



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published November 24, 2010

## Leaf Blower Ban Not Likely to Blow Over

By *Andrea A. Firth*

"This issue is not going away. The City Council has not heard the last of this," said Quiet Orinda organizer Jeff Segall a few days after the Council voted unanimously against banning leaf blower use in the City. "I was extremely disappointed by the outcome and process used by the Council," added Segall. Quiet Orinda founder Peter Kendall had a similar reaction. "A consummate disappointment, really a travesty. I sincerely hope the City isn't laboring under the misapprehension that we're 'going away,'" said Kendall.

At the November 16th City Council meeting, Quiet Orinda was given 15 minutes to present its rationale for a ban on leaf bower use in the city. Over 150 residents were on hand to listen as Segall and Kendall hurriedly flipped through dozens of slides outlining the noise nuisance and health risks they believe are posed by the widely used garden maintenance equipment.

Segall, whose wife and three-year old twins were also in the audience, explained that twice a week his family is forced to retreat indoors due to the noise and air pollution caused by the onslaught of mow and blow landscaping crews that move through his neighborhood. "We're here to restore calm and quiet in our neighborhoods," said Segall, citing Piedmont, Mill Valley, Carmel, Santa Monica, and Beverly Hill as cities that have already enacted leaf blower bans.

Kendall focused his comments on the health hazards associated with particulates-the microscopic particles of fecal matter, herbicides, and pesticides-made airborne by leaf blowers. "It used to be the noise that drove us to pursue leaf blower bans," said Kendall, "But it's the particulates that will kill us." The Council then listened for two hours as over 40 residents shared disparate views on the idea of banning leaf blowers. Eighteen residents and supporters echoed Quiet Orinda's call to restore tranquility and cleaner air to Orinda through a ban on leaf blowers, while 23 residents argued against the ban citing the impracticality of managing the maintenance of large lots populated with dozens of deciduous trees with rakes and brooms.

Some residents identified the ban on leaf blowers as a slippery slope. "What about barking dogs, wood chippers, cars, and trucks," said Alan Prager. "I don't propose that we ban these things." Others challenged the validity of the anti-leaf blower data and what they consider to be inappropriate comparisons to other cities that have enacted bans. "I think we have heard the gamut tonight from the public, " said Vice Mayor Victoria Smith, noting that she believes the City's current noise ordinance adequately addresses that element of leaf blower use. Regarding the air quality issue raised, Smith suggested that one way to engage the public was through education and encouraged Quiet Orinda supporters to pursue this through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

"My sense is that there is not a clear community consensus here," said Council Member Steve Glazer. He did not see a need to revise the current noise ordinance, but Glazer indicated that he would be interested in looking at some alternatives to a complete ban on leaf blower use.

Ultimately the Council did not find sufficient consensus for an outright leaf bower ban, and Mayor Tom McCormick declared, "This matter is now closed."

Reach the reporter at: [andrea@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:andrea@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA