



STAFF REPORT

City Council

Meeting Date:

6/9/2026

Staff Report Number:

26-095-CC

Informational Item:

Update on implementation of the zero emission landscape equipment ordinance

Recommendation

The purpose of this informational item is to provide an update on the implementation of the zero emission landscape equipment ordinance.

Policy Issues

Menlo Park regulates gasoline powered landscaping equipment through Municipal Code Chapter 8.05 “Gas Powered Landscape Equipment” and Chapter 8.06 “Noise”. Under Chapter 8.05:

- A. Effective July 1, 2024, it shall be unlawful for any person to operate or authorize the operation of, permit, or direct another who engages in the operation of any gasoline powered leaf blower and string trimmer within the city limits.
- B. Effective Jan. 1, 2029, it shall be unlawful for any person to operate or authorize the operation of, permit, or direct another who engages in the operation of any gasoline powered lawnmower, hedge trimmer and chainsaws.

These local restrictions align with California state policy. Effective Jan. 1, 2024, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) banned the sale of gasoline powered small off-road engines, including landscape equipment, throughout California. These regulations support Menlo Park's 2030 Climate Action Plan goal of carbon neutrality by eliminating fossil fuel use in landscape equipment, which contributes to climate change and negatively impacts air quality and community health.

Background

In September 2021, the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) advised the City Council to prohibit the use of gasoline powered leaf blowers and as a result, the City Council directed staff to develop a policy. A proposed policy was presented at a City Council study session Oct. 18, 2022, with recommended rules to prohibit the use of five types of gasoline powered landscape equipment (leaf blowers, string trimmers, lawnmowers, hedge trimmers and chainsaws) due to their negative impacts on the environment and human health. The City Council directed staff to continue outreach and education with landscapers about the proposed rules and prepare a draft ordinance for final adoption by the City Council in 2023.

On June 13, 2023, the City Council approved introducing the proposed rules (Attachment A). On June 27, 2023, a reintroduction of the proposed rules was required to resolve potential conflicts with the City's noise ordinance (Attachment B). As a result of the June 2023 meetings, the City Council directed staff to implement the following activities once the rules are adopted:

1. Begin outreach with the community and professional landscapers immediately using existing outreach material and community communication platforms, providing one year to transition.

2. Consider an electric landscape equipment rebate program.
3. Provide an annual progress report to the EQC for two years starting in 2025.

On July 11, 2023, the City Council adopted the ordinance adding Chapter 8.05 to the Menlo Park Municipal Code (MPMC) that prohibits the use of gasoline powered leaf blowers and string trimmers in Menlo Park effective July 1, 2024, and gasoline powered lawnmowers, hedge trimmers and chainsaws effective Jan. 1, 2029 (Attachment C). The ordinance requires the use of zero emission landscape equipment (manual, electric, or battery-powered), applies to all properties within the City (residential, commercial and City-owned) and holds property owners responsible for ensuring compliance, whether using their own equipment or contracting landscapers. Violations may result in enforcement actions, including monetary fines. At the same meeting, the City Council approved an electric landscape equipment rebate program and directed staff to conduct public outreach (Attachment D). During outreach, the ordinance became known as the zero emission landscape equipment (ZELE) ordinance.

Between the ZELE ordinance adoption and July 1, 2024, the public works department proactively converted its entire landscape equipment fleet to electric power and has worked with its contractors to ensure compliance. The department now maintains an all-electric inventory consisting of 13 leaf blowers, 20 hedge and string trimmers, 17 pole and garden pruners, 25 chainsaws, two soil cultivators, and two mowers. This transition continues to serve as a model for ZELE ordinance compliance.

On May 27, 2025, staff provided the first ZELE implementation update to the City Council, summarizing outreach efforts, voucher program progress, and initial enforcement preparation (Attachment E).

On March 18, staff provided the final ZELE ordinance and voucher program update to the EQC (Attachment F). The Commission discussed options for continued and early engagement in advance of the lawn mower, hedge trimmer, and chainsaw enforcement period, as well as the potential development of a voucher program ahead of the 2029 enforcement date.

Following a one-year period focused on education and outreach, citation enforcement of the ZELE ordinance began on July 1, 2025. This transition marked the shift from an educational approach to active enforcement, with violations subject to fines in accordance with the MPMC.

Analysis

Staff have continued outreach and education efforts, completed the voucher program, and transitioned to enforcement. Staff have also begun planning for future outreach to prepare the community for enforcement of the lawn mower, chainsaw, and hedge trimmer ban Jan. 1, 2029.

