

11-08-2023 - Reno City Council Meeting - Item # A.3 Public Comment

[illegible]



Public Comment <publiccomment@reno.gov>

Comment for RCC meeting Nov 8

1 message

Bari Levinson <barilevinson111@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 7, 2023 at 9:48 AM

To: Publiccomment@reno.gov

Hi Reno City Council: I have a public comment attached. I will also be presenting this comment in person at the beginning of the meeting.

Thank you,

Bari Levinson, Co-Chair Legislative Committee, Sierra Club



Transition Landscape Equipment.pdf

57K

SIERRA CLUB

Great Basin Group

To: Reno City Council Members and Mayor Shieve

Date: Nov 8, 2023

Re: Transitioning Landscape Equipment to Electric

Honorable Mayor Shieve and distinguished Council Members, my name is Bari Levinson, a volunteer with Sierra Club Great Basin Group. I am also a retired chemical engineer and physician, and have been living in Reno since 2020.

Of all the big issues in the world, my gravest concern is that of climate change, which is primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels. I fear that in the coming few decades we will be living in an environment and climate that is very different, and much less pleasant, than that to which we have been accustomed. I joined the Sierra Club to try to make a difference on this front.

As we all know, Reno and Las Vegas are two of the fastest warming cities in America. I feel that it is therefore incumbent upon all of us in Reno, Washoe County and the state of Nevada, to institute policies that move us expeditiously toward a greener economy, powered by clean renewable energy. Today, I would like to talk about one small area ripe for change: that of gas powered landscape equipment.

Gas-powered leaf blowers and other similar equipment run on 2-stroke engines. These engines are cheap, powerful, and extremely dirty and noisy. According to the EPA, emissions from landscape equipment reached 30 million tons of CO₂ in the US, which is more than the entire city of Los Angeles. (1)

They are extremely inefficient, spewing as much as 30% of their hydrocarbon fuel as unburned aerosols. These aerosols are extremely toxic, containing small amounts of benzene, toluene, xylene, and sometimes lead, all of which are toxic to human health, especially causing cancers. (2)(5). I always cringe when I am in proximity to these leaf blowers, both for my own health, but especially for the health of the landscapers who are exposed for hours upon hours each day.

This equipment also creates a large amount of volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, which are the major components of smog. (3) According to the California Air Resources Board, operating a commercial gas-powered leaf blower for one hour creates as much smog-forming pollution as driving a passenger car 1100 miles! (4) Smog has been linked to many human health effects including heart attacks, strokes, asthma and cancer (5).

The solution to all these problems is a switch to electric powered equipment. A study by TURF magazine estimates that electric equipment is more expensive initially, but saves money over the long run. They estimate a breakeven point of 2-3 years. (6) This may be a small price to pay to prevent the toxic health effects of their gas powered equipment. Many municipalities have banned gas-powered equipment including DC, Miami Beach, and Evanston Ill. California has banned them starting next year. (7)

I would like to encourage some discussion on this topic by the Reno City Council, so that we can begin to find ways to transition away from gas and toward electric powered landscape equipment. Some paths forward could include funding from the Nevada Clean Energy Fund or the IRA.

- 1: <https://grist.org/technology/lawn-equipment-pollution-report/>
- 2: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/substances/ToxSubstance.aspx?toxid=83#:~:text=Typically%2C%20gasoline%20contains%20more%20than,%2C%20xylene%2C%20and%20sometimes%20lead.>
- 3: https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/files/8238_info_photosmog.pdf
- 4: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/fact-sheets/sore-small-engine-fact-sheet>
- 5: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/banks.pdf>
- 6: <https://turfmagazine.com/gas-vs-electric-outdoor-power-equipment-real-world-costs/>
- 7: <https://grist.org/solutions/leaf-blower-bans-air-pollution-noise/>