf blower emits 300 times the pollutants as a pick-up truck. These pollutants include carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, benzene, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, particulate matter, and contribute to the formation of ozone. Our region experiences one of the highest levels of ground ozone in the country. [This EPA press release of June 1, 2023](#), warns of our area's high ozone levels and cites a need to reduce the levels of use of gas-powered lawn equipment on days with low air quality.

Blowing the ground to remove leaves and grass clippings also degrades topsoil by desiccating it. Lawns that are blown require much more water as a result—water that comes out of our rivers threatening their health. In the Norwalk River watershed, we are facing on-going drought conditions. We experienced a stage 2 drought last summer for the sixth time in the last two decades, and the city lost many trees as a result. The loss of tree canopy compounds our issues of increasing heat and drought. Our region faced an extended drought from 2012-2017 that threatened drinking water supplies to southwest Connecticut. This is the new climate reality for Norwalk. We need to change our actions in response.

The blowing of clippings also results in an increase in the use of chemical fertilizers. Clippings are full of nitrogen, which makes them a natural fertilizer if left on lawns. If they are blown into waterways, they add their nitrogen there and the result is hypoxia and fish kills in Norwalk Harbor and Long Island Sound. Even worse, after blowing away clippings, people add fertilizers, which wash even more nitrogen and phosphorus into our rivers and the Sound. NRWA supports this ordinance because it seeks to curtail harmful lawncare practices that are not necessary to a healthy lawn. The ordinance will help educate the public about changes we all need to make in response to climate pressures.

Finally, leaf blowers destroy the habitat of ground nesting bees which make up 80% of our native bee populations. They also destroy the over-wintering habitat of countless moth and

butterfly species whose caterpillars are necessary food for baby birds. By mindlessly blowing every inch of our properties all year, we are wiping them clean of life. We are unintentionally contributing to the loss of 3 billion songbirds over the last 20 years and contributing to the crashes we see in bumble bee, butterfly, and moth populations. And for what? This ordinance will raise awareness about these vital issues and protect the pollinators and birds we have left.

Passing this ordinance will mean Norwalk joins over 200 communities that have instituted restrictions on gas leaf blowers for all the reasons above. Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Louise Washer
Norwalk River Watershed Association
Pollinator Pathway

Candela, Brian

From: TJ T <tjtrimboli10@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 1:24 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Leaf blowers

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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I am totally against using electric leaf blowers. It is not conducive to operating a golf course and the maintenance. It would be totally impossible to try to have a golf course kept in great shape using something that does not have the power or longevity.

Stop wasting my tax dollars on this nonsense.

Candela, Brian

From: Dan Delventhal <dandelventhal@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 2:19 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Public Comment from MowGreen Electric Lawn Care Provider
Attachments: Gas Leaf Blower Reform Support Letter 2 Norwalk CT.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Hi Brian,

I have been doing lawn care for 18 years and never used a gas leaf blower for the reasons your town is contemplating this ordinance.

I have attached a letter of support for your ordinance and would appreciate it being included in public comments.

I may be able to speak during the meeting also, and hope to log in via Zoom to do so.

My company serves Norwalk and surrounding towns and we hope you pass the ordinance.

Letter of comments is attached.

Thanks & Healthy regards,

Dan Delventhal, AOLCP, DEEP 3A Supervisor, MBA 203.209.5979 Green Individual Award Winner '16
Founder, MowGreen LLC

Mentioned in Landscape Management Mag. & Irrigation & Green Industry News
CT SWA Clean Cities Coalition Business of Year, Lawn Care '22
TownVibe Green Company: Honorable Mention '17, '19 & '20
Smogathon Finalist '18
Green America People & Planet Award Finalist '17

Instagram | Facebook



June 20, 2023

Re: Support for restricting/eliminating Gas Leaf Blowers - Norwalk Initiative

Greetings,

MowGreen supports the initiative referenced above. MowGreen tends 70 acres of lawns per week and uses no gas powered leaf blowers (GLBs)

GLBs are known to cause significant health problems for workers and others in the area due to high levels of air and noise pollution, while electric leaf blowers are zero emission and produce far less noise (below the threshold of hearing damage and nervous system disruption). The noise of GLBs is bad enough to damage hearing and raise blood pressure in humans at properties where in use, as well as adjacent properties. Students and remote workers have trouble concentrating. The low frequency noise travels hundreds of feet and penetrates walls. You can smell the unburnt fuel and other fumes in the air from 100's of feet away.

