

October 6, 2021

**TO: Mayor Grover C. Robinson, VI
Pensacola, Florida**

Copy: Council Members:
Jared Moore, President
Ann Hill, Vice Chair
Jennifer Brahier
Teniadé Broughton
Sherri F. Myers
Casey Jones
Delarian Wiggins
Council Executive Don Kraher

From: [Larry Will](#)



References:

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2021/09/21/pensacola-noise-ordinance-limits-lawn-equipment-eyed-council/5788762001/>

Dear Mayor Robinson, Council Members and Council Executive:

This letter should be of interest to you because it deals with noise, how sound is measured and what you can and can't do to control it, which is presently an issue before you.

Right up front, I want to say that I am not a stakeholder in your community's noise issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any legislation decision you deem necessary. But because the second issue brought before you, by resident John

Herron, is leaf blower noise, I also would like to share with you information about the design and use of cordless and gasoline-powered leaf blowers that will be of considerable value to you. I am a retired Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I would like to start by providing you with a link to a brief summary of my [qualifications and credentials](#).

According to the referenced Internet article, Deputy Police Chief Kevin Christman is alerting you to the problem he is having enforcing the present sound ordinance, which is subjectively written. Let me point out that an objective ordinance, with measurable sound limits, will not make his job easier.

The reason for this assertion is that measuring sound with any degree of accuracy is very difficult in the field because there are a multitude of variables that can't be controlled. I learned this while developing the very first quiet gasoline-powered leaf blower commercially available. This is why leaf blower manufacturers, have a third party organization test blower sound, according to a very strict sound measuring Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)).

Things to consider when measuring sound include the following variables:

- Distance to the microphone
- Position of microphone above the ground
- Location of the person reading the meter
- Location of sound absorbing materials or people nearby
- Direction of wind
- Magnitude of the wind
- Position of the operator relative to the position of the measurement device (facing or pointing away)
- Type of ground cover
- Closeness to sound reflecting surfaces
- Ambient sound level

Check out the excerpt from the ANSI Standard at the link above to learn more.

If ball park values are all that you are looking for, then you can use an [app](#) on your cell phone, however, they are limited in accuracy to the quality of your cellphone's microphone. Mine is unable to measure anything above 75 dB(A).

In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. A "Quiet" leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per the above ANSI Standard.

Now before you read on, just think about what that equates to for a minute. Sixty-five dB(A) is the same sound level as that inside a [typical office environment](#). Is it silent? No! But this is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound. At the ear of the operator, quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) and do not require hearing protection [according to OSHA](#). Check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blower sound on my website. Note that battery-powered blowers are not as quiet as one might think. To understand how sound level is quantified, [click here](#).

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet. Now for a little technical talk. Look at it this way. Sound from today's leaf blowers can be categorized per the following:

- Sound levels from Quiet blowers 65 dB(A) or less, have been reduced by 75%.
- Blowers 71 dB(A) or less, have been reduced by at least 50%.
- Blowers at 77 dB(A) are loud.
- Blowers greater than 77 dB(A) should be considered too loud for residential use.

From this, you can see that for every 6 dB(A) reduction in sound level, the volume is reduced by 50%.

I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time, especially in your area of the country. But most of the cities that have decided to ban leaf blowers, have done so because of two things, activist pressure and highly publicized false information. As for advocate pressure, one should be sure that this faction represents the will of the majority of your constituents. Those bringing this issue before you are well organized and dedicated to their conviction. Others will ignore the possibility of a ban until it actually starts to impact them personally. Complacency or lack of reaction does not necessarily mean approval.

If the proposal in Pensacola is prepared based only on the negative claims made about the gasoline leaf blower, you are being misled, not on purpose, but because the advocates have also been misled. The reason is their claims come from unilaterally biased sources that do not allow for any contradictory arguments.

I know you will want to do something about the leaf blower to please those that want them banned. But you must consider the impact this will have on those that use them.

If you are thinking that you should require battery-powered or electric units as a replacement, there is no need. If you walk through your local home supply center, it is obvious that battery power is already very popular with the homeowner. Given the time necessary for the technology to develop further, the professional will also accept the design as a replacement on its own merit. The problem is, the available power today is not sufficient for the professional application, resulting in lost time, increased cost and the potential loss of business or profit.

So, with that in mind, what can you do in response to your constituents? It's simple. **Ban only the noisy blowers.**

The industry took notice of blower noise more than 25 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from all gasoline powered leaf blowers, spending millions of dollars to make an alternative to noisy blowers available to the consumer.

Therefore, I encourage you to learn more about these quiet blowers before summarily banning them along with the noisy ones. Fortunately, because of the industry's foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a gas-powered leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with local sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached [label](#). This decal has been on all quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, you can assume it is loud and it does not comply.

