

August 20, 2020

**TO: Mayor Peter Scherer**

**Copy:**

**Trustee Joseph Stargiotti**

**Trustee Nicole Asquith**

**Trustee David Vinjamuri**

**Trustee Steve Lord**

**From: [Larry Will](#)**



Reference:

<https://patch.com/new-york/pleasantville/pleasantville-divided-on-leaf-blower-proposal>

I see from the referenced Internet article that Pleasantville is once again considering restrictions on leaf blowers. If I may, I would like to provide some valuable information that will help you make a decision as to what type of restriction will be best for your community.

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stake holder 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 about the design and use of cordless and gasoline powered leaf blowers. I can also share with you the negativities experienced by other cities that have limited the use of these tools.

The proposal is to ban both electric blowers (primarily battery powered) as well as gasoline units. Right up front, my suggestion is to not do that. Why? The leaf blower is an indispensable tool, for the homeowner as well as for the professional lawn care provider. If you have been told that there is no application for the blower during the summer months and no one will mind losing the ability to use them, you are being misled. Yards need grooming all year round and it cannot be done with a broom and rake. See these pictures to understand why I say this:

<https://www.leafblownoise.com/whyheneedsaleafblower.pdf>

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 yard with it, but because she likes to keep our flower adorned deck free of debris as 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. 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 few hours working in their yard. 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 with grass that never quits growing, and trees that continually shed leaves, seed pods and twigs, always in need of grooming. These people turn to the yard care professional for this task. But the battery powered blower is inadequate for the professional user. To make money, they must get the job done fast. This can only be done with a gasoline powered blower.

Ultimately, banning blowers will be controversial. Lawn care contractors have taken at least one city to [court](#) over a ban. I am fully aware of the different kinds of restrictions being applied to leaf blowers by various cities and I can assure you that opposition to a ban will be substantial. The reason is because eliminating this tool will impact a lot of people, homeowners as well as professionals that want or need these blowers. According to the article above, you are already hearing opposing arguments to a blower ban, but you will surely hear a lot more from them and others once the ordinance is implemented.

One other likely obstacle could be enforcement. Police officers, in most cases, are reluctant to cite their neighbors with leaf blower related violations. Not when they are charged with apprehending criminals and preventing acts of violence. Lots of cities have problems with enforcement; Palo Alto, Santa Monica, and Los Angeles just to mention a few.

As may already be obvious, my experience guides me to say that the electric or battery powered leaf blower should be allowed all year round for the homeowner. The professional user should be allowed to use the gasoline powered unit if it meets certain requirements, because the causes for objecting to the gasoline blower can be mitigated.

The stated reasons for implementing a ban include pollution caused by gas-powered engines, particulate matter and ecological harm to the environment. These are the usual arguments placed before city councils by those bent on banning gasoline leaf blowers.

These statements and arguments are wholly unsubstantiated. Be wary of comments and quotations based on someone's opinion and derogatory innuendo. The more colorful the argument and the more often it is repeated, however untrue it may be, the more believable it becomes. But the facts do not support these claims. As these arguments are brought up, you can find help in understanding the facts at my [website](#).

Obviously the gasoline powered blower emits exhaust fumes, but hydrocarbon [emission](#) was reduced by as much as 90%, depending on engine size, effective January 2005. A [label](#) indicating manufacturing date is on the unit. [Greenhouse gasses](#) from blowers are miniscule compared to other sources.

As for [perceived health hazard](#), this is an unsubstantiated statement with studies that confirm its fallaciousness. [Dust](#) is also insignificant if blowers are operated properly.

Only the noise from the leaf blower can be an issue. But much has been done to reduce the noise from gasoline powered leaf blowers. In order to understand what a quiet blower is, note that for every six dB(A) reduction in sound magnitude (from any starting point on the measurement scale), the actual volume is reduced by 50%. Seventy-five percent reduction is 12 dB(A).

This much sound reduction is hard to accept as being true for the average person because we cannot comprehend from experience what a 50 or 75% reduction sounds like. The best thing to do is to witness an actual leaf blower sound comparison, but I know that it is not easy to arrange this. An alternative is to check out the [video](#) of an actual demonstration developed for the comparison of leaf blowers on my website. The difference between a loud blower and one that is quiet, which is a 75% reduction in sound, is impressive. You might be surprised to learn that battery powered leaf blowers are not as quiet as you may have been led to believe, but noise from and electric blower has never been an issue.

In the case of a gasoline powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet per and industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A "Quiet" leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per the above Standard.

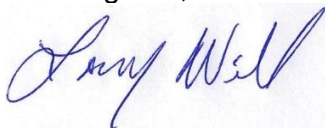
Fortunately, because of the industry's foresight, any city that wants to limit the sound emanating from a gas-powered leaf blower can easily determine sound magnitude in the field without testing. The consumer can also determine compliance with local sound limitations at the point of purchase via the attached [label](#). This decal has been on all gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past fifteen years.

I assume that consideration is being given to what a blower ban will mean to the professional user, but I suggest lawn care contractors should be included by invitation, in any discussion of an ordinance to that end. Using alternatives to a gasoline powered leaf blower could take him as much as [ten times longer](#) to clean up yard debris (using a broom or rake). The added cost could either put him out of business or, at the very least, increase cost to his customers.

Therefore, give serious thought to ban alternatives. Explore and understand what changes and improvements have been made to the gasoline powered leaf blower. Give serious consideration to imposing different requirements for private citizens versus professionals. Allow contractors to retain the use of gasoline-powered blowers if they are the quiet version and have been manufactured after 2005. Keep in mind that the real issue here is noise and how the blower is used, not the gasoline powered leaf blower per se.

If you should need information that is not clearly addressed here or on my website, please contact me and I will do whatever I can to help, at no cost to you, including further research on your behalf.

Best regards,



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