Loud and highly polluting gas powered lawn care devices use should be restricted.

Hundreds of new laws have emerged at the municipal level across the country in recent years restricting the use of GLB's based on carefully weighed evidence. New York state is now considering one (<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S1113>). In California, where lawn care gear pollution has eclipsed that of automobiles, they are outlawing the sale of all gas lawn gear by 2024.

The fact that electric blowers are so much quieter than GLBs and zero emission, makes them a superior alternative for tasks with efficiency targets demanding such tools. People have a right to peace and quiet in their own homes, and the noise and pollution levels from GLBs used in adjacent properties victimizes them. Gas leaf blowers have a low frequency noise that penetrates buildings. Quieter electric leaf blowers do not. (Anti-smoking laws in public places appear to parallel GLB regulation.)

There may be some gas leaf blowers with mufflers that aren't as loud as the worst of them, and some workers may be more prudent with how much throttle they apply, which can help reduce but not eliminate public detriments. However, the noise (low frequency), even if slightly reduced, is still a nuisance.

There may be some service providers who will be inconvenienced and challenged to budget money to replace their GLBs with electric ones. Some service providers may be induced to raise prices slightly. Differences should be minor due to increased affordability of suitable electric unit replacements. The American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) has stated that it costs about 25 cents per hour to operate an electric blower vs. about \$1 per hour (more now with increased gas prices) for a gas leaf blower. Lawn care providers often buy new blowers every few years anyway, and should transition to electric now. Electric units cost less to own and operate in the long run and last longer than gas units.

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Gas leaf blowers should be banned due to the amount of public detriments they represent, especially considering that similarly capable and priced electric units are available. Unless one believes that land owners' and service providers' rights to pollute pre-empt the rights of bystanders to be free of the extreme pollution and noise, then support for GLB bans should be unanimous. Unless one thinks GLB bans will substantially increase costs of land care services or impair the work, then support should follow. MowGreen cares for 70 acres per week using all electric blowers and other tools. Our prices are at market or within 10-20% of the regular market rates. Again, we use ALL electric tools, not just electric leaf blowers. With 50% quieter electric blowers running at 765 CFM (cubic feet per minute--similar to many backpack GLB's), and 200MPH, with batteries that last 20 to 120 minutes available now, professional level electric blower/extra battery sets are affordable (in the \$1,200 range) and capable. Units rated more highly still, in the 800 to 900 CFM range, have been announced and are shipping. In our practice 650 cfm hand-held blowers with 20 minute batteries have sufficed, and those cost around \$300 with a battery and charger. But more recently, in 2022, the 765 CFM units came out and the game was changed further. We have purchased a few of the 765 units. They are just \$330 with a battery and charger. Purchasing two extra chargers and 3 extra batteries for an extra \$1000 and charging at our customers' sites allows us to use blowers all day even in the fall. It costs about 25 cents to charge a battery and all our customers are fine with that. We carry a couple extra batteries as contingencies for when there is no outlet available to charge at. Based on the total cost of operation and benefits of fuel savings over time, I analyzed the return on investment for choosing electric over gas, and got 50%. The calculation includes 3 extra chargers and batteries in addition to those included with the blower for all day blowing capability. Electric leaf blowers also have a lifespan longer than GLBs (5+ vs 3). The hand held units that we prefer take up less space and are easier to maneuver and control than back pack blowers.

We believe two-stroke particulate air pollution, vibration, spillage, and noise is unconscionable and use all electric blowers! For that matter we use all electric tools, no gas, for trimming, hedging, sawing, edging, mowing, pruning, aerating, spraying, and dethatching too, and we care for 70 acres weekly as professional landscapers. MowGreen serves customers in New Haven, Westport, Rye, Rye Brook, Greenwich, **Norwalk** and Bedford/Katonah New York where similar ordinances have been or are under consideration to be implemented. Our testimony and working model has supported ordinance initiatives in Scarsdale, Larchmont, Maplewood, Irvington, Southampton, and other towns as well. We are based in the Black Rock neighborhood in Bridgeport CT. Our revenue will reach \$1 Million for 2023 following 9 years of 35% compound annual growth. Other companies like us are operating in CT and I know of another company that will scale to a Million in revenue in Acton, MA this year, which means the model works and demand for quiet and clean lawn care is growing.

