

May 4, 2021

**TO: Mayor Shelley Brindle  
Westfield, New Jersey**

**Copy: Council Members:  
Linda Habgood  
James Boyes  
Michael Dardia  
Mark Parmelee**

**Mark LoGrip  
David Contract  
Dawn Mackey  
Scott Katz**

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



Reference:

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/westfield/sections/green/articles/after-branch-pickup-issues-westfield-looks-to-mandate-landscapers-register>

Dear Mayor Brindle:

I see from the referenced Internet article that leaf blowers are at issue in Westfield. I know the leaf blower has been a hot button for some people for a long time, but I must say that if you support a blower ban based on what these anti-leaf blower advocates have told you, you are being misled. There is no legitimate reason for banning gasoline-powered leaf blowers, **except for noise**, because everything else you have been told is either false, misrepresented, or unsubstantiated. I know you don't want to believe this because you have heard otherwise for a long time, from people you think know the facts. The bottom line is that noise is the problem and there is a way that noise from gasoline-powered leaf blowers can be mitigated, without banning all gasoline-powered blowers. I

feel compelled to comment further on this, so you are not blindsided in the future as certain so-called facts you have been given are shown to be false.

It is hard for me to get my point across because I can't dramatically compete with the passionate efforts of those working hard to convince you otherwise. I'm just one person.

By now, you are wondering who I am to be telling you all this. I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered handheld lawn care products. I am not a stakeholder 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 that will be enlightening to you. I would like to start by providing you with a link to my [qualifications and credentials](#).

I do not know all that you have been told about blowers, but I can guess. Much of it has been articulated in the referenced article. I have heard it all before. 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 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..."

So, the Kendall's and many others have searched the Internet with statements and enlisted dignitaries that support their mission, regardless of the truth. Many others have created websites that dedicate themselves to demeaning the leaf blower. This is why people that are not familiar with the blower feel so strongly against it. 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 you want to do something about the leaf blower to please those that want them banned. But you have to consider the impact this will have on those that use them. For the professional user, this can be a game changer.

The local people trying to convince you that leaf blowers are bad, are well meaning, conscientious, and dedicated to improving the environment, but they

are not professionals. What I mean by not being professional is that 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 understand the value of this tool to those that use them. These people can only quote claims made by others. They have no way of knowing if what they are restating is true. Have they cited qualified tests as justification, or is what they say simply inuendo or opinion? Some of the background material they show is true in concept, but the impact on the environment, as it relates to the leaf blower, is not true.

For example, where are the facts that support the claim that "...gas leaf blowers not only pose threats to hearing but also cause stress-mediated disorders such as heart disease, psychological disturbances and metabolic abnormalities, some of which raise the risk of complications from COVID-19." These claims are over the top, don't you think?

I know that in time, the proposed changes as to what kind of leaf blowers can be used in Westfield, will come before you for a decision. No doubt something will have to be done, but you do have choices, choices other than banning. Limiting the time of use for leaf blowers is a good first step. It will be hard to enforce such a restriction, but it is being done by other cities with some success. The key to any ordinance succeeding is that it should be something that people will accept and willingly 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 issue regarding the gasoline leaf blower is and should be to eliminate the noise.

So, how can you do that without controversy?

The industry learned about the noise issue more than 20 years ago and deliberately addressed this issue in response to complaints. Much has been done to reduce the noise from gasoline powered leaf blowers, spending millions of dollars to make an alternative to noisy blowers available to the consumer.

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.

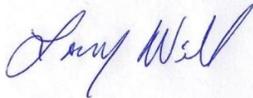
In the case of a gasoline-powered leaf blower, sound level is measured at 50 feet to replicate what a bystander will experience. The published values are obtained per the industry Standard ([ANSI B175.2](#)). A “Quiet” leaf blower is 65 dB(A) or less, measured per this Standard. This is at least a seventy-five percent reduction in sound or 12 dB(A), from a typical noisy leaf blower at 77 dB(A). Quiet leaf blowers are only 85 dB(A) at the ear of the operator. Hearing protection is not required according to OSHA.

Quiet leaf blowers have been available for a long time, however, not all leaf blowers are quiet. 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 gasoline powered leaf blowers manufactured in the United States for at least the past fifteen years. If there is no label on a unit, it does not comply.

The leaf blower issue can become quite complex. It is my experience that most of the time, people not interested in engineering or technical matters, are not so inclined to understand details presented by an engineer. According to my wife, engineering stories can be quite boring. 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](#) and read the [appendix](#) to this letter. Ask him if what I am saying has merit. Knowing the facts will help you arrive at the best decision in this matter.

Best Regards,



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