

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 8, 2019**

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING

The Village of Lake Bluff Board of Trustees met as a Committee-of-the-Whole (“COW”) in the Village Hall Board Room (40 East Center Avenue) on Monday, April 8, 2019. Village President O’Hara called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Village Clerk Joy Markee called the roll.

The following were present:

Village President:	Kathleen O’Hara
Trustees:	Barbara Ankenman Mark Dewart Paul Lemieux William Meyer Aaron Towle
Absent:	Eric Grenier
Also Present:	Joy Markee, Village Clerk Drew Irvin, Village Administrator Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator

Non-Agenda Items and Visitors

President O’Hara stated the COW allocates 15 minutes for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the COW on any matter not listed on the agenda.

There were no requests to address the COW.

Consideration of the Minutes from the February 25, 2019 and March 16, 2019 Committee-of-the-Whole Meetings

Trustee Lemieux moved to approve the February 25, 2019 and March 16, 2019 COW minutes as amended. Trustee Dewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

A Discussion Regarding Leaf Blowers and Powered Landscape Equipment Operation Regulations

At the invitation of President O’Hara, Village Administrator Irvin presented his memorandum to the Committee-of-the-Whole regarding leaf blower regulations including an overview of public comment received regarding this matter. At the conclusion of his presentation, President O’Hara stated that she did not desire to refer this to the Sustainability and Community Enhancement Ad Hoc Committee. She asked the Trustees how they would address this concern.

Trustee Lemieux stated that he was comfortable with the regulations as they exist today. If anything, he said, he would consider additional education of landscapers. He believes that the cost of other policy alternatives would be passed onto residents.

Trustee Dewart read from an extensive memorandum based on his research and provided the Village Clerk with a copy thereof. He discussed research and experiences regarding pollution, emissions standards, fugitive dust, municipal enforcement difficulties, and the time and cost differences incurred by avoiding the use of leaf blowers. He presented four alternatives for the COW's consideration:

1. Continue time-of-day restrictions for contractors and consider further restrictions on homeowners (who are currently subject to more permissive rules).
2. Limit use of gas leaf blowers to those manufactured since 2005 or 2007 (which corresponds to the phase-in of different emission standards for small motors).
3. Register contractors and provide copies of regulations in English and Spanish.
4. Publicize revised regulations and best practices.

In response to Trustee Dewart's remarks on enforcement, Village Administrator Irvin stated that his survey of North Shore communities found similar difficulties with enforcement. Village President O'Hara stated that almost all of them found these regulations difficult to enforce. Trustee Dewart stated that, in his research, communities rescinded their regulations because it was worse to unevenly enforce regulations than to not have regulations.

Trustee Towle stated that, if the Village is unwilling to fully enforce regulations, it should not consider them. He thanked Trustee Dewart for his research and stated that he learned a great deal from it. He still desires to do something, such as the manufacture year restrictions if those correspond to reduced noise. He talked about the difficulties in enforcing those restrictions.

In response to a question from Trustee Meyer, Village Administrator Irvin stated there was no decibel level in the code to define a noise nuisance.

Trustee Ankenman stated that the Village has only a few summer months to enjoy its outdoor spaces – during which landscapers are active. While a ban would cause less noise and less pollution, it would also increase costs, increase working hours, increase how long landscapers are present, and increase parking congestion. She wants the benefits of reducing noise and pollution and improving a homeowner's enjoyment of their property, but there are drawbacks as well. She reviewed the reports of inconsistent enforcement and stated that an unenforceable standard will only create more tension. She desires all of the good and none of the bad but doesn't know how to do that.

Trustee Meyer concurred with Trustee Ankenman's sentiment. He thanked Trustee Dewart for his research. He too wants the positive outcomes, but the devil is in the details. He is worried about citizens perhaps having to pay 40% more for landscaping. He also stated that some of the new electric leaf blower technology may even be louder than gasoline driven leaf blowers.

Trustee Towle asked what direction the COW is providing to Staff. Village President O'Hara said that, before deciding upon a course of action, she would provide an opportunity for public comment.

Village President O'Hara recognized Frank Mariani, a local landscape firm owner, who came forward to the podium. Mr. Mariani thanked everyone for their thoughtful discussion and research. He, too, does not like the sound of power equipment in neighborhoods such as leaf blowers, weed eaters, jackhammers, chain saws, and so on. He discussed trends towards electric lawn maintenance equipment but said that, as of now, most of it is not yet feasible even if Mariani Landscaping is testing some devices such as robotic mowers. He believes that much of the issue owes to landscape companies that use poor judgment with leaf blowers. He intends to meet with his landscape associates tomorrow to train them to be better neighbors and eliminate noise. He knows that he runs a big company and that it is easy to solve problems by regulating his firm; however, he believes that clients suffer the most when these types of regulations pass. He said that there was

considerable national attention on this subject, and that the technology will eventually come to help these issues. He also said that further restricting landscape operation hours would increase rush hour traffic. He concluded by saying that he was focused on doing his work the right way by being a good neighbor, and that companies like his will need to continue to stand up and do a better job.

Village President O’Hara recognized Pam Russell, resident, who came forward to the podium. She stated that she originated the request now being considered by the COW. She believes the COW’s conversation has been misdirected, as her request was to increase restrictions during months when there are no leaves on the ground to blow. She believes there is no valid need to use these during the summer months, and that these changes would improve the environment for Village residents.

Village President O’Hara recognized Christine Letchinger, resident, who came forward to the podium. She stated that leaf blowers are great but that these problems owe to overuse. The standards of gardening are such that everything has to be perfect, but it is not okay to manicure your lawn to the point that you upset your neighbors.

Village President O’Hara recognized Nancy Wick, resident, who came forward to the podium. She stated that she has seen five leaf blowers in operation on a 50-foot wide lot and cannot imagine the noise levels. She believes that this is unacceptable and should be stopped.

No one further requested to speak to the COW.

The COW resumed their discussion and, after a short time, requested that Mr. Mariani comment on the idea of a limited ban during summer months when leaves are not being shed. Mr. Mariani responded that residents are used to not having grass clippings clutter hardscapes. While he could use a broom to control these clippings, the cost would be substantially higher. Some clients of his pay 40-50% more for this service because they do not want leaf blowers in operation. He discussed the difficulties of enforcing a licensing requirement and, subsequently, said he would call a meeting of area landscape firms and Village Administrator Irvin to talk about how to be better neighbors and do a better job of self-policing these behaviors. He said he would take everything the COW and the audience has offered to try and be a better neighbor, and that he was happy to return and work with either the COW or Village Staff on solutions.

Village President O’Hara noted that the COW was exceeding its scheduled time and must adjourn. Mr. Mariani responded that he would schedule the meeting tomorrow. Village President O’Hara stated that her concern with regulation was that no community we found had done well at it. She is reticent to make anything that cannot be enforced and wants to look for other solutions. Mr. Mariani said that a letter to the community asking for help controlling this issue could be stirring.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed on a unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

R. Drew Irvin
Village Administrator