

## Town Meeting: Warrant Article Oral Presentation, March 23, 2013

- Good afternoon. Thank you all for your patience and staying so late into the day. I promise to be short.
- This article concerns a need to study the impact of the growing use of leaf blowers on the health of our citizens and our environment.
- We're going to start by showing a short video from Fall 2012 in Lincoln Station

*Run video*

### Background

*Go to Slide 1 – Title slide*

- This warrant article asks the Town to appoint a working group:
  - To study noise and air pollution related to the increasing use of leaf blowers for public and private property maintenance
  - To research alternatives
  - To present findings and recommendations to Town Meeting 2014.
- Leaf blowers, especially gas-powered and commercial grade leaf blowers, are a major point source for high level noise and pollution, including toxic and carcinogenic emissions and particulate matter, known to cause disease.
- This past Autumn, some residents who reside or work at home were exposed to high levels of noise and pollutants sometimes on a daily basis for hours at a time.
  - In the Lincoln Station area, noise levels up to 10,000x normal background noise were recorded.
  - This same experience is happening in some other neighborhoods as well.
  - These noise levels are far in excess of established safety standards.
- Although once confined to major Autumn cleanups, leaf blower use has expanded to include a range of routine maintenance activities from debris removal from paved surfaces, to cleaning of gutters, street shoulders, walking paths, and planting beds.

*Go to Slide 2 - Cambridge Trust picture*

- We found this picture of Lincoln Station circulating on the internet on websites from Bronxville, NY and Davis, CA.
- Growing evidence in the medical and scientific literature suggest that prolonged exposure to high level noise and pollutants produced by leaf blowers has adverse health effects, particularly for children, seniors, and people with pre-existing medical conditions.

### ***Go to Slide 3 - Health effects***

- Medical societies and government agencies report that short term or chronic exposure to leaf blower-generated noise and pollution may lead to:
  - Cardiovascular disease (such as high blood pressure, heart attack)
  - Respiratory diseases (such as asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis)
  - Hearing damage and tinnitus
  - Impaired childhood development and cognition
  - Sleep disturbance and mental health problems
  - Reduced quality life
- Of particular concern are leaf blower crews which employ 2-5 machines at a time in close proximity to our homes, our schools, pets, shoppers, commuters and other pedestrians including infants and children, seniors, and people with pre-existing conditions who are most vulnerable to their adverse health effects.
- Lincoln is not alone. Noise and pollution from leaf blowers is a serious concern for hundreds of communities across the US, many of whom have taken action to control their use.
- We know that potential alternatives exist that are quiet, economical and sustainable. These deserve exploration.

### **Warrant Article**

#### ***Go to Slide 4 – Warrant article***

- The proposed working group would bring together town representatives and experts who would:
    - Develop a scientifically grounded evaluation of the potential health effects of leaf blower-related pollution
    - Assess the effects of leaf blowers on our environment and quality of our life
- And
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders to explore solutions that are economically feasible, healthy and sustainable.
  - Our town is committed to protecting the health and well being of ALL of its citizens as well as our environment. This warrant article is being put forth because of the responsibility we bear to keep our citizens safe and protect our environment. This warrant article has been endorsed by the Lincoln Board of Health. We hope you will support it by voting “Yes.”      **THANK YOU.**