

Dear Quogue Residents,

Many of you have called the Village Office asking about a survey received from “Quieter Quogue” asking for opinions on the noise level generated by gas powered leaf blowers. This survey was not initiated by me or anyone else with the Village government, but one of the residents behind the survey did file a FOIL (New York Freedom of Information Law) request for the email address list we use to communicate with residents. That is a public record and has to be furnished upon request. Note that it is simply a list of email addresses that are not associated with any name, physical or snail mail address or telephone number.

On the topic of gas-powered leaf blowers, I have received a small number of requests over the years (is that about to change?) suggesting that they be banned and have done a fair amount of research on the subject. Here is a response that I sent to a resident in 2020:

“Over the years, I have received a handful or two of communications promoting a ban on the use of gas-powered, hand-held leaf blowers but not the other equipment referred to in your email. I have researched the issue periodically and would be glad to lend you my file. I am aware that some communities throughout the country have enacted bans. The Village of Southampton did so last summer. I have written the landscaping companies asking them to voluntarily limit their use of the gas-powered leaf blowers.”

“My personal bottom line is that I do not favor such a law. I believe that noise caused by leaf blowers is a relatively high class problem that adversely impacts mainly small businesses and their workers. Quogue is also relatively more spacious than most locations that have enacted bans. Enforcement would be difficult since people would have to be caught in the act, which I am sure would be frustrating to residents. In time, technology will improve the problem with quieter equipment and better batteries.”

“If someone wants to promote such a law in Quogue, I believe that they would have to do and present the research on the problem and the alternatives and garner significant public support from knowledgeable people.”

Further guidance that I gave to a summer resident last year asking about a ban on all gas-powered equipment was:

“Your task is to convince me and the other trustees that your ideas are good ones that should be enacted into law. A written presentation would be the first step. The more detail you provide the better. It is easy to say that people prefer less noise. Of course they do. How great is the reduction? What is the cost of limiting it? On whom does it fall? How do they manage that? What if they do business inside and outside of Quogue? How would the transition work? Does the equipment work adequately given the demands that would be placed on it. What does it cost compared to other equipment? It is easy to say the machines pollute. How much? What is the incremental impact in Quogue? Is it harmful? What steps have environmental regulatory agencies taken to control it? Should the Village of Quogue make judgments about pollution without any expertise?”

The survey seems to be a start to this process.

On another subject, we have had reports of a few scams. People in Quogue are generally pretty astute, but living here can give a sense of security, and it does not hurt to be reminded to keep your thinking cap on if confronted with a weird request. Here is an incident that happened locally: An individual claiming to be from the Quogue Police called a potential victim directing her to empty her bank account

and place money on cash cards. This caller was able to disguise his number to show up as our actual police line (631-653-4791). Masking a phone number is a commonly used tactic by scammers. Do not be fooled by this trick. If you have any doubt about with whom you are speaking, hang up and call the police department to verify any information. Scammers cannot intercept incoming calls even though they are able to disguise their number to make it look like the police department. Additionally, any direction to place money on a cash card should be a huge red flag for a potential scam attempt. (Happily, the potential victim in this case was wise to these tricks and did not relinquish any money.)

Also, lately thieves are assuming the identities of actual individuals and use phony addresses to file false unemployment claims. Apparently, they are able to access the money before the verification process is completed. There were four instances of this type of theft reported in this week's Southampton Press alone. Be alert to report any mysterious, unexplained notices you get to the Police Department.

Your real estate value seems to be going up. The median sale price in 2020 for the so-called Quogue Group was reported in the Southampton Press to be up 64.97% from the prior year to \$2,425,000. That used to be regarded as good news. Nowadays, the message seems more mixed, to me at least.

Enjoy the long weekend.

Peter Sartorius
Mayor