

November 8, 2017

**Mayor Bill Kampe  
and  
City Councilmembers  
Pacific Grove, CA**

RE: <https://www.cityofpacificgrove.org/safety-crime-prevention/leaf-blowers>

<https://www.cityofpacificgrove.org/sites/default/files/city-council/2017/11-1-2017/city-council-11-1-2017-13b-leaf-blower-discussion.pdf>

Mayor Bill Kampe:

Based on what I have found on the Internet, Pacific Grove has a very restrictive leaf blower ordinance. Are you aware that there are no lawn care products that can meet your sound limit at the lot line? Nothing, not even lawn mowers. I'm sure your enforcement agency has already discovered that. Add to that, the impossible task of trying to enforce such an ordinance, I would like to encourage you to consider revising your existing code.

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 have disseminated 'up to date' information to more than 160 cities throughout the United States and Canada. More information on my qualifications can be found at:

<http://leafblownoise.com/about%20the%20author.pdf> I can provide you and your city's councilmembers with facts that will help you understand why this regulation needs to be modified.

Let me start by saying that 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, as I'm sure you have learned over the years. Keep in mind that the one and only true issue with the leaf blower is noise. However, since sound is not a viable reason to ban blowers, a small group of well-organized people will be asking for a complete ban on gasoline powered leaf blowers for reasons other than sound. Their arguments will be based on opinion and anecdotal claims including outdated and unsubstantiated quotations. Don't believe everything you hear. Never the less, opinion is important in this case and you will have to deal with the noise issue and all the other complaints as they are presented. It will be helpful for you to know all the facts.

One example of an unrealistic claim, made by a 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, a Raptor no less, 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 must be for an unloaded vehicle. Edmonds remarks cannot be justified because it is impossible to compare these two vastly different sized engines using the equipment available in their test lab. Check out the facts at: <http://leafblownoise.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 in California 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) per the industry Standard. This represents more than a 75% reduction in sound pressure over older designs and is the quietest universally available gasoline powered leaf blower. [http://leafblownoise.com/Measuring\\_Sound.pdf](http://leafblownoise.com/Measuring_Sound.pdf) To help you understand these numbers, keep in mind that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound, the magnitude is reduced by 50%. If you don't have a feel for this difference, you owe it to your constituents to attend a subjective comparative noise demonstration.

If I understand your present code correctly, the sound from leaf blowers, measured at the property line, must not exceed 56 dB(A). I understand the intent of this ruling, but I expect you are having a problem determining when there is a violation. For one thing, leaf blowers are often used right up to the property line and at that distance, there are no leaf blowers in existence that can meet your sound limit. Since the enforcement officer must be there at the time of the violation to measure the sound amplitude, another problem exists. The operator can stay away from the property line or shut the engine off until the officer leaves, assuming the user is still at the site of the alleged violation when the officer arrives. So how can one enforce something like that?

Since noise is the only issue and the driving force behind your ruling, I propose that you consider revising your code to require that all leaf blowers used in Pacific Grove display the manufacturer applied sound label stating that it meets 65 dB(A) at 50 feet. (<http://leafblownoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>) . In spirit this ruling would comply with your present code, which is to reduce the sound from leaf blowers. It is a simple and understandable revision to the text. This would prohibit the use of only noisy leaf blowers. Remove the property line measurement requirement for improved ease of enforcement. This type of ordinance works well where your present code most likely does not. Landscape contractors will readily use quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers because these quiet blowers will allow them to adequately do their job. The leaf blower has become an indispensable tool for them. As for the homeowner, if a neighbor complains about another neighbor's blower, the enforcement officer need only ask the alleged offender to show him his blower. If the 65 dB(A) label is not present, he is in violation. No need to catch him in the act.

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 revision would be negligible. The quiet leaf blower has been on the market for twenty years and I can guarantee that there are many already being used in Pacific Grove. 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.

Electric powered units, for example, are fine for some applications, like a homeowner 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.

[http://leafblownoise.com/#Leaf\\_Blower\\_vs.\\_Broom](http://leafblownoise.com/#Leaf_Blower_vs._Broom)

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 twenty 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 a new 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 in dealing with leaf blower sound.

Oh, 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 there are pamphlets to help you get the word out. You can reprint them or refer to these pamphlets on the Internet in your literature. You can also use them as a starting point for your own publication, which sets down allowable hours, days of use and other requirements.

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

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

Before amending your leaf blower ordinance, be sure to talk to cities that already have bans in place. You can learn firsthand if their ordinance is working or not. More specifically, talk directly with their enforcement agency. Leaf blower ban supporters will not tell you this, but like your present code, you will find it is impossible to enforce a leaf blower ban because the police give this infraction a very low priority. Take a look at what's happening in Newton, MA.

<http://leafblownoise.com/WBZ%20Boston%20Radio%20.pdf>

For 20 years, Santa Monica has struggled with no success enforcing their leaf blower ban.

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

Lawn care providers would rather take a chance on getting fined, rather than lose money on the job. To arrive at a workable solution, have your advisors reach out to these service people 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 just remove the leaf blower limitation from your code and let it go at that, but you must point out that 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Will". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Larry Will, BSME  
Leaf Blower Information Specialist  
ECHO Inc.  
479-256-0282  
Email: [info@leafblownoise.com](mailto:info@leafblownoise.com)  
Website: <http://leafblownoise.com/>

To learn more about ECHO: <http://www.echo-usa.com/About-ECHO/About-Us>