



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Christine L. Haider Chairperson / **Susan Seinfeld** District Manager

To: All Board Members
From: Environmental Committee
Henry Euler & Paul DiBenedetto, Co-Chairs
Date: September 25, 2015

On Monday, September 21, 2015, the Environmental Committee met to discuss lawn care devices. Present were Paul DiBenedetto and Henry Euler, Co-Chairs of the Environment Committee, Christine Haider, Board Chair, Christina Scherer, Jyothi Sriram, Community Members Steven Levin and Mary Bandziukas and District Manager Susan Seinfeld.

Many members of the community have voiced concern over the noise produced by lawn care devices. Many people find the noise particularly annoying since some professional gardeners as well as homeowners use the devices early in the day, especially on weekends and holidays. The matter was brought to the attention of the Environment Committee to see what action, if any, could be taken to ameliorate the problem.

The Committee discussed two pieces of legislation dealing with lawn care devices, both sponsored by Council Member Danny Dromm of western Queens.

- Intro 853 deals with a ban on the sale or distribution of diesel powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers in the City of New York effective 9/1/17. Penalties for non-compliance are listed in the proposal.

- Intro 59 deals with a ban on the sale or distribution of gas powered leaf blowers in the City of New York rated to produce a maximum sound level in excess of 65 decibels, as well as associated penalties for non-compliance. In addition, there are provisions banning the use of existing gas powered leaf blowers that emit noise levels above the 65 decibel level. Also these devices would have to operate using a muffler between May 15th and September 15th. The use of gas powered leaf blowers would not be allowed on weekends and holidays before noon. The proposal would go into effect one year after enactment.

Co-Chair Euler stated that he had contacted Council Member Dromm's legislative office to determine the status of the two bills and was told by an aide to the Council Member that the bills were still in committee and needed more cosponsors to ensure movement toward passage. The aide also requested to be kept informed of the work of the Committee and any action taken by the full Board.

The Committee discussed the issues associated with this problem at length. It was noted that the issue had come up at Community Board 11 over ten years ago and District

Manager Susan Seinfeld showed some documents that were on file from that time. She also showed us a copy of the Douglas Manor Association's September, 2015 newsletter. A survey was taken of the membership of that group. The results indicated that there should be limits placed on the use of leaf blowers.

Committee discussion continued. It was mentioned that gas powered leaf blowers not only pose a noise issue, but also pose a health issue because of the dust generated and spread by the power of the machine. That dust contains all kinds of particulates including feces and pesticide residues used in our gardens. The motors in gas powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers pollute the environment as well. Two cycle motors, which use a mixture of gas and oil, are more polluting than 4 cycle motors.

One member of the Committee, Community Member Steven Levin urged that leaf blowers be banned entirely in the City of New York, as they are in other jurisdictions across the country. Other members felt that it would be more realistic to lobby for restrictions on gas powered leaf blowers and other lawn care devices. It was hoped that those restrictions would encourage people to use electric powered or battery powered leaf blowers and other devices, which are less noisy and polluting.

The issue of enforcement of any law passed to address this problem was discussed. Noise laws in our city are enforced by the Police Department and the Department of Environmental Protection. Given budget and time constraints, these laws would be difficult to enforce. It would behoove residents to report infractions of any law passed to 311, and to local elected officials, as needed.

Attention was then focused on the formation of a resolution that would include the many concerns raised at this meeting, as well as action to be taken by the Board. A motion was made by Co-Chair Euler, seconded by Christine Haider, to bring the resolution to the full Board for their consideration. The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present. The Co-Chairs would write the resolution, and have it reviewed by the Environment Committee by email, to have ready for the full Board to consider at the October 5, 2015 meeting.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of another issue facing our communities. Jyothi Sriram brought up the concern of the use of pesticides, herbicides and other chemicals in our gardens and elsewhere, and the effect those agents have on our health and environment. It was suggested by Co-Chair DiBenedetto that we invite a speaker to come to a full Board meeting to discuss the issue and what alternatives could be used to replace these toxic agents. Committee Community Member Mary Bandziukas volunteered to contact possible speakers and coordinate with Susan Seinfeld to have the speaker appear and briefly discuss the issue at a future Board meeting. The Environment Committee would further discuss the issue and perhaps submit an additional resolution for the full Board to consider.