



Pick up after your pets

Left on sidewalks or lawns, pet waste washes directly into storm drains and enters our local waterways in the form of raw, unfiltered sewage. You'd be scandalized if human waste was going into our waterways, wouldn't you? So do your part as a pet owner by scooping, bagging and trashing. And, yes, this goes for cats too, if your feline uses the great outdoors as a bathroom. It makes for better water quality as well as cleaner sidewalks and happier neighbors. Thank you!!

Learn more at <https://www.hrwc.org/petwaste>



Fun spring!



Spring reminders from Maintenance and Landscaping Staff

- Lawn crews are now out in full force and have noticed a lot of pet feces in the fronts and backs of units.
The Whitewood area is especially bad!
- Is your hose spigot leaking? Please let us know by calling 971-0233.
- If your window flower box is in need of repair, let us know now before planting season.
- Did you check the batteries in smoke detectors last month?
- Realtor/For Sale Signs: 'For Sale' signs are required to be within your unit's garden bed, not in the common area

In the Garden

April 2024

By: Kristan LaFleur

Bulbs are flowering, trees are popping, and the birds are singing... Spring has arrived!!!! With early Spring comes rain, frost and warmer weather.

Just remember, with a milder winter come more ticks and mosquitoes.

Things to do Early April for all of our Gardeners

Prepare your containers.

Clean used pots with one part bleach to nine parts water and rinse thoroughly.

Be sure the pots you plan to use have drainage holes in the sides or bottom.

If you haven't done your spring cleanup yet and the weather allows it, do it now. Remove winter protection (evergreen boughs, mulch, etc.)

gradually as growth appears, but be prepared to protect tender plants in case of a sudden April frost.



Things to do in Mid-April

Thin, divide, and transplant overcrowded perennials, herbs, and groundcovers. Daylilies, irises, Hosta, ornamental grasses, and other perennials can be divided when they reach 2" to 3" in height.

Pull weeds as soon as they begin to appear. Weeds are smaller and easier to pull during the rainy season. Be careful not to disturb perennials coming up in the garden. If you're not sure if something is a weed, let it grow until you're sure.



Things to do in Late April

Cut woody perennials such as Buddleia (Butterfly Bush), Hydrangeas and Caryopteris (Blue Mist Shrub).

Begin to harden-off pots of the things you grew from seed earlier this spring. Put them outside for a few hours every day in a shady but bright location and bring them in at night. Gradually introduce them to more sunlight. Do this for at least one week before planting them in the garden.

Stay on top of the weather forecast for your area and be ready to protect plants from sudden frost using row cover material or mulch.

Board Beat: Marching into Spring

Submitted by David Brassfield, Member of the Board

For our Village Board and Standing Committees, March was a month of culminations, preparations, and business as usual. Here are the highlights.

2024–25 Budget and Monthly Co-Owner Fees. Members of the Board and our Management staff put in long hours throughout February and March examining anticipated Village expenses and hammering out a budget for the coming fiscal year. Every effort was made to keep increases to an absolute minimum. Though costs have continued to rise on multiple fronts, we were able to minimize their impact and to hold fee increases to 4.6% beginning in May. The new budget and schedule of fees will be mailed out at the beginning of April.



Annual Meeting and Board of Directors Election. This year's Annual Meeting of the Association is scheduled for Monday, May 6 at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be held virtually. Three of the five seats on the Board of Directors are up for election this year. Nominations will be accepted through April 12 and ballots will be sent out shortly afterward. Deadline for returning ballots to the Office: 5:00 pm on the day of the meeting. Two Village residents will conduct the count with oversight by Office staff.

Service Contracts. The following agreements were approved:

- **Myler & Szczypka.** Annual audit of Association financial statements.
- **HomeSpec BasementFix.** 2387 Jeanne: foundation stabilization. Total: \$23,860.95.
- **RTA Roofing.** 2328 Fernwood: monitoring roof structure strengthening work to be performed in conjunction with solar panel installation. Total: not to exceed \$1,500.00.
- **Superior Mow and Snow.** Removal of large collapsed Willow Tree behind the 2800 block of Pittsfield. Total: \$3,500.00.

Maintenance and Modification Committee Report. The following business came before the Committee:

- **Routine Approvals:** Windows replacements for units on Pittsfield and Parkwood. Sump Pump installation on Parkwood.
- **Outdoor Storage Units:** Discussion resumed on possible changes to our current specification. The Committee is not yet ready to draft a proposed replacement for consideration by the Board.

Landscape Committee Report. The March meeting agenda was jam-packed. Highlights:

- **Co-Owner Requests:** Nine separate requests for shrub and tree removals and replacements were considered and approved.
- **Replacement Landscaping for Plantings Lost to Foundation Repairs:** The following units are on the list: 2656 Whitewood, 3425 Edgewood, 2329 Parkwood, 3431 Norwood, and 2640 Whitewood.
- **Tree Nursery Ground Cover:** Rye grass will be sown as a temporary cover this season.
- **Flower Give-Away:** Scheduled for Saturday, May 18, 11:00–1:00.

