

Karyn Borella

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Dear Martha's Vineyard Commissioners:

I am writing as a community member, parent, athlete, and youth coach to express my concerns about the proposal to introduce an artificial playing surface to the children of Martha's Vineyard. Even though I am a person who seeks peace and consensus, and longs for that within our community whenever possible, I find it necessary to speak up in this situation and say that compromise is unacceptable: even one artificial field is too many.

I have a variety of serious concerns about artificial turf: as a mother, I am appalled at the idea of installing this for our children. It defies my belief in the collective parental, coaching, school, and community leadership's obligation to protect our children's well-being and to teach them the core values of respect for self, others, and the environment, which are becoming increasingly overlooked and abandoned.

The installation of turf fields **poses known and unknown risks to children's small bodies**, which are significantly more susceptible to chemicals than grown adults, due to their size and the rate at which they are growing. Additionally, health concerns abound for the aquifer which sits underneath the slated project and the community it serves.

The installation of turf fields **shows children that we prize the allure of athleticism over our commitment to the environment**. This statement deserves repetition: if we install a turf field, our message to our children is that saving our oceans and earth is only important if it fits within our convenience/desires for more, better, faster. It says we can pick and choose how we try to help the environment; we will refuse a plastic straw but we will not refuse a plastic field. We do not have this luxury of choice. We need to demonstrate a clear commitment to preserving our environment and bettering all of our related decisions, big and small, or we risk everything for our children's future.

The proposal to install artificial turf and the movement behind it **has misled many of our children to believe they will be stronger, more competitive athletes by having access to this type of field**. I believe it has distracted from our coaching conversations with children; instead of prizing values such as hard work, commitment to practice, teamwork, healthy competition, and strategy amongst them, it has deluded (some of) our kids into thinking that not having access to "premier surfacing" is holding them back athletically. Instead of feeling grateful and excited for their opportunity to play and improve through hard work, many of our children have received the message that they are entitled to artificial turf and are focused on the surface as at least partly responsible for their athletic success or failure.

We have a responsibility here to lead by example, to choose the less popular, less glamorous path; to model for our children that together, as the adults who guide their growth and development, we care. We care about their health and the health of others. We care about the earth. And we believe that the chance and thrill to go out and play, the values of sportsmanship, team building, and hard work, are the ones to be celebrated in the athletic philosophies of parents, coaches, and schools.

And, in speaking of our obligations to our children, I want to reiterate that I do believe we owe them safe playing surfaces. We cannot leave our grass fields in their current condition and in good conscience say go play. It is irresponsible not to consider children's physical

safety. Whilst rejecting the notion of artificial turf, I do support the implementation of a maintenance plan for our island grass athletic facilities with accountability. We cannot support a grass complex without providing the necessary care for it, again taking the opportunity to model for our children how to care for living things and how to follow through on our commitment to their safety and enjoyment. I hope developing this plan can become the pathway and focus of our work and resources, together as a community.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further clarification on the points above.

Thank you for your time and vision to the future with this project.

Appreciatively,
Karyn Convey Borella, Tisbury Resident