

University Park Town Council Committee on  
Policy, Rules, and Municipal Structure

Notes from the Wednesday, March 30, 2016 meeting  
7:00 to 8:30 pm  
held at Town Hall

Attendees: Councilmember Linda Verrill (Chair), Mayor Len Carey, Councilmember Bradlee Hess (committee member), Councilmember Joe Thompson (committee member) (departed 7:30 pm), Councilmember Roy Alvarez, Councilmember Jim Gekas, Ginny May, Richard Scorza, Sarah Elder, Katherine Alter, Foster Lott, Jane Horvath

1. Discussion on complaints regarding noise from gas leaf blowers.

Complaints:

- Disturb the peace – cannot sit on deck to enjoy birds and quiet; cannot work at home with the windows open; must retreat to the basement for conference calls.
- Health issues: hearing loss of equipment users, pollution in the form of exhaust and suspended particulates which can lodge in the lungs; dust can cause allergies.
- Leaf blower noise can go on for hours because landscapers are moving from house to house.
- Some landscaping companies have 2 or 3 leaf blowers going at the same time.
- Leaf blowers are worse than mowers because the sound goes up and down.

Ideas for solutions:

- Ban gas-powered leaf blowers and impose fines for usage.
- Use Battery powered lawn equipment. Some companies use battery powered equipment. Battery-powered equipment sound peaks at 67 db.
- Ocean City has decibel limits; can call police and they will measure; homeowner can be fined.
- Register gas blowers at town hall. Only so many companies allowed in town at any one time.

- Structure a town ordinance that will achieve the same effect as a ban.
- Make noise rules more restrictive.
- For gas blowers, restrict the hours for use.
- Ban on blowing leaves or debris into the street.
- Check with Maryland Municipal League for ideas
- Invite Metropolitan Landscape for a discussion about using quieter equipment
- Ask the Green Team to help provide a solution
- Town of UP should secure a discount for purchase of electric equipment at reduced cost
- Lawn Maintenance Fair on Earth Day

Discussion will continue at the next committee meeting.

## 2. Discussion on changing allowable backyard fence heights

Discussion began with conversation about the unsystematic application of exceptions to the town ordinance requirements for fence heights. Sometimes having a dog that can jump the fence is an allowable exception and sometimes it is not – with no differences in context or circumstances between the applicants.

A suggestion was made to allow exceptions for dogs, in line with the county. This was countered by another suggestion to specify in the ordinance that dogs do not qualify for exceptions. There was agreement that six foot fences should be allowed if people want them.

Discussion will continue at the next committee meeting.