

March 18, 2019

**TO: Mayor Terry Tornek
and
Pasadena City Councilmembers**



By: [Larry Will](#)

Reference: <http://www.pasadenanow.com/main/city-commission-takes-aim-at-leaf-blowers-and-lawn-mowers/#.XIIToShKiUk>

I see from the referenced article that Pasadena's Environmental Advisory Commission has asked the City Council to launch a formal review of the City's existing regulations on the use of lawn and garden equipment. The stated key point is to reduce noise and air pollution with leaf blowers being the primary focus.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of lawn care products (company information below). Since my retirement, I have been disseminating 'up to date' information about modern leaf blowers throughout the United States and Canada. I have helped more than [180 communities](#) sort fact from fiction, which typically results in a reasonable and effective regulation that reduces leaf blower noise to an acceptable level.

Your Advisory Commission is taking the right approach to the noise problem by asking for a formal process to evaluate the issues. However, it appears they pretty much have their mind made up in that they are trying to influence the outcome by sharing the opinion that there are other issues to consider, but in reality, noise is the only true issue. The memorandum wrongly tries to blame leaf blowers for excessive hydrocarbon exhaust emission in hopes that they will be banned. The commission cites the report by edmonds.com that falsely states leaf blowers are worse than a Ford F-150 pickup truck when it comes to emission. This argument is so ridiculous that people think that a reputable organization like Edmonds wouldn't say something this unrealistic if it were not true. To learn why it's ridiculous, please review the following paper. <http://leafblownoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf> .

The more often this edmonds.com article is cited, the more credible it seems, which is a typical political approach to convincing the uninformed of an untruth. I don't consider Edmonds credible because they will not even respond to my request to discuss their finding. I believe they are afraid they will be exposed as a purveyor of false information, which is what would happen.

The commission further cites a California Air Quality Management District study from 2000 that makes similar remarks about blower emission. That report is 19 years old and in no way represents the performance of today's modern leaf blower engine. CARB, the leader in controlling exhaust emission, has mandated the reduction of unburned hydrocarbon emission by as much as 85 to 90%, depending on engine size. The entire concept of a city banning a product to limit exhaust emission is illegal because the EPA explicitly preempts cities from regulating emission per the [Clean Air Act, 1990](#). Even though CARB sets the emission Standard in California, everything they do is still subject to EPA approval and federal laws. If you want to improve the environment legally via a leaf blower regulation, remove older blowers from use that have not been optimized for exhaust emission. Any unit older than January 1, 2005 has not reached its lowest emission level. You can tell the manufacturing date by looking at the emission label on the unit. <http://leafblownoise.com/Mounted%20emission%20Label.jpg>.

With the advent of battery powered lawncare products, anti-leaf blower activists are now asking for the complete elimination of gasoline powered equipment. I admit there is an appropriate application for battery powered units, but they have their drawbacks. They work fine for the homeowner with a small yard or for clearing a deck or patio of leaves, but their power level is inadequate for the larger applications and for the professional, whom wants to get his work done as quickly as possible. Since more than one battery is required per leaf blower for a full day of use, with the high cost of lithium ion batteries, the professional will consider this option unacceptable.



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On an environmental level, there should be concern that there is no viable method available for the recycling of lithium ion batteries.

The only true issue concerning leaf blowers is noise, but you will find that dealing with this on a legislative level can be difficult and very controversial. You need only speak to stakeholders Joe Caruso ((617) 966-5421) of Newton, Massachusetts or Faith Michaels (617) 543-2962) of Brookline, Massachusetts to confirm this. Believe it or not, people are extraordinarily polarized on the issue. As you know, there are those that are annoyed by blowers, wanting to ban them entirely, and then there are those that won't tolerate losing the option to use them.

Not as a passionate local stakeholder, but as a friend to the city, I make available the facts about leaf blowers so people like yourself can arrive at an informed decision. If you submit to emotional pressure based on opinion rather than facts, the wrong decision could be made. "What could make it wrong?" you ask. Your decision could hurt local landscape businesses, it could cause a hardship for your citizens and it could cost your city a great deal of money in trying to enforce an unpopular law. Check out the report from Dean Kubani, Director – Office of Sustainability and the Environment, to the Mayor and City Council of Santa Monica, California: <http://leafblownoise.com/Santa%20Monica%20Report.pdf>. They have had a complete ban in place for more than 20 years and are still trying to figure out how to enforce it.

At your leisure, please take a half hour or so to go over my website. You will find a wealth of information specifically dealing with the issue of leaf blower sound as well as many other claims made about the blower. The manufacturers of leaf blowers, in response to complaints from the field, have spent millions of dollars to provide a solution to the leaf blower noise problem. It is my hope that you will take advantage of that feature and require that blowers be limited to 65 dB(A), the quietest design available.

In your effort to sort through this issue, be sure to include professional contractors in your discussion. You will find that they do not understand all the issues, but they will tell you how a blower ban will impact their income and how their customers will react to a cost increase.

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

Best regards,

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