NEW CASTLE’S PROPOSED LEAF BLOWER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAW

Report by the New Castle Sustainability Advisory Board

Presented at a Town Board Meeting – July 14, 2020
Agenda

• Executive Summary
• Our Neighbors
• Education & Rollout
• Trade-in Programs
• Current Electric Blower Technology
• What our residents are saying
• Next Steps
Executive Summary

- SAB has been conducting research on leaf blowers for three years
- SAB has submitted to the Town a local law to significantly reduce their ill effects
- Many comments from people who thought the law didn’t go far enough and those who thought it went too far
- SAB held listening meetings with a variety of stakeholders
- SAB is proposing a revised solution
  - Fuel-Powered Leaf Blowers (GLBs) October through May
  - Electric Leaf Blowers (ELBs) all year long
- Exemption determined by “public safety concerns”
Executive Summary

Proposed Leaf Blower Environmental Protection Law (Revised Version)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June 1 – September 30</th>
<th>October 1 – May 31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Fuel-Powered Leaf Blowers (GLBs)</td>
<td>GLBs and Electric Leaf Blowers are permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Leaf Blowers are permitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noise Levels from Domestic Tools

No restrictions during the hours of:
- 8 AM – 8 PM – Mon – Fri
- 9 AM – 8 PM – Sat
- 9 AM – 5 PM – Sun & Holidays
All other times not to exceed 45 dB(A)

Exemptions:
- Chappaqua Central School District’s & Town of New Castle’s recreational fields, tennis courts, country clubs’ tennis courts, homeowner associations’ tennis courts, swim clubs’ tennis courts, golf courses, and cemeteries
- Use of any fuel-powered motorized leaf blower shall be minimized to the maximum extent practicable
- Town Administrator may temporarily permit use where public safety concerns exist

Noise Level Restrictions:
- Align with the Town’s noise ordinance for domestic tools
Our Neighbors

The SAB contacted many of the municipalities in Westchester county with existing leaf blower bans.

Although over half of them exempt their Town from the ban, most of them stated that they try to set a good example.

Here are some of their comments:

"We've asked our landscape contractor to switch to electric"

"We've taken to using alternative measures such as mulching and vacuuming where practical"

"Our Town Supervisor...has discouraged their use"
GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS ARE ILLEGAL IN THE TOWN OF MAMARONECK
JUNE - JULY - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER
Violations are subject to fine
All leaf blowers harm our health and the environment!

PARTICULATE MATTER
► All leaf blowers propel into the air particulates such as dirt, dust, pollen and fecal matter, as well as dangerous contaminants such as mold, fungus spores, pesticides, herbicides, lead, organic and elemental carbon. A leaf blower can send up about 5 pounds of particulate matter per hour, and it can remain suspended in the air for hours.
► Particulate matter is easily absorbed into the lungs. It can increase the number and severity of asthma attacks, bronchitis, and other lung diseases, and reduce the ability to fight infection.
► Children and frail elderly people are especially vulnerable. Children breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults, and their organs are more sensitive to environmental hazards.
► Leaf blowers also unnecessarily disturb beneficial organisms in the soil and erode valuable topsoil.

AIR POLLUTION
► A gas-powered leaf blower operating for one hour fills the air with much more carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, and hydrocarbons than a large car traveling for one hour.
► These emissions are more dangerous in warm weather, when they contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone.
► High ground-level ozone concentrations can cause serious respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

NOISE POLLUTION
► Loud noise from leaf blowers is a danger to operators and passers-by, and a disruption for neighbors.
► Workers equipped with sound-blocking gear have only partial protection. Passers-by and neighbors have none.
► There is an increased risk of hearing damage and elevated blood pressure from exposure to loud noise.

PLEASE KEEP OUR TOWN LEAF BLOWER FREE THIS SUMMER!
Make sure that gas-powered leaf blowers are not used on your property.
Minimize use of electric models.
Notify your landscaper and lawn crew about the gas-powered leaf blower ban.
Report violations in progress to Town of Mamaroneck Police at 914-381.6100
Direct questions and comments to the Town’s Sustainability Collaborative
(518) soichi.m@townofmamaroneckny.org

Yonkers' Leaf Blower Ban

Yonkers Gas-Powered Leaf Blower Ban
What is it?
The City Code bans the use of gas-powered leaf blowers to help protect the public health during the summer months.

