

July 2, 2021

**TO: Mayor Diana Mahmud
South Pasadena, California**

**Copy: Mayor Pro Tem Michael Cacciotti
Councilmember Evelyn G. Zneimer
Councilmember Jack Donovan
Councilmember Jon Primuth**

From: [Larry Will](#)



Reference:

<https://southpasadenan.com/coty-council-to-consider-gas-powered-leaf-blower-ban/>

City council to consider gas-powered leaf blower ban!

Dear Mayor Mahmud:

From the referenced article, it appears that Mayor Pro Tem Michael Cacciotti is in a hurry to ban the gasoline powered leaf blower in Pasadena. As near as I can tell, the issue is becoming before the council for the first time at the council meeting on July 7. It is intriguing that this proposal is made public only seven days before the meeting and then during the week of the summer's most important and popular holiday, the 4th of July. If this is really the case, shouldn't

people be given more time to understand what this is all about and provide them with ample opportunity to formulate an opinion as to whether this is good for them personally, before taking a vote?

Mayor Cacciotti's association with the South Coast Air Quality Management District and with the American Green Zone Alliance, clearly testifies to his bias on this matter. These associations provide him with a stature wherein some people will think him to be preeminent in this field and therefore wholly trustworthy. From the referenced article, I know he is making some incorrect claims, perhaps inadvertently, about the gasoline-powered leaf blower that really should be subject to review.

Okay, now you are wondering who I am to make such presumptuous statements. I am personally not a stakeholder in this issue, nor am I trying to interfere with any regulatory decision you deem necessary to control leaf blowers. Nevertheless, I am a source of facts about the design and use of cordless and gasoline powered lawn care products that will be enlightening to you, because you will not hear what I have to say from anti-leaf blower advocates. I would like to start by providing you with a link to my [qualifications and credentials](#).

I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time, especially in California. But I must say that if you support a blower ban based on what anti-leaf blower advocates tell you, you are inadvertently being misled. There is no legitimate reason for banning gasoline-powered leaf blowers, **except for noise**, because everything else you hear and see is either false, misrepresented, or unsubstantiated.

You probably are reluctant to believe what I will be telling you here because you have heard otherwise, from all kinds of sources, for a long time. But I feel compelled to comment further on this, so you are not blindsided in the future as certain so-called facts professed to you are shown to be false.

Taken from the referenced article:

"Other cities around the United States have done it (banned blowers) and I hope we join them."

In the back of your mind, because this was suggested by Mr. Cacciotti, 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. Before accepting their decision as your own, you should carefully check out the impact this has had on their city. You can talk to the council members involved, but don't overlook talking to the

enforcers, professional lawn care providers, and homeowners to learn the true impact.

These are some of the questions for which you need answers:

- How is their ban being enforced?
- Did homeowners with leaf blowers get upset?
- How did this impact the elderly?
- What was the cost impact to the homeowner and landscape contractor?
- Are current users complying with the ordinance?
- Are people using time consuming tools, or are they just leaving the debris where it lies?

“The elimination of these types of blowers will be a benefit for their physical and mental health, along with the workers, who may not know this is polluting equipment that is toxic and unhealthy,” he continued. “It also affects the healthcare system, costing us billions of dollars a year, where people get lung disease, cardiovascular disease, hearing loss and, from recent studies, we know it impacts the brain and the nervous system. It also has a dramatic impact on the environment and climate change. There are multiple benefits through a ban of this type that potentially could save the country billions of dollars.”

Wow! How is it possible organizations such as CARB and the EPA could ever allow these products to be manufactured and sold? Where is the proof that all this is being caused by leaf blowers? There is no proof. Billions of dollars? Lung disease? Cardiovascular disease? The brain? The nervous system? All of this is alarmist for effect at best. I would just love to leave it at that, but this deserves a rebuttal.

Beside noise, health hazards are always brought up. Don't believe everything you have been told regarding this argument. Here 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 East and West coasts of the US. The initial reason for their banning effort was that some of them are noisy and therefore irritating. Their program now includes health hazard issues as support for a ban. The problem is that this claim 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...”*

This movement to ban leaf blowers has gotten so large that a [coalition of several local Southern California environmental groups](#) has been formed, consisting of approximately 35,000 people (SD350, The Sierra Club, Ban Leaf Blowers San Diego, and others). It has been specifically created to promote the banning of gasoline-powered leaf blowers in regional cities. These people have an agenda, steeped in propaganda.

Many anti-leaf blower advocates have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the gasoline-powered leaf blower. So, the Kendall's and the people leading the movement to ban blowers in South Pasadena, have searched the Internet for the names of dignitaries and organizations that provide statements supporting their mission, regardless of the truth. Proof of this can be found in the referenced Internet article. Local people that are strongly against the leaf blower are eager to believe what they read, using these falsehoods to justify their cause. 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.

