February 21, 2018

Mayor Patrick J. Furey
and
City Council Members
Torrance, CA

RE: https://www.torranceca.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=35921

https://www.dailybreeze.com/2018/01/30/will-torrance-become-the-next-south-bay-city-to-restrict-the-use-of-leaf-blowers/

Mayor Furey:

I see that the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission is once again looking into what could or maybe should be done about leaf blower use in Torrance. Five years ago, almost to the day, I sent Mayor Scotto and the Torrance City Council, of which you were a member at the time, a letter containing facts important to making a decision regarding the regulation of leaf blowers. Although you may have heard most of my remarks before, I am writing another letter because the new members of the City Council may not have been exposed to the facts surrounding the leaf blower controversy.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered lawn care products, including leaf blowers. I have helped more than 160 communities enact reasonable and effective leaf blower regulations. More information on my qualifications can be found at the following websites. http://leafblowernoise.com/about%20the%20author.pdf
http://leafblowernoise.com/List%20of%20cities.htm

In the above referenced article from dailybreeze.com, there are statements made that once again are misleading. These remarks are intended to entice the public into thinking that leaf blowers are bad for the environment. One such comment made is, “Air quality regulators said pollution from…leaf blowers…will soon surpass that of cars”. This is a totally misleading statement. First, the statement was directed at all Small Off-Road Engines (SORE), not just leaf blowers. Lawnmowers, for example, can generate many times more exhaust pollution than leaf blowers because their engines are larger, and they are run longer at any given location. Second, the statement was made based on the assumption that automobile emission levels will be reduced by nearly 70% in the coming years, which is highly unlikely. Perhaps they are expecting that 70 percent of the cars on the road will be replaced by electric vehicles which is also unlikely.

The claim that gasoline-powered leaf blowers create high levels of exhaust pollution 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 today’s engines are well within acceptable limits according to CARB and the EPA. Due to government regulations, effective January 2005, hydrocarbon emission has been reduced by 85 to 90%, depending on engine size. http://leafblowernoise.com/emission%20graph.htm

You should know that it is illegal for a city to ban internal combustion engine driven products because of exhaust emission. Per the Federal Clean Air Act, all States or subdivisions thereof (i.e. cities) are preempted from controlling emissions, including through the means of banning.

One thing you can do concerning exhaust emission, is to require that all small off road handheld engines used in your city, not just leaf blowers, be manufactured after January 1, 2005. There is a label on the unit that will tell you when it was built. http://leafblowernoise.com/Mounted%20emission%20Label.jpg

The insinuation that leaf blowers are hazardous to your health is totally unfounded. There are reputable organizations that have done 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://leafblowernoise.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.
http://leafblowernoise.com/#Dr._Nancy_Steele,_of_the_California_Air_Resources_Board_

In response to noise complaints, many years ago my engineering department developed the first "Quiet" gasoline powered leaf blower for ECHO Inc. This was done in direct response to the claims made regarding leaf blower noise. ECHO now has five designs in the product line to choose from that are "quiet". Today, several other manufacturers have invested millions of dollars in tooling, testing and new assembly lines to provide this important alternative. I say *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://leafblowernoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg. I'm sure there are already many quiet gasoline-powered leaf blowers in Torrance, but the problem is, if there is only one noisy leaf blower 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 owe it to yourself to seek out a comparative noise demonstration.

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 ban will impact their income and/or how their customers will react to a cost increase. It will take them at least eight times longer using a broom than it would with a leaf blower. Time is money to them.

Often those that do not like leaf blowers blame the professional user for the sound issue. You should consider that homeowners are the ones that work in their yards on Sundays and holidays. They are the ones that use their blower after work, well into the evening or very early in the morning when many are still sleeping. Because they buy inexpensive and underpowered units, they must run them longer than they should to get the job done. Most professionals limit their workday to normal business hours. And when they use the blower, they are interested in getting the job done as quickly as possible, usually less than ten minutes per residence.

One other thing to consider is that there is a need to use leaf blowers all year round. Yes, the fall of the year is the worst, but leaves from trees and shrubs as well as branches, grass clippings and seed pods require cleanup throughout the year.

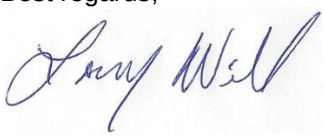
I could go into much more detail in this document pointing out all the inaccuracies you will hear, but at your leisure you can learn all the facts about the leaf blower at my website.

Keep in mind that a leaf blower ban does not work. You probably have heard that there is a court case in Maplewood, NJ contesting a recent blower ban. Leaf blowers are firmly entrenched as indispensable

tools. This issue is deeper than just addressing someone's personal preference. Many problems can arise; for the city, for homeowners and for landscape contractors that depend on the leaf blower. The best thing to do is find a solution that everyone can support, especially the professionals.
http://leafblowernoise.com/#Will_a_ban_work

Should you or your staff have questions that are not adequately answered here or at my website, please respond to this email or call with your inquiry.

Best regards,



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