

To: City Council Members  
From: Carol & John Flaherty, 10 Camino Por Los Arboles  
Date: January 18, 2021  
Ref: Item 15, January 20th City Council Meeting, Leaf Blower Ordinance

Dear Council Members:

I applaud the thoughtful and comprehensive evaluation that provided a backdrop for the proposed changes to Section 8.16 of the Municipal Code pertaining to leaf blowers. More specifically, it appears that there is a recognition that --- at this time --- electric leaf blowers are not capable of removing debris in a timely manner from yards the size that we have in Atherton. Rather than diminishing noise, the longer blower intervals could, in fact, have the opposite effect. And, there's the need for multiple batteries to complete just one yard. Of course, Atherton landscapers often service several yards per day, meaning they would need an extraordinary number of batteries --- that must also be charged nightly at their own homes.

I do have one concern regarding the proposed changes to Section 8.16 and that is the restriction of any leaf blowing on Spare the Air days. Have any of you actually looked at how many such days there were last year in the Bay Area? As of Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, there were 52 designated days. In 2017, there were 46. What's more important is the number of consecutive Spare the Air days. Last year (2020), there were 26 consecutive days. So this proposed change would mean that no leaf blowing could potentially occur in Atherton for 26 straight days if we had a year like last year. Is that really what you intend? I doubt it.

Maybe you have landscapers that are more environmentally sensitive than mine. Although my husband and I take care of our own yard, we have professional landscapers for a home that we own in Redwood City and a second home in Atherton. Candidly, their English language skills are minimal. Rather than caring about Spare the Air days, I suspect they are just trying to survive economically. I just don't see them checking a web site every morning at 7 am before they leave for their first job or looking at a phone app to see if they can blow that day. Nor, do I see myself routinely calling or texting them to try to manage this provision. While I applaud the goal of cleaner air, I think it is totally impractical to expect landscapers and residents to track Spare the Air days and adjust landscaping services accordingly. Nor do I see residents being happy that they may not have blowing for weeks on end if we have a year like 2020 or 2017. What's going to happen is exactly what happened with the April Covid "lockdown" when landscaping was banned altogether. It was ignored at many properties, and the landscapers still came and did what they wanted. Further, the property owners didn't stop them. That is exactly what will happen again, because few will actually track this. Rather than being a benefit, it becomes a huge burden. Candidly, this is just impractical. Further, California's Spare the Air mandates were never intended to restrict landscape services. They were intended to regulate wood burning. Since when did Atherton decide that it needed to expand state mandates independently?

In an unrelated matter, let me comment on the proposal to hire a Sustainability Officer. The town seems to be inclined to spend upwards of \$100,000-\$125,000 for a new position. I suspect that residents are far more interested in spending \$100,000 on cameras that might help with the rash of robberies that we continue to experience. When Atherton has bought 50 more cameras for our streets, then it might be appropriate to consider the new position. That's what residents really care about --- being safe in our own homes and having our properties protected. I would think that you could meet any state and county environmental mandates with a part time person -- one who doesn't need full benefits, as well as a salary. And, hopefully, you will find the funds for more cameras, especially for the residents of Lindenwood who have been especially hard hit recently. I think they would appreciate that a lot more than a Sustainability Officer.

Respectfully,  
Carol and John Flaherty

**From:** [Jerry & Patty Leugers](#)  
**To:** [Council](#)  
**Subject:** Leaf blowers  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 11:01:37 PM

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**[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]**

Council members,

We are all aware of the pollution caused by gas powered leaf blowers and I'm sure that you hear them almost every day when working from home. I hear my neighbor's gardeners about 5 hours each week with my windows closed.

So the question is whether the Town of Atherton will be a leader and ban these devices for residential use so that we can regain a bucolic atmosphere in the town.

I urge you to spend a few more minutes by reading this website.:

<https://quietcommunities.org/leaf-blowers-pollution-and-covid-19/>

Thank you for your service.

