

MVRHS Sports Complex Letter of Support

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To: Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>;

Hello,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed sports complex at MVRHS, to include the construction of a synthetic turf field. Having grown up on the Island and playing multiple sports, I became accustomed to subpar field conditions. Missing practices and games due to fields being underwater and sustaining injuries as a result of poorly kept surfaces were the norm; frankly our Island athletes deserve better.

Admittedly, I'd personally prefer playing on a perfectly manicured grass field. However, I recognize that it's unrealistic to expect the MVRHS to expend the financial and people resources necessary to keep the fields to the standard of the Augusta National golf course. The high school has tried (and failed) to maintain grass fields for decades; it is time to consider a new approach.

The opponents of constructing a synthetic turf field have valid concerns. It appears they are coming from a place of genuine concern and only want the best for the Island. Unfortunately, the facts they claim in their argument consist of outdated pseudoscience at best, rife with confirmation bias. Furthermore, it's incredibly myopic to tout a synthetic turf field as damaging to the Island geology and ecosystem when there are other instances of construction on the island that are far more damaging. The proposed synthetic turf field is made from recycled materials (to include wood mulch infill and a PFAS-free woven backing). The field will be recycled at the end of its useful life. I challenge the detractors to come up with a logical explanation as to why thousands of elite educational institutions with robust environmental engineering and geology departments have synthetic turf despite the supposed risks.

In response to the claim that turf fields cause a higher incidence of musculoskeletal injuries, this is misleading. I'd argue that the injuries studied on grass fields were sustained on a surface of much higher quality than MVRHS'. Sure, the composition of natural grass is different than that of synthetic turf. You negate the potential safety factor of a natural surface when the surface isn't level and filled with potholes, divots, or even metal debris (as found on multiple MVRHS fields). Many former teammates and I have suffered life-altering injuries as a direct result of the condition of the MVRHS fields. I personally suffered a severe ankle sprain in my final season as a MVRHS Lacrosse player due to the state of McCarthy Field. MVRHS has proven time and time again that it does not have the resources to maintain the fields in a condition to prevent injuries, so something needs to be done.

The time is now to move forward with an urgently needed field upgrade. Generations of Island athletes have spoken in favor of the proposed upgrades. I implore the powers that be to consider the implications of not moving forward with the new sports complex.

Respectfully submitted,

Conor Smith
MVRHS c/o 2012