For gasoline oriented providers to transition to electric, some training and process changes may help the process. For example, many of them charge a fixed fee to strip the property side to side of all debris. The bigger and faster the blowers, the more profit they can make on those fixed fees. However, the practice is unhealthy for the lawn/land. Those consumers in the know prefer to keep their natural mulch and fertilizer on site (leaves), using some in beds as mulch and mulch mowing some leaves into the turf to reduce bulk and feed the soil, while also composting piles of leaves at times to make their own fertilizer. Companies like MowGreen use tow behind lawn sweepers after mulch mowing leaves to clear excess and it is more efficient

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in many cases without as much blowing. Customers need to dictate better practices to their providers and demand electric leaf blowers and prudence when it comes to leaves as mulch and or compost and mulch mowing them too for lawn fertilizer.

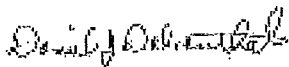
Using no gas blowers in our practice, and being all electric, has helped our business grow 35% annually for 9 years straight - with happier customers and healthier workers. We serve over 12 towns and people call us all the time seeking our services in towns where electric lawn care providers are not yet operating, but there are more emerging. To us, choosing electric blowers over gas units is the easy part of changing the old disturbing and toxic ways. We also use no gas power for mowing, trimming, edging, hedging, pruning, sawing, aerating, dethatching, spraying and spreading.

A decade or two ago, the EPA said that small gas engine tools in land care represented 5% of our air pollution, but it has gotten worse since then. It is probably closer to 10% now, because small gasoline powered equipment is 10 to 20 times more polluting per gallon than cars.

We wholeheartedly support your effort to restrict the use of GLBs. With gas lawn care gear representing 10% of US air pollution and GLBs being the biggest offenders, and electric blower investment over gas offering 50% annual ROI, a complete ban appears reasonable. Compelling even. Your target of summer and winter bans sounds like a good move for the public health and sanity of Norwalk!

Please feel free to call or email me with any questions.

Healthy reYards!



Dan Delventhal, AQLCP, CT DEEP 3a Pesticide Supervisor, MBA 203.209.5979 Green Individual Award Winner '16,
Founder, MowGreen LLC

Mentioned in Landscape Management Mag. & Irrigation & Green Industry News +1
CT SWA Clean Cities Coalition Business of the Year - Lawn Care '22
TownVibe Green Company: Honorable Mention '17, '19, & '20
Smogathon Finalist '18
Green America People & Planet Award Finalist '17

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MowGreen®:

Tending the ave. lawn with gas emits tons of green house gases per year; like a car driving 12,000 miles, as gas lawn gear is 10 to 20 times more polluting per gallon than in a car. Lawn Care is 5-10% of US air pollution. MowGreen cuts grass without gas. Over 1000 metric tons of air pollution are avoided annually - over 8,000 acres mowed without gas, avoiding 8 MILLION auto-mile equivalent emissions since 2006 (the equivalent of 320 trips around the world by car)! MowGreen® is a carbon neutral company, focused on sustainable lawn care technologies and services. Clean & Serene, No GasolineSM.

Values: Reduction, Ecology, Ethics, Life sustaining, & Respect, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Lasting value (REEL).

Mission: Get the Gas off the Grass! More Food Growing, Less Lawn Mowing! No Invasives, Let's Plant Natives! No Synthetics, Go Organic!

Vision: National Network of locally managed and centrally supported eco-friendly gardening & lawn care.

Candela, Brian

From: Gary Leeds <gleeds88@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 2:42 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Gas powered Leaf Blowers

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

I see the issue of leaf blowers and gas powered blowers is up for a vote. As a member of Oak Hills Park Authority, I would like for you to consider an amendment to the ordinance. In order to comply with the ordinance, the maintenance of the course will be extremely difficult and expensive to replace this equipment. I certainly understand the residential part of the ordinance, but believe the over 2 acre part of the ordinance should be amended to something like properties of between 2 acres and 20 acres. The Park is enclosed within itself and the hours of operation should be possible. Hope you will consider the request.

