

October 31, 2017

**Mayor Sam Liccardo,
Vice Mayor Magdalena Corrasco
and
City Council Members,
San Jose, CA**

RE: Potential Leaf Blower Legislation

Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor and City Council Members:

I was just alerted by the owner of Greenland Power Equipment, Campbell, CA that San Jose is to be considering a ban of leaf blowers at a meeting later this week on the basis of environmental impact and I see on the Internet that Councilman Donald Rocha is the person introducing this proposal. I am concerned that Mr. Rocha may be misled by those that are encouraging him to move in this direction. I am not a local resident and as such it would be difficult for me to meet with Mr. Rocha before your meeting, but even though I have no real stake in the outcome of this meeting, I have been asked to contact all of you to share my knowledge on the subject and offer my help. I am well versed on the technical aspects of the leaf blower, the issue of leaf blower noise, and the impact a leaf blower ban will have on your city, its residents and those that are using a leaf blower to make a living.

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 disseminate 'up to date' information to cities throughout the United States and Canada that are contemplating an ordinance similar to what you are now considering. There are several things you should know before making a decision concerning leaf blowers.

First of all, 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. You see, the one and only true issue with the leaf blower is noise. Everything else you hear is contrived to convince you to support the banning of leaf blowers. Even in the case of noise, it is only anecdotal opinion that you will hear, supported by outdated and unsubstantiated quotations. Never the less, you will have to deal with all the issues as they are presented and it will be helpful for you to know all the facts.

An example of an unrealistic claim, made by one person in New Haven, CT, is that the presenter spoke to an engineer from Edmonds.com that said hydrocarbon emissions from a two stroke leaf blower running 30 minutes is the same as a Ford pickup running from Texas to Alaska or 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 intuitively ridiculous statement. In 30 minutes a leaf blower will burn less than a gallon of fuel. At 18 miles per gallon, a pickup truck will burn 217 gallons during a trip to Alaska and that has to be for an unloaded vehicle. Edmonds remarks cannot be justified because it is impossible to compare these two vastly different size engines using the equipment available in their test lab. Check out the facts at: <http://leafblowernoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf>.

The most interesting thing to me is that these same engineers, whom are feeding this false information to anti-leaf blower advocates, will not talk to me. I have offered to fly out to their office in California to discuss their conclusions, but they will not respond to my overtures. This tells me that someone out there knows that their findings will not stand up to technical scrutiny. You see, they know that as the Vice President of Engineering for a manufacturer of leaf blowers, I am well versed on the subject. I was the engineer responsible for meeting CARB emission Standards during the development of compliant handheld products at ECHO Inc.

Getting back to the point, I'll grant you that there are leaf blowers 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) at 50 feet per the industry Standard. This represents more than a 75% reduction in sound over older designs. If you have no feel for this difference, you owe it to your constituents to attend a comparative noise demonstration. Be sure to include electric blowers for they are, for the most part, louder than 65 dB(A).

I propose that you consider outlawing only noisy blowers. Such a ruling is easy to enforce, for all leaf blowers are labeled with their sound level per a strict industry standard (<http://leafblownoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>) . This type of ordinance works well where a total ban never will. Landscape contractors will readily use quiet leaf blowers and discard their old noisy ones, but they will ignore a total ban for they cannot adequately do their job without a gasoline powered leaf blower. It has become an indispensable tool for them.

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. Increased sales due to your ordinance would be negligible. The quiet leaf blower has been on the market for twenty years and I can guarantee that there are many quiet leaf blowers in San Jose. 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 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 if they must use a rake, a broom or an underpowered electric blower.

Alternatives like battery powered units are fine for some applications, like a home owner clearing leaves off from a deck or patio, 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.

Here's something you might not have thought about. Most homeowners buy inexpensive leaf blowers. That means they are small and of very low power. So if he is using it on a large yard, he may have to run it for several hours. I know firsthand because I have a neighbor that typically runs his for four hours every time he uses it. But the professional uses large blowers and will only be running them for six to ten minutes at any given location. Now isn't that better than running it for several hours? By the way, powerful quiet leaf blowers large enough for professional use are available. <http://www.echo-usa.com/Products/Blowers/PB-760LN>

I would like to give you some insight on the people drawn into this issue. There is an article on my website that addresses this important matter based on my own personal experience over the past several years ([People and their leaf blower issues](#)).

You will learn from this that you must find a way to satisfy both sides of the issue, should you decide to promulgate an ordinance to control leaf blowers.

There are many facts concerning the overall leaf blower issue I would like to share with you, but for the sake of brevity, may I simply 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 statements to the contrary. You can also learn what other cities have done.

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 we have pamphlets to help you get the word out. You can use these pamphlets as a starting point for your own publication, setting down allowable hours, days of use and other requirements unique to your ordinance.

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

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

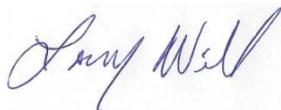
In closing, before enacting a leaf blower ordinance, be sure to talk to cities that already have bans in place. You can learn firsthand if their ordinance is actually working or not. More specifically, talk directly with their enforcement agency. Leaf blower ban supporters will not tell you this, but you will find it is impossible to enforce a leaf blower ban because the police give this infraction a very low priority and because lawn care providers would rather take a chance on getting fined, rather than lose money on the job. For 20 years, Santa Monica has struggled with no success enforcing their leaf blower ban.

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

To arrive at a workable solution, have your advisors work with local landscape service providers to find out what they will support voluntarily. It is an important issue to them and it will take more time than that allowed at a typical council meeting for these stakeholders to relate all their concerns. Be prepared for them to ask you to do nothing, but you must point out that something will most likely be done and 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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