



SUSTAINABLE WEST HARTFORD COMMISSION

June 29, 2026

7:00 PM, Room 407, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order **7:06 PM**
 - **Commission Members Present:** Ally Schoenhorn, Dave Sagers, Blake Ellavsky, Andrea Yuliano, Pat Wilson, Ted Newton, Steve Sack, Kelly Kennedy.
 - **Commission Members Absent:** Lianne Allen-Jacobson, Maura Beudreault. (Note: There is currently one [1] vacancy on the commission).
 - **Community Members/Staff in Attendance:** Nancy Cooner, Dan Walsh, Parker Walsh, Mike Cocca, Bernie Pelletier, Catherine Diviney
2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Prior meeting minutes from 5/18/2026 were approved unanimously (8,0).
3. Administrative – **Election of Secretary:** A motion was made and properly seconded to elect Ally Schoenhorn as Commission Secretary. The motion passed unanimously (8-0). There is still 1 vacancy on the Commission.
4. Communications & Community Comment
 - **Commission Vacancy:** Questions were raised by members of the public regarding the current vacancy on the commission.
 - **Celebrate West Hartford Event Sustainability:** Correspondence was received from Katherine Bruns (former recycling/waste coordinator) regarding strategies to reduce waste and improve sustainability at future Celebrate West Hartford events.
 - **Conard High School Spanish Class Volunteering:** Conard high school Spanish teacher reached out to inquire about volunteering/coordinating events as class will be studying sustainability within their curriculum this coming fall.
 - **Resident Concerns:** Councilor Jason Wang reported resident grievances regarding local pesticide usage and the noise/environmental impact of gas-powered leaf blowers.
5. Ongoing Business
 - **Celebrate! WH debrief**
 - The Commission reviewed the success of the recent Celebrate West Hartford event, noting high attendance with approximately 400 visitors over two days.
 - The tree-themed display was highly effective at engaging attendees. Numerous residents signed up for the newsletter, and many parents and children participated in the "Mosquito Bucket Challenge" and received decals.
 - **Future Planning:** For next year's event, the Commission will explore relocating the booth closer to the Recycling and Paine's booths.

- **Working Group Reports**

- Energy

- **Community Energy Boost Grant** - A **motion** was made and seconded to authorize the commission to apply for the Community Energy Boost Grant through Eversource to conduct outreach for the Home Energy Solutions program. The motion carried unanimously (8-0). **Action Item:** Ally and Catherine will submit the application by week of July 7, 2026. Application must be submitted by October 31, 2026. Any volunteers who would be interested in helping apply or work on grant funding items, please email Catherine Diviney. Funds must be utilized by December 31, 2026.
 - **ESCO Contracting:** The working group reviewed metrics highlighting the necessity of Energy Service Company (ESCO) contracting. An Energia representative will be scheduled to present at an upcoming Commission meeting. Town has issued a Request for Proposals, and will make decision in 3rd quarter.

- Nature Based Solutions

- **Rain Garden Project:** Working group member Suzanne reported that Public Works has agreed to construct a rain garden near "Conny the Whale Tail" on Trout Brook within the next year.
 - **Wolcott Park Weeding Event:** Following a successful weeding event at Wolcott Park, another date has been scheduled for July. It was suggested that the Town manage and leverage a centralized volunteer list for these events.
 - **Pesticide Ban Initiative:** A suggestion was made to include an article in the upcoming newsletter and potentially launch a petition to eliminate municipal pesticide usage. Councilor Lazarus has indicated personal interest in the Pesticide issue.
 - **Westmoor Park Garden Walk:** The Commission, Town Council, Parks Department, and the public are invited to a garden walk guided by Master Gardener Suzanne on July 22 from 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM (Rain date: July 23).
 - **June 2027 Garden Tour:** The group proposed expanding the West Hartford garden tour in June 2027 to focus on pollinator gardens, modeled after the Buffalo, NY program.
Motion: A motion was made and seconded for the Sustainable West Hartford Commission to officially sponsor this event. The motion carried unanimously (8-0).
Funding: The group will explore the Sustainable CT Match Fund grant to cover organizing materials.

