

October 8, 2020

**TO: Mayor Teresa Heitmann
Naples, Florida**

**COPIES: Vice Mayor Terry Hutchison
Council Member Michael McCabe
Council Member Gary Price
Council Member Ted Blankenship
Council Member Paul Perry
Council Member Raymond Christman
City Manager Charles Chapman
City Clerk Patricia Rambosk
City Attorney James D. Fox**

From: [Larry Will](#)



Reference:

<https://nbc-2.com/news/local/2020/10/06/naples-city-council-to-discuss-leaf-blower-ordinance-after-noise-complaints/>

Dear Mayor Heitmann:

Calling your attention to the referenced article on the web, I see that Naples is once again being asked to address leaf blower complaints, primarily because of the sound they make. I have written to your office in the past, offering my assistance in

understanding the leaf blower issue you are presently reviewing. In as much as you, and several of the present city council members were not in office at the time of my first letter, I thought it appropriate to give you an update to my previous correspondence and share my knowledge and experience with you.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stakeholder in your community's leaf blower issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any decision you deem necessary. But I am a source of facts that will be helpful to you. I would like to start by providing you with my [qualifications and credentials](#).

The issue with the leaf blower, as you know, is sound. 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". Okay, so you're thinking, "Do quiet blowers really exist?" Well yes, they do. I have a [video](#) on my website that confirms their existence.

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**. No, not all present-day leaf blowers are quiet, but all are quieter than they once were for a given size. But even though these large blowers are not considered "Quiet" their sound level has been reduced by 50%.

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. 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 both sides of the leaf blower issue have been slow to embrace these products. Overwhelmingly, users do not 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.

Anti-leaf blower advocates likewise will not 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.

I see that battery powered leaf blowers might be allowed if they are 65 dB(A) or less, but there is a problem with this. These blowers have not been tested and labeled for sound level. There is no easy way of determining compliance, which is different from the gas version. If you watch the blower comparison [video](#), you will see that the battery-powered leaf blower is actually noisier than the quiet gasoline-powered blower.

Nevertheless, battery-powered leaf blowers are becoming very popular among homeowners. My wife loves ours because it is easy for her to use, not that I make her clean the entire yard with it, but because she likes to keep our flower adorned deck free of debris, which seems like an everyday ritual. I use it in the summer to clean a 5400 square foot driveway and courtyard. It does an adequate job clearing debris from paved surfaces and therefore may be viable for the homeowner. It is faster than a broom or rake and does a much better job.

However, battery powered blowers have lower performance than that of a gasoline powered unit, because of their limited available propulsion energy from a battery. This means it takes more time to get the job done. But most homeowners do not mind having to spend a little extra time working in their yard, as long as it doesn't take too much time. To many, their yard is a source of pride and pleasure, requiring a great deal of care, with a personal touch.

To others, yardwork is a pain. It is just a yard always in need of grooming. These people turn to the yard care professional for this task. Most landscapers consider the battery powered blower inadequate. To make money, they must get the job done fast. This can only be done with a gasoline powered 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 exercise bike 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.

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.

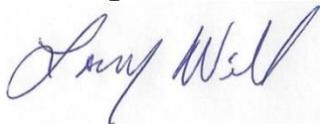
When you solicit information from professional contractors, you will find that they do not understand all the issues, but they can tell you how a blower ban will impact their income and/or how their customers will react to a cost increase.

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

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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