Next Board Meeting. Wednesday, April 24, at 6:00 pm, in person at the Village Office or remotely online. Log-in information will be provided via email before the meeting. All Village residents are welcome to attend. Complete minutes of the March meeting will be posted on line after acceptance at the April meeting.

City to Condo Associations: “You’ll Figure It Out!”



No Waivers for the Gas-Fueled Lawn Blower Prohibition



Reporting and Commentary by David Brassfield

Over the past two months our Board and Office staff have been working with our long-time landscaping service provider Les Crots to develop a plan for bringing the Village into compliance with the City’s recently enacted ban on gas-powered lawn and leaf blowers.

Though initial public announcements in December gave many to understand that the law’s provisions would be phased in over a period of four years, in truth large residential developments like ours with extensive plantings of trees, shrubs, and flower gardens bordering large expanses of grassy lawn have been denied the time to respond to the new requirements in a phased, orderly manner. The law says that less than two months from now we must cease the use of our gas blowers for clean-up after mowing during the entire summer lawn care season.

The solution the City has mandated requires the purchase and use of battery-powered blowers going forward. But as we have shopped for such new equipment and field tested high-end commercial models, it has become apparent that for lawn blowers the technology is not sufficiently advanced to make compliance possible without the investment of tens of thousands of dollars in new equipment, the hiring of additional lawn care staff, and the establishment of a ridiculously complicated system of driving around and swapping out blower batteries as they go dead after an average of just 15 minutes of use by a crew who must fan out through our large property to clear miles of walkways and porches after mowing.

At City Council’s regular biweekly meeting on Monday, March 18, a contingent from the Village went before council members to ask that the gas blower law be amended to make compliance possible for our community and the many others like us elsewhere in the City. Our Board president, Ellen Johnson spoke as did our service provider Les Crots and our Sustainability Group convener Su Hansen. They were joined by Simone Taylor representing Newport West, a large condo complex like ours with extensive grounds and walkways to maintain. Several options were proposed: (1) an extended phase-in period of several years to allow battery technology to develop and become a practical choice for large-scale lawn care operations, (2) a time-limited waiver to essentially accomplish the same thing, or (3) an outright variance that would recognize the minimal benefit that a switch from gas to battery would bring in relation to the huge costs involved in doing so.

To date, their efforts appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Except for our own council representatives Aysha Ghazi Edwin and Travis Radina, who pushed similar amendments even before the law was passed back in December, all but one of the other council members has shown the least interest in correcting the failures of their new law. The attitude seems to be “we’re proud of the ordinance, don’t tell us about your challenges, we don’t want to hear about them, find a way to make it work whatever the cost.”

In the face of this response our Village officers and staff are continuing to press our case with follow-up letters to the mayor, council members, and the Office of Sustainability and Innovation, which is charged with educating residents about the law’s requirements and assisting them with compliance. Repeat appearances at Council meetings are planned as is consultation with our Association legal counsel. We are reaching out to other large residential developments and asking that they join us in our efforts. Village residents can do their part by writing to Council, attending Council meetings, and sending letters to our local news outlets.

Those interested in a more comprehensive explanation and report on the many issues this law poses for our Village residents should read on.

The Ban in a Nutshell

In late December Ann Arbor City Council enacted a law imposing a city-wide ban on the use of all gasoline-powered lawn and leaf blowers, effective June 1 of this year. A four-year phase-in period to run through 2027 was granted for fall and spring clean-up work. The prohibition on use of the machines for summer lawn care, however, goes into effect just two months from now.

The City is advising home owners, businesses, condo associations, and apartment complexes to make the switch to electric blowers, either corded or battery-powered. Plans are in the works to provide assistance to low-income residents and small businesses for whom the costs may present an undue burden. No such assistance, however, is planned for the coming summer. Missy Stults, head of the City's Office of Sustainability and Innovation reports that the earliest such a program could be up and running would be the end of 2024.

Compliance: A Major Challenge for the Village

Our Village condominium development is a rare island of green among large residential complexes. The landscaping of our 422 townhouse units includes thousands of trees, shrubs, and flowers and more than 55 acres of grassy lawn to tend to. We are a highly walkable community with more than 5½ miles of walkways to maintain.

Each week our landscape workers complete the task of mowing and trimming our vast acreage of green and clearing the resulting grass clippings from our City sidewalks and roadways as mandated by City ordinance, while also sweeping clean our own up-walks and porches. Clippings are blown back into our lawns using state-of-the-art commercial high-efficiency Stihl blowers that employ what the manufacturer refers to as “reduced emission technology,” allowing them to meet and exceed emissions standards set by both the EPA and the even stricter California Air Resources Board (CARB). To accomplish this clean-up a crew of three fan out through the Village with their backpack blowers, each covering approximately 2 miles of walkway over the course of about an hour and a half. Each machine consumes about a quarter of a gallon of gas to complete its task.