- **Sust CT Action Recommendations** - Catherine presented the Commission's suggested Sust CT actions to the internal Sust CT committee, she is holding follow-up meetings with certain departments (Leisure, Public Works, Planning) separately. Todd Dumais (Town Planner) is planning to move forward with several sustainability-related new or revised town ordinances (e.g., Dark Sky regulations, Changes to Renewable Energy, Stormwater, etc.). Catherine will maintain monthly meetings with the Town Planner to monitor progress.
 - **Finalizing Report to Town Council** - Commission is finalizing the 2025 report. It will be brought to the next meeting for a formal approval vote before being submitted to the Town Council and published on the commission website per charter requirements.

6. New Business

- **Tree Summit & Urban Forestry**

- The WH Tree Project (a 501(c)(3) organization) was contacted; they are open to volunteering but are currently at maximum capacity leveraging a CT sustainability grant.
 - Inquiries are being made into DEEP funding and a Nature Conservancy urban forestry grant aimed at municipalities to improve tree planting.

- The Tree Action Group (TAG) has town plans underway. The Commission discussed potential town ordinances to protect the tree canopy, and members will evaluate incentive programs from other cities to share at a future meeting.
 - Moving issues forward to Council - **Commission Action Framework:** Dave presented a PowerPoint template addressing the leaf blower issue. This layout will serve as a standardized model for future presentations to the Mayor and Town Council (e.g., regarding pesticide usage).
7. Calendar Updates – none at this time.
 8. Agenda for Next Meeting – 7/27/26
 9. Adjournment **9:03 PM**

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Nature Based Solutions Working Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting: June 22, 2026

Members present: Pat Wilson, Suzanne Sayers, Madeline Hexter, Chris Feeley, Andrea Yuliano

Old Business:

1. Suzanne brought prelim design for Trout Brook rain garden
2. Wolcott meadow-we had a successful weeding morning on 6/13/26. We have little sprouts, even though much of the area is unseasonably dry right now. We have been instructed by the consultant to not artificially water, but rather to let nature do the work.
3. Planting policy-on hold until discussion at the next Commission meeting.
4. Tree summit/tree action: Pat will email Bill Gleason for update

New Business:

1. New director and new naturalist at Westmoor Park. If we want to have a fall follow up program to Less Lawn, More Life we could do it there. Discussion about the difference between there and the library. Library has excellent outreach.
2. We will have a field trip for our working group and any other Commissioners (maybe also invite town councilors?) on 7/22 (rain date 7/23) from 5-630PM at Westmoor to walk through to find fall program ideas. This will be our meeting for the month of July.
3. Pat will email NBS working group to let everyone know about change in meeting date.
4. We are planning programming for next spring: WH Garden club doesn't have their garden tour next year. We are thinking about a Pollinator Garden Tour modelled on the Buffalo (NY) Garden Walk: <https://www.gardensbuffaloniagara.com/garden-walk-buffalo>. Time frame: 6/12-13/2027. Many details to be sorted yet, but it will be brought up at next Commission meeting since we would like their support.

Next NBS WG Meeting: Wednesday, July 22, at 5:00 at Westmoor Park. Raindate July 23

Waste Working Group

The Waste Working Group did not meet in June.

WH Energy Working Group Meeting Minutes 6/25/26

1. Upcoming Webinars

- **Wastewater Thermal Usage - 6.25.26**

2. Energy Use & Infrastructure Updates

- **Historical Trends**
 - Since 2011, overall municipal electricity energy use has dropped 33%. Natural Gas dropped about 10% (adjusted for weather (heating degrees days).
 - Dip then increase in COVID-era usage, due to increase in COVID ventilation requirements.
- **Current Renewable Assets**
 - Town purchases ~ 15 million kWh per year. On-site rooftop solar generation equals 10% of town electricity usage. Virtual net metering solar contracts equal another 40% of town usage.
 - King Philip Elementary has largest solar array 527 KW solar.
 - Town purchases external solar credits – RECs – for Sustainable CT program and prior commitment to Eversource's Clean Energy Communities program.
 - Charter Oak uses geothermal heating.
 - Future elementary school AC additions will increase load.

3. Performance Contracting & RFP

- **Project Framework**
 - Seeking an energy savings company (ESCO) to provide turnkey services to audit and design and implement energy efficiency projects in about 12 Town and School buildings.
 - ESCO installs energy-efficient projects – streamlined procurement process.
 - ESCO guarantees savings pay for projects.
 - Funded via future utility savings. Can also contribute other funds - from capital improvement budget, grants, loans.
 - ESCO absorbs the project risk – cost a little more
 - Enabled by CT Sec 16a-37x.
 - Supported by Energia (CCM-approved vendor) consulting services
- **Timeline & Scope**
 - RFP active July through September.
 - Proposal selection of ESCO follows closing.