Jerry Leugers  


## **Proposed Leaf-Blower Ban: Table It**

The proposed ban on leaf blowers is without adequate analysis and is based on a number of errant ideas that do not consider the larger context. This item should be deferred for several years until technology develops that offers a suitable alternative. The alternatives offered are unsatisfactory.

To be sure, leaf blowers of all kinds produce some noise and produce emissions. So do numerous other activities. One must balance the good with the tradeoffs.

**Noise:** The noise issue is not a significant factor in Atherton for the reasons below.

- **Throttle Range Varies in Practice:** The range of decibels in the report appear to be those recorded at the machines when operated at maximum power rather than when the machines are throttled down as is often the case when blowing around plants and to gather leaves. It is wrong to assume all use is at maximum throttle because that is not normal use. Further, the blowers are used only briefly during normal landscaping maintenance, clearing leaves from roofs and gutters, and other common tasks.
- **Inverse-Square Law:** In the air over an unimpeded surface, such as water, mountain top, or hardscape, sound pressure (amplitude) and sound intensity each drop with greater distance as the spherical wave front radiating is inversely proportional, i.e., decreases by a ratio of  $\frac{1}{2}$  as the distance is doubled. This does not equal the decibel level, but that diminishes as well over distance. The size of typical Atherton lots and the setbacks diminish excessive noise.
- **Environmental Muffling:** Sound is diffused and muffled when it encounters objects in its path, such as trees, bushes, fences, walls, and the like. Heavily wooded and landscaped areas, which are an Atherton feature, absorb considerable sound. Further, use behind fences and walls does not travel as if it were over an open area.

The foregoing factors indicate that, in general, the noise is not objectionable in the context of our Town's neighborhoods. I have never had to stop a conversation in my yard because of the ambient noise of a neighbor's use of leaf blowers. In contrast, there are really loud and objectionable noises from distant sources that stop conversation: (i) trains' diesel engines and horns; (ii) civil and commercial plane aviation to and from San Carlos Airport; (iii) helicopters; and (iv) police and emergency vehicle sirens. The last of these is necessary, while the others can be and should be controlled. Put the Town's energies to that end.

**Emissions:** The emissions from any combustion power equipment are brief, an unwanted tradeoff, but needed. They must be viewed in the larger perspective of fully weighted costs and alternatives. The more powerful the MPH of the wind force, the shorter the needed use. Electric leaf blowers are relatively anemic, taking multiples as long to accomplish a lesser job. I know, as the owner and user of both. Plus one must consider the costs to produce the electricity. If corded blowers, one must factor in that electricity from PG&E is largely not from clean sources but includes burning fossil fuels (gas and coal) and nuclear power. If battery-operated, there are the need for multiple batteries, recharging, and battery recycling. Each of these have

environmental tradeoffs that belong in any analysis. They are absent here. The technology and innovations are simply not there yet to offer an attractive and competitive alternative.

**Perspective:** How do you compare other machines in setting priorities? The civil and commercial aviation flying overhead to and from San Carlos Airport spew voluminous unmitigated exhaust that is uncontrolled. Motorcycles and diesel engines spew all sorts of really nasty exhaust that are proven health hazards. Does the Town outlaw them? What about the energy demands of the Town's households? Hair dryers, spas, pool pumps, saunas, washers, dryers, dishwashers, furnaces, air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, vacuum cleaners, ranges, ovens, automobiles, lighting, alarm systems, air travel, and everything else that leaves a carbon footprint? They all have an impact. Is there an analysis of which contribute the most harm? Is the Town going to take action? There is no justification provided for leaf blowers being banned before any of the above.

**Comparative Jurisdictions in the Report are Not Comparative:** The chart of jurisdictions that limit or ban leaf blowers is patently deficient because(i) it does not focus on similar size lots as those of the Town of Atherton and (ii) the Town's promotion of heavy forest and intense landscaping. Many of the communities have the proverbial postage-stamp lots and/or are landscaped in a natural style where the duff of trees and shrubs is left to accumulate (albeit, that may change in California as fire-dangers seems to increase every year). Seriously, have you been to Manhattan Beach?

