

November 29, 2017

**Mayor Paul F. Rickenbach Jr.
and
Trustees
East Hampton Village, NY**

RE: <http://www.27east.com/news/article.cfm/East-Hampton-Village/538635/East-Hampton-Village-May-Silence-Gas-Powered-Leaf-Blowers>

Mayor Rickenbach:

Based on what I have found on the Internet, East Hampton is considering the viability of battery powered lawn care products over the industry standard, gasoline powered equipment. I have seen a lot of advertising and one-sided propaganda touting electric products as today's best option for yard work, so I understand why the interest. Battery power is a niche application and will never reach the performance of gasoline powered units for technical reasons. I know because I designed the first battery powered leaf blower for professional use and know their limitations and applications. I can provide you with facts you should have before making any decision regarding legislation requiring this product.

I am a retired Vice President of Engineering for ECHO Inc., a leading manufacturer of gasoline powered lawn care products. As an expert on the subject of leaf blowers, I have disseminated 'up to date' information to more than 160 cities throughout the United States and Canada. More information on my qualifications can be found at: <http://leafblownoise.com/about%20the%20author.pdf>

Let me start by saying that opposing stakeholders on this issue are highly polarized and are generally intolerant of each other's point of view, often making the issue quite controversial. One side hates gas powered blowers and the other can't get along without them. I find that most of the haters have never used them, so it is hard for them to understand the resistance to giving up their leaf blower. Regardless what you may hear about gasoline powered leaf blowers, the one and only true issue with them is noise. However, since sound is not a viable reason to ban blowers, a small, but influential group of well-organized people will be asking for a complete ban on gasoline powered leaf blowers for reasons other than sound. Their arguments will be based on opinion and anecdotal assertions including outdated and unsubstantiated quotations. Don't believe everything you hear. Never the less, opinion and personal observations are important in this case and you will have to deal with all their complaints as they are presented.

Many years ago I gave a demonstration before the California Air Resources Board of my new professional grade battery-powered leaf blower suggesting it was a viable alternative to gasoline units from a sound standpoint. It had a sound level of only 55 dB(A). To understand how quiet this is, one must realize that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in magnitude, the sound pressure is reduced by 50%. Fifty-five dB(A) represents a 92% reduction in sound pressure from the typical leaf blower of the time having a sound level of 77 dB(A). But that is not the level of today's battery powered leaf blowers. Manufacturers of battery blowers do not concern themselves with sound. You will not find a sound label on their units based on industry testing standards. Most are as loud as gasoline powered blowers. Sure, the motor is basically quiet, but the fan isn't. Now the blower I designed was not problem free. We didn't put it into production for lack of performance and because of its unacceptable cost.

Mr. Mabe, the Founder, CEO and President of AGZA admits that electric equipment technology is "not quite there yet". Keep in mind that battery powered blower use is especially costly for the professional. In addition to the cost of the blower, several batteries are required to operate one blower for an eight-hour day. Stihl's backpack battery retails for \$850. Then there is the charging equipment cost and the safety

issues surrounding lithium ion batteries to consider. Finally, the limited capability available for the disposal of spent lithium ion batteries can be a problem.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214993714000037>

If you check the retail outlets in your area, you will see that stores like The Home Depot offer a large selection of battery powered products. For the home owner, they work very well. Normally they are used to clear off decks, short driveways and sidewalks, but they are not very effective for the large job. Since they are basically of low power, it will take a long time to get the job done on any yard of substantial size. This is where the gasoline powered unit excels. It's why the professional will not use battery or cordless power. You know, time is money. Corded units are totally out of the question because they cannot be used more than a few feet from the wall outlet.

Mr. Arthur Graham is suggesting that a ban could apply to only the summer season. He is right when he says that there is less debris to blow in the summer, but if the landscaper can use his large blower, his job will be done in minutes, not hours. Now that has got to be some kind of advantage noise wise, don't you think?

I'll grant you that there are gasoline powered leaf blowers out there that are very noisy, some over 80 dB(A) measured at 50 feet, but there are also extremely quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers, which measure 65 dB(A) per the industry Standard. This represents more than a 75% reduction in sound pressure over older designs and is the quietest gasoline powered leaf blower universally available.

http://leafblownoise.com/Measuring_Sound.pdf If you don't have a feel for this difference, you owe it to yourself and your constituents to attend a comparative noise demonstration. Be sure to include battery powered units. I know you'll be impressed.