- Commission presentation slated early 2027.
- Possibility of future public referendum.
- Strategy targets about 12 existing facilities – developing a package of energy projects with a combined payback ~15-20 years.
- Large renovations/ new construction typically not done using performance contracting model.

4. Grants & Next Steps

- **Community Grant Action**

- Requesting commission approval to apply for grant up to \$5,000.
- Funding goes directly to town/Commission.
- Application via Energize CT portal.
- Seeking committee volunteers.
- Next step includes meeting Devan (Business Development)

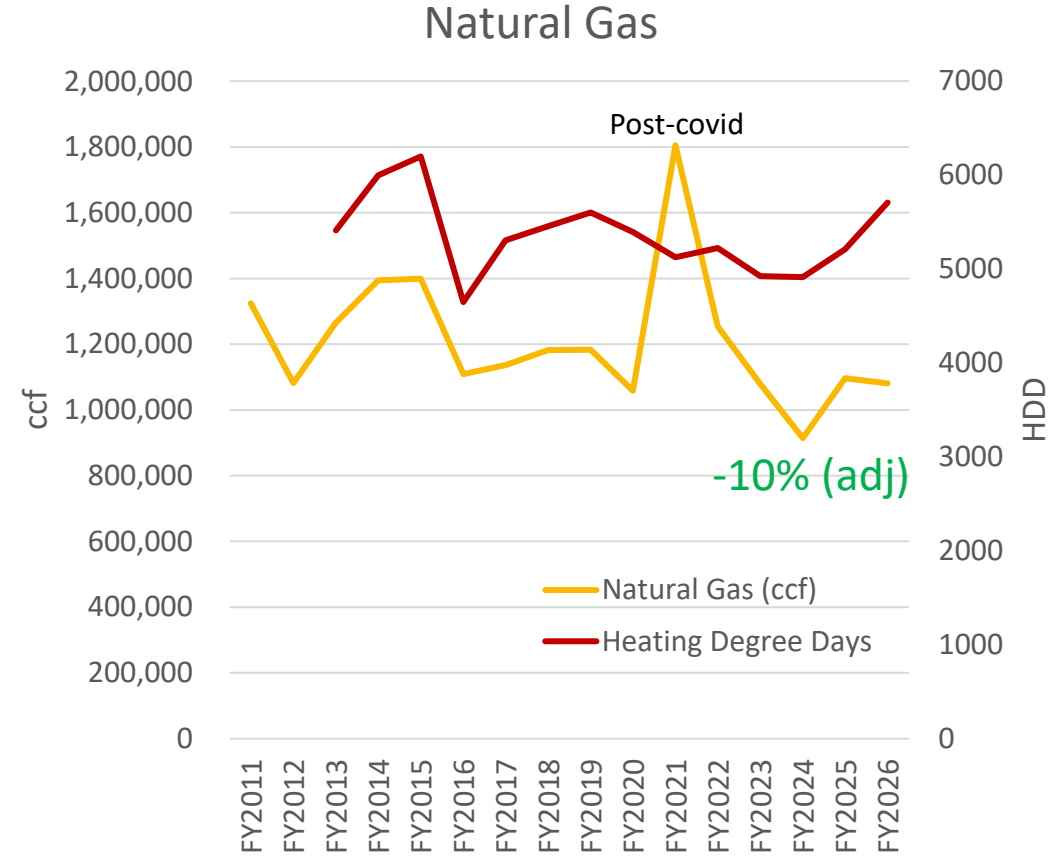
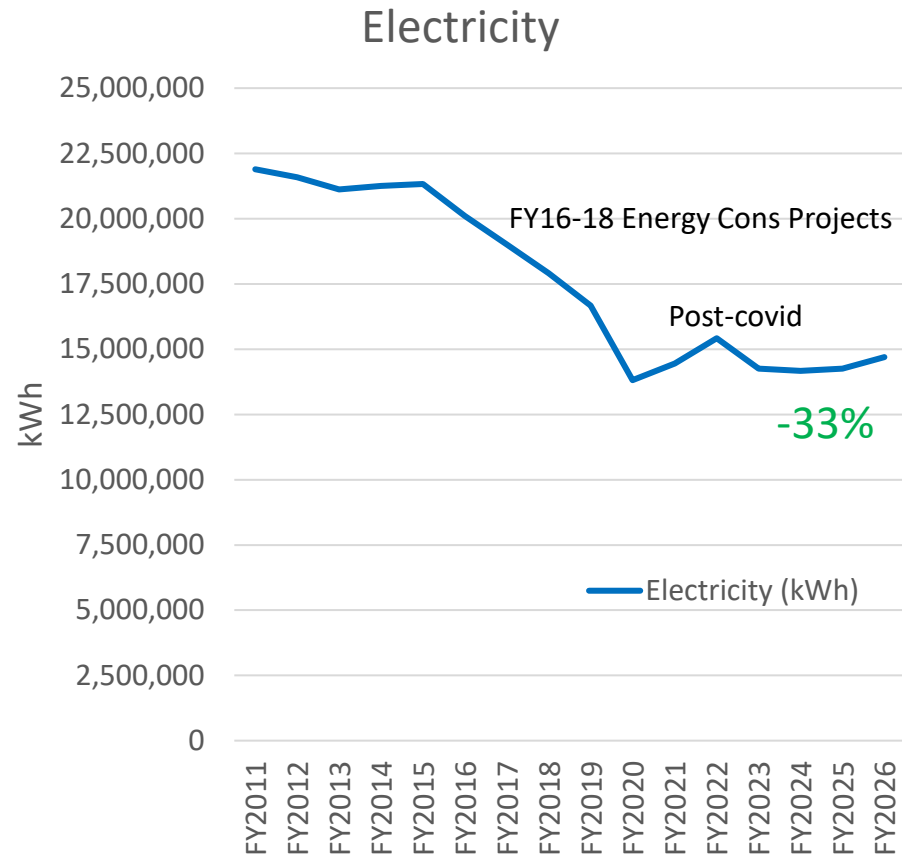
- **Example Grant Usage Options**

