

## NOISE PRESENTATION TO LANDSCAPERS

5/11/10

I'm Sally Kelly, chair of the Town's Environment Committee.

This is David Lublin, who is on our Town Council and who also serves as part of our committee, sharing our work with the Council.

It's our job to protect the environment in our neighborhood. One of the things that people around here really value is peace and quiet. Residents have complained often about noise, and when we asked residents which type of noise was the problem there were two answers: Construction and Landscape machinery (especially leaf blowers).

Because construction noise only lasts while a project is ongoing, people are more willing to suffer through it, knowing that it will end in a few months. But landscape noise is a constant, pretty much ongoing for three seasons of every year.

We thought they needed to be addressed separately. Construction noise is addressed through the contact that contractors have with the staff during permitting and during construction. That's not what we are discussing today, but I didn't want you to think that building contractors were "off the hook". They're not.

We invited you today to help you understand resident concerns about landscape machinery noise and what you can do to help.

We fully appreciate the work you do. It helps keep our neighborhood beautiful and healthy. We understand the work approaches you take for efficiency's sake. Working quickly, moving around and in/out of Town, helps keep prices down for your clients

But I hope that you can and will try to understand the perspective of residents:

1. We are not all away at jobs during the day. Many work at home and have difficulty doing so with noise in the background. Especially with people who have to make a lot of telephone calls and use speaker phones.
2. There are many children and elderly in the Town. Mothers and caregivers have difficulty getting kids down for naps. When supervising kids outside, it's hard to communicate with loud machinery in the background. That can actually be a safety issue. Our retirees and seniors want to enjoy their homes and yards in peace during the day as well as at night.
3. Landscape noise is less temporary and LOUDER than you might think: Noise carries in this neighborhood. Residents are just as likely to be disturbed by noise coming from a block or two away as they are from noise next door. For our residents, this may mean that they're listening to several teams at work simultaneously. OR that the entire DAY is full of unwanted sound coming from different directions. We know that bad weather is really a problem for you. It can also especially be a problem for our residents when weather has kept people from working and a number of landscape teams are working at once in close proximity.
4. Many try to save energy by keeping windows open, but are forced to close them due to noise during the spring and fall and summers when you're working.

One more point that doesn't concern noise, but that I thought is worth mentioning: Leaf blowers create other problems aside from noise, especially when they are operated on highest settings: dust, pollen, weed seeds, and yard trash is sent into neighbor's yards and onto streets. Some landscapers are better than others at controlling where the stuff they blow up goes, and we ask you to pay attention to this too.

So: what can we do? In addition to the new quiet hours, over the last couple of months, we started educating residents to make them more sensitive to their neighbors. The result is that some residents are now eager to hire companies that will WORK more QUIETLY. Keep this in mind: YOUR HEALTH is at stake, too. Reducing noise and dust and pollution from gas engines is better for workers, too!

**We are asking you to take all the steps that you can to bring the noise level down.** We believe that many steps can be taken without seriously harming your bottom line.

**WE are, in fact, offering you the opportunity to IMPROVE your bottom line by giving some of you some free publicity. We want to let residents know which landscape contractors are prepared to get serious about reducing noise.**

Some people might even be willing to pay a bit more if you offer to work more quietly. Some environmentally-minded people want to hire companies that use less energy. Some with allergies and asthma might want to hire companies that send less dust and pollution into the air.

That is why we created this NOISE RESPONSIBLE PLEDGE that we've given you. We think that all of you can make some level of commitment, and we'll reward you if you do. The information will be posted on our Town Website and advertised in our Newsletter and online messages.

There are two parts to the pledge:

Part ONE: the LEAST you can do is required by law, or are steps you should take as best business practice. It's in your best interest to do this because along with the new ordinance, we have instituted Noise Education for residents. They now know more about the County Ordinance, the new Town ordinance and are more sensitive to the noise issue in general. Residents now have easy access to the County's and the Town's complaint forms on the Town website. The Town also has sent a schedule for the quiet hours and a copy of new complaint form to every household. The quiet hours will be enforced by the Town's police. By informing yourselves and your employees, you will avoid noise complaints and penalties.

Part TWO: taking further steps. The pledge also lists several other steps you can take in order to be Noise Responsible. You may check off and commit to as many of these as you choose when you sign the pledge. This information will appear on a spreadsheet on the Town website. Our residents will be able to make judgments about which companies really intend to take noise seriously by seeing which businesses committed to which practices, and will be able to make their hiring decisions based on the information.

We welcome your Questions and Comments:

We really want to hear what you think about this. If you have questions/comments on how the ordinance is working, or about the pledge, please contact the Town staff. We will be monitoring how the Quiet hours and education efforts are working. Hearing what you have to say will help us do a better job of that.

**We're trying to avoid making more rules and regulations for you to follow. We're trying to avoid having to write citations and penalties. We hope that this voluntary approach will make residents happier without harming your work effectiveness. A Win-win for all of us.**