

Engine noise irks Town of Port residents

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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A group of Town of Port Washington residents, frustrated by loud noise from the Briggs & Stratton testing grounds that they said interrupts their life throughout the day and night, asked the Town Board for help Monday night.

“Thursday night was the worst it’s ever been,” one woman said. “I couldn’t even sleep in my bed.”

Connie Pals, 3377 Terry La., compared the noise to a neighbor running a snowthrower at 6 a.m.

“During the day, it’s fine. Every once in a while, it’s fine,” she said. “But that’s what I get to listen to 24 hours a day, day and night.”

Pals said she has contacted Briggs & Stratton about the noise, but the company denied causing a problem, saying they don’t run engines around the clock.

“What is that noise I hear at 2 in the morning?” she asked. “I don’t feel like I’m being heard. I’m asking for your help.

“I’m thrilled to have them here in the town, but they have to work with me.”

Former town clerk Katherine Allen, who also lives on Terry Lane, said noise complaints about the testing grounds date back to the mid-1980s. At that time, she said, Simplicity Manufacturing — which was later bought by Briggs & Stratton — agreed to plant trees as a noise barrier.

“I thought at one point they weren’t going to run their tractors at night or on weekends,” she said. “Nothing’s changed, and it’s worse. It’s like an echo in my bedroom, and it’s been that way for 25 years. I like to have my windows open in summer and I can’t.”

Lucy Christopoulos, 3280 Hwy. LL, said she hasn’t heard a significant amount of noise until recently.

“I thought it was the Highway LL bridge coming down,” she said. “It’s very disturbing.”

Chuck Hamell, 3271 Bay Hill Rd., told the Town Board that the noise got worse this summer and hasn’t let up.

“I don’t know what they’re doing differently,” he said, “but it does seem worse. It does seem like it’s gotten louder. We can hear it over the air conditioning in summer. It doesn’t matter if the house is closed up.”

Town officials were sympathetic to the residents’ plight, with Building Inspector Rick Fellenz noting that town ordinances require that the noise at the lot line not exceed 85 decibels.

Town Chairman Jim Melichar said he would talk to the company to try and reach a solution, and

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also asked that the Plan Commission look at the town ordinances to see if they need to be beefed up to handle the situation.

“We don’t want to chase them out of the town,” he said, but the firm needs to respond to the residents’ complaints.

“Go talk to them, but we probably should contact our attorney and get him going on that, too,” Supr. Jim Rychtik said.