

IMPACTS OF GAS-POWERED LEAF BLOWERS
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING NOTES
10 March 2022
Virtual Meeting

Attendees

1. Co-Chair Phil Kiraly
2. Scott Grams
3. Jeff Nehila
4. King Poor
5. Joe Scopelliti
6. Tony Blumberg
7. Heather Ross
8. Karen Glennemeier
9. Sam Barghi

Scope of Work

The following is the scope of work for the sub-committee that was identified by the Regional Working Group.

- The group's goal is to look at impact of gas-powered leaf blowers as a general subject.
 - What are those structures that exist?
 - Are there time periods throughout the year where leaf blowers can be used? Noise may be the biggest complaint that is received from residents, but others can be pollution and impacts to people and environment.
 - While reviewing everything, we need to gather information about impacts to both small and large landscape companies.

Notes

The following is a summary of the conversations that occurred during the meeting.

- Scott Grams- Requested the group review the current cost of equipment; availability of equipment in the marketplace; weight of devices (commercial backpack scale); power and blower force (impacts how quickly landscapers can move from one home and street to the next); ability to charge batteries in the field (current commercial equipment require 8-12 batteries per day each); policing of the ordinance (code enforcement vs law enforcement, and compliance of black market).
 - Phil Kiraly- Enforcement via law enforcement and/or code enforcement is an important distinction and will be considered.
- Karen Glennemeier- Discussed resources and support. If we assume this group will recommend restrictions, can we do research and have actionable support suggestions to help companies make the transition? It is the right thing to do and can help with compliance. Go Green! Wilmette worked with a consultant to help landscapers make an economically successful transition to electric options.
- Tony Blumberg- His community is focused on leaf blower impacts on their community, including noise and emissions.
 - Noise: Important to quantify what that means for leaf blowers. Can it only be mitigated with electric blowers?
 - Emissions: What is output of emissions compared to vehicles, lawnmowers, and other equipment residents use
- Heather Ross- If we're focusing on landscaping companies, what about residents? The alternatives sub-committee will review that, according to Mr. Kiraly. Glencoe treats these entities differently. Mr. Poor

added that In Winnetka, they are not treated differently, but the overwhelming use is by commercial companies. Mr. Grams said a report from California showed that 85% of use was from residential, not commercial.

- King Poor- Evanston spoke with professor of noise and she was a resource for that community. Mr. Poor will contact Professor Nina Krause.
 - Mr. Kiraly replied that a recent Glencoe Board report has research on noise and environmental impacts of leaf blowers, but it would be helpful to have this input from the professor.
 - Mr. Grams noted that only the State of Illinois can create noise reductions laws and cannot make emissions requirements. Mr. Kiraly replied that the goal isn't creating ordinances, but to do the research to provide justification to go down one path or another.
- Tony Blumberg- Based on evidence, if we find the emissions are offensive or damaging, we can prohibit the use of that equipment and not regulate the emissions, etc. Mr. Poor said Winnetka's ordinance has been in law for 20+ years, and its intent is to prohibit nuisance. Another goal is to have uniformity and compliance with laws on record.
- Joe Scopelliti- Echo did a decibel level test showing noise levels have improved. Echo does have data on emissions and noise level and will be shared.
- Karen Glennemeier- Process suggestions; all communities that have ordinances on the books can be a good first place to start. Mr. Kiraly said if the ordinance was done recently and there is research backing it up, that can be helpful, but if not, it may no longer be timely. Mr. Grams said that the landscape community is open to a transition plan, but the concern is going too fast too soon. It may be better to look at what the central issues are that may be preventing forward movement. Mr. Kiraly asked how the industry has evolved. It's not a given that a gas-ban on equipment is the direction each community wants to go. This group is trying to catalogue the information and consume it to bring back to their communities. Background information is not meant to be contentious, just to help identify the "why" of what we're doing.
- Phil Kiraly- Feedback from various stakeholders are important and potentially doing a small-scale survey may be beneficial.
- Joe Scopelliti- Hours of operation is key to the success of this initiative. There is support from ILCA because it helps clean up the black market.
- Sam Barghi- Items for the group to consider: Whether public works departments and government contractors will be exempted, what does the landscape look like for commercial grade equipment transitioning to electric, and what are the impacts to the environment for electric/battery operated equipment.
- Heather- Does any community send penalty notices to residents instead of landscapers?
- Jeff Nehila- There can be a good comparative way to display noise levels, for example comparing it to a dishwasher, etc.

Next Steps

- Review Penalties and Violations from various municipalities
 - Ms. Glennemeier and Mr. Poor
- Review best-practices/feedback on hours and days/times of the year, and noise pollution
 - Mr. Kiraly, Mr. Grams, and Mr. Nehila
- Review Leaf Blower Specs and Information
 - Mr. Scopelliti, Mr. Blumberg, Ms. Ross, and Mr. Barghi

Next Meeting

The next sub-committee virtual meeting will be held Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Barghi
Public Works Management Analyst, Village of Lincolnshire