- Reusable HES banner on Green.
- Eversource efficiency hybrid webinar.
- Paid We-HA promotional posts (\$400).
- Farmers Market information tables.
- PTA/PTO network flyer distribution.
- Fall Electric Showcase educational booth.
- Social Media (reels, etc.) – working with students

- **Mayor's Youth Council**

- MYC has been disbanded – it is not clear why. This is a shame.

Total Municipal Energy Use



Energy Use Index (EUI)

Kbtu/Sq Ft



SCHOOLS

Name	Energy Current Date	ENERGY STAR Score	Weather Normalized Site EUI (kBtu/ft²)
CTK12_WHPS_WebsterHillElementarySchool 4451174	05/31/2026	15	115.2
CTK12_WHPS_WhitingLaneElementarySchool 4451175	04/30/2026	19	106.8
CTK12_WHPS_KingPhilipMiddleSchool 4451169	03/31/2026	48	83.4
CTK12_WHPS_DuffyElementarySchool 4451167	01/31/2026	12	78.3
CTK12_WHPS_BugbeeElementarySchool 4451164	04/30/2026	36	75.7
CTK12_WHPS_AikenElementarySchool 4451161	02/28/2026	57	74.4
CTK12_WHPS_MorleyElementarySchool 4451170	05/31/2026	46	71.2
CTK12_WHPS_NorfeldtElementarySchool 4451171	05/31/2026	73	57.9
CTK12_WHPS_BristowMiddleSchool 4451163	02/28/2026	73	54.6
CTK12_WHPS_BraeburnElementarySchool 4451162	05/31/2026	54	53.2
CTK12_WHPS_SmithElementarySchool 4451173	05/31/2026	74	52.4
CTK12_WHPS_SedgwickMiddleSchool 4451172	05/31/2026	76	47.4
CTK12_WHPS_ConardHighSchool 4451166	02/28/2026	86	46.5
CTK12_WHPS_HallHighSchool 4451168	02/28/2026	85	45.2
CTK12_WHPS_CharterOakElementarySchool 4451165	02/28/2026	80	30.9
CTK12_WHPS_WolcottElementarySchool 4451176	03/31/2026	93	28.1