Gary Leeds
50 Hunt Street
Norwalk 06853

Candela, Brian

From: Larry Giglio <knobhilllandscaping@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 10:00 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: blowers

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Hi there my name is Larry Giglio from Knob Hill landscaping.. I just want to make a few comments regarding this blower issue

- First of all I'm not against electric blowers,
- They are not yet cost effective for the Commercial market
- What today is considered commercial ready cost \$1700 per backpack and purchasing a spare battery is an additional 1200 (Site one , Stamford Ct)
- If a Company has 10 gas blowers at 600 each which cost 6,000 and needs to replace with 10 at 2900 which cost 29,000, You know damn well 90% of us can't afford it..
- Lets say we could afford it, The cost will be carried over to the client.. Do you really think they are going to accept these astronomical charges to cover the cost.
- I did compare this Makita blower to my gas blower.. Its only giving you about 66% of what the gas powered blowers do for you
- A charge last about 2 hrs and it takes about 2 hrs to charge.. That's is only about 4 hrs of the day working time
- If you have 100 clients, and this proposal goes thru it will be impossible to maintain 100, you may be reduces to 70 or 75 to maintain work efficiency.. That will go for most companies..
- So who will pick up all these extra clients if most companies will not be able to maintain there work load
- There are already issues with these non compliant companies out there working till 7 to 8 pm and also Saturdays and Sundays.. Do you think this is going to get better
- The quality of work will diminish and it will take longer to get the work done at a greater cost to the client
- These blowers are used thru out the season.. Spring clean ups, Early summer to clean up the heavy lawn clipping , Cleaning up after trimming shrubs, Fall clean ups. It is the work horse of the industry..
- In the Fall even when leaves are a bit wet we struggle with the gas blowers, Electric ones will just be out of the question at this point.
- The Town of Westport recently passed this ordinance.. If it was such a great thing to do why did they exempt the Town of Westport public works and Golf courses from this... DOES THAT SEEM FARE!!!!
- The Town of Westport public works and golf courses were exempt because they made a big uproar internally saying there is no way in Hell they would be able to maintain what they do .. And that is FACT!!
- Unfortunately the small percentage of people that are for this DON'T really understand the consequences it will create to 99 percent of homeowners and businesses, and even themselves
- Anyone that has a small property and maintains it themselves can go to Home Depot or Lowes and purchase on of those units.. Those maybe fine if You use it for 20min or half hr and set it on charge again.. The problem is these are the people that are trying to make the decisions for the industry.. I was at the town hall meetings in Westport and I heard the speakers trying to push these homeowner electric blowers. They did not have a clue on what it really takes to maintain a property at the most cost effective way for the Business and the Homeowner

I going to leave you with this.. Electric blowers will be the way of the Future, they can not be forced on people if its not ready to do an efficient job. They are just not there power wise and cost wise.

In 2011 Chevy introduced the Volt electric car. Here we are 12 years later with a much vast improvement, but Gas engines are still the majority and electric cars are still not 100 % there, but they are gaining on it..

Give it a chance and the same will be for small engines .. However we are a few years away still

Candela, Brian

From: Denise Brown <db930@optonline.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 1:32 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Cc: Shanahan, Lisa; Smyth, Barbara; db930@optonline.net
Subject: Leaf Blower Ordinance

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Response to Electric Leaf Blower Ordinance regarding Oak Hills Golf Park:

I am writing to express my position against the electric leaf blower ordinance. It seems there are people putting their feel-good ideas of dos and don'ts of running this city, while Norwalk struggles with over densification and building in flood zones, as well as having one of the lowest tree canopies in Fairfield County. Seems we have bigger environmental issues.

Maybe residents can use an electric leaf blower in their backyards, but the city cannot operate a golf course of 144 acres with electric blowers, especially at the cost that it takes to purchase them with the battery packs of \$4200 apiece. Additionally, they are not developed enough to operate a large company. The operating budget for OHP cannot handle this cost. If this passes the golf course must be exempt.

The people who are running this city are doing things that the people who live here and pay taxes do not want, like rezoning areas to accommodate multi housing projects, even though the streets and sewers cannot handle the extra traffic. We can't even fully fund our schools. Where are our priorities? What the heck is going on!!!

I vote NO to this new ordinance!

