

MODERATOR'S COMMITTEE ON LEAF BLOWERS
August 9, 2016 Minutes

The Moderator's Committee on Leaf Blowers held a meeting on June 14, 2016, 5pm – 7pm, in Room 310 of Town Hall. Present were Committee members John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Neil Gordon, Jon Margolis, Faith Michaels, and Benedicte Hallowell (at 5:10).

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the July 14, 2016 meeting and approved them as amended by a vote of 5-0.

The Committee continued its discussion of possible Warrant Articles. John Doggett presented a draft Article and a draft Resolution based on the discussion from the July 20th meeting.

John's proposal involved changing the by-laws to separate out all leaf blower restrictions into a separate section rather than having some of the rules in the noise bylaw. The Committee noted that this can be done in a variety of ways and there are problems with each. Ultimately the Committee considered John's proposal point by point. The most important points discussed were:

1. Should the word "portable" be replaced with some other way of characterizing the equipment under consideration. After a long debate, John's proposed language was dropped and the word "portable" remained.
2. Should we have restrictions on the number of leaf blowers that can be in operation simultaneously on a single property. There was a sense, if not a consensus, on the Committee that there are limits that when exceeded make people "go crazy." The question is whether it is possible to quantify those limits in an enforceable way. John's proposal was to limit the number of leaf blowers in either the front and sides of a yard or in the rear to no more than 2; the committee felt that this would be hard to enforce, especially with strangely shaped yards. John will investigate alternatives.
3. Should there be exceptions to any rule such as the above. There was some support on the Committee for reducing the size exemption from 5 acres to 2 acres; again, John to investigate.
4. The Committee agreed that a public hearing to review the proposals is preferable.
5. Should there continue to be a Town Exemption. Dennis argues that the fundamental reason this issue continues to come up is the collision between his sense that while there are good reasons for the Town to be exempt from such restrictions (for example, public safety), historically the Town has abused this privilege, resulting in 25-30% of all leaf blower complaints being about DPW use. Faith points out that this number has dropped considerably in recent years and that the Town has been making a real effort to improve in this regard. In addition, if there is a new leaf blower ombudsman position, such a position could help resolve complaints regarding the Town's activities as well.
6. Should there be separate violations for homeowner and operator/landscaper? Despite most Committee members appearing to favor this position in prior meetings, during this meeting there was overwhelming support for simply changing the by-law to fine the homeowner ONLY.
7. Happy Birthday Benedicte!

The discussion will continue at the subsequent meeting.ext meeting discussion continues.

Documents considered:

- Draft Warrant Article
- Draft Resolution