

A version of this letter was sent to the MVRHS School Committee--

I'm a father of 3 soccer-loving kids, a youth soccer coach, a concerned global citizen, a former Division 1 athlete, and also someone who worked 7 seasons at a top European football club, FCBarcelona, and the past 20 years in the global football (soccer) industry. I know executives who worked at FIFA in charge of installing plastic turf around the world, and another who worked for a top North American artificial turf company. Both left their positions in disgust and dismay after numerous failed projects, which are seldom reported but many in litigation. One saw first hand how African kids developed terrible blisters playing on plastic (this doesn't happen on grass which naturally cools). The other resigned after his company's plastic carpet melted in the summer heat, causing a chemical spill into his own New Jersey neighborhood's water system.

Over my career I have also observed that many of the best soccer players come out of underdeveloped nations where field conditions are rough to say the least. The repeated statements coming from coaches claiming that Vineyard students require plastic fields to remain competitive are untrue and I believe send the wrong message to our student athletes. While I definitely appreciate the value of safe, healthy fields (and fully support The Field Fund's work to that end), let's help our kids focus on what athletics are really about — teamwork, fun, adaptability, training, persistence, strategy, wholistic and multi-sport training, etc. and enjoying sport in nature, not at the expense of it.

It is simply irresponsible for our school leaders to support laying acres of plastic for our children to play on, whilst its safety is dubious at best. Especially so in the midst of the climate crisis where the very sustainability of our communities depends on the concerted and urgent effort by each and every one of us, and also importantly on the proper education of our children. Please disregard the sales pitch and local politics. Given that the proposal gets key fundamentals wrong, such as game field orientation and grass field design, one has to wonder how much integrity the entire plan contains. Your rational and concerned thinking is of utmost importance.

PS I am also highly concerned that the MVRHS committee has been putting this field issue front and center for years when the entire campus is in dire need of reconstruction and investment.

PPS Since our decisions as consumers are directly linked to the sustainability of our community and globe, we need to be better informed of what companies are selling to us. You can see many cases of litigation already taking place nationwide against one of the leading plastic turf companies here <http://fieldturf.nj.com>. We should not pretend we are isolated from this living on MVY.

Respectfully,  
Josh Thomson