I know that Mr. Cacciotti and those that support his ban proposal, are well meaning, conscientious, and dedicated to improving the environment, but they are not professionals. What I mean by not being professional is that, unlike me, none of them are in any way professionally involved in the use, development, or accreditation of the leaf blower. As a result, they really do not know or understand the value of this tool to those that use them, or how they have been improved over the years. These people can only quote claims made by others. None of them want to quote me because I contradict most of what they have been led to believe. I maintain that the information they find on the Internet is based on improper testing and innuendo or opinion. Some of the background material they show may be true in concept, but the impact on the environment, as it relates to the leaf blower is not true.

"While it may seem that a leaf blower is a minor cause of air pollution, because there are so many and they have minimal or no pollution controls, they're one of the region's significant sources of pollution."

Hydrocarbon exhaust emission is gasoline that goes straight through the engine unburned. This environmental constituent was studied for years by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Air Resources Board

(CARB). After much testing, evaluation and negotiation, it was determined that when these small off-road engines comply with the resultant revised emission limitations effective January 2005, there will be no significant or detrimental impact on the environment. Hydrocarbon exhaust emission has been reduced by [85 to 90%](#), depending on engine size. The impact calculation takes into consideration that these products are only used for a matter of minutes per week per household, which is not the case for electric power generation, jet airplanes, factories, trucks, cars and other major sources of air pollution.

I told you above that the only true issue with the leaf blower is **noise**. So, how can you mitigate that without controversy? Obviously, **ban only the noisy blowers**.

The industry took notice of blower noise more than 20 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.

In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. The published values are obtained per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A “Quiet” leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard. This is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound. At this level,, according to OSHA, the operator does not have to wear ear protection.

[To understand how sound reduction is quantified](#), note that for every six dB(A) reduction in sound magnitude (from any starting point on the measurement scale), the actual volume, or sound pressure, is reduced by 50%. This much sound reduction is hard to accept as being true for the average person because we cannot comprehend from experience what a 50% 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. Note that battery-powered blowers are not as quiet as one might think.

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet, especially the older units. 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 for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, it does not comply.

Soon a decision from you will be required. Something will have to be done about blowers, but don't rush into this. You do have choices that should be explored, choices other than banning all gasoline-powered leaf blowers. Limiting the time of use for leaf blowers is a good first step. This is being done by other cities with great success.

The proposal is to switch from gasoline-power to battery.

"It looks like they're starting to make the conversion to electric with some of their smaller equipment, so that's a good sign,"

Clearly, there is a natural movement in this direction on its own accord. There are many desirable features prompting homeowners to make the switch. You need only go to your big box home and garden store to see how much shelf space is dedicated to electric products. But there are also drawbacks. They have limited run time and they are under powered. For commercial use, it takes too much time to get the job done. Batteries are [very expensive](#) as well. Some [batteries cost more than \\$1200](#), for example, and more than one will be needed per device if they are to be used for six to eight hours in the field by the professional.

In time, and in the not-too-distant future, battery powered leaf blowers will be able to do the job for the professional and when they do, contractors will eagerly make the switch by attrition. Pasadena should just be patient and allow this design to replace gasoline power on its own merit.

The key to any ordinance succeeding is that it should be reasonable, fair, justifiable and something that people will accept and are voluntarily willing to comply with. In other words, don't do something that will cost them money and don't take away their indispensable tools, tools that except for your ordinance, are perfectly legal and do not significantly impact the environment. Look, the overall goal of an ordinance regarding the gasoline leaf blower is, and should be, to eliminate the noise.

The leaf blower issue can become quite complex and as such, will require some detailed study to learn and comprehend the facts. It is my experience, however, that most of the time, people not interested in engineering or technical matters,

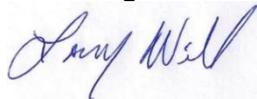
are not so inclined to understand details presented by an engineer. But that is where you will find the facts about the issues:

- [Noise](#)
- [Time efficiency](#)
- [Impact on insects](#)
- [Hydrocarbon emission](#)
- [Carbon monoxide](#)
- [Particulate matter](#)
- [Electric power](#)

If engineering stories are boring to you, before you believe all the negative claims you hear about the leaf blower, ask an engineer friend, or better yet, ask the city's engineer to check out my [website](#), [links](#) to references, and the [appendix](#) to this letter. At these locations one can find the truth about noise, exhaust emission, dust, health hazards, and every other negative claim made against the leaf blower. Ask your engineer if what I am saying has merit. And then ask him what the facts are. Knowing the facts will help you arrive at the best decision in this matter.

If you have any "Ya, but what about (...)" questions that I have not touched on here, chances are you can find the answer at my website, if you only do a search for the keyword.

Best Regards,



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