TOWN

Name	Energy Current Date	ENERGY STAR Score	Weather Normalized Site EUI (kBtu/ft²)
CTLG_WestHartford_IT/Gemini_130SMain 4451188	05/31/2026	NA	490.6
CTLG_WestHartford_CornerstoneAcquaticsCenter 4451178	05/31/2026	NA	265.5
CTLG_WestHartford_DogPound 4451180	05/31/2026	NA	230.7
CTLG_WestHartford_VeteransMemorialSkatingRink 4451194	05/31/2026	NA	141.6
CTLG_WestHartford_FireStation5_Berkshire 4451187	05/31/2026	NA	118.0
CTLG_WestHartford_FireStation4_Albany 4451186	05/31/2026	NA	106.7
CTLG_WestHartford_FireStation2_Brace 4451184	05/31/2026	NA	98.9
CTLG_WestHartford_FireStation3_NewBritain 4451185	05/31/2026	NA	98.1
CTLG_WestHartford_FireStation1_Prospect 4451183	05/31/2026	NA	79.8
CTLG_WestHartford_Police 4451192	05/31/2026	NA	71.1
CTLG_WestHartford_BishopsCornerLibrary/SeniorCenter 4451177	04/30/2026	NA	60.2
CTLG_WestHartford_ElmwoodCommunityCenter 4451181	05/31/2026	NA	56.9
CTLG_WestHartford_HANOCHouse 4404162	04/30/2026	NA	53.9
CTLG_WestHartford_ArtLeague 4413406	05/31/2026	NA	53.5
CTLG_WestHartford_NoahWebsterHouse 4361884	05/31/2026	NA	51.7
CTLG_WestHartford_FaxonLibrary 4451182	05/31/2026	NA	49.1
CTLG_WestHartford_FairviewCemetery 4375217	05/31/2026	NA	44.4
CTLG_WestHartford_TownHall 4451193	03/31/2026	97	35.6



Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

Outline

- What is the problem?
 - Who are the stakeholders?
 - Who benefits from solving the problem?
 - Who has concerns about solving the problem?
 - What have others done?
 - What are our options?
 - What are next steps?
-

What is the gas blower issue?



Sustainable
West Hartford

Our Town, Our Planet, Our Future

- Issue most mentioned by community
- Noise
 - Decibel level (commonly at 106-115 dBa)
 - Quality of life in residential areas
 - Damage to hearing
- Air Pollution, Health Issues
 - 1 hour usage = Driving from WeHa to St Louis

[Levels Of Noise In Decibels \(dB\) Level Comparison Chart - Sound Proofing Guide](#)

Listed here are only some of the many health risks caused by gas leaf blower pollution



Global warming

Smog, acid rain, global warming

- Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

- Noise

- Carbon Monoxide (CO)

- Nitrogen oxides

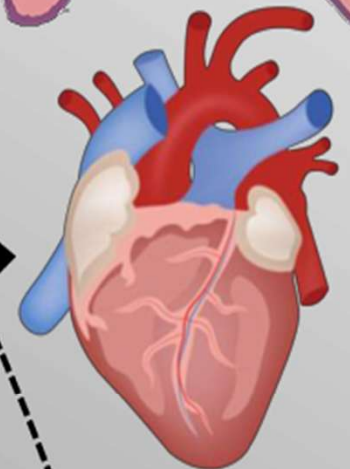
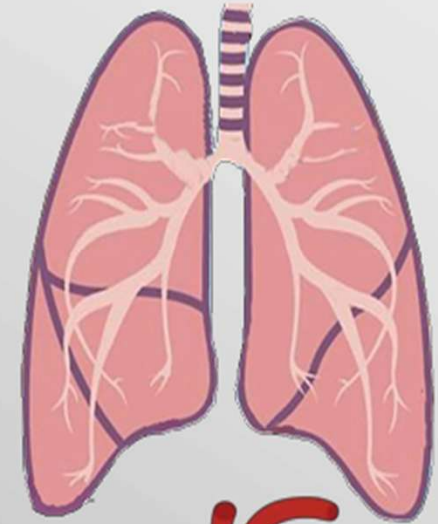
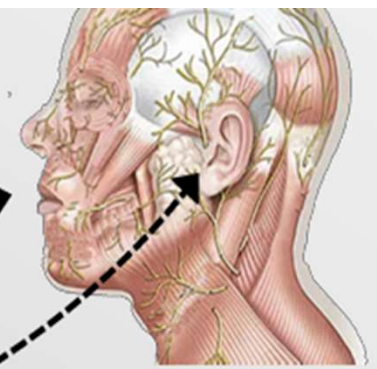
- Hydrocarbons/VOCs

Including *carcinogens* Benzene, Formaldehyde, Butadiene, and Acetaldehyde

- PM 10

- PM 2.5

PM = Particulate Matter (more on next page)



Who Is Concerned/Impacted?



