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Board Matter

**Supervisor James Walkinshaw
Chairman Jeff McKay
Supervisor Walter Alcorn
Supervisor Dan Storck**

**Limiting the Purchase and Use of Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers
on County Properties**

Background

Mr. Chairman, as you're aware, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers presents a number of problems, most prominently their extreme and penetrating noise levels and the highly toxic emissions from the out-of-date two-stroke engines that they often use. Many gas-powered leaf blowers reach noise levels of 65 to 80 decibels at 50 feet away, enough to cause permanent hearing damage and/or tinnitus. Their engines are incredibly inefficient, releasing as much as 30% of oil/gasoline mixture they burn as aerosol. They emit 23 times more carbon monoxide than a Ford pickup truck.

This year, Supervisor Alcorn requested an [accounting](#) of how many gas-powered leaf blowers are owned and operated by County agencies. Additionally, the Board's recently-adopted Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan ([CECAP](#)) calls for the transition to electric vehicles and leaf blowers to achieve the County's emissions reduction goals. Fairfax County Public Schools have begun a pilot project at three schools to test the feasibility of switching to electric-powered tools on all of the district's 1,700 mowable acres.

County agencies work with the Department of Procurement and Material Management (DPMM) on product specifications when making purchases of leaf blowers. Agencies also place orders independently for products, and some agencies use third-party contractors for landscaping services. Due to the multifaceted nature of the acquisition and use of leaf blowers,

a countywide policy would be necessary in order to institute the changes across departments and to express our commitment to a cleaner and quieter County.

Proposed Action

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Board direct staff to take the following actions:

- The County Executive shall report back to the Board with a plan to discontinue the purchase of gas-powered leaf blowers as soon as is practical and;
- Relevant agencies to report back to the Board with a plan to update their procurement processes to incentivize electric use by awarding extra points to contractors which use electric leaf blowers and landscaping equipment

Finally, to encourage County residents to join us in this effort, I move that the Office of Environmental & Energy Coordination, the Office of Public Affairs, and the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services work to inform residents about the environmental hazards of gas-powered leaf blowers and the alternatives to grass and leaf collection. This work would include an announcement of what the County will be doing to limit and phase out gas-powered leaf blowers, as well as promotional pieces to be posted on the relevant County websites where information about leaf collection and lawn maintenance is listed.