Denise Brown
OHPA Member



Virus-free, www.avg.com

Candela, Brian

From: Nicholas Kantor <nskantor@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 2:05 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Leaf Blower Ordinances

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Brian,

I am writing in support of the leaf blower ordinance. I was surprised to learn that "using a commercial gas leaf blower for an hour produces emissions equal to driving from Denver to Los Angeles" (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/04/30/gas-leaf-blower-mower-bans-spread-us-fight-climate-change/11746893002>). In 2018 the US EPA - "National Emissions from Lawn and Garden Equipment" went into these effects in detail including "Commercial gas landscape maintenance equipment (GLME) is a source of high levels of localized emissions that includes hazardous air pollutants, criteria pollutants, and carbon dioxide (CO2)." (https://cms6.revize.com/revize/highlandparkil/government/boards_and_commissions/docs/Final%20Leaf%20Blower%20Report%20DR-AFT%209-28-22.pdf)

In today's fight against climate change, doing everything to reduce carbon emissions ought to be considered. Norwalk ought to be a leader in this space.

There also seems to be considerations to help the landscape companies transition. Though I am not sure the details, I would support that as well since many landscapers are small business owners. I appreciate Council taking action here.

Nick Kantor
25 Hawthorne Drive
(writing on behalf of myself, but I am a Planning and Zoning Commissioner)



Icahn
School of
Medicine at
Mount
Sinai

Children's Environmental Health Center
Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
One Gustave L. Levy Place, Box 1217
New York, NY 10029-6574

November 15, 2022

Re: Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

To the Norwalk City Common Council.

We are writing to provide information about the health impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers (GLBs). As clinicians and scientists with expertise in environmental health, we recommend against the use of this equipment to protect the health of residents and lawn care workers.

Air and noise pollution generated by GLBs poses multiple hazards to human health. Children are highly susceptible to these hazards because they breathe more air per pound of body weight per day than adults and thus inhale more pollutants that are emitted by this equipment. Children's vulnerability is further magnified by the fact that their lungs, ears, eyes, and other organ systems are still developing, making them inherently more sensitive to environmental hazards than the organs of adults. In addition, workers who operate GLBs for as many as 8 or more hours per day are at high risk of health impacts.

Airborne pollutants: GLBs are a major source of air pollutants that impact health both directly when inhaled and indirectly through acceleration of climate change. GLB combustion engines are extremely low efficiency; 30% of the gas and oil that they use is unburned and released directly to the atmosphere. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) estimates that operation of a GLB for one hour releases emissions equivalent to driving a car for 15 hours or 1100 miles. GLB emissions include carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, benzene, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and particulate matter. In addition to impacting respiratory health and increasing asthma risk and severity, these pollutants are associated with numerous health outcomes including autism, cancer, heart disease, and dementia.

The air released from GLBs can reach speeds of 200 mph, sending dust, pollen, pesticides, mold, and heavy metals in soil into the air where they can be breathed in. Lastly, exposure to fine particulates like those emitted from GLBs was associated with an increase in COVID-related deaths. For these reasons, the American Lung Association recommends using hand-powered or electric lawn care equipment instead of gas-powered.

Noise: GLBs can expose users to greater than 100 decibels (dB), the equivalent to a jackhammer or a jet taking off, and well above the level at which chronic noise exposure leads to irreparable hearing loss. The low frequency sound produced by GLBs travels long distances and can penetrate walls and windows. The World Health Organization recommends general daytime outdoor noise levels of 55 dB or less, but some manufacturers estimate noise exposure from GLBs for bystanders as far as 50 feet away at around 70 dB. In addition to damaging hearing, noise affects quality of life by impairing communication and learning, reducing ability to accurately complete complex tasks, and increasing stress.

The high intensity noise that GLBs produce is particularly harmful to the developing ears of infants and young children because their auditory systems are undergoing rapid growth and development, and these developmental



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Children's Environmental Health Center
Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health

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processes are easily disrupted. Studies have also shown that exposure to excessive noise during pregnancy is associated with preterm birth and high-frequency hearing loss in the child.

For these reasons, we recommend that the city of Norwalk take steps to restrict the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in order to protect the health of children, families, and workers.

