

October 7, 2021

**TO: First Selectman Jim Marpe
Westport, Connecticut**

**Copies: Selectwoman Jennifer Tooker
Selectwoman Melissa Kane
All 36 Representatives of Town Meeting (RTM 1-9)**

From: [Larry Will](#)



References:

<https://westportjournal.com/community/rtm-committees-rake-over-leaf-blower-ordinance/>

Dear First Selectman Marpe, Selectwomen and RTM representatives:

Don't let the length of this letter deter you from reading it, because it will turn out to be of great value and interest to you. It deals with the leaf blower, the use of which has been put in question before you. According to the referenced Internet article, a very strong presentation has been given by Ms. Jamie Banks, Quiet Communities, which may have convinced some of you that gasoline powered leaf blowers must be banned. If someone were telling me all that she said about my lawnmower, not knowing anything about this device or how it was developed or tested or certified by the government, I would probably feel the same way. But really! If all this were true, don't you think the EPA would by now have done something about them. Well, they did. And what the EPA has ignored, such as noise for example, the industry voluntarily did something about it.

All the usual points she cites as reasons for banning leaf blowers are very familiar to me. I have studied each of them in detail and find them all to be either false, misleading, outdated, or unsubstantiated. Did she tell you that the hydrocarbon exhaust emission from the leaf blower engine has been reduced by 85 to 90% as of January 2005? I don't think so. Did she tell you that these engines no longer pass one third of the ingested fuel straight through the engine unburned? No, I know she didn't. Did she tell you that there have been leaf blowers on the market for 20 years that are 75% quieter than older designs? I'm pretty sure she didn't tell you that either. In this letter, I will show that all the arguments supporting a blower ban are bogus, except for noise, and the quiet leaf blower is the solution to that issue. Herein you will find the truth, the other side of the story so to speak, with links to supporting documentation.

Right up front, I want to say that 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 information about the design and use of cordless and gasoline-powered leaf blowers that will be enlightening to you. Why? Because I designed them, tested them, worked with regulatory agencies to certify them, and have spent more than 27 years helping cities learn the truth about them. I have contacted over [190 cities](#) in this endeavor.

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](#).

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 group represents the will of most of your constituents. Your form of government is probably the best way to gage the will of the community. Regarding false information, I know that if each of you take the time to review my comments, this will make your job easier. At the very least, it will give you a new prospective on the issue. Complacency or lack of interest could result in an undesirable result.

If the proposal in Westport is prepared based only on the negative claims made about the gasoline leaf blower, in other words, what you have heard so far, you are being misled. I know you 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 and need 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 time for the technology to develop, the professional will also accept the design as a replacement on its own merit. In spite of what you may have heard, the available battery power today is not sufficient for the professional application, resulting in loss of 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.** Before explaining how this can work and why that approach should be taken, let me first address how you are being misled.

I do not want to excoriate Ms. Banks. That is not my purpose, for I know she has a passion for her convictions. She believes that what she is doing is the right thing. And maybe it is for some people. But is it the right think for a plurality of Westport's residents, especially at this time? Here is something that I am reasonably sure you do not know or have given much thought to. There are groups of people, from outside your community, working hard to have gasoline-powered leaf blowers banned throughout the country. The reason for this is not initially evident. One such example is [Quiet Communities](#). The name alone shows clearly that Ms. Banks and her supporters have a more global interest in this issue than that of just Westport. Only you are charged to do what is best for your community. This non-profit is well organized and apparently, well financed. I count at least 15 employees per the link to their website. I work alone, the intent being to give you the information you need to make an informed decision.

The initial reason for banning leaf blowers, Ms. Banks being the exception, 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 Westport, 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 you are being misled:

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.

<https://eos.org/research-spotlights/volcano-in-iceland-is-one-of-the-largest-sources-of-volcanic-co2>

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/148510/fagradalsfjall-continues-to-erupt>

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 exhaust emission:

It is illegal for a city or town such as Westport 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 Rapter pickup truck, or any other over the road vehicle for that matter. Keep in mind the difference in engine size, [400 horsepower](#) vs. 2.5 horsepower.

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

Since January 2005, this type of exhaust emission has been vastly reduced on leaf blowers, meeting imposed government limits.

[https://www.leafblownoise.com/#What then is the big complaint](https://www.leafblownoise.com/#What%20then%20is%20the%20big%20complaint)

Dust:

Only PM10 and PM2.5 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](https://www.leafblownoise.com/#Are%20leaf%20blowers%20hazardous%20to%20your%20health)

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>

Okay, now what about **noise**? Well, 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.

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.

Now 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%.

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.

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?
- Are you at least willing to partially share in the cost for consumers and professionals to convert to battery power? A rebate so to speak? For one unit, it could cost a professional as much as \$2000, including enough batteries to run the unit for a four-to-six-hour period of any given day.
- Will current users comply with your ordinance or just take a chance?
- Will people use time consuming tools, or will they leave the debris?
- 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,

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.
Vice President Engineering (retired)

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