Outreach and education

Since the last update, sustainability and police department staff have continued outreach and education efforts to inform the community and support the transition to zero emission landscape equipment through in-person engagement at community events, direct phone outreach, direct conversations with landscapers and property owners, and targeted mailings. Highlights include:

- Updated ZELE webpage regularly as new resources became available, including ordinance updates, enforcement timelines, outreach materials, frequently asked questions, reporting information, and voucher program details (Attachment G)
- Mailed 669 letters to addresses reported through ACT Menlo Park July 2024 to June 2025
- Distributed 12 bilingual yard signs to residents (Attachment H)
- Hosted information tables at six community events
- Published Weekly Digest reminders July and August 2025

- Displayed bilingual banners in downtown Menlo Park and Belle Haven neighborhood January to February 2026
- Mailed 53 bilingual reminder letters to landscapers March 2026

Voucher program

Building on the initial two phases of the voucher program, staff continued its partnership with Acterra to launch a third and final round using the remaining program funds of approximately \$6,000. A total of eight vouchers were issued, including three to residents and five to businesses operating in Menlo Park. Throughout all three phases of the program a total of 108 vouchers were distributed. Distribution details are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Voucher program distribution					
Voucher	Amount	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Total
Professional landscapers	\$1,000	10	11	5	26
Non-landscape businesses	\$250	2	2	0	4
Eligible Menlo Park residents	\$250	38	37	3	78
Total		50	48	8	108

For phase 3, breakdown for the eight vouchers issued was based on the eligibility criteria as follows:

- Three vouchers were issued to residents based on geographic location (Belle Haven)
- Five vouchers were issued to small businesses operating in Menlo Park with one based in Menlo Park, two based in East Palo Alto and one based in Mountain View.

Staff have not observed additional demand or interest in expanding the voucher program for leaf blowers beyond the completed three phases.

Enforcement

Enforcement of the ZELE ordinance began as an educational approach in July 2024, with a focus on informing rather than issuing citations. On July 1, 2025, the City incorporated citations into enforcement following a one-year period of outreach and education. Reports are submitted through non-emergency police dispatch by phone.

When a violation is reported, police department staff respond by visiting the reported address. If a violation is observed, staff speak directly with the landscaper, inform them of the ordinance, and request that the activity stop. Staff also attempt to contact the property owner or tenant; however, in most cases the owner is not present, and a courtesy notice door hanger is left at the property. If a property owner is present, a citation may be issued. Most interactions continue to result in education rather than citation. To date, no citations have been issued.

Sustainability and police department staff have also conducted coordinated outreach to provide direct, in-person engagement with landscapers and property owners. To date, three outreach details have been conducted, including a pilot in June 2025 and follow-up efforts in October 2025 and March 2026. Staff contacted a total of 17 landscapers observed using gasoline powered equipment and provided real-time education on the ordinance and compliance requirements. Staff also observed four landscapers using compliant electric equipment. Coordinated efforts allow staff to engage directly with landscapers, reinforce awareness of the ordinance, and encourage compliance. During each detail staff observed increased

positive behavior change.

To date, the City has received 1,210 ZELE ordinance violation reports, including 669 submitted through ACT Menlo Park and 541 received by phone to non-emergency police. In the past six months, reporting has averaged approximately one call per day. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 447 reports received since the last ZELE update May 27, 2025.

Table 2: ZELE violation reports May 2025 to April 2026	
Month	Number of reports
May 2025	64
June 2025	70
July 2025	28
August 2025	38
September 2025	27
October 2025	28
November 2025	36
December 2025	47
January	21
February	29
March	38
April	21
Total	447

Several neighboring cities have adopted similar zero emission landscape equipment ordinances. Palo Alto and Portola Valley had existing ordinances in place prior to the City's adoption. Menlo Park, Atherton, Hillsborough, and Burlingame all adopted similar ordinances around the same time with implementation effective July 1, 2024. San Mateo is the most recent neighboring city to adopt an ordinance, which will become effective Jan. 1, 2027. Staff continue to coordinate with regional partners to share implementation approaches, enforcement practices, and outreach strategies. This coordination supports consistency across jurisdictions and helps reinforce compliance among landscape professionals who operate in multiple cities.

Staff will continue to track enforcement data, respond to all reports, and prioritize education and enforcement. These efforts will inform planning for the next phase of the ordinance, including preparation for the Jan. 1, 2029, enforcement of lawn mowers, chainsaws, and hedge trimmers, and help guide future outreach and compliance strategies.