**Options:**

- Ban trees and shrubs. Encourage complete hardscape.
- Pass the ordinance without adequate analysis and deliberation.
- Table the ordinance until practical alternatives are readily available **[Recommended]**

**From:** Patrick Kelvie  
**To:** Diana Hawkins-Manuelian  
**Cc:** Council  
**Subject:** Leaf-Blower Survey  
**Date:** Thursday, January 14, 2021 4 56:12 PM  
**Attachments:** Leaf Blowers 10-17-20.docx

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**[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]**

Diana --

Please note that I applaud your good intentions in wanting input to enable you to put your finger on the community pulse and to gain more information for decision-making. My comments below are not directed at you, but are intended to improve the understanding of the challenges in avoiding oversimplification leading to wrong conclusions. For that reason, and as the analysis may help others, I copy your colleagues on the Town Council.

The poll fails the basics of collecting useful input because of its design and a lack of understanding of the variables that would yield more-useful responses. Whereas the poll is not a scientific study, its methodology should be sound (sorry for the pun).

Before going to the poll questions, let's look at what can happen when asking the wrong questions leads to gross misinterpretations. At the trial of O.J. Simpson for the murder of his former wife, one of his defense counsels was the dubious Alan Dershowitz who was allowed to apply his sophistry in collaboration with his defense pseudo expert. Dershowitz was wrongly allowed to argue that in negligible cases did a man who battered his domestic partner proceed to murder her. Indeed, the percentage was 1 in 2,500 or 0.04%. True, but not on point because it fails to factor in that a murder was not speculative but had actually occurred of a previously battered woman. What was germane and at issue at the murder trial is what is the likelihood that a wife-beater domestic partner is the murderer if the wife was murdered? The answer, unfortunately not elicited at trial, a stunning 90%! The deceptive question and selective evidence went unchallenged and led the court astray. If you are not familiar with critiques of this illogic travesty, there are many. See, e.g., [Murder Cases, Evidence and Logical Rigor—YOU CANalytics](#) .

In the poll you circulated, there are three response options invited, "Yes," "No," and "No Opinion." I suspect, if the relevant background were presented, many folks' real answer, if allowed, to each would be "It Depends" or "I Need More Information," but those aren't allowed options. Below I point out some of the complexity and problems with the poll questions. To be sure, some of my comparisons and hypotheticals are pointed, as in reductio ad absurdum, but that is just to facilitate seeing the source of factual and logic errors.

**1. Noise During Construction Hours.** The first question addresses all leaf-blower hours, gasoline and electric, seeking a categorical Yes or No (putting aside the largely meaningless No Opinion) to restrict use to construction hours (thereby setting cognitive bias; in psychology and negotiating this is called anchoring or focalism, which is applied in this case to set the idea that such hours are the appropriate criteria), but fails to distinguish the many possible users, noise levels, uses, and other implications. Nor does it explain why the span of construction hours is the relevant benchmark. If the pollee is not informed of the many considerations, how does the pollee make an intelligent decision?

