

**CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING**

1. Call to Order and Attendance @ 7:03pm

Present: Matt Macunas, Ted Newton, Jessica Schaeffer-Helmecki, Emily Graner-Sexton, Emilee Scott, Roni Rodman

2. Old Business

- Approval of minutes from June 21, 2021 – motion by Scott second by Graner-Sexton

3. New Business

- Referred from Town Manager - Discussion of resident concerns regarding gas-powered landscaping equipment and public input session

Matt Hart's intern has researched other communities' response to citizens who want to ban gas-powered leaf blowers.

Those communities that have bans typically run them from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and primarily to reduce noise, not emissions.

Suggested evaluation criteria:

- What's our goal? What's the objective? Would this ban help our goal?
- What are the benefits? What are the negatives?
- Does the Town have the authority to reduce noise (yes) and/or emissions (not sure – may be reserved for state or federal authorities)?
- If so, is it enforceable? Does the Town have the resources – or desire – to do so?
- How do we measure success or failure?

Public input:

- Stephan Sack – against banning gas-powered equipment due to cost and availability
- Nicholas Graczyk (CCO of Hartford Golf Club) – personally supports action for residential; on a commercial basis the equipment doesn't exist and certain types of bans may harm commercial activity
- Julia Carey-Ruiz – against gas-powered leaf blowers for noise reasons primarily, but also because of significant emissions. Raised social justice issues with workers subject to both noise and bad air. Other options for leaf blowers do exist (unlike for landscaping equipment generally).
- Alan Ruiz – primarily focused on gas-powered leaf blowers, they're not precise enough
- Liz Pang (owner Luna Tree Care) – believes electric chain saws are more dangerous due to low torque, and agrees with Stephen that it's not practical for landscaping companies to purchase electric equipment. Consider tree planting initiatives.
- Hendree Milward – mostly concerned about emissions, but if there are changes, we should implement through phases, as this would allow homeowners and companies a chance to plan for change, and the technology to catch up.
- Katherine Bruns – agree with Liz that homeowners should plant trees to help the environment and cut down on lawn maintenance. Local ecosystems suffer from overactive maintenance (e.g., firefly larvae in leaf litter).
- Ted Newton – education about the benefits of different alternatives to gas-powered equipment may help reduce noise and emissions with residents making more informed decisions.
- Town Manager Matt Hart – Town does not have an articulated position but thought CEC should position to make recommendations. Most complaints have been about leaf blowers. Noise ordinance is enforced, typically on complaint basis. Town has purchased an all-electric zero-turn mower for use on pilot basis and seeks to reduce carbon footprint over time.

4. Adjournment motioned by Graner-Sexton, seconded by Scott @ 8:20pm