



Memorandum

Date: September 2021
To: Interested City Commissions
From: Adrienne Heinig, Assistant to the Director, Public Works Utilities & Operations
Subject: Discussion of Modifications to Leaf Blower Ordinance & Recommendation Process

Recommendation

Informational/Action Item

- Receive informational memo on the status of the discussions around the use of leaf blowers in Davis, and if desired, consider the appointment of a member of this Commission to attend the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) meetings when the leaf blowers are on the agenda for discussion.

Background

While the use of leaf blowers within the City of Davis has been a topic of discussion for a number of years, a substantial fire season from August to October 2020 severely impacted air quality within the City of Davis, and brought additional attention on the use of leaf blowers during periods of significant air quality impacts. Ash particulates on the ground in 2020 further contributed to concerns with leaf blower use.

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) produced a draft report presented to Council in September 2020, with a recommendation that leaf blower use in the City be halted in observance of the ash particles and the other air quality impacts. After discussion at a few Council meetings, the Council adopted a resolution proclaiming a local air quality emergency, and authorized the City Manager to:

Impose a temporary ban on the use of leaf blowers and authorizing the Director of Public Works Utilities & Operations, acting as Assistant Director of Emergency Services, to suspend and reinstate the ban as needed, depending on air quality conditions, the presence of wildfire ash, future air quality forecasts, and/or forecasted smoke conditions for the region.

As of the drafting of this report, the local air quality emergency is still in effect, and the City has had cause to ban the use of leaf blowers, based on the criteria in the

resolution, twice since the beginning of 2021 (August 18-23, 2021 and from August 27 to the time of the drafting of this report).

In addition to the action directed on the local air quality emergency, City Council directed staff to “return to the City Council at a future meeting with a full analysis of the NRC’s report and a staff recommendation for amending the Davis Municipal Code.”

Leaf Blower Ordinance Revision Process to Date

Based on Council direction, at the end of 2020, an established NRC subcommittee on leaf blowers and City staff met to discuss an outline of next steps to review the use of leaf blowers in Davis, as well as objectives and assignments to achieve the next steps. During the discussion, it was clear that the overall discussion would benefit from an understanding of the community use of leaf blowers and what types of leaf blowers are used. As such, surveys were released to collect responses from the community and commercial operations on the use of leaf blowers, and what concerns the community has regarding their use, and possible modifications to their usage.

The information received from the surveys is included in a report for the NRC currently scheduled for their regular meeting on September 27, 2021. The feedback will serve to inform the Commission deliberation on any recommended modifications to the City’s ordinance on leaf blower use.

The community survey was released May 17, 2021 and closed June 30, 2021. The survey for commercial businesses was released the first week of June and closed July 16, 2021. At the close of the period for each survey, the City received 760 responses to the community survey and 95 responses to the commercial survey.

In addition to the collection of surveys for input from the community, the City has reached out to other jurisdictions that have implemented a full or partial ban of leaf blowers to understand their process and experience, as well as collected information on the City’s use of leaf blowers from the Public Works Utilities and Operations and Parks and Community Services departments. This information will also be summarized and provided to the NRC for consideration.

Staff Note: *The current direction is for the consideration of revisions to the City’s Municipal Code on leaf blower use only. Commissions can provide recommendations for review of other types of equipment, however the current process is focused solely on leaf blowers, and the review of other types of equipment (if recommended for consideration) would occur after the conclusion of this process and at Council direction.*

Commission Input

Initial Recommendation Development

Based on City Council direction, City staff is working with the NRC on the development of recommendations related to the City's leaf blower ordinance. Substantive discussions around the initial recommendations will take place with the NRC. Commissions that wish to participate in the discussions should appoint a Commission liaison to the NRC, a liaison who will attend the meetings when leaf blowers are on the agenda (similar to the CAAP process currently underway). This liaison can participate in the discussion, provide feedback as needed, and can report back to the respective commission on the discussion.

Recommendations

Once recommendations have been proposed by the NRC, the recommendations will be brought by staff to each interested commission for review and discussion at the Commission's regular meeting. Staff will take the NRC recommendations, and any endorsements or alternative recommendations from other City commissions, to Council for review and action.

Current Timeline *(tentative)*

The original goal was to return to the City Council prior to the summer months, in anticipation of the 2021 fire season. However, with delays both with the production and distribution of the surveys, the discussion of potential leaf blower recommendations will begin with the NRC in September. Council review and possible action could be in late October or November.

Month	Activity
June - July 2021	Release surveys and collect data
July-August 2021	Close surveys, analyze data, staff and agency responses, and staff recommendations for NRC discussions
September-October 2021	Present report, recommendations on leaf blower modifications to NRC, other relevant commissions as necessary
October-November 2021	Return to Council with recommendations on leaf blower modifications