

May 21, 2018

# **Mayor Bill Barnett and City Council Members Naples, FL**

RE: <https://www.naplesnews.com/story/news/columnists/brent-batten/2018/04/05/brent-batten-council-unlikely-turn-over-new-leaf-lawn-blowers/486963002/>

<https://www.fox4now.com/news/local-news/city-tackles-issue-of-noisy-leaf-blowers>

Dear Mayor Barnett:

Calling your attention to the referenced articles on the web, I see that Naples is once again being asked to address leaf blower complaints, primarily because of the sound they make. There are some that feel the city has not done this with enthusiasm in the past. I know this is not the case since I remember when this was first addressed back in 2007. A great deal of consideration was given to the issue at that time and the resulting decision was in fact the right one. It just was not the one complainers wanted.

Never the less, noise in Naples remains an issue, not only leaf blowers, but it appears that there are other sources that might be of concern. Since the city staff has been asked to gather input from homeowners and landscapers, even though I am not a stakeholder, I thought this to be a good time to offer my assistance. I can't give any advice regarding other sources, but I think I can give you some guidance regarding the leaf blower issue.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered lawn care products. Information on my qualifications and expertise can be found at the following websites. <http://leafblownoise.com/about%20he%20author.pdf>  
<http://leafblownoise.com/ListOf%20cities.htm>

I'm sure that you already have a very good grasp of the issues surrounding the leaf blower. The arguments are always the same. Unfortunately, people on both sides of the issue can get a little hot when discussing the leaf blower issue, because there is an emotional component to the controversy. People like you, whom are forced into considering legislation, are caught in the middle.

Almost always, when the opposition to leaf blowers is great enough, some sort of legislation will be passed. I try to tell city managers and representatives to "ban the noise, not the blower". So how is this possible and how can it be enforced. Well, require the use of "Quiet" leaf blowers.

Okay, so you're thinking, right, quiet blowers! Do they really exist? If I may, I'd like to start with a short commercial about quiet leaf blowers.

*In response to noise complaints, a number of years ago my engineering department developed the first "Quiet" gasoline powered leaf blower at ECHO Inc. This was done in direct response to the claims made in the field regarding leaf blower noise. ECHO now has five designs in their product line that are "Quiet". Today, several other manufacturers have joined in, investing millions of dollars in tooling, testing and new assembly lines to provide this important alternative to a blower ban. It is important because this is the solution to the leaf blower noise issue.*

*The industry attaches a label to the blower that indicates sound level, which is measured according to a highly detailed ANSI Standard that controls all the measurement variables. This makes it easy to determine sound magnitude at the point of purchase and in the field by the enforcement officer. The number to look for is 65 dB(A), measured at 50 feet. This represents a 75% reduction in sound from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A). <http://leafblownoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>.*

These blowers have been available for more than 20 years and still those that use them and those that dislike the sound of leaf blowers (in other words, both sides of the issue) have been slow to embrace these products. Overwhelmingly, users don't see blower noise as an issue since all their power equipment makes noise. If they have an older blower that is still working, they are reluctant to scrap it. And when they do, they don't want to spend \$30 more for a quiet blower they think is unnecessary. Some even think that quiet blowers have less power, which of course is not true. Blower haters likewise won't acknowledge this design. They just can't seem to accept that this option is viable and just might solve their problem. To them, it is not quiet enough. They want silence.

No, not all present-day leaf blowers are quiet, but all are quieter than they once were for a given size. All of ECHO's handheld (small) blowers are in fact quiet, but some of the larger blowers are not. But even though these large blowers are not considered "Quiet" their sound level has been reduced by 50%. Quiet blowers are 75% quieter.

I'm sure there are already many quiet gasoline-powered leaf blowers in your area, but the problem is, **if there is only one noisy leaf blower being used in the neighborhood, all leaf blowers are reviled**. If you have not actually heard the difference between these two blowers (65 vs. 77 dB(A)), you really should seek out a comparative noise demonstration. These numbers may not seem significant, but keep in mind that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound, the sound pressure is reduced by 50%. Twelve dB(A) reduction is 75% quieter.

Some people claim that gasoline-powered leaf blowers create high levels of exhaust pollution. This is way out of line with today's reality. Yes, years ago engines from leaf blowers were troublesome and some of these may still be in service, but since January 1, 2005, new leaf blower engines have been well within acceptable limits according to the EPA. Due to government regulations, hydrocarbon emission has been reduced by 85 to 90%, depending on engine size. <http://leafblownoise.com/emission%20graph.htm>

One popular claim regarding exhaust emission from leaf blowers is the diatribe published by Edmonds.com. Their unrealistic claim is that hydrocarbon emissions from a two-stroke leaf blower running 30 minutes is the same as a Ford pickup (a Raptor no less) running from Texas to Alaska (3900 miles). Even if you take into consideration that the blower they tested was 11 years old at the time and did not meet current emission standards, this is an unbelievable statement and quite frankly, ridiculous. In 30 minutes a leaf blower will burn less than a half-gallon of fuel. At 18 miles per gallon, a pickup will burn 217 gallons in 3900 miles. Intuitively, it is hard to believe that a three-horsepower leaf blower, running for 30 minutes, has as much exhaust emission as a Ford Raptor with a 450-horsepower engine, running up and down mountains and hills, starting and stopping in traffic, for 3900 miles, or for at least 78 hours. Edmonds' remarks cannot be justified because it is impossible to compare these two vastly different engines using the equipment available in their test lab. Check it out at:

<http://leafblownoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf>.