With the passage of this new law and no reasonable time allotted to meet its requirements, the Village and its landscape service are faced with a mandate to purchase tens of thousands of dollars' worth of new equipment, none of it budgeted for. At the same time, the investment our landscape service has made into thousands of dollars of high-end, low-emissions equipment will be rendered largely valueless. And the challenge of meeting the costs of new equipment and bearing the loss of previous equipment investments is only the beginning of the harm we and our landscape service are facing. There will be major logistical barriers to surmount in deploying the new machines and real concerns about their impact on worker health and safety.

Compliance Logistics

Unlike other commercial battery-powered lawn care equipment on the market today, such as chainsaws, pruners, and weed whips, all of which perform quite well and have been in regular use for several years by our landscape service provider here, commercial battery-powered lawn care blower technology still has far to go

(Continued on following page)

Ann Arbor Lawn Care Blower Ban (continued)

before it can deliver a level of performance equal to that of gasoline-fueled machines. To efficiently clean up our nearly 6 miles of walkways and porches, we require machines with enough blowing power to clear away not only dry clippings in the heat of midsummer but also to dislodge the sticky mats that can be laid down when the grass is still wet with dew or soaked by an early afternoon shower.

Battery-powered machines with enough oomph to match the performance of gas-powered blowers cost nearly four times as much to buy—on average, \$2,700 vs. \$700. But cost is not the most important stumbling block. Battery life is the killer. Our provider has field tested the most highly rated machines available today and found that their batteries under constant load and powering a lawn blower at full bore wear down quickly. The most powerful batteries, costing upwards of \$1,400 a piece, provide at most 15 to 20 minutes of run time and must then be changed out. Such batteries are large, the size of 3 reams of copy paper stacked one on top of the other, and they weigh about 17 pounds a piece. The machines they power are themselves quite large, weighing in at 35 to 38 pounds, a good 10 to 15 pounds more than their heavy-duty gas counterparts.

At present a crew of 3, dividing up our property into 2-mile routes, can clear our walkways in roughly 1½ hours. With blowers that require battery replacements every 15 minutes, each crew member will run through a total of 6 or 7 batteries from start to finish. The only practical way to manage that will be to set up a just-in-time delivery system by employing a driver and a utility vehicle running a route with stops timed to meet each crew member with a fresh battery just before the battery in use runs out of power.



Charging time for these high-end batteries is 35-40 minutes, so we can expect to get only one charge out of each on lawn care day. The task of replenishing the charge on the 21 required to clear our walks will have to be carried out by our provider between lawn care days. To recharge so many batteries efficiently, more than just the single charger that comes with a new blower will have to be purchased, at a cost of about \$800 each.

Obviously, the on-site logistics will be both complicated and expensive. And then, as explained, there are the logistics of battery charging off-site. Still one more logistical requirement must be met, however, and that is provision for the safe transport of the blowers and batteries between our job site and our provider's home base in South Lyon. Large lithium batteries must be stored and handled with great care. A load of 21 accompanied by 3 blowers will tip the scales at close to 450 pounds, approaching the nominal capacity of a small pickup truck. Safe transport and handling of blowers and spare batteries will most likely require a separate truck and driver to carry them safely to and from our service provider's home base on lawn care day.

Employee Health and Safety

Our current commercial gas-powered backpack blowers weigh a bit less than 25 pounds, a reasonable load for an adult crew member to wear while walking a 2-mile route over the course of an hour and a half. On a hot and humid 90° day, however, even the fittest of employees can be challenged to finish their routes wearing such packs.

(Continued on following page)

Ann Arbor Lawn Care Blower Ban (continued)

Given this fact, there are serious questions about the wisdom of requiring lawn crew employees to walk a 2-mile route on a hot and humid summer day carrying a blower backpack weighing 35 pounds or more. The likelihood of stress injuries to neck, shoulders, and back is greatly increased.

Can This Be Done, and Should It Be Done?

By this point anyone who has come this far with me should be able to see that, yes, compliance with this City mandate is possible, but at considerable cost and at the risk of serious employee injury. The complicated choreography of managing battery swaps, transport, and recharging verges on the comedic. The monetary outlays in the first year are astronomical. Members of our Board and Management team working in conjunction with our long-time lawn care provider have come up with an estimate of \$50,000 once all direct and indirect expenses are taken into account. For our community this amounts to roughly \$120 in additional fees to be levied on each of our 422 co-owners.