On occasion you will hear that gas leaf blowers are bad for the environment. Not any more than any other small off-road engine, because all these engines must meet a very strict federally mandated emission standard. Since January 2005, exhaust emission has been reduced by as much as 85 to 90%, depending on engine displacement.

By the way, you should know that if you write an ordinance to ban any gasoline powered product because of exhaust emission, you will be in direct violation of the Federal Clean Air Act, 1990.

<http://leafblownoise.com/Taken%20from%20the%20Federal%20Clean%20Air%20Act.pdf>

Since noise can be the only issue and the driving force behind any attempt to ban gas leaf blowers, I propose that you consider requiring that all leaf blowers used in East Hampton display the manufacturer applied sound label stating that it meets 65 dB(A).

(<http://leafblownoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>). It will be a simple and understandable directive. If you want to impact exhaust emission, include allowing only units built after 2005. The date of manufacture is also available on the unit.

<http://leafblownoise.com/Mounted%20emission%20Label.jpg>

This type of ordinance works well where a total ban on gasoline powered leaf blowers will not. The landscape contractors will readily use a quiet blower because it will allow him to adequately do his job. The gas leaf blower has become an indispensable tool for them. As for the homeowner, if a neighbor complains about another neighbor's noise, the enforcement officer need only ask the alleged offender to show him his blower. If the 65 dB(A) label is not present, he is in violation. No need to catch him in the act.

Now please don't think that I am just trying to sell ECHO leaf blowers because we have been selling quiet blowers for a very long time. The quiet leaf blower has been on the market for twenty years and I can guarantee that there are many already being used in East Hampton. Increased sales due to your ordinance would be negligible. But the problem is, if there is only one noisy blower in the neighborhood, all leaf blowers are reviled. Your ordinance will only be requiring that quiet ones be used exclusively. Many cities have already taken this step.

Initially, you might hear complaints from lawn care providers because they don't want to discard their old noisy gas blowers if they are still working. But these complaints will pale compared to those you will hear if you ban them totally. Why? It's because they lose money.

Electric powered units are fine for the typical consumer or homeowner, but for the professional, it would simply take too long to get his work done. He doesn't get paid by the hour; rather he gets paid by the job. Substandard equipment could put him out of business. At the very least, it will increase his cost, which is not always recoverable through increased pricing.

There are more detailed facts concerning the overall leaf blower issue I would like to share with you, but for that, I'd like to call your attention to my website <http://leafblownoise.com/>. In it you will be able to read about all the false claims made by anti-leaf blower activists with links to documentation supporting my comments. You can also learn what other cities have done in dealing with leaf blower sound.

Oh, one more thing! The blower is not to blame for everything in this controversy. Don't forget about the operator. More than not the issue is when and where the blower is being used. Education is the solution to that problem and there are pamphlets to help you get the word out. You can reprint them or refer to these pamphlets on the Internet in your literature. You can also use them as a starting point for your own publication in which you can set down allowable days and hours of use and other requirements you may have.

<http://leafblownoise.com/LeafBlowerTraining.pdf>

<http://leafblownoise.com/LEAF%20BLOWER%20%20manual%2012-13-10.pdf>

Before taking the step of introducing a leaf blower ordinance, be sure to talk to cities that already have bans in place. You can learn firsthand if their ordinance is working or not. More specifically, talk directly with their enforcement agency. Leaf blower ban supporters will not tell you this, but you will find it is impossible to enforce a leaf blower ban because the police give this infraction a very low priority. Take a look at what's happening in Newton, MA.

<http://leafblownoise.com/WBZ%20Boston%20Radio%20.pdf>

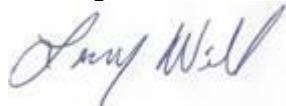
For 20 years, Santa Monica has struggled with no success enforcing their leaf blower ban.

<http://leafblownoise.com/Santa%20Monica%20Report.pdf>

As you seek more information about specifics, provide an opportunity for these stakeholders to share all their concerns in detail. Often there is not enough time allowed at council meetings to accomplish this. Be prepared for them to ask you to just do nothing about leaf blowers, but you must point out that they need to work with you to find an acceptable and workable compromise.

If you should need information that is not clearly addressed on my website or need documents that I have not provided, please contact me and I will do whatever I can to help, including further research on your behalf.

Best regards,



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To learn more about ECHO:
<http://www.echo-usa.com/About-ECHO/About-Us>