

David Hobart

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Dear Ms Morrison:

My name is David Hobart, I have a PhD in Chemistry, and have worked in the pharmaceutical industry for more than 30 years. My family and I have been coming to the Vineyard seasonally since the mid 1980's and my wife and I moved here full time in 2012. We live in the Sengekontacket Community on Sengekontacket Pond in Oak Bluffs. Both my wife and I are active in our community and island organizations, and are concerned for the health and safety of our island communities, ponds and aquafer.

The watershed for Sengekontacket Pond includes the high school fields, and extends all the way to the airport. What soaks into or is washed off the ground there, eventually finds its way to Sengekontacket Pond (and other ponds), adversely affecting the ponds' flora and fauna and our sole source aquafer.

**We are strongly opposed to the installation of artificial turf fields at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS).** The risk of shedding micro-plastic particles and toxic chemicals into our ponds and water supply is too great. And the probability of a safe and effective way of "recycling" 20+ tons of plastic field at the end of its life is miniscule, so it will continue to pollute after its use!

As has been provided to the MVC elsewhere:

- All 6 towns on the island have already shown their intent on plastic pollution by banning plastic bags, bottles and recommending to not use plastic straws. It is inconceivable that we would now *intentionally* put down a several acre plastic mat for our children to grind up into micro-plastic particles by running, falling and sliding over it.
- The shedding of toxic chemicals by the turf is another unacceptable risk. Remember those per- and polyfluoroalkyls (PFAs) we are so concerned about in the W. Tisbury watershed by the airport? These mats shed the same class of compounds. Are we to *intentionally* pollute our sole source aquafer and salt ponds with these PFAs?
- None of this, of course, happens with grass fields. In fact, among other advantages, grass *helps* our ponds and watershed by absorbing nutrients *before* they reach the ponds. So if we put down these turf fields, we are not only adding toxic turf chemicals to our water, but are also removing the nutrient absorbing grass – a double whammy!!
- Play on artificial turf leads to increased injuries, and turf is, from my personal experience, harder to play on, hotter, more slippery, and can give sliding skin burns.

But did you know that it is recommended that **an athletic shoe without cleats should be used on artificial turf?** This is so that, with the sharp turns or falls of the game, the foot, ankle, knee and hip can (hopefully) turn with the body and avoid the numerous possible twisting injuries caused by the turf not releasing the foot during those turns or falls, as grass does.

**How many of the other teams MVRHS plays will have those shoes when they play us? Not only is it an added expense for us and them, but would MVRHS then be exposing them to increased injury risk, if they play with cleats? Would MVRHS then be liable for those injuries?**

**Artificial turf is an extremely bad idea for the island, from a lot of perspectives.**

Now, from what I have read, it seems that the cost of, and time for, grass maintenance is a significant, if not the major, issue, for the installation of grass fields. To that end, I have several suggestions for your, and the community's, consideration:

1. Because the more use a grass field gets, and the more maintenance and recovery time it needs, might it be possible to lower MVRHS' fields' use by shifting some activities to other (perhaps under-used) fields on the island? There are fields in Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, at least, which might be used. This is an island-wide issue, and calls for an island-wide solution. It occurs to me that a lot of team bus transport time to those other fields might be purchased instead of an artificial turf field!
2. MVRHS already has a Horticultural program; would it be possible to employ some of those students, as part of that program, before or after graduation, to assist with the field maintenance?
3. We have dozens of landscaping companies and several golf courses on the island, probably with many owners/employees who have children in the school system, who will play on those fields. Could we ask those companies to volunteer some of their time, equipment and/or expertise?
4. Or could we ask the community at large to volunteer their time for their kids?
5. We also require those landscaping companies / golf courses to acquire a license to apply fertilizer. Could we make it a requirement of the license to provide X hours of maintenance work on the fields?
6. If they do volunteer, would it be possible to give those people a break on their town taxes, town school tuition share or marketing / advertising benefits? Bartering is a well-known island tradition – can we do it here?

I am not an expert on field maintenance and do not know if any of these suggestions are feasible or possible. But the island managed to come together for the fertilizer and plastics regulations, and the COVID response; can we also do it for our children's playing fields, and our ponds and water supply?

I would be happy to speak on these points at a Zoom meeting, if possible. I am currently off-island (returning mid-February), and would have to join remotely. If it is possible, please let me know when the meeting is to be held and its log-in information.

Thanks so much!!

David R Hobart