And all for what? To eliminate the weekly exhaust emissions attributable to clean-running machines that in total will use no more than 3/4 gallon of gas. And to save on this small amount of fuel we will be required to run both a utility vehicle and a truck that together will consume several additional gallons of fuel and create their own added greenhouse emissions.

In effect the City is requiring that we increase, not lower, our fossil fuel consumption and thereby enlarge, not shrink, our carbon footprint.

What Are We Asking of the City?

We are asking that the City acknowledge the unreasonable and harmful burden that its leaf blower ordinance places upon our condo association residents and the residents of similarly situated large residential complexes elsewhere and amend it to provide immediate relief from the mandate to comply with its provisions just two months from now. It is clear that the battery technology is not yet available to make compliance practicable and may not be available yet for several years to come. Relief could come in the form of time-limited waivers, variances, or outright exemptions. We are open to any and all solutions.



Facts and Figures

So what actually are we looking at as we seek to comply with this new City mandate? Here is a sampling of facts and figures.

- New Commercial Battery-Powered Blowers—3 needed
 - Unit Cost: \$2,700. Total Cost: \$8,100.
 - Weight: 35 to 38 lbs (gas models in current use weigh 23 to 25 lbs)
- Extra Batteries—minimum of 18 needed
 - Unit Cost: \$1,000. Total Cost: \$18,000
 - Battery Life: 15 to 20 minutes
 - Battery Weight: 17 lbs

(Continued on following page)

Ann Arbor Lawn Care Blower Ban (Continued)

- Extra Charging Units—minimum of 3 needed
 - Unit Cost: \$800. Total Cost: \$2,400
 - Battery Charge Time: 40 minutes
- Blower Crew: 3
- Batteries Runner: 1
- Walkways and Porches to Clear: 5½–6 miles
- Additional Vehicles
 - Site utility vehicle for battery resupply
 - Highway vehicle for safe transport of 450 lbs of blowers and lithium batteries to and from the site
- Total Projected First-Year Investment in Equipment, Vehicles, and Added Staff: \$50,000.

Given these projected expenses, our estimated costs per co-owner for the coming year could total just under \$120.00, increasing average unit monthly fees by \$10.00 per month.

Links

- ***The Ordinance:***
https://library.municode.com/mi/ann_arbor/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITVIFOHE_CH75LEBL
- ***City Website: Blower Ban Page:***
<https://www.a2gov.org/departments/sustainability/Sustainability-Me/Businesses/Pages/Gas-Leaf-Blower-Phase-Out.aspx>
- ***City Blower Ban Flyer:***
https://www.a2gov.org/departments/sustainability/Sustainability-Me/Businesses/Documents/Gas%20Leaf%20Blower%20Ordinance_Summary%20Information.pdf
- ***WXYZ Reporting:***
<https://www.wxyz.com/news/region/washtenaw-county/landscapers-share-concerns-about-ann-arbor-leaf-blower-ban>
- ***MLive Reporting:***
<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2024/03/ann-arbor-gas-leaf-blower-ban-shouldnt-apply-to-large-properties-condo-complexes-argue.html>

Author's Note: The opinions expressed in this article are my own. I do not purport to speak for the Pittsfield Village Condominium Association, its Board of Directors, or its Management. —*David Brassfield*



ASSOCIA / KRAMER-TRIAD

Kendra Zunich, Manager: kzunich@kramertriad.com
Wanda Buster, Bookkeeper: wbuster@kramertriad.com
Tracy Vincent, Admin: tvincent@kramertriad.com
General Info / Maintenance: office@pittsfieldvillage.com

Pittsfield Village Office

Monday— Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
Office: 734-971-0233 Fax: 734-971-3421

www.pittsfieldvillage.com



Call or email the office with
Questions/concerns/requests:
office@pittsfieldvillage.com

Meeting links (copy and paste in your browser)

M&M Committee: April 2
<https://meet.goto.com/765797341>

Landscape Committee: April 9
<https://meet.goto.com/500448893>

BOD: April 24
<https://meet.goto.com/250888005>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

Ellen Johnson, President ellen.johnson@pittsfieldvillage.com

John Sprentall john.sprentall@pittsfieldvillage.com

Jessica Lehr jessica.lehr@pittsfieldvillage.com

Joy Knoblauch joy.knoblauch@pittsfieldvillage.com

David Brassfield david.brassfield@pittsfieldvillage.com

Paws & Tails Pet Care

Right here in Pittsfield Village!

Email to book your free meet & greet and to receive
more information.

irenehayes03@yahoo.com

APRIL 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 M&M Committee meeting 6:00 pm	3	4	5	6
7	8 office closes early for KT all-staff mtg	9 Landscape Committee Mtg 6:00 pm	10	11	12 Proxies &/or Board nominations due	13
14	15 GoDoc Mtg 3 pm—5 pm	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Board Meeting 6:00 pm	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			