Don't give any credence to the health hazard assertion either. The insinuation that leaf blowers can be hazardous to your health is totally unfounded. There are reputable organizations that have done incisive research to determine if there are health hazards attached to leaf blowers. The Greenwich Department of Health indicated in a report that there is no health hazard attributable to leaf blowers. [http://leafblownoise.com/#Greenwich\\_Department\\_of\\_Health\\_Statement](http://leafblownoise.com/#Greenwich_Department_of_Health_Statement)

Dr Nancy Steele, of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), came to the same conclusion in a report to the California State Legislature. This report is over 15 years old, but the blower can only be better today, since engines are cleaner by magnitudes than they were when this report was prepared. [http://leafblownoise.com/#Dr.\\_Nancy\\_Steele,\\_of\\_the\\_California\\_Air\\_Resources\\_Board](http://leafblownoise.com/#Dr._Nancy_Steele,_of_the_California_Air_Resources_Board)

Certain individuals, relying on their title to give weight to what they say, make health hazard claims without justification. Because we have a paradigm to always believe our doctors, people tend to believe them blindly in whatever they say. I read that one pediatrician claimed that leaf blowers cause asthma. He may know children's health vulnerabilities and he may also know a lot about asthma, but where does he get his knowledge regarding leaf blowers. I am still waiting for him to provide test results that verify his statement.

Now, it is true that some leaf blower operators are inconsiderate of others. The only way to address this is to create an education program. To help with that, you will find educational material at my website, which can be copied, paraphrased, or used in any other way that you like.

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

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

Therein are explanations on how to properly use the blower per the following subtitles:

- #1...Be considerate;
- #2...Observe noise ordinances;
- #3...Run at part throttle where possible;
- #4...Use only one blower at a time;
- #5...Minimize dust;
- #6...Never deliberately blow dust;
- #7...Replace your old leaf blower.

Often those that do not like leaf blowers blame the professional user for the sound issue. Keep in mind that people get upset when they must listen to blowers in the evening or early in the morning, and on Sundays or holidays. Sometimes blowers run for what seems like hours at a time. Well, homeowners are the ones that work in their yards well into the evening or very early in the morning when people may still be sleeping. They are the ones that use their blowers on Sundays and holidays. Because they buy inexpensive and therefore underpowered units, they must run them longer than they should to get the job done, another big irritation. Most professionals limit their workday to normal business hours. They are interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, usually less than ten minutes per residence. As with any professional, time is money.

So, what are the other alternatives? Obviously, the broom and rake. These are fine if you're into sweating and hard work. Perhaps some homeowners would prefer this over an exercycle or a treadmill. It will take them at least eight times longer using a broom or a rake than it would with a leaf blower. But for the rest of us and for the contractor, this is an archaic and unacceptable approach.

For others, maybe the battery powered blower will do. There is a market for these blowers, but they are as slow as a broom in most cases. All I can say about these is that their performance is not there yet. Air flow and velocity is not sufficient for the professional. As for running time, well I'm sorry to say, it's dismal. From the Internet, let me paraphrase from some customer comments:

- *I agree with several previous reviews; the battery life is maybe 20 minutes tops after a full charge.*
- *Charged it out of the box. Got about 15 minutes run time.*
- *Total run time, 8 minutes 35 seconds*

As for limiting blower use only over the summer months is concerned, thinking there is little need for them at this time, let me say that there is a need to use leaf blowers all year round in Naples. Yes, the fall of the year may be the worst, but leaves and twigs from trees and shrubs as well as grass clippings, hedge trimmings and seed pods require cleanup throughout the year, especially over the summer months and most assuredly after the frequent Florida rain storms.

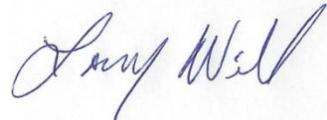
When you solicit information from professional contractors, you will find that they do not understand all the issues, but they can tell you how a blower ban will impact their income and/or how their customers will react to a cost increase.

Finally, keep in mind that a complete leaf blower ban does not work. You probably have heard that there is a [court case in Maplewood](#), NJ contesting a recent blower ban. Like an iceberg, this issue is deeper than it appears to be on the surface. Many problems can arise from a blower ban; for the city, for homeowners and for landscape contractors that depend on the leaf blower. [http://leafblownoise.com/#Will\\_a\\_ban\\_work](http://leafblownoise.com/#Will_a_ban_work)

Leaf blowers are firmly entrenched as indispensable tools, to anyone that has ever used them over the alternative. The best thing to do is find a solution that everyone can support, especially the professionals. Let me say this one more time, "Ban the noise, not the blower"!

I could go into much more detail in this document, pointing out all the inaccuracies you will be expected to believe, but for the facts and to save time here, you can find more information about the leaf blower at my [website](#). Should you have any specific questions that are not adequately answered, please respond to this email or call with your inquiry.

Best regards,



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