When is the ban in effect?
June 1 - September 30

How can I report violations?
During regular business hours, please call Code Enforcement at (914) 377-6669.
After hours, please call YPD at (914) 377-7900.

www.yonkersny.gov/leafblower

In 2007, the City of Yonkers enacted a Leaf Blower Ban which is in effect each year from June 1 through September 30th.
The use of gas-powered leaf blowers is a violation of the Yonkers City Code Section 91-31 and is intended to protect the public health by reducing air pollution.
Failure to comply with the ban is punishable as a Class II offense with fines ranging from $250 to $5,000. To report violations during weekday hours of 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., call Yonkers Code Enforcement at (914) 377-6669. To report violations on evenings and weekends, call the Yonkers Police Department at (914) 377-7900.
The Town of Bedford’s New Leaf Blower Law
Summary and Frequently Asked Questions

The Town Board of the Town of Bedford on June 19, 2018 adopted a new local law to regulate the use of leaf blowers. The new law takes effect on August 15, 2018 except for an “off-season” rule in the Hamlet Zones which don’t take effect until 2019.

We wish to help the community with the new law.

How the Law Came About and Summary  The law came about due to the noise and pollution which gas powered leaf blowers create. The Town Board worked for a number of months with Town staff and the Leaf Blowers Task Force and relied heavily on feedback from members of the community, especially those who considered as too stringent some proposals earlier under consideration. The Board adopted hours and days of use which are uniform throughout the Town. The Board did not adopt certain other provisions, such as complete bans, licensing of landscapers, requirement to obtain a permit or as short a “leaf season” as in other towns. There are two special rules for Hamlet Zones (see below), which are primarily smaller lots and based on zoning districts, otherwise Hamlet Zones are treated the same as the rest of the Town.

Effective August 15, 2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Permitted for Leaf Season</th>
<th>Hours Permitted Off Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 16 through May 14</td>
<td>May 16 through September 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays 8:00 AM through 6:00 PM</td>
<td>Weekdays 9:00 AM through 5:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturdays and Holidays 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM</td>
<td>Saturdays and Holidays 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sundays</td>
<td>No Sundays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special Rules for Hamlet Zones

Year round: one leaf blower at a time and no push-behind blowers

Off-season (effective 2019): no gas powered blowers during off season

Meetings and discussions with landscapers were important in the decision of the Leaf Blower Task Force not to recommend to the Town Board that the Town license landscapers or require special permits. The Task Force considered such an approach excessive regulation which would result in unnecessary expense to landscapers.

As to landscaper participation on the Task Force, the Supervisor personally invited landscapers to the meeting with them to join the Task Force, but unfortunately none did at such time. The Task Force will recommend to the Town Board that the Board at its July 17, 2018 meeting appoint to the Task Force a landscaper who has expressed an interest in serving.

Why didn’t we just use the Leave Leaves Alone initiative to reduce leaf blower use? The LLA initiative began seven years ago and quickly converted many people to leaf mulching. But many more chose to stick to their old methods of blowing leaves. After seven years of education on this topic, it has become clear that we need to help both homeowners and landscapers become more aware of the merits of leaf mulching; these are people who are not seeking out the education. It is a Catch 22. Landscapers will not change until homeowners require them to do so. Homeowners defer to their landscapers’ recommendation to keep the status quo. They will not change their leaf removal methods unless strongly encouraged to do so via regulation. www.leafleavesalone.org

What is the town planning to do to help people who want to obtain good quality electric leaf blowers at reasonable cost or who are interested in different ways of handling their properties? The Town and the Leaf Blower Task Force will work together to try to secure discounts on electric equipment from manufacturers and distributors. The Task Force is also working with Sustainable Westchester and the American Green Zone Alliance to find discounts for residents looking to purchase electric leaf blowers.

Further, the Task Force will be organizing leaf mulching demonstrations for homeowners and for the commercial landscapers to help them better understand the technique and see how it can help them save time and money during fall clean up.

For more information refer to the American Green Zone Alliance website (www.agza.net), which educates individuals, property owners, and landscape maintenance professionals on how to reduce or eliminate the use of gasoline powered maintenance equipment in favor of cordless electric and manual equipment.

