

**From:** Shane McGovern  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 13, 2021 12:17 AM  
**To:** Alex Elvin; lucy@mvcommission.org  
**Subject:** High School Field

To whom It may concern,

My name is Shane McGovern, MVRHS Class of 2005, Varsity Lacrosse 03',04',05'. I am writing you to voice my opinion on the new high school field.

First, I agree we should want the best field/ fields we can provide for our student athletes. Second, I played on a what some people might say were "crap fields" for my whole lacrosse career growing up on island. Third, personally as a player I prefer to play field sports, especially lacrosse on natural grass.

With those things being said, I will voice my opinion on the new field with the information I have gathered from my own experience, and from reading various studies, most notably ones from Duke University, University of Pittsburgh, and the Australia Federal Government. This field debate has gone on a long time, and I will not pretend to be an expert in any aspect of this debate.

#### #1 - Environmental

- With any material used in the chemistry of the synthetic grass and infill material, the environmental concerns should be the number one concern for us. This field sits in the middle of the island and overlays an area that feeds at least four major watersheds for islanders. Unlike many communities that have installed these fields, we drink our ground water here on island, and we still have relatively healthy water systems compared to many of our offisland neighbors. We have healthy water systems, because we have placed our water quality as a major importance compared to other communities who have installed these fields, many being in more urban environments where the amount of use justifies the installation cost. I am not clear on the new specified material being proposed in this version of the field turf proposal but we need to look deep into the material used. If we went with the original proposal many years ago, we would of installed a toxic field with crumb rubber and PFAS that would of slowly hurt the health of our student athletes and the water systems we rely on. I know there is class action lawsuits and tort litigation concerning those specified field turf fields. We should know with 100% confidence this field is environmentally safe. I have yet to see proof of this.

#### #2 Cost

I have read three economic studies and there does not seem to be a economic case for field turf when we have space for grass. The justification for the cost is based on the high level of play the high school game field is seeing and this is because youth programs like lacrosse are now playing at the high school rather than elementary fields. When I was in the youth lacrosse program we played games and practiced at the barely maintained Oak Bluffs Elementary School

field and the field we absolute junk. We had to mow the field for most of games ourselves, mud patches at the goal crease, and weeds everywhere. We went undefeated three years in a row on that crap field. We need to spread the youth programs play to other fields on the island that see little use. This can and should happen.

I have also come across numerous lawsuits with faulty fields and improper maintenance which has lead to the field failing, and requiring replacement (\$500k min.) I wont get into the other things this money could be used for but it's very obvious the field money could be used in many other areas of MVRHS.

To address the cost of the maintenance of the grass field, I believe we should devote more of our Horticulture program to the maintenance of the grass as use for teaching those students organic grass turf management which is a viable career.

### #Health

Firsthand, I played on "crap" fields my whole lacrosse career on island and I do not recall one ligament injury to any of our players. I witnessed a handful in college playing on field turf.

One of the things that I like about grass fields is that they regulate the speed of the game. In rainy conditions, grass becomes slicker, mud is formed and players will slow the speed of their game to meet those conditions. I believe with field turf, players feel more confident with the field's perceived conditions while the risk of injury increases with worse weather conditions.

From my reading on injury studies, they swing both ways and very dependent on individual sport. For football it is clear, in September 2020, the NFLPA President JC Tretter has recently called for all NFL teams to switch to grass as the non contact injury data is very clear in football. There is 28% increase in non contact injuries in the NFL on field turf fields.

On a final note, one thing that is very clear is that field turf fields are hot, much hotter than grass. We are not in the tropics here but this should be noted.

### -Competitiveness

One major argument that field turf proponents believe is that we are loosing competitive advantage playing on grass as we are not experienced in playing on turf regularly, and that we need to keep up with the Joneses and get field turf so we can win more. I find this argument to be particularly flawed.

We have our own grass field which we are experienced on.

We live on the island which requires mainland teams to take a ferry to play us.

If we play half our games at home on grass, and a couple away games on grass we are playing the majority of our games on grass. That gives is the advantage in the majority of our games.

If we played only away teams with field turf we still would play half our games on our home grass field which would play nothing like the opponents turf fields, which in turn would give us an increased advantage at home. Home field advantage means you know your home field conditions better than the opponent. This home field advantage is an actual thing with grass fields, and basically does not exist with turf.

As previously stated, we have always had a "crap" field here, and we always have been very competitive in state play. In 2003, Vineyard Lacrosse brought a State Championship game to that "crap" field. Unfortunately, we lost in that game, and I'll tell you it had nothing to do with field. It does seem like some Vineyard sports programs have become less competitive in recent years and I do not believe that a new field will do anything to help that. Success comes from practice, and dedication, not how awesome the MV logo would look at center field. If your kid is a bad driver, you don't buy them a Ferrari.

In conclusion, I believe grass the only choice for the island based on the factors of the environment, player health, economic cost, and program competitiveness, I believe if we are to raise funds for a new field, let it be grass.

Shane McGovern  
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