- **Affected Users:** This first question ignores all the likely users of leaf blowers, apparently assuming it is only professional landscapers and that such folks should be only working blowers during construction hours. However, limiting use to construction hours would control who can even use the machines. Do you invite the Town to dictate effectively who can do the maintenance on one's property? What about DIY homeowners who may not be around or available during construction hours weekdays to do maintenance? If a homeowner is excused, why not the hired landscaper working with the homeowner? Or the landscaper who does the maintenance on the weekend just like the homeowner?
- **Uses Besides Landscape Maintenance:** Construction hours would also unnecessarily control many needed tasks that the Town's citizens undoubtedly don't intend to micromanage. Does the Town wish to dictate construction hours for use of any leaf blower to clean out the leaves from the floor of one's garage and pathways or to clear a blocked dryer vent? What about the time of the year, e.g., if one wants to clear from a pool cover and surrounding hardscape the many leaves deposited by Atherton's trees so one may swim after 5:00 PM in the summer or anytime on a weekend? Are the offered answer options intended to funnel to responses that will be used to dictate the days and hours to remove the abundance of leaves deposited on one's roof and in gutters? (Leaf removal from roofs and gutters is safely done when sufficiently drier conditions for roof access prevail, which may not coincide with construction hours on weekdays.)
- **Deceptive Anchor:** Or, if the thrust of the question is noise, why not directly adjust the question to deal with noise that is reasonably objectionable in level, pitch, and duration where the noise is likely to be heard by a neighbor? The implicit assumption is that this is an issue, but there is no evidence presented that the noise generated is reasonably objectionable at a neighboring property in our Town of large lots, fences, walls, and heavy vegetation that deflect and absorb considerable noise. Is the noise from a gasoline or electric leaf blower substantively different from the noise of a power washer or numerous other devices that don't have specific regulation? And if noise is the issue, then why the construction-hours anchor question and invite more unneeded regulation? Cannot any reasonably objectionable noise from the leaf blowers be managed as with the noise of a celebration, children playing, any gathering, music, or any other source? Doesn't the Town have a general noise ordinance already? Why is the general noise ordinance not presented as the anchor instead of construction hours? Moreover, one would suspect the Town's existing construction-hours noise controls are a reaction to a radically different context, i.e., to control the largely continuous noise and slamming/clanging sounds suffered hours on end throughout the day and for days and weeks on end for major building construction (by relatively high-paid skilled craftsmen), not the brief and comparatively occasional weekly use of leaf blowers at most properties for gardening maintenance (often by modestly paid workers eking by) and other uses. The anchor of construction hours invites a superficial analysis and conclusion.

**2. Spare-the-Air Regulator.** The second question flags that blowers "can" stir particulates, without any explanation as to what levels of stirring of what particulates are significant health issues, then leaps to whether the blowers may be used on Spare the Air days. The question is phrased to alarm the pollee, evades the gating issues, and disregards other regulatory control. Why? This leads to uninformed opinions.

- **Can vs Do:** A spoon can be used to kill somebody. Do we ban spoons? Let's assume all serial killers drank milk as infants, a positive correlation of 1.0, but correlation does not equate to causation. Shouldn't we consider context and application to understand and assess the risk factor? The polling question does not advise as to: how much and of what particulate matter is a serious health issue; how much harmful matter is, as a practical matter, typically stirred by leaf blowers doing garden maintenance or other tasks in the Town; nor whether the stirred matter lingers at highly objectionable, concentrated levels that drift to residents in adjacent properties. Indeed, no significantly objectionable particulates may be stirred up and contribute to any concerning degree. A common practice is to use a leaf blower briefly to corral the leaves to be efficiently raked or mowed up. This does not necessarily stir a material amount of particulate matter. Further, visible particulates stirred in many uses appear to drop back to earth rather quickly rather than remaining airborne. To add perspective, compare the considerable

particulate matter that is routinely stirred by vacuuming a home, much less the exterior particulate stirring by vehicle traffic and natural wind. (What about vigorous raking, one might ask?) Does the pollee understand that pollens, including those of our oaks and other trees, are natural spewing sources of PM 10 and PM 2.5 particulates? Or that diesel-powered engines and vehicle tire wear are significant contributors of PM 10 and PM 2.5 particulates? Without background information and comparative data, the pollee lacks perspective and does not make an informed and intelligent choice.

- **Deceptive Anchor:** Spare the Air days are in the jurisdiction of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the government agency with expertise and staffing to evaluate air quality and issue regulations in this area (BAAQMD). The BAAQMD is authorized to regulate the activities deemed to be material additive contributors of harmful emissions. The Town lacks such expertise, much less any ongoing expertise to make ongoing adjustments. Yet, the question to the pollee, after alarming the pollee that leaf blowers “can” stir harmful particulates, asks if blowers should be automatically banned on Spare the Air days issued by the government agency with expertise. Odd, isn’t it, that this usurps the BAAQMD yet references the BAAQMD regulation without noting this is in the BAAQMD jurisdiction and control? Imagine the response if the query were to be phrased to elicit a different response, e.g., “Do you think that the Town, which has no expertise in the area, should supplant the BAAQMD, which has expertise and regulates Spare the Air days, to regulate when and how to balance the use of leaf blowers?” I would think many informed pollees would say to defer to BAAQMD and prefer to have the Town focus on local matters of higher priority that need attention.