**Sustainable
West Hartford**

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Audience	Benefits	Concerns
Residents	Reduced noise and pollution	Investment, government overreach
Public Works	Employee health	Budget
Town Leadership	Sustainable CT Progress toward 2050 zero emissions goal	Budget, resident opposition
Contractors	Employee health Address customer concerns	Initial capital expenditure to covert – blower, batteries, charging
	Lower long term cost of ownership	Performance, batteries don't last long enough

CT Municipal Ordinances



Town	Ordinance	Additional
Greenwich	Ban between Memorial Day and Labor Day/September 30,	Town given multiple years to comply
Stamford (11/2025)	Ban during Jan-Sept beginning 11/2028	City departments retire gas equipment within 3 years, financial hardship exemption. Applies to private individuals and commercial landscapers.
Norwalk	Restricted to 4/1-6/1 and 10/15-12/15	Fully ban property owners by 2027/28
Westport	ban from May 15 – Oct 15	
New Canaan (2026)	Ban Saturday prior to Memorial Day – Labor Day	

Other Approaches

- Quiet Clean Alliance
 - Bans
 - DC (Quiet Clean DC) – 3 year phase in
 - Santa Cruz (Coalition for a Healthy & Safe Environment)
 - Montgomery County, MD
 - States (CA)/cities offering incentives
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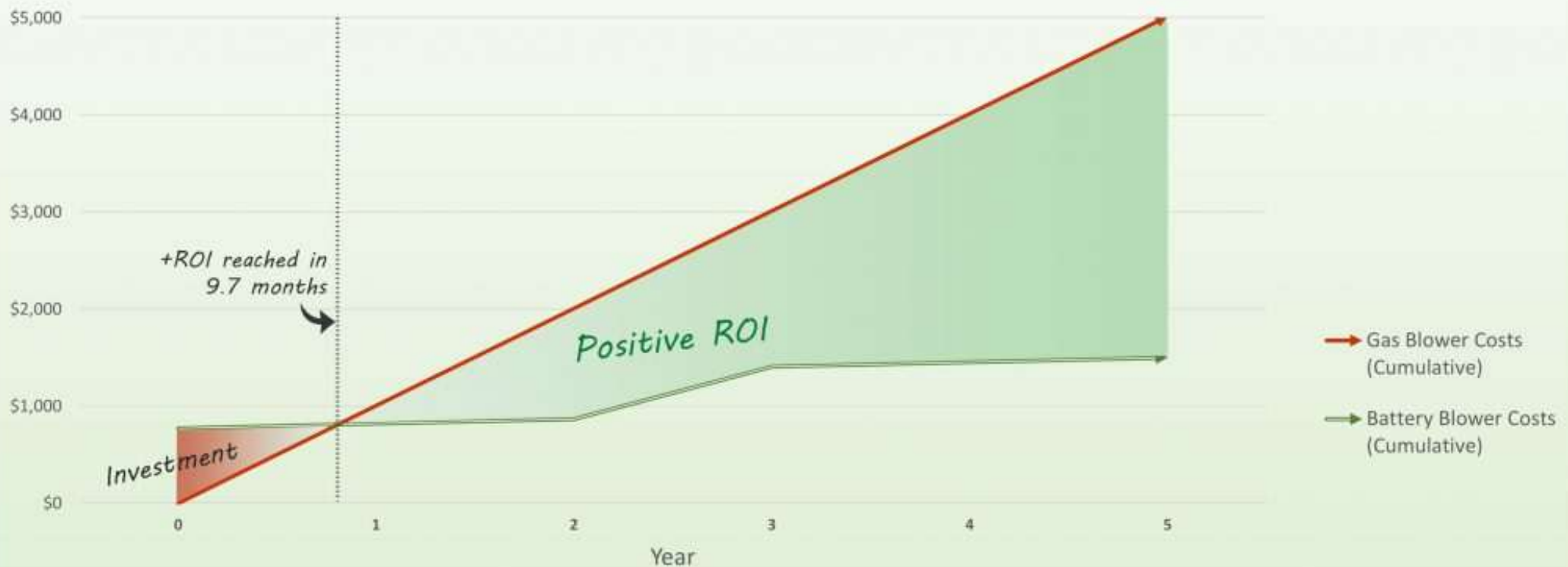
What can we learn?

