

April 1, 2021

**TO: Mayor Teresa Barrett  
Petaluma, California**

**Copy: Vice Mayor Brian Barnacle  
Council Members:  
D'Lynda Fischer  
Mike Healy  
Dave King  
Kevin McDonnell  
Dennis Pocekay**

**From: [Larry Will](#) <sup>1</sup>**



Reference:

[http://petaluma.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view\\_id=39&clip\\_id=2917](http://petaluma.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=39&clip_id=2917)

Dear Mayor Barrett:

I see from the referenced document on the Web that the gasoline-powered leaf blower is now an issue in Petaluma. It appears that Elsa Beatty is the leader of this movement. Of course, I do not know her, but I'm sure she is well meaning, conscientious, and dedicated to improving the environment. I can understand her position on this matter, for she is not alone in this conviction. I have seen this in several cities in California. Some leaf blowers are loud and can be very irritating if they are used often, near your residence, and for long periods of time. But before

acting upon this request, it is important that you consider if a ban is the right thing to do for your city? Your goal should be to learn the impact a ban will have on leaf blower users as well as understand the facts about the blower. I can help you with that.

**Who am I to tell you all this?** I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I have been in the lawncare industry for 27 years, 19 of these years as an advisor to cities with leaf blower issues. I do not live or work in your community, but what I share with you in this document will not be heard from anyone else in your area. The reason is, I can provide information not commonly known to the average citizen. As a professional engineer, I deal in facts. The information herein is presented as a public service to you, to your city and to the people that own and use leaf blowers in Petaluma.

The trend to ban certain leaf blowers is troubling to me because except for noise, it is based on distorted facts and lacks empathy for those that need them for their work or want them to reduce their workload at home.

Here are some very important leaf blower facts to consider:

- The only true issue with any type of leaf blower is that some of them are noisy. But quiet ones (gasoline versions) at 65 dB(A), measured at 50 feet, are universally available from several manufacturers. These blowers are actually quieter than battery-powered units. Click [here](#) for a demonstration video.
- Quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) at the ear of the operator. Hearing protection is not required according to OSHA.
- Health hazard and environmental impact issues are overstated if not untrue.

I don't want to overwhelm you with technical engineering numbers and other details. But let me focus for just one minute on the one thing mentioned in the Council meeting minutes as a reason for banning leaf blowers. I'd like to talk about the [Greenhouse Gas](#) coming from internal combustion engines.

Have you ever given any thought to what happens to the fuel (a hydrocarbon) that is burned in an automobile or a leaf blower? It oxidizes. That means oxygen combines with the two elements found in fuel, namely hydrogen and carbon. Every ounce of it turns into an airborne gas. Hydrogen combines with oxygen to form water vapor (H<sub>2</sub>O) and carbon oxidizes to form carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). CO<sub>2</sub> is the greenhouse gas everyone is talking about.

Those arguing that leaf blowers are worse than automobiles when it comes to Greenhouse Gasses (CO<sub>2</sub>), are totally incorrect. It's all a function of how

much fuel is burned. In your car, how many gallons of gasoline do you burn in a week, one tank full (18 gallons)? How much do you burn in a leaf blower in a week, 10 ounces? A gallon, by the way, is 128 ounces. The average automobile is 230 times worse than a leaf blower when it comes to the emission of 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 generates about the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as that found in a [couple cases of beer](#).

There is much more to learn about this and other claims made about the gasoline-powered leaf blower if you read the [appendix](#) and checkout my [website](#).

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. One should look into the result of creating such a ban. How will it be enforced? Will homeowners with leaf blowers be upset? How does this impact the elderly? What will be the cost impact to the homeowner and landscape contractor? Will current users comply with your ordinance? Will people use time consuming tools, or will they just leave the debris where it lies? If you decide to check this out for yourself, you can talk to council members from 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.

I think you will agree that the driving force for a ban is that some people are irritated by leaf blower noise. But other than noise, what they are telling you in their zeal to ban blowers is erroneous. Perhaps this is because ban advocates are misled by the propaganda available on the Internet. As for them understanding the impact a ban will have on users, they likely have never used these blowers personally and therefore have no concept of how valuable they are to homeowners and lawn care professionals.

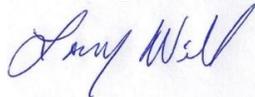
By now you are thinking I am as biased as the ban advocates. Well, I guess I am to a point. But I consider myself as being objective. My bias is to present the facts, not opinions, based on my experience in the industry as a Professional Engineer designing these products. I have worked personally and directly with organizations such as the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), to arrive at environmentally friendly products. Do I want to preserve the gasoline-powered leaf blower? Yes! But only because I see that banning it is unnecessary since noise is the issue, and quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers are available from several manufacturers. There is a [label](#)<sup>23</sup> on the unit that tells you what the sound level is, making it easy to enforce your noise restriction, should you

choose. If for one second I thought there was any truth to the claim that leaf blowers were significantly harmful to the environment, I would not be writing this letter.

In time, when battery-powered units have sufficient power and performance to do the job at hand, they will replace gasoline power by their own merits. You need only visit your local outlet store to see how popular battery-powered leaf blowers are among those with light duty, consumer type applications. Allow the professional user to retain the use of their gasoline-powered units, if they are quiet and until battery blowers can provide adequate power.

Please, read the appendix, with links to references, to learn more facts about the leaf blower and its use.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Will". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Larry Will. BSME, Leaf Blower Information Specialist, ECHO Inc.  
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Click: [APPENDIX](#) for details and [links](#) to references