

MODERATOR'S COMMITTEE ON LEAF BLOWERS  
January 11, 2016 Minutes

The Moderator's Committee on Leaf Blowers held its second meeting on January 11, 2016, 8am – 11am, in room 408 of Town Hall. Present were Committee members John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Jonathan Margolis, Faith Michaels, Maura Toomey, Neil Gordon, and Benedicte Hollowell; Selectman Ben Franco; and members of the public Peter Gately and Linda Plazonja.

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the December 17, 2015 meeting and, by a vote of 5-0, approved them.

The Committee reviewed and, by a vote of 6-0, approved the following charge, to be posted on the Town's web site:

The Fall 2015 Town Meeting referred the subject matter of Article 10, concerning the use of leaf blowers, to a Moderator's Committee.

This Committee will review and evaluate the provisions of the Town's By-laws, Article 8.15 - Noise Control (with respect to Leaf Blowers), and Article 8.31 - Leaf Blowers. The Committee will consider the Selectman's Noise By-Law Committee report, leaf blower abuses, inappropriate uses, best practices, provisions used in other towns, property owners' responsibilities, landscaping service provider responsibilities, Town responsibilities, enforcement issues, and other relevant matters.

The Committee expects to make a preliminary report to Spring Town Meeting 2016 and a final report with recommendations, and, if indicated, a warrant article amending the current By-laws, to the Fall 2016 Town Meeting.

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to a discussion with Selectman Franco, who presented a comprehensive review of the findings of the Selectmen's Noise Bylaw Committee, which was convened in March, 2015 with the objective, as described by Selectman Franco, of taking a "light touch" towards reworking the Town's noise bylaws. The findings of the Noise Bylaw committee which are relevant to this present body are that there was essentially no noise-related dissatisfaction noted other than leaf blowers, that there is a desire in the Town for regulations regarding permissible leaf blower noise, and that there is some potential for confusion and ambiguity in the current bylaws.

As reported by Selectman Franco, the Noise Bylaw committee made several recommendations for action, including leaf blower registration, public education, clarifications to the existing bylaws, enhanced enforcement, and suggestions for how the Town could improve its own uses of leaf blowers.

The Leaf Blower Committee spent considerable time discussing a range of implementation options for many of these recommendations; this discussion fed into the next major discussion topic, which was to debate the content of an information-gathering survey to be sent to the

citizenry of the Town. This (non-scientific) survey is intended to gather public opinion regarding the impact of leaf blowers (positive and negative) on individual citizens.

By a vote of 7-0-0 the committee voted to delegate to Faith Michaels the task of producing and distributing this survey, with the goal of collecting and summarizing the results for review at the committee meeting scheduled for February 29, 2016, at which would be discussed the relevant regulations from other towns.

The committee scheduled a public hearing for the evening of February 8, 2016 and a technology-focused meeting for March 21, 2016, at 8am.