Sincerely,

Sarah Evans, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health

Maida Galvez, MD, MPH
Professor, Departments of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, Pediatrics

Perry Sheffield, MD, MPH
Associate Professor, Departments of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, Pediatrics

Children's Environmental Health Center
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
New York, NY

Additional resources:

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/109428.html>

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/banks.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2017-02-vitalsigns.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/hearingloss/infographic.html>

<https://www.lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/10-tips-to-protect-yourself>

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Candela, Brian

From: Betty Ball <bettyballusa@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 4:18 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Written Public Comment for Special Ordinance Committee Meeting
Attachments: BBall_GasLeafBlowers_6_20_23.docx; Gas-Powered-Leaf-Blower-Emissions-Factsheet-11.12.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Brian,
I am not sure of the format for this evening's Ordinance Committee Zoom meeting. I will be on the zoom call and am happy to read my comments regarding Gas Leaf Blowers. I have attached the comments to this email for the record along with documentation and sources.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Betty Ball
10 Green Beech Drive
Norwalk, CT 06853

June 20, 2023

RE: Ordinance Committee Meeting June 20, 2023 / Gas Powered Leaf Blowers

My name is Betty Ball. I have been a Norwalk Resident for over 30 years and am a founding member of Skip the Plastic Norwalk.

I am in favor of common-sense limits of gas powered leaf blowers that hurt our health, our environment and the quality of life here in Norwalk.

- Gas powered leaf blowers contribute to air pollution by emitting hazardous particulates. They produce hundreds of times more pollutants and fine particulates than automobiles.
- Backpack style gas leaf blowers typically consume .43 gallons of fuel per hour of operation¹⁵. This translates to 11lbs of CO2 per hour of use. Because they are small engines that don't have to comply with automobile emissions standards, they also emit large quantities of fine particulates and black carbon due to incomplete combustion of the fuel. According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, these particulates have additional global warming effects beyond the CO2 released during combustion¹⁶.
- Gas blowers emit high levels of formaldehyde, butadiene, benzene and fine particulates, all of which are known carcinogens or known respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological health risks and which lead to increased levels of mortality in children and the elderly.
- Gas spills can contaminate soil and waterways; maintenance produces toxic waste like fuel filters and contaminated air filters.
- Operators of the equipment are most at risk, but the exhaust and dust is a danger to the general population especially children, the elderly, people with chronic asthma and people exercising. In addition, prolonged or repeated exposure to sound levels about 85dB, which are common with backpack style blowers, can cause permanent hearing loss.

As a Norwalk resident, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers affects the quality of my life year round. I can no longer spend time outdoors without smelling the fumes or suffering through the noise. The blowers used to be limited to spring and fall, now lawn services use them on my neighbors' lawns in the winter. I'm not sure why.

After last week's serious air quality alerts, we should be doing everything possible locally to preserve the quality of our air.

Thank you.

Attached: Quiet Clean PDX.org and sources.



Gas Powered Leaf Blower Noise and Emissions Factsheet

11.12.2019

Quiet Clean PDX

quietcleanpdx.org

Below is a compilation of facts and associated sources regarding the public hazards posed by Gas Powered Leaf Blowers.

1. Extreme Noise

High Decibel Noise - Portland has committed to minimize noise levels within the city to maintain quality of life. Title 18 of the Portland City Charter, Code and Policies - Noise Control states "It is the intent of the City Council to minimize the exposure of citizens to the potential negative physiological and psychological effects of excessive noise and protect, promote and preserve the public health, safety and welfare."¹

Under Title 18, Leaf Blowers must operate under 65 dBA for year round use and under 70 dBA for use from Nov 1 - Feb 28. The Office of Neighborhood Involvement has published a list of available leaf blower models that comply with these standards. On the current list, there are only 2 gasoline engine backpack style blowers that comply with the year round standard. Since back pack style blowers are the standard choice for commercial lawn and garden services, it is therefore exceedingly likely that most commercial operations are not in compliance with Title 18 for at least half of the year.

A discussion with the staff at Noise Control, Office of Neighborhood Involvement revealed that complaints about noise from leaf blowers are one of the "top three sources of complaints" during the fall season. They also admit that this ordinance is nearly impossible to enforce due to the small staff of the Noise Control office and the fact that by the time a complaint is made and an officer arrives at the scene, the leaf blower is no longer being used.

Reviewing the noise ratings of the backpack leaf blowers available from typical suppliers, nearly all of the backpack style gas powered blowers operate at over 70dB and many are as high as 85 - 100 dB.² This would put most gasoline powered backpack style blowers out of compliance with the wintertime standards as well.

