

**Village of Woodstock**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**June 13, 2023**  
**6:30 pm**  
**Town Hall & Zoom**  
**Minutes**

**Draft minutes are subject to approval.**

**Present:** Chair Seton McIlroy, Jeffrey Kahn, Brenda Blakeman, Bill Corson, Gabe DeLeon, Eric Duffy, Nikki Nourse, Isabel Lescure, Tom Ayres, Jill Davies, Michael Caduto, Tess Hunter, Josh Lescure, Tom Weschler, Beth Finlayson, Donnie Surdoval, Karen Pearsons, David Yatim, Hayley Bauer, Gina Auriema, Jenevra Wetmore, Greg Fullerton, Morgan Brophy, Steven Bauer, Randy Richardson, Owen Tarleton, Lauren Dorsey

**A. Call to order**

1. Chair McIlroy called the Village Trustees Meeting of June 13, 2023, to order at 6:30 pm.

**B. Citizen comments**

1. Mr. Weschler stated that 500 people use the Ottauquechee River Trail every week. The project for a ramp will allow many more people to enjoy the trail. He is upset that the Village is considering purchasing the parcel of land.
  - a. A letter from Mr. Richardson is attached.

**C. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda**

1. Additions
  - a. Trees & Seeds refund
  - b. Permit request for East End Park
  - c. Interview – Lauren Dorsey

**D. Manager's report**

**1. General report**

- a. Mark Hunter would like to use asphalt to repair some cracks and bumps on Village sidewalks. He believes asphalt would be better and cheaper.

**2. Financial report**

- a. Mr. Duffy shared a report that showed a small, estimated surplus for the end of the year.

#### **E. Police Chief's report**

1. Kirsten Murphy was promoted to Corporal. Chief Blish introduced Officer Tarleton. They recently hired Elizabeth Turco as a full-time officer. Sergeant Swanson received the Vermont American Legion Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. The meter revenue was \$10,504.77.

#### **F. Lauren Dorsey Interview**

Motion: by Mr. Kahn to appoint Lauren Dorsey to the Conservation Commission.

Seconded: by Mr. DeLeon.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

#### **G. Permits**

##### **1. Driveway permit – 41 South Street – Yatim**

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to approve the driveway permit for 41 South Street as submitted by Mr. Yatim.

Seconded: by Mr. DeLeon.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

##### **2. East End Park permit**

Motion: by Mr. Kahn to approve the East End Park permit for Carolyn Barnwell Coaching LLC for an event on 6/21/23 pending all fees are paid and there is a Certificate of Insurance.

Seconded: by Mr. DeLeon.

Vote: 4-0-1, passed. (Mr. Kahn for, Ms. Blakeman for, Mr. Corson for, Mr. DeLeon for, Chair McIlroy abstained).

#### **H. Old business**

##### **1. Trees & Seeds – refund**

- a. Administrative

##### **2. Bathrooms & buses during foliage**

- a. There are still ongoing conversations. There are no definite solutions yet.

##### **3. Continuation of leaf blower discussion**

- a. Woodstock agreed to a Climate Energy Resolution to commit the transition of Woodstock to net zero greenhouse gas emission by 2030. The goal is to have community wide electricity use. Therefore, a full transition of the electricity sector to clean, renewable energy. The Town and Village of Woodstock Comprehensive Plan Energy Chapter states that the goal is to transition from existing use of fossil fuel to renewable sources. Operating a gas powered leaf blower for one hour can create as much smog-forming pollution as driving a Toyota Camry 1,100 miles. Leaf blowers use 2-stroke engine fuel which is a gas mixture that is especially toxic compared to automobile emissions.
- b. No decisions were made regarding leaf blowers in the Village. This will be discussed more in the fall.

#### **4. Bookstock restroom decision**

Motion: by Mr. Kahn to approve putting porta-potties in the two far right parking spaces behind the courthouse.

Seconded: by Mr. Corson.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

#### **5. Overnight parking ban**

- a. They discussed banning parking from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am on Mountain Avenue. There would be a fine if anyone did. The main problem area is in front of Faulkner Park. Chief Blish will create an ordinance that they can approve next month.

### **I. New business**

#### **1. St. James Episcopal Church – 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Church Fair**

Motion: by Mr. Kahn to approve the 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Church Fair held in front of St. James Episcopal Church.