Will it cost more if I am not allowed to use a leaf blower on my property? Leaf blower laws have been implemented in more than 170 municipalities around the nation. The Town of Mamaroneck, as an example, has had it in place since 1995. We have not heard of any municipality reporting an increase in costs. Landscapers with whom we have spoken who work in Westchester where legislation has been passed are not changing their rates. http://www.irvingtonny.gov/index.aspx?ND=236

Leaf mulching doesn’t work. There is a great deal of evidence online and from professional landscapers and homeowners that leaf mulching does work, although it requires some thought and perhaps some adjustments to the equipment used. Plenty of YouTube videos describe its use and we also have two Westchester organizations with websites about the practice: www.leleny.org and www.leafleavesalone.org. Bedford will be hosting leaf mulching

Education and Rollout - Goals

- Inform residents and landscapers (about the law)
- Raise awareness (noise, health and other issues)
- Educate (Leaf blower impact and alternative solutions)
Education and Rollout - Actions

- Residential Mailing & Follow-up –
  - information for homeowners and landscapers (bi-lingual)
- Town e-newsletter
- Town signs
- Provide (small) yard signs
  - (e.g. no Gas leaf blower, for yard, gates at owner’s discretion, etc.)
- Seminars/Programs on healthy yard practices -
  - Partner with
    - Healthy Yards
    - Pollinator Pathways
    - TNC Conservation Board
    - New York State Turf & Landscape Association
- Equipment demonstrations
- Maintain online resources
  - Town website (Law, FAQs)
  - Additional resources via SAB website and Facebook page
Education and Rollout

• Examples from other towns
Trade-in Programs

• American Green Zone Alliance
  – AGZA (Dan Mabe) In conjunction with local merchants and support from the Town can develop a trade-in program

• Sustainable Westchester
  – Will work to explore a countywide trade-in program
Current Electric Blower Technology

**Electric Leaf Blower as of July / 2020**

**Toro 51585 Power Sweep Electric Leaf Blower**
- Electric plug in
- 155 CFM/180 mph
- Approx. $35-50 on Amazon

**Greenworks 40V 150 MPH Variable Speed Cordless Blower**
- Battery lasts approximately 35 minutes
- Adjustable air flow maximum speed - 150 mph
- Blower and battery - approx. $100 on Amazon

**EGO Power+ 480 CFM 3-Speed Turbo 56-Volt Lithium-Ion Cordless Electric Blower**
- Battery lasts approximately 1 hour (depending on setting)
- 250 CFM (385 CFM to 480 CFM)/Maximum speed 92 MPH
- Recharges in 40 minutes
- Blower - approx. $300 on Amazon (battery not included)

**BLACK+DECKER LSW36 Lithium Sweeper**
- Battery lasts approximately 15-30 minutes
- 90 CFM/Up to 120 mph
- 40 volt battery
- Recharge in 25 minutes
- Blower and battery - approx. $130 on Amazon

**Greenworks 40V Cordless String Trimmer & Blower Combo Pack STBA40B210**
- Battery lasts approximately 45 minutes
- 890 CFM/Up to 110 mph
- Recharge in about 60 minutes
- Blower and battery - approx. $270 on Amazon

**Worx WG545.4 Cordless Hi-Capacity Blower**
- Battery lasts approximately 30 minutes
- 80 CFM/Up to 120 mph
- 20 volt battery
- Blower and battery - approx. $180 on Amazon

**DEWALT DCHL720P1 20V MAX 5.0 Ah Lithium-Ion XR Brushless Blower**
- Battery lasts 20 minutes full speed, longer with variable speed
- 400 cfm/Up to 90 mph
- Blower and battery - approx. $200 on Amazon
Current Electric Blower Technology

- **Greenworks GBL80300 2400102 Cordless Blower**
  - Battery lasts up to 70 minutes
  - 500 CFM air flow
  - Air speed up to 125 mph
  - Recharge in 30 minutes
  - Approx. $250 on Amazon

- **Greenworks PRO 80V 125 MPH – 500 CFM Cordless Blower**
  - Battery lasts up to 70 minutes
  - 500 cfm air flow
  - Air speed up to 125 mph
  - 60 volt battery
  - Recharge in 30 minutes
  - Blower and battery - approx. $250 on Amazon

- **Greenworks 40V 185 MPH Variable Speed Cordless Leaf Blower/Vacuum, 4.0Ah Battery and Charger**
  - Battery lasts up to 60 minutes (depending on setting)
  - 340 cfm/ up to 185 mph
  - 40 volt battery
  - Blower and battery - approx. $250 on Amazon
What our residents are saying

- Emails received by the town in response to this public hearing have been in support of passing the current version of the legislation.
  - 6 in favor
  - 3 opposed
  - 1 neutral

- Residents who have switched to landscapers that do not use motorized blowers in the summer for cleanup after mowing have found no visual difference in their property appearance.

- Residents who have switched to landscapers that use electric equipment in the summer have experienced a slight increase in cost over previous years.
Next Steps

• Approve legislation
• Organize trade-in program with town support
• Develop and present educational seminars for residents, landscapers and commercial property owners