Low Frequency Noise - The low frequency of gas powered leaf blower noise is also part of the problem that is not captured by the decibel ratings. A Study by the Harvard School of Public Health show that low frequency sound travels farther and penetrates walls and buildings more effectively than higher pitched sound³. The study concluded that a single gas powered leaf blower could

negatively impact up to 90 surrounding homes in typical urban densities versus 6 homes for a powerful electric blower. Electric engines operate at higher frequencies which is why they are significantly less "noisy" than gas powered blowers.

Hearing Loss and Hypertension - Most people consider the noise from gas powered leaf blowers to be annoying, but the noise they generate is also a health risk. Prolonged or repeated exposure to sound levels above 85dB which are common with backpack style leaf blowers can cause permanent hearing loss⁴. Multiple studies have found a correlation between exposure to ambient noise over 55dB and a higher incidence of arterial hypertension and cardiovascular diseases⁵.

2. Health Risks

Dangerous Emissions - The concentrated emissions from lawn and garden equipment include high levels of benzene, butadiene, formaldehyde and fine particulates, all of which are known carcinogens or known respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological health risks and which lead to increased levels of mortality in children and the elderly.

The EPA has published a report titled "National Emissions from Lawn and Garden Equipment",⁶ which states:

"Gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment is a source of high levels of localized emissions that includes hazardous air pollutants, criteria pollutants, and carbon dioxide. Workers using commercial equipment are exposed when they are close to the emitting sources several hours each day, several days a week in seasons of use. Other members of the public, including children, may also be exposed to high levels of emissions from commercial landscape maintenance equipment."

"The very substantial contribution of VOC, in particular benzene and 1,3 butadiene, deserves attention especially because of their localized nature."

"Extensive evidence exists on the adverse health effects of exhaust emissions and other fine particulates which include cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory disease, cancer, neurological conditions, premature death, and effects on prenatal development."

"Communities and environmental, public health, and other government agencies should create policies and programs to protect the public from GLGE air pollutants and promote non-polluting alternatives".

The American Lung Association⁷, the World Health Organization⁸, and the American Heart Association⁹ all report on the serious cardiovascular, neurological and respiratory health risks associated with the fine particulates and

other pollutants which are documented to be released in high concentrations by this EPA study. The American Cancer Society¹⁰ states that exposure to benzene, which is common when working around gasoline and gasoline combustion, causes leukemia and other cancers of blood cells.

Environmental Justice - The health risks associated with lawn and garden equipment are highest for those who operate this equipment continuously. They are exposed to very high levels of pollutants for many hours each day. They are also exposed to very high noise levels that can induce permanent hearing loss if proper ear protection is not worn at all times. These operators are typically low wage workers. This puts additional, disproportionately high health risks upon this low income population who are some of the least able to avoid those risks.

3. Hazards to the Environment

Air Pollution - Gasoline powered leaf blowers typically use small two stroke engines which emit many more air pollutants than automobiles including Carbon Monoxide, Non-Methane Hydrocarbons and Oxides of Nitrogen. While manufacturers have made steady reductions in two stroke engine emissions, they are still one of the largest sources of air pollutants in this country.

A widely cited study conducted at the American Automobile Association's Automotive Research Center commissioned by Edmunds InsideLine.com¹¹ found that a typical two stroke leaf blower emits hundreds of times more hydrocarbons than the Ford Raptor Pickup truck that was used as a control.

"The hydrocarbon emissions from a half-hour of yard work with the two-stroke leaf blower are about the same as a 3,900-mile drive from Texas to Alaska in a Raptor."

Due to the increasing numbers of lawn and garden equipment powered by small gasoline engines, the California Air Resources Board projects that total smog forming pollution emissions from small engines will exceed those from passenger cars by 2020 in the state of California¹². They recommend a major shift toward electric equipment in order to hit state emissions reduction targets.

"For the best-selling commercial leaf blower, one hour of operation emits smog-forming pollution comparable to driving a 2016 Toyota Camry about 1100 miles, or approximately the distance from Los Angeles to Denver."

Carbon Emissions - Gasoline powered leaf blowers combust fossil fuels and create carbon emissions just like automobiles. According to the US Department of Energy¹³, 1.2 billion gallons of gasoline are consumed annually in the US for lawn and garden maintenance, and a significant portion of that is spilled while filling gas tanks. Roughly 25 pounds of CO₂ are emitted per gallon of gasoline burned¹⁴, which means nearly 15 Million Tons of CO₂ are emitted per year for lawn maintenance.