Seconded: by Mr. DeLeon.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

#### **2. FY24 Zoning permit fees**

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to approve the FY24 Zoning permit fees as presented by Mr. Bauer.

Seconded: by Mr. Kahn.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

**J. Other business – none.**

**K. Executive session to discuss personnel**

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to move into executive session to discuss personnel at 8:22 pm.

Seconded: by Mr. Kahn.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

The Trustees left executive session and resumed the public meeting at 8:35 pm.

**L. Minutes**

**1. 5/2/23 joint minutes**

**2. 5/9/23 minutes**

**3. 5/31/23 joint minutes 1**

**4. 5/31/23 joint minutes 2**

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to approve the minutes for 5/2/23, 5/9/23, and both minutes from 5/31/23 as presented.

Seconded: by Mr. Kahn.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

**M. Adjournment**

Motion: by Chair McIlroy to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Seconded: by Mr. DeLeon.

Vote: 5-0-0, passed.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Nikki Nourse*

## Correcting the record - Ottauquechee River Trail ORT Village Trustees Meeting 6/13/23

I am here to set the record straight with regard to the work carried out on the 1.23-acre parcel on Maxham Meadow Way. Part of this Village-approved work was described in your recent minutes as “cleared vegetation” that made Woodstock ineligible for the WISPr grant. The minutes also indicated that the funds would only be reallocated by the State if “the riparian barrier is replanted”.

This description and the related assumptions are inaccurate, and exacerbate the misrepresentations made by the State official who shut the project down and by others in the Vermont Standard. No one told us about the WISPr grant and related land deal or about any State-related requirements. Our plans included some planting new native species, but there is nothing good that would come from “replanting”. The vast majority of the cut vegetation was invasive knotweed which is now vigorously re-growing every day. It is important to understand that the project, including the removal of vegetation, was clearly outlined in our application to the Village Design and Review Board (an application that was praised by more than one Board member as exemplary).

As our application explicitly explains, the work in progress was planned with two primary goals in mind:

1. To provide a universally accessible trail in order to make it possible for virtually all Woodstock citizens and visitors to use the first portion of this unique riverside trail.
2. To remove the dead/hazard trees, and enough vegetation to make it possible to manage the infestation of invasives – primarily knotweed.

**Our ORT Committee explained these goals and our work in more detail in a letter to the editor in the Vermont Standard - copied below for more context and explanation.** The most relevant section is highlighted in bold on page 2:

*Last week, Tom Ayers wrote an article for this publication with the headline Accessible River Trail Project Mired in Regulatory Weeds. While Mr. Ayers clearly did some research, the article is missing some important facts about the Ottauquechee River Trail (ORT) and this project.*

*We are disappointed by the unfounded criticism of ORT’s universal access project and the improvements ORT has made to date to protect the parcel of land on Maxham Meadow Way where the Ottauquechee River Trail begins. With limited funds and many hours of hard work, ORT volunteers have built a trail that is loved by the Woodstock community while also significantly improving this neglected property.*

*Over the years, this small piece of land has suffered numerous conservation injustices — partly to provide necessities to the Town of Woodstock, including the installation of sewer lines and a water treatment plant. These are the realities of balancing conservation with sustainable development – we cannot create an ideal world, but good intentions, reasonable regulation and transparent communication can lead us to positive compromises and outcomes.*

*It may not be obvious now, but the entire riverbank running from this property past the Woodstock Water Treatment Plant is a giant man-made stone riprap berm built by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960s. At about the same time, large sewer lines were installed that run through this parcel and along the berm to the treatment plant. As you hike the trail, you can see three manhole covers. While we can and have worked with these sewer realities, they have diminished the natural beauty and riparian and floodplain qualities of the land. They have also affected the vegetation and the creation and sustainability of the trail.*

*As Phil Robinson shared in a letter last week, a failing culvert that channels water off of Mt. Peg and Route 4 led to years of somewhat polluted water regularly flooding the area and preventing the natural growth of trees and other*

vegetation on the East End of this parcel. Similar to East End Park - which was at one point declared a brownfield - the upper part of this property was also used as a dump for years, and continues to sometimes be used illicitly.