- Noise is the primary pain point
 - Bans are seasonal (summer)
 - Banning blowing grass clippings, not leaves
 - Phase-in is common
 - Town planning for expenditures
 - (Greenwich \$500K) – Cost to convert entire Greenwich fleet to electric leaf blowers 'shellshocking,' officials say
 - Could be first step to total elimination
-

The Cost - ROI Example

Economics of Switching from Gas to Battery Leaf Blowers

Scenario A: Mid-range Property Size and Runtime



Includes up-front cost of battery leaf blower, 2 batteries, plus accessories, and purchase of two new batteries after year 3, plus tax. Gas costs include 2-stroke engine oil and recommended yearly maintenance. This scenario: gas blower is **Husqvarna 525BX**, battery blower is **Ego LB7654** with 2x 5.0 Ah batteries, and runtime is **3 hours/day**, 281 days/year. At time of calculation (June, 2022), gas price is \$6.49 (source: AAA) and electricity cost is \$0.27/kWh (source: U.S. Energy Information Administration). Energy consumption data provided by Husqvarna and Ego.

The Cost - ROI Example

Results:

Battery Operating Cost Savings:

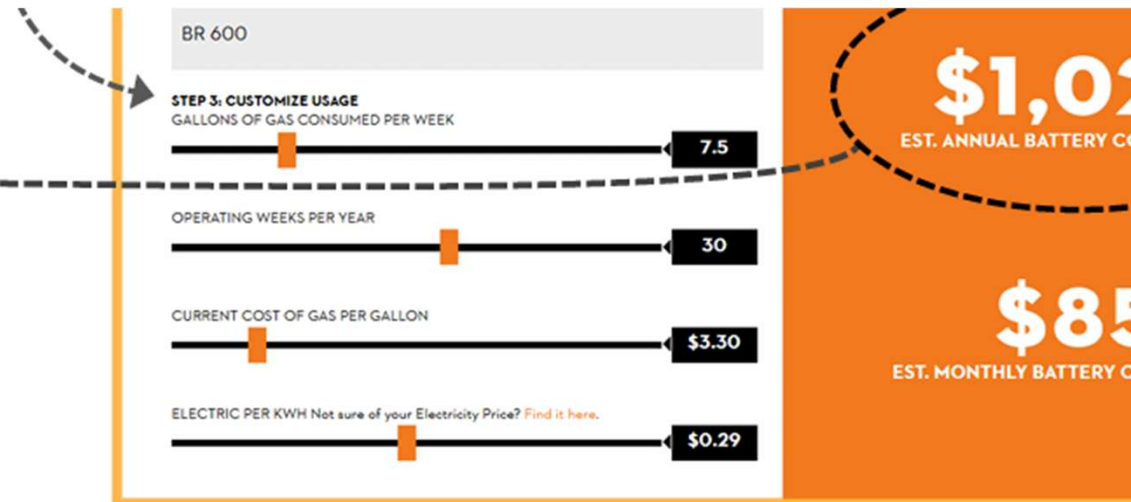
\$1,022/year (from STIHL calculator) ←

+ Service Cost Savings (typical)

\$150/year (no service required for battery LBs)

= Total Battery Savings:

\$1,022 + \$150 = **\$1,172/year**



• Cost Breakout by Power Type:

- Gas LB = \$1,274/year

(\$150 service + \$743 gas + \$382 oil) ←

- Battery LB = \$102/year (electricity)



Note: In 2-stroke gas leaf blowers, lubricating oil is mixed in with the gasoline in a 50:1 ratio, adding substantially to the cost and the amount of pollution produced (oil burns "incompletely" creating many harmful byproducts)

Does it make even more sense under current conditions?