Next phase of ordinance implementation

Preparation for the next phase of the ordinance will focus on the following:

- Develop and implement targeted outreach to prepare residents and landscaping professionals for the Jan. 1, 2029, ban on lawn mowers, chainsaws, and hedge trimmers, incorporating lessons learned from current implementation

- Continue coordination with neighboring jurisdictions with similar ordinances
- Monitor enforcement data and community feedback to refine outreach and compliance strategies

Impact on City Resources

All voucher program funds have been fully expended and no additional costs are anticipated at this time. Ongoing outreach, education, and enforcement activities will continue to be supported through existing department budgets.

Environmental Review

This action is not a project within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15378 and 15061(b)(3) as it will not result in any direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

Public Notice

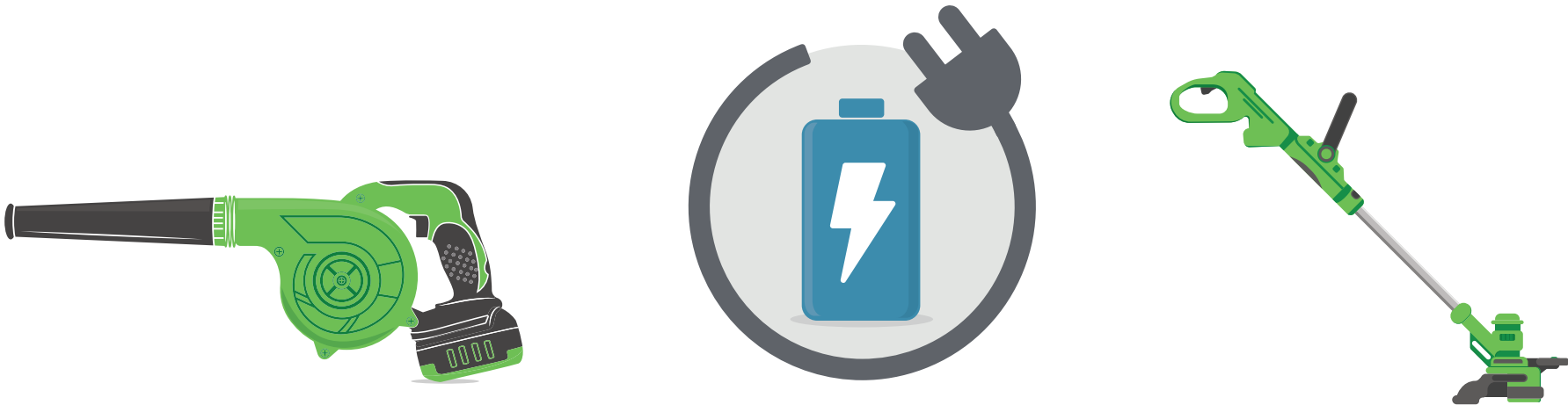
Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

- A. Hyperlink – June 13, 2023, Staff Report #23-134-CC:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/7/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2023-meetings/agendas/20230613-city-council-regular-agenda-packet_w-presentations.pdf#page=163
- B. Hyperlink – June 27, 2023, Staff Report #23-153-CC:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/3/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2023-meetings/agendas/20230627-city-council-regular-agenda-packet.pdf#page=428
- C. Hyperlink – July 11, 2023, Staff Report #23-158-CC:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/6/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2023-meetings/agendas/20230711city-council-regular-agenda-packet_w-presv2.pdf#page=138
- D. Hyperlink – July 11, 2023, Staff Report #23-169-CC:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/6/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2023-meetings/agendas/20230711city-council-regular-agenda-packet_w-presv2.pdf#page=145
- E. Hyperlink – May 27, 2025, Staff Report #25-078-CC:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2025-meetings/20250527/m2-20250527-cc-zele-progress-report.pdf
- F. Hyperlink – March 18 ZELE ordinance implementation update:
www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/agendas-and-minutes/environmental-quality-commission/2026-meetings/agenda/20260318-environmental-quality-commission-regular-meeting-agenda.pdf
- G. Hyperlink – Zero emission landscape equipment webpage: www.menlopark.gov/zele
- H. ZELE yard sign

Report prepared by:
Liz Tapia, Management Analyst II

Report reviewed by:
Rachael Londer, Sustainability Manager
William A. Dixon, Police Commander



GAS IS OUT. ELECTRIC IS IN.

**Gas leaf blowers and string trimmers
are prohibited in Menlo Park.**

*Sopladoras de hojas y cortadoras de hilo a
gasolina están prohibidas en Menlo Park.*



menlopark.gov/ZELE

