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TO: Oak Bluffs Planning Board members and Martha's Vineyard Commissioners
FROM: Cindy Doyle
RE: Proposal to install new athletic field facilities at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School
DATE: 4/22/21

I drove by the high school today and read the sign on their front lawn:

If you see something wrong
You must say something
You must do something

For the record: I am pro grass playing fields.

I wasn't going to write because I've already written a letter expressing my concerns about the proposed installation of an artificial turf athletic field at the high school (10/20/2020), have attended all the MVC public hearings and spoke at the hearing on 3/4/21 so presumably have had my 'say' but the high school's sign compelled me to write.

1. Toxicity

At last Thursday's planning meeting (4/15/20) a gentleman spoke saying the Field Fund had not submitted one piece of scientific evidence proving the harmfulness of PFAS. PFAS are known as "forever chemicals" because they don't degrade and while it's true that studies of the effects of PFAS aren't conclusive there is enough evidence to warrant extreme caution. Read James Ferraro Jr., Esq 3/12/2020 letter listing a number of studies finding a link between PFAs and the following six (6) diseases:

- Kidney Cancer
- Testicular Cancer
- Ulcerative Colitis
- Thyroid Disease
- Pregnancy Induced Hypertension (including preeclampsia)
- Hypercholesterolemia

Below are two examples of substances that doctor's 'studies' insisted were safe that were later found to cause deformities, disease and death:

- Thalidomide
- Cigarettes

I'll say no more.

2. Maintenance

Yes, the existing grass athletic field at the high school is in disrepair.

Yes, grass athletic fields require regular maintenance.

I suggest the MV Commissioners look at the high school's athletic field maintenance budget over the past 10 years and you'll understand why the playing fields are in such bad shape. Like the MV Regional High School buildings which are suffering from deferred maintenance, the condition of the grass athletic fields are the result of lack of care. If the high school has a history of not taking care of its buildings or playing fields what is going to ensure they will do that now? Installing and maintaining grass athletic fields would be much less expensive than putting in an artificial turf field that will need to be replaced after 8-10 years. One of the MV Commissioners spoke at last week's planning meeting sharing research he had done which concluded the high school could re-sod the grass playing field on an as needed basis at a minimal cost compared to what it will cost to install and replace an artificial turf field.

3. Recycling

The MV Commissioners are responsible for the environmental impact of projects they approve. Despite the petitioners assertions they will recycle the artificial turf when it needs to be replaced, testimony at the 3/4/21 hearing concluded there is currently no company in this country that recycles artificial turf playing fields and the one company in the Netherlands that recycles them won't recycle imported turf. The Island voted to ban the use of plastic bags and plastic straws in an effort to reduce plastic consumption locally. How can you justify installing a 2-acre field, with each carpet containing the equivalent to 46 million plastic straws or 3.2 million plastic bags? Additionally, all of the Island schools now have water filling stations which has dramatically lowered the need and use of plastics. And last year Plastic Free MV, a group of 5th and 6th grade students, won bans on single use plastic bottles in three towns (West Tisbury, Chilmark and Aquinnah) and are now going to try to get the ban passed in the Island's other three.

4. Biden's commitment to climate change

At the Leaders Summit on Climate held on Earth Day 2021 President Biden announced America would cut its global warming emissions at least in half by 2030 saying, "This is a moral imperative, an economic imperative. A moment of peril, but also a moment of extraordinary possibilities." Given this, how can the high school in good conscience put in a carbon, methane emitting petroleum burning 2.5-acre plastic field?

The MV Commission's mission is to be stewards of the Island we need to protect. It is unconscionable to pass down environmental destruction and debt. Almost every Island environmental group has spoken out against the use of an artificial turf for the high school's athletic field. May the facts, your conscience, and your wisdom guide your decision. Please hold the school accountable for the values they proclaim to have.

If you see something wrong

You must say something

You must do something

Enough said.

Thank you,
Cindy Doyle