

DRAFT  
MODERATOR'S COMMITTEE ON LEAF BLOWERS  
April 11, 2016 Minutes

The Moderator's Committee on Leaf Blowers held a meeting on April 11, 2016 from 8:00am - 10:00am in room 408 of Town Hall. Present were committee members John Doggett, Neil Gordon, Faith Michaels, Jonathan Margolis, Benedicte Hallowell and Maura Toomey. Members of the public present were Andrew Fischer (TMM P13) and Irene Scharf (TMM P16)

1. The minutes for the March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 meeting were approved on a vote of 6-0-0.
2. John and Maura presented their research regarding leaf blower rules and regulations in other cities and towns. Maura commented that wealthier communities seemed to have more restrictions on leaf blowers. She compared Evanston IL to Brookline in size, climate and restrictions. Other communities were discussed including Sleepy Hollow NY, Tarrytown NY, Cambridge MA, Palo Alto CA and Burlingame CA. John mentioned that in his discussion with Cambridge officials, Harvard, MIT and the City are exempt. Those seem to garner the most complaints (57) with zero sanctions. In most cities and towns they looked at, same sort of code enforcement instead of the police department does the ticketing. Palo Alto was used as an example of a regulation that did not work. The police did not enforce the 100% ban. The city has just hired a code enforcer and will see what happens in the coming year. Burlingame has a color-coded day of week when neighborhoods are allowed to use the gas blowers. Faith mentioned that weather issues in New England would make that difficult to replicate in New England. John pointed out that all of the research they did is on the Google drive and that it was important to be informed as to what others are doing so that we can come to our own informed decisions.
3. The upcoming leaf blower demo day (April 28<sup>th</sup> 8:00AM) was outlined and different models were discussed for demonstration purposes as well as the planned location, Larz Anderson, and the proposed demonstration tests. John and Faith were planning to meet with Erin Gallentine, Director of Parks and Open Spaces to arrange the demonstration tests which would be run by her Department. Also, John had made contact with Joe Passarello of Stihl Inc. to arrange for the loan of their latest battery powered leaf blower as well as Joe doing a Q&A on leaf blower technology future developments for the second item for the next meeting. The vote to proceed with the demo day was 6-0-0.
4. The preliminary report to Town Meeting was discussed. Neil commented that we are in no position to make recommendations as of yet but we need to do a summary of our work. John will prepare a summary and circulate the draft. Faith said that it was important that Town Meeting is aware of the depth of research and work the committee has done.

5. John summarized the survey monkey work he did, broken down by precinct, for Benedicte and Jon M since they were not at the previous meeting.

6. Public Comment period included a discussion with Irene Scharf who had concerns:

- She stated that she had to call the police for others because they were afraid to.
- That she had been belittled and demeaned by the police officers.
- Thinks some other agency should do enforcement.
- Wants to know if the decibel level of machines increases as the machine ages.
- Said that she would prefer a known day on which leaf blowers could operate.

Andrew Fischer commented on the proposed screening of leaf blowers for the “blind” noise test during the demonstration event meeting, that any screening could dampen the sound. The Committee discussed alternate methods for this test such as just turning our backs to the leaf blowers.

John was interested to know if there were more complaints during the week or weekends. Maura felt there should be a clear reporting mechanism using the Town web site for example, rather than calling the police. Faith mentioned that Newton is now sending her emails of complaints and she has successfully followed up with the landscapers and is distributing her “Best Practices” leaflet to landscape contractors who operate in both Towns.