**3. Electric Always the Choice (Huh?).** The third question asserts that electric (battery or corded) leaf blowers are typically quieter and don’t emit gasoline pollutants. Then leaps to ask, as if the stated noise factor and gasoline pollutants alone are the determinative considerations, if there should be a one- or two-year transition from gas to electric blowers. This ignores other considerations.

- **Typically Quieter:** Is it fair to say electric blowers are typically quieter? No, not necessarily in the same context. My gas blower, used at lower throttle, is not appreciably louder than my electric blower in use. Gas blowers are usually modulated in power when gentler and more-forceful uses are appropriate. It is wrong to assume otherwise. The peak power of the electric blower is dramatically less than the peak power of a gas blower. Each blowing at equivalent force is not necessarily so different. So, to say typically quieter is not a fair or intelligent comparison to begin with because the capacities and delivered results are not close. A quiet unicycle cannot perform the load tasks of a Ford 150 pickup, although each can do the mild task of transporting one person at 3 mph. Based on that, do we mandate a transition from motor vehicles to unicycles in 1-2 years? No, we look at all highly relevant needs and considerations, I hope.
- **Power Equivalents:** Are electric blowers equivalent in power? No, not in many instances. Because they are comparatively anemic, they cannot do as good a job because of the lack of blow reach and take much, much longer to complete a bigger job. Largely drained batteries and dying batteries produce even weaker results. A simple example is clearing a pool cover. A gasoline blower does this in just several minutes. Using my corded electric blower (which is more powerful than available battery-powered blowers when purchased) takes much longer and cannot effectively remove much debris near the cover’s center or trapped by moisture or oak sap (live oak ‘honey dew’ in the summer) or caught by a live oak’s thorny leaf, requiring a combination of blower use with telescoping pool brushes. Trailing long cords are also a huge problem. A battery-powered blower (less powerful than the better corded blowers) takes longer still because the delivered air flow is inadequate to reach.
- **Gasoline Pollutants:** Is this issue presented in full and fair context? Of course, a gasoline-powered motor produces gasoline pollutants. Yes, necessarily. By definition, only sheep birth lambs. Each fuel source has its inherent byproduct tradeoffs. The gasoline engine, because it is more powerful, is used for a shorter period of time. Electric blowers, which require longer durations of usage, demand electricity, much of which comes from the burning of coal, natural gas, and petroleum products, each of which produce associated pollutants. Battery-powered blowers require mining and use of powerful chemicals, as well as multiple expensive battery packs that need to be repeatedly recharged and replaced. The costly lithium batteries have to be manufactured and are a challenge to recycle. There are certainly tradeoffs with each kind of blower. This is not to argue in favor of gas pollutants, but let’s not lead the pollee to assume there is not more at issue from the larger perspective.
- **Tripping Impractical Cords or Multiple Batteries:** Not mentioned are the additional challenges of electric blowers. Corded blowers, which are often more powerful, require extension cords. These could be hundreds of feet, create hazards, and add to the time to locate, attach, drag around, and coil for storage. Battery-operated blowers presently often do not have batteries with sufficient life to do many a larger property or for gardeners doing several properties, thus requiring multiple batteries and time added for recharging. This is not only a nuisance and costly, but may be impractical. On the other hand, for a small property, not the typical Atherton property, perhaps acceptable for light garden maintenance only.
- **Anchor Time Frame:** The question suggests the choice of either a 1- or 2- year transition is appropriate, but provides no rationale. Nor does it say who will pay for the replacement. The fact is that there will likely be an evolutionary move to battery-powered blowers once the technology catches up. Battery technology has for decades lagged far behind the rate of development of other technologies. That has only recently changed. In recent years, the lithium battery made a leap forward and is now preferred for many hand-held construction tools used intermittently. And many other and better battery technologies are being announced. See, e.g., these two hyperlinks from reports last month:

