Title: Ordinance Amendment Relating to Leaf Blowers

Location: Citywide

Recommendation: Provide direction to the City Manager on amending the Sacramento City Code to restrict the use of leaf blowers.

Contact: Peter Lemos, Code and Housing Enforcement Chief, (916) 808-8183, Community Development Department

Presenter: Peter Lemos, Code and Housing Enforcement Chief, (916) 808-8183, Community Development Department

Attachments:
1-Description/Analysis
Description/Analysis

**Issue Detail:** The use of leaf blowers creates several types of emissions, including engine exhaust, refueling emissions and fugitive dust emissions. The most significant health impact created by leaf blowers comes from the fugitive dust emissions and noise created during operations. Leaf blower dust entrained from streets can aggravate asthma and other upper-respiratory conditions when inhaled. The use of portable gasoline-powered blowers when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is high has created health concerns. According to the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, the AQI exceeded 100 an average of 34.4 days dating back to 2014. Vice Mayor Jeff Harris has requested that the City consider amending the city code to prohibit the use of all blowers whether electric or gas-powered when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is at or above 100.

**Policy Considerations:** Health concerns regarding the use of leaf blowers has created the potential need for a regulation ordinance. Staff seeks the direction from the committee on the development of an ordinance restricting the use of leaf blowers.

**Economic Impacts:** Gardeners and landscape contractors cite the superiority of gas leaf blowers as gardening tools compared to rakes and other alternatives. The additional time it may take to use alternative methods may have a negative economic impact on these businesses as a result of lost productivity, and potentially result in increased cost to the consumer.

**Environmental Considerations:** The proposed action would always restrict the use of gas leaf blowers, and electric leaf blowers during certain weather conditions. Prohibition of leaf blowers as proposed would not have any significant adverse effects on the physical environment and would have several beneficial effects as described in the staff report.

The proposed action does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment and is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). (Public Resources Code sections 21065 and 21080 and CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4).)

The proposed ordinance has as its basic purpose improving the noise and air quality environment and is categorically exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15308 (actions by regulatory agencies for the protection of natural resources). Because it can be seen with certainty that the action would have no significant effects on the environment it is also exempt under the commonsense exemption. CEQA Guidelines sections 15061(b)(3); 15060(c)(3).

No CEQA review is required.
**Sustainability:** The proposed ordinance prohibiting the use of leaf blowers when the Air Quality Index is above 100 could improve public health outcomes by potentially reducing cases of asthma and upper respiratory ailments, resulting in a more resilient community.

**Commission/Committee Action:** Not applicable.

**Rationale for Recommendation:** Currently, staff is requesting direction on whether to proceed with a proposed revision to the Code related to the use of leaf blowers.

**Financial Considerations:** Monitoring and enforcement costs related to restricting the use of leaf blowers when the Air Quality Index is above 100 are unknown.

**Local Business Enterprise (LBE):** Not applicable.

**Background:** Sacramento City Code section 8.68.180 prohibits the use of gasoline-powered blowers on residential property or within two hundred (200) feet of residential property, except between the hours of nine a.m. and six p.m. Monday through Saturday and between the hours of ten a.m. and four p.m. on Sunday. It also prohibits the use of portable gasoline-powered blowers that exceed certain decibel levels, but the scope of enforcement is limited because leaf blower use is transient and short in duration. Over the years, the City Council and staff have received complaints about leaf blowers and occasional requests from the public calling for a ban or restriction of leaf blower operations. Other than the applicable provisions of the City’s noise regulation (Chapter 8.68 Noise Control) leaf blower use is not regulated.

Gas-powered leaf blowers can be a source of air pollution. Most gasoline-powered leaf blowers have two stroke engines, which mixes fuel with oil. Over 30 percent of the fuel used by gas-powered leaf blowers fails to completely combust, releasing several air pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, and hydrocarbons. Both electric and gasoline-powered leaf blowers generate considerable amounts of dust, noise and exhaust impacting residents, businesses, pedestrians, and others who may be in the immediate area at the time when this equipment is in use.

Health impacts that result from the use of leaf blowers are generated by leaf blower engine exhaust, dust and noise. According to the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, the most significant health impact created by leaf blowers comes from the fugitive dust emissions and noise created during operation. Leaf blower dust entrained from streets can aggravate asthma and other upper-respiratory conditions when inhaled by passersby on a short-term basis. If exposure is on a long-term basis, as it would be for landscape workers, particulates in the dust may contribute to serious health issues.
To minimize economic impact to gardeners and landscape contractors that utilize leaf blowers and to protect the health and safety of the general public, Vice Mayor Jeff Harris requested amending the city code to prohibit the use of all blowers when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is at or above 100. According to the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, the AQI exceeded 100 an average of 34.4 days dating back to 2014.