*Partly because this parcel is an altered, vulnerable and challenged landscape, the 1.23 acres have also been overwhelmed by invasive species, especially since hurricane Irene. There are a number of problematic invasive plants, and unfortunately, a significant portion of the property has been overrun by knotweed. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources tells us that “knotweed outcompetes and replaces native vegetation, and causes many problems for native plants, insect populations and waterways.” Knotweed was a significant obstacle to the creation of the ORT, and volunteers have spent countless hours over many years researching, soliciting expert advice, and attending workshops in our ongoing efforts to control this problematic invasive infestation.*

*Most of our hundreds of volunteer hours went toward a losing battle against knotweed, and it became obvious to those of us who love the trail and the river that we had to do something different. Based on our research, we decided on mechanical rather than chemical control of knotweed, particularly in this riparian zone. Regular cutting for 5-10 years is one of the few proven methods of controlling knotweed, and we had to clear out dead and dying trees and other invasives to make the repeated annual cuttings possible. We chose not to dig as this would have only spread the knotweed and destroyed valuable native species, including the beautiful ferns. Therefore, we cut at ground level, and the quick and dramatic return of both the ferns and the knotweed can be observed at the site today.*

*We were also determined to foster the recovery of this land with the selective cutting of the knotweed followed by a strategic planting of a mix of grasses and native species to eventually replace the knotweed infestation — similar (with much less funding) to the impressive efforts at East End Park. During the mechanical clearing the process, we saved as many living native trees as possible – in stark contrast to the repeated implications that we kept only “specimen” trees. The reality of our selective cutting can easily be seen in before and after photos.*

*The bottom line is that we enthusiastically support the desire to protect this property, and we have been diligently working to do so for years. We went through the town approval process for this project, even receiving praise from members of the Village Design and Review Board for our well-documented application. It is also important to note that, despite multiple inquiries, we have yet to receive any indication from relevant State authorities that we need additional state approval or permits. In fact, we have been told that we need to work with the town processes.*

*We are convinced that the ORT and our recent efforts are in Woodstock’s best interests and compatible with both conservation and public access goals. We also believe that managed access and long-term attention to the property, including the management of invasives, will help ensure that more Woodstock residents and visitors will understand and appreciate the value of riparian zones and floodplains. In fact, before the work was shut down, we were in the process of planning a related educational sign/panel along the trail. Unfortunately, we are not aware of any management plan or funding for the property if it is purchased by the Village/Town of Woodstock.*

*While we have been disappointed by unfair and uniformed criticism, we remain hopeful that open communication and cooperation can get things back on track. Ideally, we will be able to restart our work and receive permission to continue maintaining the trail (currently limited to mowing the field sections). If we all start to communicate and act more transparently and collaboratively, we are convinced there can be a better future for the shared interests of the Ottauquechee River, the ORT and Woodstock.*

Jerry Fredrickson      Phil Robertson  
Wendy Jackson        Tom Weschler  
Randy Richardson  
Ottauquechee River Trail Volunteers



## Photographic Evidence – Before and After Photos

Notice the number and location of trees before the project began:



Satellite photo from Vermont Parcel Viewer (2020)

And then after the project was completed:



Drone photo taken 6/10/23



## **An East End Vision**

Includes both public access with an accessible trail, and floodplain and riparian zone conservation.

## **The example of East End Park**

Described by Sustainable Woodstock as a “restored floodplain and riparian zone”.



Drone photo taken 6/10/23

## **The 1.23 Acre Parcel**

Virtually all of the understory vegetation in this photo is knotweed, but management and planting of native species and grasses similar to East End Park is included in our application and planning.



Drone photo taken 6/10/23



## The Imperative of Knotweed Management

This effort is motivated by science and a shared vision to protect this land and the river. We were repeatedly told by numerous experts that knotweed has invaded this property and is a problematic invasive, particularly in riparian zones. The following is some of the peer-reviewed research that provides evidence of the negative impact of knotweed on a floodplain.

