

Comments before the Scarsdale Village Board of Trustees on Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Good evening. I am William Roberts. I have lived at 15 Autenreith Road in Scarsdale for the last 21 years. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening and I commend you for addressing what is a serious issue for Scarsdale. My background affords me useful perspective on the damaging effects of gas-powered blowers from three different vantage points, as a physician caring for patients earlier in my career, over the last seven years, as a high school teacher of Biology and Environmental Science, and for many years, as an evidence-based researcher and executive developing new medicines at a biotechnology company.

We have all experienced the loud noise created by the gas-powered engines on leaf blowers. In exploring this question, I looked at data from NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which is a part of the Center for Disease Control, or CDC. They point out that the sound generated by normal conversation runs at about 60 decibels, and electric or battery-powered blowers run at about 65 to 70 decibels, while gas powered blowers typically create noise levels of 80 to 100 decibels, depending on your distance from the blower. Since the decibel scale is logarithmic, an increase of 10 on the scale means the noise is 10 times as loud. Thus, the gas-powered blower may be between 10 and 100 times as loud as an electric model. This is measured at 50 feet from the blower. For the landscape worker, the noise level may be 1000 times higher than what you experience as you walk by or are subjected in your house. Chronic headaches, permanent hearing loss, and high blood pressure due to the stress of these noise levels are all part of the experience for neighbors, and especially for the landscape workers. One more, again quite serious risk posed by these blowers, is the generation of air-borne, small particulate matter, especially those smaller than 2.5 microns, which can clog up the tiny air spaces in our lungs, the alveoli, where one of the body's waste products, carbon dioxide, is exchanged for the oxygen we breathe in to keep ourselves alive.

As a teacher of Environmental Science, I have studied about the harmful effects of these gas-powered engines on the health of our environment. The greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide produced by these blowers is many times greater than the amount produced by automobile engines. These contribute, of course, to global warming and climate change. In addition, the incomplete combustion of gasoline in the engines of these blowers also produces nitrogen oxides, which are a substantial contributor to acid rain with its deleterious effects on lakes and forests. Finally, this incomplete combustion process also produces carbon monoxide, which of course, can cause serious effects on the central nervous system, especially for those who operate the blowers.

Finally, as someone who has worked to generate clear, credible data while developing and testing candidates for new medicines, I understand the value of clarity in moving forward with a course of action. For the landscape companies, it is important that they have clarity as to how to proceed. The proposal put forth this evening provides clarity so that they may plan for and fulfill their responsibilities to their customers, while still being responsible to

the health and well-being of their employees. I would suggest that the measure to be voted on tonight is a good first step in protecting the health of those who live and work in our community. The second, final step, once this transitional phase has been implemented, should be to provide a full ban on gas blowers, starting in 2023, as many other municipalities have done.

Thank you all, our Mayor and Trustees, for your time and consideration this evening as well as for the exceptional work and enormous amount of time, which you devote to Scarsdale. I would also particularly like to thank Village Manager Pappalardo for his devoted, excellent work over his long career here in Scarsdale. Thank you.