

Paul Foley

From: Susan Desmarais [obsusan@icloud.com]
Sent: Thursday, September 08, 2016 1:11 PM
To: Paul Foley
Cc: Rebekah Thomson; rlionette@gmail.com
Subject: Fwd: Due Diligence Needed | The Vineyard Gazette - Martha's Vineyard News

Hi Paul,

I have attached the link for a letter to the editor I wrote back in May. In rereading it I am struck by how nothing has changed. Hundreds of us are counting on the MVC to conduct the due diligence which thus far has not been done. I remember from the public meetings how MV@Play kept pressing that time was of the essence, they wanted, in fact contracted with the school dept, for their “shovel ready” project to be started no later than September 1st. I stood and raised the point that this project should go to the MVC as it's in a DRI. Their response, in a public meeting, in May, was that they were aware of that and prepared for it.

Within weeks MV@Play stated in a Tisbury Selectman's meeting that they believed their project was nothing more than “landscaping” therefore they were not going to pull any permits. That began the quest by Vineyarders for Grass Fields to get a referral to the MVC. In all candor we chose to address the towns that could get us on their agendas first. Each time we went before the selectman, no one from MV@Play showed up, then they, stating they deserved to state their case asked to for the referral to be delayed until a meeting could be scheduled for them to attend. In both cases the boards complied then reaffirmed their initial votes.

While and since all of this unfolded both myself and Rebekah Thomson from Vineyarders for Grass Fields reached out to MV@Play. Once there was some communication then they shut down. Our offer was that since NO maintenance, other than mowing, has ever been done on the fields and that we had been able to get people to commit to volunteering to start rehabbing and maintaining the fields that we work together. The response was its artificial turf or nothing. Since then we have been privately and publicly bullied, labeled obstructionists and a “small but vocal minority”. I think the over 700 people who signed our petition would take exception to this statement. We also received an email from one member of MV@Play telling us we didn't care about the athletes and were trying to prevent some of them from earning athletics scholarships. Another email stated we should “put up or shut up”.

While I know behavior doesn't trip guide wire for a mandatory referral it does speak to character, ethics and trustworthiness. When organizations or people state one thing then behave another way that gives others insight when they take notice. In May, MV@Play stated they had a “gift”.. turns out there is no such gift. It was stated in the MV Times a couple of weeks ago that they have been unable to fundraise for the project because of a “small group of obstructionists” making it necessary for them to educate Boards of Selectman. I also wonder why the delay in submitting their plans to the MVC....they showed shovel ready plans in public meetings during April and May. Most recently after finding out the stadium seating and lighting would trigger a mandatory referral MV@Play without hesitation removed them from the project. There goes their whole reasoning for artificial turf! They have consistently stated it had to be artificial turf in order to support dramatically increased usage because of night time games and spectator seating. It appears to me that this project and the organization of MV@Play needs close examination and supervision.

In conclusion....as a taxpayer this project concerns me. To their credit MV@Play has been 100% candid about the fact that the moment the project is complete their obligation/support is over. In fact I believe the contract with the MVPS system states that. However this means that the school system must start a stabilization fund for maintenance and replacement of the turf and infill. The warranty is 8 years. When the field is replaced the waste is considered toxic being costly to dispose of. A school committee member Robert Lionettes stated in the

Chilmark Selectman's meeting this past June that he had consulted with the principal at Barnstable High School. They have a 10 year old field which needs to be replaced and in today's money it will cost at least one million dollars. Quick math says the school system must start putting aside 100K per year immediately just to eventually replace the field. And, there has been no \$ to maintain the fields we currently have. This makes no sense and will place a financial burden on already stressed budgets, especially as we look at the issues with the High School building.

i ask the commissioners to accept this referral. There are so many unanswered questions about this project, this organization as well as the health and environmental consequences. Some of these consequences are irreversible. Why would this island take the chance?

<https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2016/05/19/due-diligence-needed>

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Due Diligence Needed

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On Monday night the school committee voted to approve phase one of an ambitious three-phase project at the regional high school which includes at least one artificial turf field. While I know the men — from MV@Play who are the movers of this project — have been working for several months on it, this was only the second public forum.

Numerous serious concerns were raised about the health and environmental impacts of the plastics. While definitive studies are ongoing, there is enough cause for concern that many community members attended Monday night's meeting. Several hundred people signed a petition on MoveOn.org asking that further research and review take place before voting occurred and expressing support for natural grass fields.

At the outset of the meeting it was stated that because several key pieces of information were missing — including unresolved legal issues, maintenance and replacement costs, liability insurance, environmental impact on the aquifer from both the turf and cleaning solutions for sanitizing it and health concerns for the athletes —no vote would take place until the next meeting on June 5.

For three hours people on both sides of the issue spoke. It was clear that MV@Play would not entertain the idea of giving natural turf a try. It was artificial turf or nothing. Many of us, myself included, were struck by the fact that the school has not maintained the natural fields other than mowing. Therefore we don't know if natural grass properly cared for is a viable option. Instead, in spite of missing financial and legal information, health risks and environmental questions, a member of the school committee put forth a motion that the vote occur. Robert Lionette succinctly expressed that since so much information had come forth the vote should be held on June 5. Unfortunately, he was outvoted and a vote approving phase one occurred.

Those of us who raised concerns were told we had been heard. The truth is we were not heard. The public forums were a sham — the school committee and school administrators pushed their agenda through

without due diligence. Shame on them. The voices of reason in Robert Lionette and Theresa Manning were silenced by the rest of the committee.

Sadly the take away from this experience is that big money and loud voices win. In the long run the children, the environment and democratic process loses. It feels like the national politics of vitriol have reached our shores. And that may be the biggest tragedy of all.

Susan Desmarais
Oak Bluffs

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