**Here is a brief excerpt from the abstract of research published in the journal *Water* (in a special edition called *Streambank Erosion: Monitoring, Modeling and Management*) by Dr. Laura Toran and Emily Arnold from Temple University in April of 2018:**

*Erosion calculations based on bank pins suggest greater erosion in reaches dominated by knotweed than those dominated by trees. For a 9.5-month monitoring period, there was 29 cm more erosion on banks that were also incised, and 9 cm more erosion in banks with little incision. Turbidity responses to storm events were also higher (77 vs. 54 NTU (nephelometric turbidity unit)) in reaches with knotweed, although this increase was found when the reach dominated by knotweed was also incised. **Thus, this study linked knotweed to increased erosion using multiple methods.***

**And here is a brief excerpt from research published in a journal called *River and Research Applications* in 2020 by Brian Colleran, Shaw Nozaki and Rafaela Retamal:**

*Once established, knotweed can displace riparian plants, meaning that soil stability once provided by displaced roots is lost, carrying significant knock-on implications for watershed management. We propose that knotweed rhizomes both displace roots and the structure they provide to soil, and also amplify bank-erosion forces, especially during floods. Further, erosive forces create propagules, with larger flow events creating larger numbers of propagules and providing the vector for short- and long-distance downstream spread within the watershed. Induced erosion is therefore the main driver of knotweed invasions along waterways. As some hydrological regimes shift towards more frequent and severe storm events in response to climate change, positive feedback loops may develop in these regions between existing knotweed populations, sudden riverbank failure, and increased flood-related damage, with presumably significant impacts on riparian infrastructure. **The continued spread of this invasive could have significant riparian flood resiliency consequences if left unchecked, and mindful action to control these plants is likely to be beneficial financially, socially, and ecologically within any invaded watershed.***

**Final comment – please use this opportunity to educate and engage the public about caring for our open spaces**

Excerpt from my letter to the editor of the Vermont Standard about the potential purchase of this parcel:

*I hope the Village Trustees plan to solicit more public input before they make a purchase that will inevitably reshape the ORT and the Village. If this (parking) is the primary goal, it is difficult to imagine how the interests of the Village and State align, as it seems unlikely that the WISPr grant guidelines would support increased parking on a conserved property.*

*I struggle to understand why Woodstock is seeking to add more public land given that there has been resistance to other additions and caring for all of the properties we currently own. Not long ago, Faulkner Park was offered to Woodstock at no cost — and with an over \$800,000 endowment for maintenance. However, this generous gift was declined, and we have since been told that there are no funds available for even a part-time town employee dedicated primarily to the care of our parks and conserved lands.*

*Why would Woodstock consider adding another property — one that likely comes with many restrictions and responsibilities — before we are willing and able to fully support what we have now? The voters minimally deserve a full explanation and further opportunity for input. — Randy Richardson - 36 River Street, Woodstock, VT*

# Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers



Sustainable Woodstock

# Woodstock Climate Resolution and Goals

- **Climate Emergency Resolution** Commit to transition Woodstock to net zero greenhouse gas emission by 2030
- **Ready for 100** Community-wide Electricity Use; a full transition of the electricity sector to clean, renewable energy
- **Town/Village of Woodstock, Comprehensive Plan Energy Chapter** Transition from existing use of fossil fuel to renewable source





# Carbon Emissions

- Operating a gas-powered leaf blower for an hour can create as much smog-forming pollution as driving a Toyota Camry 1,100 miles.
- Leaf blowers use 2-stroke engine fuel—a gas-oil mixture that is especially toxic compared to automobile emissions.

