

Dear Mayor Samwick and Trustees:

As a resident of Scarsdale for over three decades, who works from home in Fox Meadow and who is also frequently out walking in many of Scarsdale's other neighborhoods, I can attest to the hugely negative impact of gas-powered leaf blowers. The ear-splitting noise and toxic fumes are detrimental to everyone's health. Fortunately, there are other solutions available to clear residents' properties of leaves.

I strongly urge the Board of Trustees to adopt "Option 1" set forth in the December 2020 Scarsdale Conservation Advisory Council ("CAC") report, "Mitigating the Health, Environment, and Quality of Life Impacts of Gas Leaf Blowers."

The CAC's findings that "[g]as leaf blowers pollute the air, negatively impact landscapers' health, and have excessive noise levels that negatively impact the quality of life for residents ..." cannot be disputed. The only open issue is what to do about this detrimental, man-made, and avoidable situation. Do we sacrifice our well-being for the convenience of the landscaping industry, or do we require the landscaping industry to take steps to protect their customers, their own workers, and the well-being of the surrounding neighbors?

The current regulations in Scarsdale prohibit the use of gas-powered leaf blowers from June 1 to September 30; at other times, they may be used Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on the weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The regulations exempt golf courses, municipal properties, and schools from these use restrictions, and gas blowers may also be used during emergencies.

In my view, the CAC's proposals, while helpful, do not go far enough; the Board should adopt "Option 1" as a minimum, incremental step. This option proposes banning the use of gas leaf blowers Saturday through Monday, and extends the ban from January. Thus, gas-powered leaf blowers could be used Tuesday through Friday, from October 1 through December 31 – the main leaf season. Electric leaf blowers, which are non-polluting and quieter, could be used at any time of the day throughout the year.

There is a perception that gas-powered leaf blowers are "necessary" to maintain residents' yards, particularly those with large properties, and that the electric leaf blowers lack the power and the battery capacity to allow professional landscapers to do the job adequately. This would be the case if landscapers try to clear all of the leaves by blowing them to curbside (where they create hazardous conditions for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists). However, if landscapers changed their practice to primarily do in-place leaf mulch-mowing, crumbling the leaves into tiny pieces that enrich the soil, there would be a relatively small amount of leaves

remaining to bag and remove; this much smaller amount could be handled with the existing technology in electric leaf blowers. This change in practice could likely be accommodated with relatively little additional expense or effort, according to a professional landscaper who testified at the hearing that resulted in the Village of Larchmont banning gas-powered leaf blowers altogether starting in January 2022, one year from now (the hearing can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d33zVCWoy4M&feature=youtu.be>; May 18, 2020, with the landscaper's comments at 30.00).

As a general matter, professional landscapers appear to be resistant to change. However, we can promote the upkeep of the appearance of our residents' properties while we also protect and enhance the quality of life for our residents. These are not mutually exclusive outcomes. Please "follow the science" and mitigate the damage caused by gas-powered leaf blowers.

I urge the Board to adopt "Option 1" set forth in the December 2020 CAC report as soon as possible, as it is the absolute minimum that should be done to address this issue. I am also asking the Board to revisit this issue in the near future, with the goal of adopting a complete ban on the use of gas-powered blowers by January 2022, as our neighbors in Larchmont have done.

Susan Douglass
59 Crane Road

Cc: Scarsdale Inquirer
Scarsdale10583