Now, since the leaf blower has been made an issue, you will hear all sorts of negative claims that will be used to convince you that they should be banned. Mr. Herron is already pointing you in that direction, calling them super polluters. I have heard all the negative claims before and have studied each to the greatest degree. Herein you will find the truth, the other side of the story so to speak, with links to supporting documentation.

Mr. Herron may have been alone in his presentation at the meeting where this issue was raised, but you can be pretty sure he will bring several supporters to the next meeting. I would like to address his arguments here, prior to that event.

This is something that I am reasonably sure you do not know. There is a group of people, from outside your community, working hard to have gasoline-powered leaf blowers banned throughout the country. The initial reason was, and still is for that matter, that some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. The concept of citing health hazards as the reason for a ban is contrived. It was initiated by Peter and Susan Kendall of Orinda, California. You can read all about them in the [New Yorker, October 25, 2010 issue](#). Because sound was not a compelling enough reason for banning leaf blowers in their hometown, Ms. Kendall said, "*I would (in the future) try to get the law classified not under noise but under health and safety...*"

Many anti-leaf blower advocates have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the leaf blower. So, the Kendall's and others, no doubt including some advocates in Pensacola, have searched the Internet for the names of dignitaries and organizations that provide statements supporting their mission, regardless of the truth. Local people that are strongly against the leaf blower are eager to believe what they read, using these falsehoods to justify their cause. Some of the statements you hear even defy logic. I am sure you know from your experience with the media that if something is said often enough, by many different people, or put in print by many sources, regardless of the facts, people will tend to believe it as being true. They then will proceed to confidently restate these unproven hypotheses emphatically.

Here are the facts in detail, which via the indicated links will explain how they will try to mislead you:

Greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide):

Excerpt from Professor Ian Plimer's book in a brief summary: [PLIMER](#) : "Of course, you know about this evil carbon dioxide that we are trying to suppress - it's that vital chemical compound that every plant requires to live and grow and to synthesize into oxygen for us humans and all animal life."

"Okay, here's the bombshell. The (recent) volcanic eruption in Iceland. Since its first spewing of volcanic ash, it has, in just FOUR DAYS, NEGATED EVERY SINGLE EFFORT you have made in the past five years to control CO₂ emissions on our planet - all of you."

During a vacation trip, my wife and I took in 2019 to the Canadian Rockies, the entire time we were there, the smoke from forest fires (the burning of hydrocarbons), partially obstructed the view of the mountains. On a mountain tram ride near Lake Louise, we couldn't see the

surrounding mountains at all. Nobody in the media was talking about the CO₂ pollution from that. Guess what, when the burning ended, it didn't take long for the skies to clear up. Nature is self-healing and always returns to equilibrium. This smoke condition was present from Banff, all the way north to the icefields, over 100 miles.

https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Consider_greenhouse_gasses

To say that leaf blowers are a serious source of greenhouse gas is an uninformed statement. Ten ounces of fuel through a leaf blower (10 minutes running time per week for a typical household) generates about the same amount of CO₂ as that found in a [couple cases of beer](#).

Hydrocarbon emission:

It is illegal for a city or town such as Pensacola to ban leaf blowers because of this type of exhaust emission.

https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Can_Leaf_Blowers_be_regulated_locally_to_reduce_emissions

Don't believe the diatribe you hear about leaf blower exhaust emission being worse than a Ford Pickup, or other vehicles for that matter.

<https://www.leafblownoise.com/edmonds%20test%20response2.pdf>

Since January 2005, this type of exhaust emission has been reduced on blowers by as much as 85 to 90%, depending on engine size.

https://www.leafblownoise.com/#What_then_is_the_big_complaint

Dust:

Only PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} particulate matter is hazardous to your health, and leaf blowers are not the source of that constituent in the atmosphere.

https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Are_leaf_blowers_hazardous_to_your_health

Take a look at what the source of this airborne particulate matter really is.

<https://www.leafblownoise.com/Table%203%2011%20San%20Joaquin%20Valley%20PM10.doc>

In the back of your mind, you may be thinking that because there are other cities that have banned blowers, you can't go too far wrong to follow their precedent. If you are seriously considering this, you should have questions:

- How will a ban be enforced?
- Will homeowners with leaf blowers be upset or angry?
- How does this impact the elderly, or those unable to use manual means?
- What will be the cost impact to the homeowner and landscape contractor?
- Will current users comply with your ordinance or just take a chance?
- Will people use time consuming tools, or will they leave the debris where it lies?
- Has this done anything to lessen the appearance of their city?

If you decide to check this out for yourself, you can talk to council members from the cities that already have a ban, but don't overlook talking to the enforcers, local lawn care providers, and homeowners to learn the true impact.

Best Regards,



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Click: [APPENDIX](#) for details and [links](#) to references.