[https://www.bing.com/search?](https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+battery+breakthrough&form=ANNTH1&refid=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b&sp=3&qs=LS&pq=new+battery+&sk=PRE5ILS2&sc=8-12&cvd=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b)

[q=new+battery+breakthrough&form=ANNTH1&refid=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b&sp=3&qs=LS&pq=new+battery+&sk=PRE5ILS2&sc=8-12&cvd=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b](https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+battery+breakthrough&form=ANNTH1&refid=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b&sp=3&qs=LS&pq=new+battery+&sk=PRE5ILS2&sc=8-12&cvd=6db3d106c4e84d5791d19eeb3e60082b)

[Apple Reportedly Has New 'Breakthrough Battery Technology' For An Apple Car Production In 2024 | Redmond Pie](#)

Exciting and coming, but these better batteries won’t be available in 1-2 years for blowers. Does the responding pollee know what is coming, that electric leaf blowers are expected to supplant gas blowers when innovation floods the marketplace in the future, but that the 1-2 years’ horizon is plainly unrealistic? I would think most folks would say let the marketplace develop and don’t foolishly legislate ahead of the cutting edge of technology that is available. Put another way, racing ahead of the technology with regulation accomplishes little if anything besides more problems. Perhaps the pollee, if informed, would say, “Let’s revisit in five years and see where we are when we have more innovation of the emerging battery technologies. Don’t force the issue prematurely.”

**4. Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad.** [Apologies to George Orwell, Napoleon, and *Animal Farm*] The fourth question notes differences between 4- and 2-stroke engines then jumps to poll whether 2-stroke should be banned. Again, why and, if so, are there exceptions? What other relevant considerations are omitted?

- **4-Stroke Plusses:** 4-stroke engines are typically quieter, more fuel efficient, and emit less pollution. That’s the light side of the scales.
- **4-Stroke Negatives:** Overall, 4-stroke engines offer few choices compared to ubiquitous 2-stroke engines, are notably bulkier and heavier (limiting more women, elderly, disabled, and other users), are much more costly to purchase (and increase theft issues), have additional maintenance requirements, require longer use for task completion (being less powerful at peak power to do a comparable job), and may not be sufficiently powerful for certain tasks. The technology and innovation are not quite there yet.
- **Users:** If there were a requirement to favor 4-stroke engines, should this only apply to burley professionals routinely using the equipment daily as part of their occupation? What about homeowners who own 2-stroke equipment and use it sparingly? Many a pollee would consider themselves and

their DIY neighbors as reasonable exceptions Will the Town pay for and provide competitive 4-strokes and extra batteries to replace the homeowner 2-strokes?

- **Phase-In:** If the question had a phase-in, say in five years for burley professionals, more pollees would be likely to agree, but the question is phrased not to consider homeowners and a reasonable phase-in once competitive technology innovation is available When we legislate higher fuel-economy standards for automobiles, do we outlaw all older vehicles?
- **Anchor:** The question falsely presupposes that 4-stroke engines are equally competitive with 2-stroke engines and that being environmentally friendlier is the only consideration Were that true, the question would not be asked because there would be no issue -- persons would naturally have proceeded to favor 4-stroke in the marketplace If being environmentally friendlier is the determinative issue, how does the leaf blower compare to other activities where regulation may have even more-favorable impact to the environment? What is the carbon footprint of a Town citizen who travels to a second home or on vacations, engages in helicopter skiing, flies by private jet or small aircraft (commercial such as Surf Air or private), rides an ATV, SxS, UTV, or motorcycle, motors a boat, etc (most all of the preceeding are for enjoyment, rarely for critical work, and largely unregulated as to emissions and spew all sorts of nasty pollutants in large volumes)? Or, perish the thought, uses a hair dryer or a laundry dryer (rather than air drying), a vacuum (rather than a damp cloth or vintage non-electric mechanical stick sweeper), hot-water heater or spa (rather than unheated water), sauna (rather than not using it at all), pool sweep (rather than daily hand brushings), or any number of other items? Each have tradeoffs Where is the perspective? Where do blowers fit among all the other activities? I don't know Nor does the pollee

