

I am writing **in opposition** to the proposed seasonal exemption for gas-powered leaf blowers.

I work from home, and I run virtual programs for a nationwide audience. Some of our programs have as many as a thousand participants. When I am not leading programs, I am often in meetings. It is not an exaggeration to say that doing my job often becomes nearly impossible during the months of October, November, and December. I live in a large complex, and the landscapers are on site for the better part of those three months. During that time, I constantly have to apologize to event participants for the loud and disruptive noise that comes through my microphone, not to mention the fact that it's very difficult for me to hear others, concentrate, and effectively facilitate these sessions. Noise-cancelling headphones do not block the low-frequency noise of gas-powered blowers. In addition to the significant disruption to my work, I often end up with headaches and increased stress levels.

You talk about supporting small businesses, but what about the thousands of us who work from home (providing the county with income tax revenue) and find our ability to make a living impaired for three months of the year by the highly disruptive noise of leaf blowers? As you decide who and what to prioritize, the health and wellbeing of the landscaping workers should be of primary importance, but please consider the needs and wellbeing of the thousands of people who work from home in the county (and county residents in general) ahead of the complaints of a handful of landscaping company owners who did not adequately prepare for this transition, despite being given two years and plenty of financial incentives to do so.

I'd also like to point out that the county did a very robust public outreach campaign for the original bill. After it became law, there were ads on buses, mailings to our homes, and many people consider it a done deal. The amount of public outreach that has happened for this last-minute exemption is grossly insufficient. I've told dozens of people about this bill, and not a single person had heard about it through any other means. You should understand that if this exemption goes through, you will likely have thousands of very upset county residents on your hands come October 1st. I know that I would feel that the council has betrayed our trust and not followed through on enforcing a law that has been on the books for nearly two years now.

Lastly, I hope we can start thinking differently as a community about how to manage our landscapes. Leaves have high ecological value – butterflies overwinter in them, and we are seeing alarming declines of butterflies in large part because of the practice of stripping the land of all leaves. An ecological practice like transferring some leaves into garden beds minimizes the need for mulch in the spring, is better for the environment, and saves money, time, and effort. I hope it's something that those who manage both private and public landscapes will consider.

All of us have been subjected to the damaging effects of gas-powered leaf blowers for long enough. Other municipalities have already made the transition, proving that it is achievable. The time to follow through on your policies and promises and make a full transition to electric blowers is now, not in three years.