Backpack style leaf blowers typically consume .43 gallons of fuel per hour of operation¹⁵. This translates to 11lbs of CO2 per hour of use. Because they are small engines that do not comply with automobile emissions standards, they also emit large quantities of fine particulates and black carbon due to incomplete combustion of the fuel. According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, these particulates have additional global warming effects beyond the CO2 released during combustion¹⁶.

"Black Carbon has recently emerged as a major contributor to global climate change, possibly second only to CO2 as the main driver of change."

Solid and Toxic Waste - Beyond the fumes and emissions, gas powered blowers also produce thousands of pounds of solid toxic waste and plastics waste yearly in the form of contaminated air and fuel filters, spark plugs, gaskets and plastic two cycle oil containers that are sent to landfills¹⁶. Filling gas tanks and mixing two cycle oil often results in spilling toxic liquids, and residual oil from used containers can find their way into water systems and harm local ecosystems. Common fluids used for engine maintenance - carburetor cleaners and engine degreasers are highly toxic fluids with high VOC content that require care in use and special disposal procedures¹⁷.

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3971384/>
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8. World Health Organization, Ambient (outdoor) air quality and health, May 2018,
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16. Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, Library > Factsheet, What is Black Carbon
<https://www.c2es.org/document/what-is-black-carbon/>

17. American Green Zone Alliance - Solid and Toxic Waste from Gas Powered Lawn Maintenance Equipment
<https://www.agza.net/solid>
<https://www.agza.net/toxic>

Candela, Brian

From: Robert Lansden <lansden@rlansden.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 6:01 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: leaf blower ordinance

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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While I would prefer a total ban of two-stroke leaf blowers as some municipalities have implemented, I do whole-heartedly support the ordinance proposed in Norwalk.

thanks,
Robert
504.202.6948

Candela, Brian

From: Shanahan, Lisa
Sent: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 6:25 PM
To: Candela, Brian
Subject: Fwd: Ordinance Committee Meeting - Gas Leaf Blowers

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Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lisa Pisano Henderson <lhendersn@aol.com>
Date: June 20, 2023 at 17:31:50 EDT
To: "Camacho, Edwin" <ecamacho@norwalkct.gov>, "Goldstein, Josh" <JGoldstein@norwalkct.gov>, "Heuvelman, David" <DHeuvelman@norwalkct.gov>, "Livingston, Thomas P." <tplivingston@norwalkct.gov>, "Meek, Bryan" <BMeek@norwalkct.gov>, "Niedzielski-Eichner, Nora" <NNiedzielski-Eichner@norwalkct.gov>, "Shanahan, Lisa" <LShanahan@norwalkct.gov>
Subject: Ordinance Committee Meeting - Gas Leaf Blowers
Reply-To: Lisa Pisano Henderson <lhendersn@aol.com>

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To the City of Norwalk Ordinance Committee:

Reference: Leaf Blower Ban

We have just been made aware of the proposed Ordinance to ban gas powered leaf blowers in the City of Norwalk. This severely impacts most, if not all landscapers, lawn care and tree companies, as well as, and most importantly, homeowners.

We request that the City of Norwalk Ordinance Committee delay the discussion and vote of this ordinance to ban gas powered leaf blowers until the City reaches out to the business community and homeowners (in both English and Spanish) who are affected by the proposed ordinance. There has been NO outreach in our community.

Also, there has been no discussion on how small and/or individual businesses are expected to work efficiently and remain financially solvent. The impact of this ordinance will further destroy many small and individual landscape businesses, most often run by minority owners and many which employ minority workers barely making a living to survive. This ordinance was written without any knowledge of how the industry works, our manpower, our hours of operation, or the type of work we do and how the weather and seasons affect us. The business community that you are targeting has firsthand knowledge of what works and what doesn't regarding landscape equipment. This proposed ordinance will have a severe economic impact on these businesses as well as homeowners who live and work in Norwalk. **WE ARE NOT GREENWICH OR WESTPORT.**

We request that this ordinance be postponed until such a time when the business community which is being affected can be heard, this is their livelihood, they should have a voice. The City of Norwalk should take the time to get this right. Rushing this through a committee without any input from the business community that is affected is unacceptable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lisa Henderson

21 Appletree Lane

Norwalk CT