This leads to who sets specific regulation of leaf blowers as the Town's priority when there are so many more issues that are doable? Are we bereft of higher priorities? With the covid pandemic we have more and more folks walking and running on the Town's streets Do people need to be injured or killed just by being pedestrians? Why not resurrect or create attractive pathways along the main corridors in Town, i e , Middlefield Road, Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton Avenue, Alameda de las Pulgas, and others? The formerly improved pathways that existed along Middlefield (except for portions on the east side along Lindenwood) have long been neglected and destroyed by road work, drainage work, tree removals/replacements, wall/fence construction, and zero maintenance [Note that I refer to improved pathways, as along Lakeshore Blvd in Incline Village and as may be found in other attractive rural examples, and not proposing curbed concrete sidewalks ] Suppose we rephrased the anchor in the poll so the question reads, "Do you think we should ban 2-stroke leaf blowers simply because someone made it an agenda item or, in the alternative, should the Town take meaningful action to improve certain pathways in town that will contribute immediately to benefit the safety and lives of all of our children, citizens, and visitors?"

The analysis above is to demonstrate that asking the wrong questions and phrasing questions in a loaded way invites the wrong conclusions We circle back to the O J trial mentioned earlier

And don't get me wrong I am not an apologist for gasoline engines of any kind I would relish evolving to affordable, quiet, pollution-free (or closer to such), lightweight, powerful, compact, long-capacity leaf blowers when such are available that ably manage the tasks on larger properties, such as most of properties in the Town However, that is simply not the case today The intention to move in that direction, when timely, makes absolute sense With the further advancement in batteries, that time is foreseeable, but it is not now Accordingly, this topic should be tabled and revisited when the described, desired machines are at hand

In case you did not see my comments to the proposed regulation of leaf blowers in October, I attach a copy of that memo for your consideration as well

Best regards,

Patrick Kelvie

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**Patrick Kelvie** | 

**From:** [Marc](#)  
**To:** [Council](#)  
**Cc:** [George Rodericks](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Leaf blowers = BAN THEM. PERIOD  
**Date:** Monday, January 18, 2021 2:58:23 PM

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**[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]**

Dear Town Council members Hawkins-Manuelian, DeGolia, Widmer, Vice Mayor Lempres, Mayor Lewis,

I read with interest the Daily Post article January 18, 2021 regarding leaf blowers.

This issue has been a problem for Town residents for years, and it seems you are on the cusp of taking action.

Of the many bans under consideration and their causes, one significant item has not been elevated to critical status:

That item is the effect of airborne carcinogens caused by all types of leaf blowers. More below:

The worst polluters are the 2 cycle blowers - the stinky ones - that cause airborne fumes.

Those need banned. Period. No way will Town officials be able to monitor and control the amount of pollutants generated by those beasts.

They also seem to cause the worst noise pollution - mostly an annoyance. The kind that Surf Air causes. I can always tell what day it is by the leaf blower noise:

Behind me = Monday,

Down the street = Tuesday.

Next door = Wednesday.

Next door - other way = Thursday.

Across the street = Friday.

The noise caused by electric blowers - corded and battery type - are less annoying, but I don't see corded blowers as feasible by our valued "mow and blow" workers due to obvious limitations of an electric cord.

I am an occasional user of the battery powered variety and I get about one driveway's worth of juice out of one battery. Batteries cost about 40 bucks each and are recharged in 2 hours and last years. So an initial investment of \$600-\$900 should be easily recouped in a short time. Gas blowers require maintenance. Electric blowers = near zero maintenance.

I digress.

Recently I had a conversation with a neighbor about the airborne dust, debris, pollen, and leaves flying in the air from their "mow and blow" service.