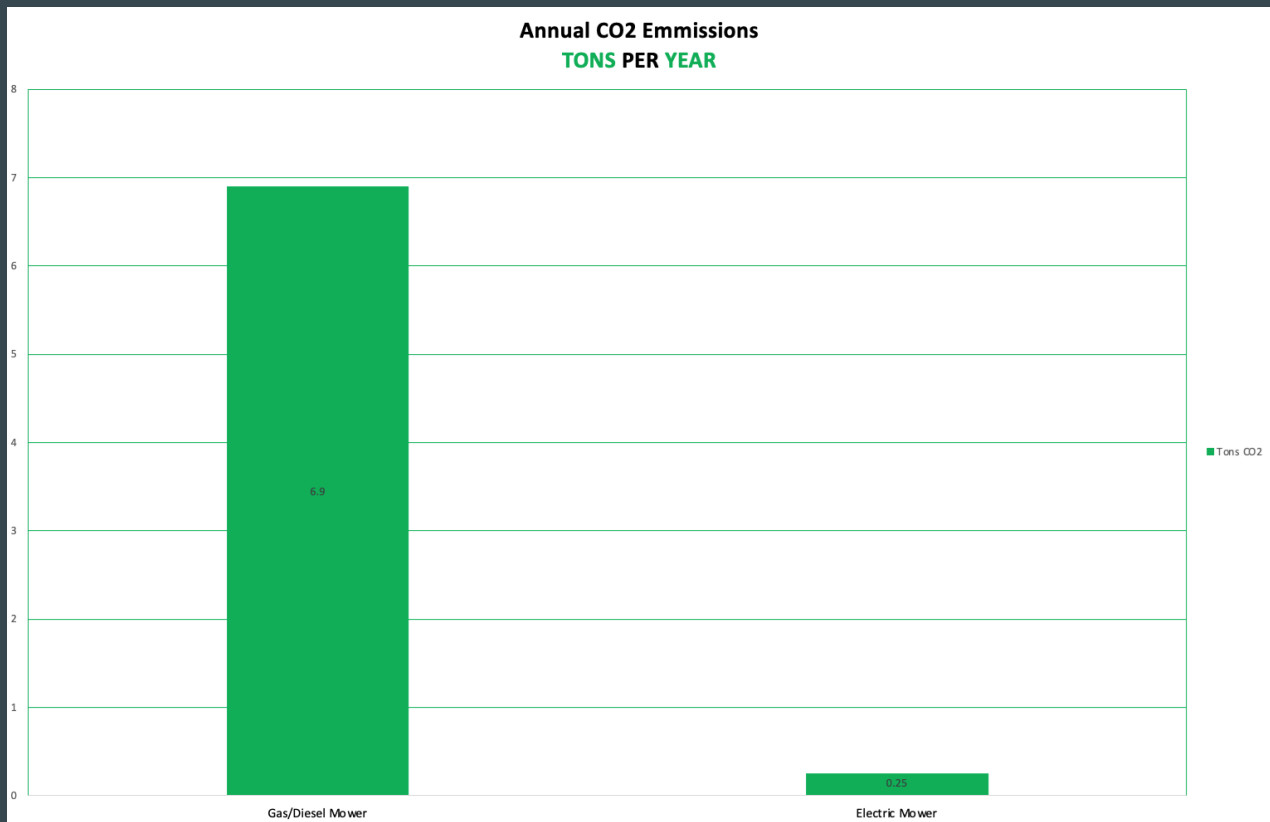
**POLLUTION  
FROM  
1  
HOUR**



**=**



**POLLUTION  
FROM  
1,100  
CAR MILES**



# Noise Pollution

## How hearing loss occurs.

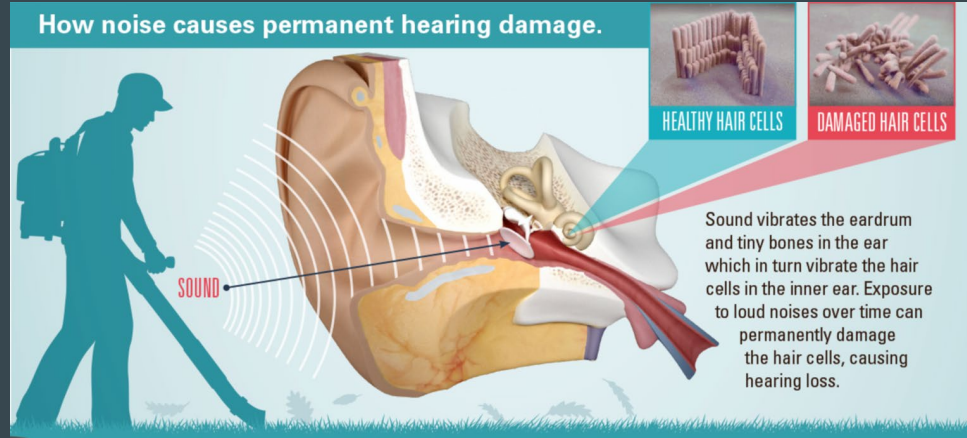
Common noises can be loud.





# Hearing Loss

- General ambient noise in a home is 40-50 decibels, whereas the decibel range of a leaf blower is 100-115; it is even as high as 90 decibels from 50 feet away.
- 2 hours of operating a leaf blower— commonly above 85 decibels— can cause hearing damage. 85 decibels is the level at which extended exposure can cause hearing damage.



