

In attendance:

- Supervisor Chris Burdick, Deputy Supervisor Lee V.A. Roberts, Councilman Don Scott, Councilwoman MaryAnn Carr, Councilwoman Kate Galligan
- Task Force Co-Chairs Fiona Mitchell & Teresa Donkin, Member Midge Iorio, Member John Fry
- Superintendent of Recreation & Parks Bill Heidepriem

The concerns from leaf blowers are as follows:

- Noise
- Environmental/pollution
- Health

The Town Board ultimately will make a decision, if any, and it will be done by local law. There will be a public hearing before any local law is adopted, which this is not. The town would like to hear from the community. Actions that other municipalities have looked at include limits on hours of operations to limits during certain times of year to an outright ban.

Fiona Mitchell introduced herself and gave a background about her involvement with the task force. She presented statistics of noise from leaf blowers vs. that of a Ford F350 truck.

Midge Iorio stated that action taken by the community to reach the B2020 climate action goals. Some of the effects from leaf blowers include: noise pollution, disturbs topsoil, water impacts, bird/insect habitats.

Teresa Donkin discussed alternatives to gas-powered leaf blowers. There are 170 municipalities across the country with regulations on blowers, including 18 in Westchester. These alternatives include:

- Rakes
- Leave Leaves Alone/Mulch
- Grass bag attachment on mower/Compost
- Electric blowers – less polluting
- Don't use during summer months – ground level pollution risk is greatest then.

Public Comments:

1. Resident who used to live in Mahwah, NJ and would do his own yardwork – would take all weekend. Leaving leaves alone suffocates the lawn and nutrients aren't balanced. Acidic lithium batteries in electric blowers create other issues. Not opposed to some limitations.
2. Amber Wetzel – limitations should begin with landscapers. She also talked about her experiences with landscape services.
3. Alan Dart – Small backpack (260 cfm). Perhaps representatives from gas/electric blower companies can discuss products/pollution levels. Any law should be put to a townwide vote.
4. Sam Goodhue (Valley Road) – Does own yardwork. The leaf blower is a versatile tool and is used a great deal. Uses Weed whacker, leaf blower and lawn mower to do yard and does not think it should be banned. Perhaps don't allow their use on Sundays.
5. Tom Newman – Leaf blower use goes on all day (8 a.m. to 7 p.m.) which is the main issue.
6. Susan Dixon – Landscapers blow leaves into roadway which causes a traffic hazard.

7. George Graniero (Meadow Lane) – Possible solution would be to fine homeowners whose landscapers blow leaves into the road.
8. John Fry (Edgemont Road) – Manages yard with no leaf blower.
9. Rocco Cambareri – Labor costs are high to rake someone’s lawn.
10. Indian Hill Road Resident – Same amount of energy exerted whether you use electric, gas or nuclear.
11. Andy Kaplan (Bedford Hills) – Does own leaves. Lithium batteries don’t last. Backpack blower isn’t answer – false reasoning. 3 hours to mulch vs. 1 to blow – don’t gain anything. Only 20% quieter on electric blowers.
12. Philippine de Haan – discussed second-hand smoke with lit cigarette and how blowers pollute and effect health.
13. Camberari (Landscaper) – Use backpack blowers for yard cleanups. People want their yards to look good. It is a service industry.
14. Resident (Katonah) – Lived here 20 years. 7 leaf blowers. Tracked landscapers in neighborhood – constant noise. Is there a happy medium that can be achieved?
15. Howland Robinson – First leaf blowers, then what? Will there be a ban/restriction on gas powered chainsaws?
16. Doreen Light – Moved to Bedford from Armonk. She resents a small committee telling her what to do – it should be put before voters.
17. Resident (Katonah) – Landscapers should be on task force to provide information.
18. John Stockbridge – Possible moratorium on Sunday use?
19. Thomas Dieck – Owns TRD Designs. Mulching mowers create thatch layer which rings insects, disease and other grass issues. Backpack blowers/electric – do not last and do not work for commercial use by contractors. Noise laws are not enforced – landscaping noise starts early, goes late.
20. Lisa Papanik – Experience of service that mulches – works for them – perhaps a buffer zone between properties?
21. Allison Bellino - What strategies are other towns utilizing?
22. John Brody – Can there be a compromise? Summer ban on gas powered lowers?
23. Bill Weld – Some data has been provided is outdated.
24. Don Fait – Work from home. Blowers an issue when trying to do business – day regulations should apply to homeowners and commercial
25. Anne – Landscaper who prunes shrubs by hand.
26. Resident – Noise ordinance in place is not enforced. Frequency and duration of use is what is not enforced. In favor of reasonable regulations – ban infringes on homeowner rights. Educate, don’t legislate. Cooperation of neighbors should be key. Any studies done? Operations exceeding noise ordinance.
27. Tom Enterlien – retired officer. Discussed unenforceability of noise ordinance.
28. Resident (Lake Katonah) – Good brainstorming going on tonight.
29. Michael Saine - Democracy should decide. Let’s not pursue what is not a real problem.
30. Landscaper – Organic landscaping company. Both sides should sit down and talk before enacting regulations.
31. Kim Richardson – Used to burn leaves when she grew up here. Some data has been cherry picked – this is comparing apples and oranges. Do not need more legislation – make incremental improvements.
32. Tom Dieck – Has the town switched over to electric blowers or mowers?

Chris Burdick stated that funding is in the capital plan to purchase green equipment and that Recreation & Parks does mulching of leaves. The use of gas-powered equipment has not been eliminated but has been reduced.

Other comments can be submitted to leafblowers@bedfordny.gov

The forum ended at 9:16 PM.