Every Wednesday, for years, their "guy" - using a 2-stroke device was flagrantly guilty of blowing flumes of airborne crud nearly 30 feet in the air.

Much of it lands on my car, driveway and occasionally dirties our kitchen windows.

This airborne dirt takes over a day to clear the air.

How do I know ?

I washed my car late on a Wednesday afternoon, after the landscaping job was done next door.

Late Thursday, I hosed off my car again and on Friday morning, there was a layer of dirt on my car. Please understand, I'm only moderately upset about having a dirty car. I have options to limit this. I am, however, VERY upset about having breathed that garbage. I now know why my asthma has been affecting me for years. It's much better now, thank you.

Thanks to a very understanding neighbor, the "blow" portion of their weekly service has been replaced by raking.

Their property still looks great.

My plea is to ban all types of blowers.

Costs nothing to convert to raking and sweeping,

No more need to blow poison to or from the street and into the air.

Our precious residents who are concerned that a costly change to electric blowers should be ecstatic.

They should also be willing to do their part to eliminate unnecessary pollution - of all types.

And even the "mow and blow" workers should be pleased that their risk of cancer will be reduced.

Even I will gladly abandon my battery-operated blower.

Thank you for reading my email letter of concern.

Good luck with your decision making process.

I look forward to hearing about a sensible solution.

Best regards,

Marc Michel

Marguerite Janopaul



**From:** [Smith McKeithen](#)  
**To:** [Anthony Suber](#)  
**Subject:** Redrafted Leaf Blower Ordinance  
**Date:** Monday, January 18, 2021 11:23:23 AM

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**[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]**

Dear Town Council Members,

We have seen the excellent letter sent to you by Carol and John Flaherty this morning. Until reading their letter, we didn't realize how very many Spare the Air days had been declared recently. It's clear that they have done extensive research on the practical effect of banning leaf blowers on Spare the Air Days, and well point out the issues that this ban would impose on gardeners as well as homeowners. Accordingly, we would like to change the position we took in our email to you yesterday, and ask that you also do not impose a leaf blower ban on such days.

The round-robin nature of these community comments is yet one more reason why we believe that it is ill-advised to bring up an issue as controversial as the Leaf Blower Ordinance during COVID-19 restrictions on meeting and true community interactions. Nevertheless, having come this far, if a new ordinance is to be adopted, it should contain the changes noted in our email dated January 17, 2021, plus those recommended by the Flaherty family.

Thank you for your consideration

R.L. Smith McKeithen

On Jan 17, 2021, at 4:32 PM, R L Smith McKeithen  
wrote:  
Dear Town Council members

**[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open**

**attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]**

Dear Town Council Members,

I commend the Council and Town Staff for listening to the many concerns expressed by citizens regarding the overly-broad Leaf Blower Ordinance presented at the November 18, 2020 meeting. The Draft ordinance contained in the Agenda for the January 20, 2021 meeting is a much more reasonable approach to this issue. We do, however, believe that Section H (4), "Hours of operation" is too restrictive. As stated in so many of the letters opposing the November draft, in non-COVID times working homeowners have few choices as to when they can do their yard maintenance. When our children were young, weekends, particularly Saturday mornings, were often filled with running errands as well as multiple sports, scouting and church activities; yard chores had to be fit in whenever we could spare the time. Thus, shortened Saturday hours and no Sunday hours presents a real, practical problem for families who choose to do yard-keeping chores on weekends.

The ban on all "legal holidays" is also problematic. For me, as an Army veteran, there is no inconsistency with raising our Flag on Memorial Day, and then, as a homeowner, taking out the lawnmower and blower to make our place more presentable. Thus, I urge you not to restrict homeowners' activities on weekends and "legal holidays," as contained in the current draft.

We fully understand that on "Spare the Air" emergency days, all forms of combustion engine activity should be lessened. But otherwise, please do not shackle future generations of Atherton families with the scheduling limitations contained in the draft resolution.

Thank you for your consideration,

R. L. Smith McKeithen