The Performance Issue



- **They aren't powerful enough:** Stihl, the largest maker of outdoor handheld gas power equipment, states on their [website](#) that *"battery power has been matching gas power in the field for several years now."*
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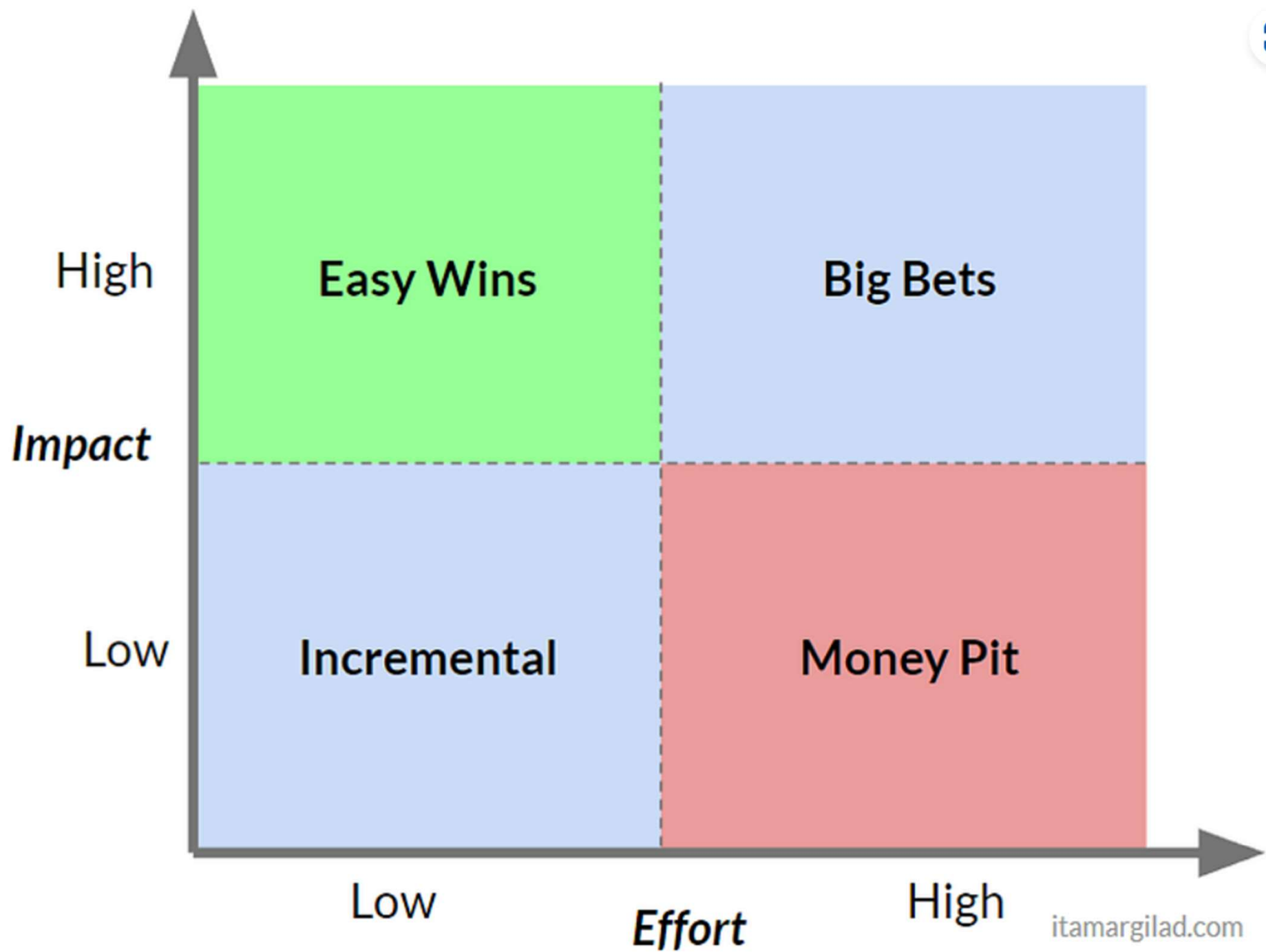
Options to Propose



- Ordinance
 - Seasonal restriction, phase-in, exceptions
 - Education
 - Convince residents to grab a rake or leave the leaves
 - Make financial case to residents/contractors
 - Incentives – grants, revolving loan fund, Green Bank
 - Advocate for state legislation
 - Not necessarily “or”, could be “and”
-

Next Steps

- Decide to proceed or not
 - If so,
 - Discuss/revise
 - Identify local contractor for success story
 - The Sierra Club CT Chapter can help with expert testimony from green landscapers, noise experts, health experts, etc.
 - Town engagement – PWFS Committee
 - Public engagement - Survey/focus group
-



itamargilad.com

Impact effort matrix



Thoughts?