

**CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING**

1. Call to Order and Attendance
 - Matt Macunas; Emilee Scott; Kim Hughes; Ted Newton; Shawn Daly; Rick Bush

2. Public Comment Opportunity
 - Steve Derby, resident – Favors phaseout of gas-powered lawncare equipment. Cited climate change rationale. Electric lawn equipment becoming more favored and reliable. Encourages for residents and town.
 - Edward Pawlak, resident – lives in small-lot neighborhood in town center. Leaf blowers becoming more ubiquitous and used for smaller tasks during more seasons. Cited noise, environmental and quality of life rationales.
 - Christine Feely – encourages campaign for equipment use curtailment and transitioning landscapes to native species where available. Cited climate change reports, agreed with noise. Various additional supporting points.

3. Old Business
 - Approval of minutes from January 31, 2022
 - Newton moved, Daly seconded
 - Report back from ad hoc group on landscape equipment educational campaign recommendations – separate attachment

4. New Business
 - Election of officers – Daly nominates Scott, Newton seconds. Unanimous support for Emilee Scott to become the new chairperson.
 - Vice chair elected – tabled for future meeting
 - Brief discussion on coordination with the Town and other commissions
 - Brief discussion on electric school buses and state activity

5. Adjournment @ 8:34pm

Draft Recommendation to Town regarding Landscape Equipment

Members of the West Hartford community, and the Town itself, brought to the attention of the Conservation and Environment Commission (“CEC”) the issue of combustion-powered landscape maintenance equipment and the negative consequences of using such equipment, whether on the basis of noise, health, or greenhouse gas related emissions. In turn the CEC deliberated a variety of approaches.

While the CEC is not recommending an explicit ban at this time, the CEC recommends to the Town of West Hartford the adoption of a resolution identifying the benefits of switching from emitting, combustion-powered landscape maintenance equipment to battery-powered equipment, affirming support and encouragement for a phaseout over time, undertaken with substantive community input and engagement.

This action would be in service to the January 25, 2022 unanimously adopted Resolution Declaring a Climate Crisis. The resolution in part states “that it shall be the policy of the Town to assess the climate change impacts of all future Town actions, to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from Town activities as quickly as practicable, and to encourage residents to do the same.” The resolution further states “that the Town Manager shall coordinate and employ the resources of the Town, through consultation with the Clean Energy Commission, the Conservation and Environment Commission, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission, the Sustainability Advisory Group, and other stakeholders, including youth, to mitigate the effects of anthropogenic climate change and to improve air quality through the implementation of projects practices and policies that reduce, eliminate or counteract the burning of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases.”

CEC recommends commissioning the creation of a working group composed of volunteer members of the above-mentioned stakeholder bodies. This working group shall further develop strategies regarding combustion-powered lawn equipment use curtailment and fuel switching. The group shall develop strategies for the creation of a public education campaign, and may also make recommendations regarding the establishment of a “swap fund” to incent consumer changeovers to non-emitting landscape equipment. This working group may be established in anticipation of, or as a result of, Town Council consideration of a resolution on this matter.