# Pollutants

- Hydrocarbons
- Nitrous oxides (components of smog)
- Carbon dioxide
- VOCs (volatile organic compounds)

Fine Particulates such as:

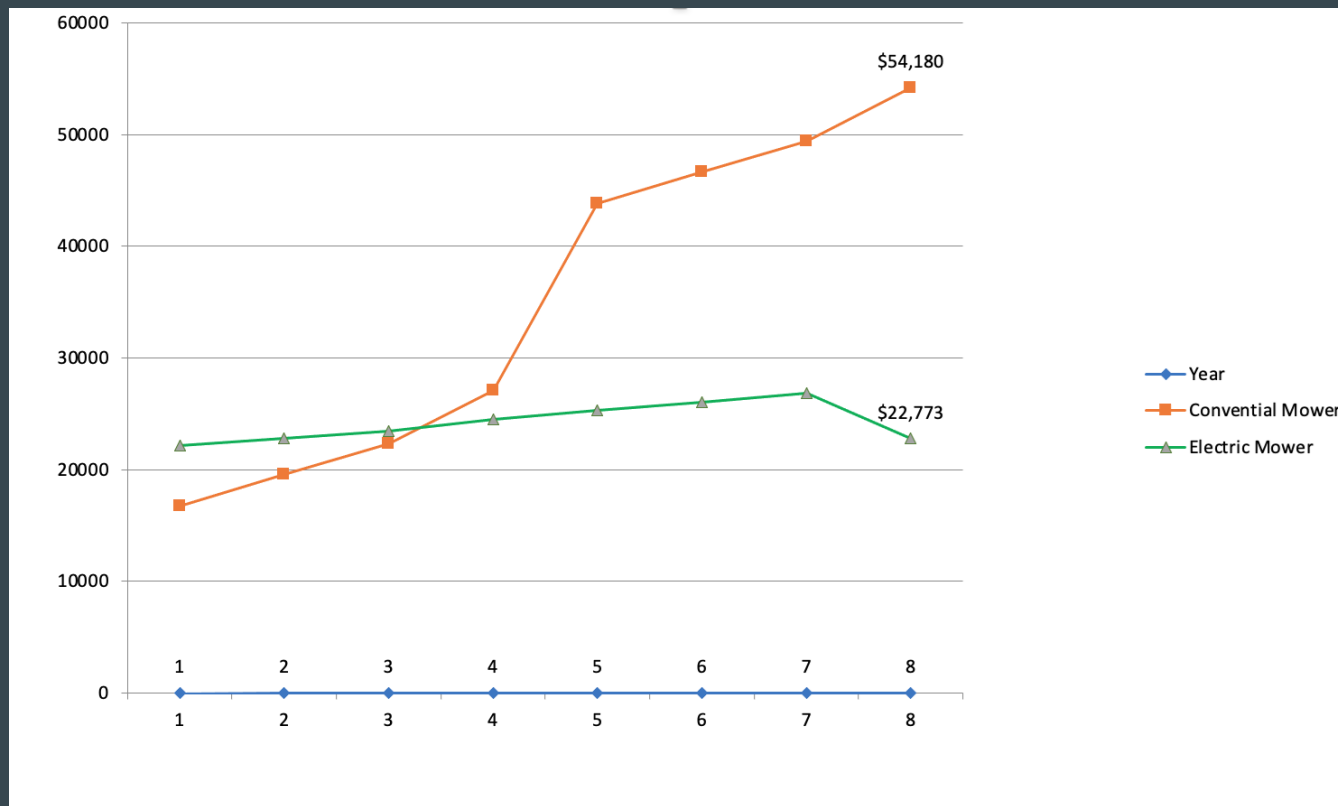
- Dust
- Pollen
- Mold
- Animal feces
- Heavy metals
- Herbicides and pesticides

Fine particulate matter can remain airborne for long periods of time, infiltrate buildings, and penetrate the body.





# Life-cycle Cost Comparison Gas/Diesel Mower vs. Electric Mower





# Ordinances in Other Cities and Towns

- From Memorial to Labor Day only electric/battery powered leaf blowers operating at 65 decibels or less can be operated. Gas leaf blowers are permitted in outside of that window but only machines under 65 decibels.
- California has a ban on all sales of small gas engines beginning in 2024, including lawnmowers, leaf blowers, weed whackers, etc
- DC has banned gas-powered leaf blowers