

**City of Norwalk
Ordinance Committee
Regular Meeting
February 21, 2023**

Attendance: Lisa Shanahan, Chair; Edwin Camacho (7:10); David Heuvelman; Thomas Livingston; Nora Niedzielski-Eichner; Joshua Goldstein (7:18), Brian Meek

Staff: Brian Candela, Corporation Counsel, Bill Ireland, Chief Building Official, Sabrina Godeski, Director of Business Development and Tourism

Other:

1) CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Shanahan called the meeting to order at 7:06.

2) ROLL CALL

A quorum was present.

3) PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Candela read an email from Priscilla Feral concerning gas powered leaf blowers. She is writing in support of a ban of these blowers for a variety of environmental reasons.

Mr. Jim Schell from Oak Hills Park addressed the issue of gas-powered leaf blowers. He explained some of the drawbacks to using electric power leaf blowers including, less power, less run time on a charge, and potential fires caused by old batteries.

Ms. Louise Washer is president of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. She expressed how gas-powered blowers negatively affect pollinators, soil quality, air pollution and water collection.

Mr. Joseph Kramer called in regarding his use of garden tools for residential use. While he agrees gas powered leaf blowers can be loud, he doesn't feel banning them is the solution.

City of Norwalk
Ordinance Committee
Regular Meeting
February 21, 2023

Mr. Roberta DiVasegli called in in support of the ordinance banning gas powered leaf blowers.

Ms. Diane Lauricella has had a bad experience with gas powered leaf blowers, particularly with the strong odors they leave behind. She also thinks the ordinance should include some requirements for protective eye gear. She supports the ordinance but would like it to be enacted earlier. She would also like to extend the times blowers can be used on the weekends.

Ms. Jess Parker is a resident and a board member of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. She made the point that the noise problem of leaf blowers not only affects people, it also affects animals and insects.

Mr. Fred Zinzer is opposed to the ban of leaf blowers. For his personal use, the electric blowers don't have enough power. He is in favor of limiting the decibel volume, and times that they can be used.

Mr. Tyson Canavieri is a Norwalk resident and the owner of a landscaping business. He states that electric blowers just aren't powerful enough for commercial use. He is concerned that if there is a ban, people will start cutting down trees as a way to remove leaves.

Ms. Lisa Henderson is also a landscape business owner. She is concerned that there is not enough outreach to smaller landscaping companies that may not be proficient in English and may be unaware that this ordinance is being discussed. She went through the added costs to landscapers. She would like to table this ordinance until electric blower technology is more advanced and affordable.

Mr. Anthony Lima is testifying in support of the ban. He feels gas powered blowers are often used unnecessarily and is a daily noise pollutant.

Mr. Lawrence Kaisma supports environmental issues, but feels that gas powered blowers are necessary. Electric blowers just aren't powerful enough.

Ms. Mary Verel wrote in the comments that she is in support of the leaf blower ban.

Mr. Tod Bryant thanked the committee for considering this ordinance. He suggests that in section 55-4 item c, there should be more definition as to what is considered a historic property.

Ms. Dana Laird asked if there isn't an alternative to any blowers. She would like there to be a 180 day delay.

4) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 17, 2023

******Mr. Livingston moved to approve the minutes of January 17, 2023.**

******The motion passed with one correction as noted and Mr. Meeks abstaining.**

On page 4, Mr. Jackson is referred to as Mr. Johnson.

5) OLD BUSINESS

• Discuss and vote Chapter 55 - Demolition Delay ordinance

Mr. Livingston outlined the changes that have been made since the last meeting. Additionally, he addressed the definition of historic properties in section 55. No additional wording was added.

Mr. Ireland stressed the importance of safety for all involved. He also stated that if the building is more than 50 years old, it is made clear in the tax sheet. Also decisions regarding siding and asbestos are handled by the state.

Mr. Goldstein asked about section 55 D, about objections. It should read that it is an objection. He also asked if the 50 year restrictions are too short a time. Fifty years is the generally accepted time frame.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner feels that the 50 year ban puts a burden on the Building Department in that it designates every old house as significant. She would like only properties that are historic be subject to the 180 day delay.

Mr. Camacho asked about the definition of a historic property. He is not sure the homeowner would be aware if their home is historically significant or not.

******Mr. Livingston made a motion to present the ordinance with the changes made tonight to public hearing.**

******Everyone except Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner voted to move the ordinance to a public hearing.**

City of Norwalk
Ordinance Committee
Regular Meeting
February 21, 2023

Mr. Candela will forward a copy of the ordinance to the committee with all the changes and a legal notice of public hearing.

**• Discuss and vote on the Arts and Cultural District Proposal,
Approval Process and ordinance (Chapter 17A – Arts Commission)**

Ms. Godeski explained that the revamping of the Arts Commission is so that the organization can raise money to achieve more of their goals. Ms. Shanahan raised a question about how the Arts Commission is elected or appointed. Mr. Goldstein asked who was responsible for the grant proposals, and managing the process. Mr. Heuvelman made the point that there are two arms of this process. One is applying for grants, and the other is the management of the funds.

• Discuss Leaf Blower ordinance.

Ms. Shanahan said that the committee hadn't yet had full conversations with all the city organizations involved, but their comments would be included in the next draft of this ordinance. They had spoken to some members of the city government and some landscapers that would be affected.

The three reasons for this ordinance are one, the pollution to the air, the noise pollution they produce, and lastly is the dispersal of topsoil and desiccation of the soil and local flora and insects and animal life.

Ms. Shanahan went through the details of the ordinance as it stands, knowing there will be some modifications to the text.

Mr. Goldstein raised the point that in three years when the ordinance restrictions go into effect, the electronic options may not be strong enough at that time. He is also concerned with enforcement of the ordinance.

Mr. Camacho mentioned that in Newton, MA they enacted a similar ordinance in 2017. There has been some negative backlash. It has been hard for citizens and companies to comply.

6) NEW BUSINESS

- **Discuss and vote on Chapter 73, Article I, Oak Hills Park Authority**

Mr. Livingston explained that this amendment is to put the director of Recreation and Parks on the Oak Hills Park Authority. There was a question whether this would cause a conflict of interest having an employee on an authority. It was decided to defer a decision until the next meeting.

8) ADJOURNMENT

******Ms. Shanahan moved to adjourn the meeting.**

******The motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Shanahan adjourned the meeting at 9:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Chapple
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Ordinance Committee
Regular Meeting
February 21, 2023