

Dear MV Commissioners,

We are writing to share the view that a synthetic turf field will be a serious hazard for our environment and our kids. I truly wish this were not such a contentious issue of “us vs. them”. Normally, I would keep quiet for fear of offending the many coaches that I have so much love and respect for, that have been there for my kids for so many years. But I feel strongly enough that the current plan to install plastic grass is a bad one, and that once carried through, will be an irreversible mistake.

As parents of high school or soon to be MVRHS athletes, we are invested in attaining the best possible facilities for our kids.

We are convinced the “best possible facilities” are grass and this is why:

Please just read the link below from the NFL Players Association. This is written by an NFL player, for other players to read. It is not from an environmental group, an investigative reporter or any other advocate.

The president of the NFL Players association JC Tretter released this powerful statement: <https://nflpa.com/posts/only-natural-grass-can-level-the-nfls-playing-field>

And then the US Women’s National Soccer Team: <https://news.yahoo.com/settlement-means-u-womens-national-235345261.html>

As parents of athletes, Tretter’s statements and the effort the US Women’s Soccer Team to ensure that they do not play on artificial turf, should make us concerned. These athletes are worried about their safety and their ability to continue to play the sports that they love due to the stress that artificial turf puts on their bodies.

Our kids are at various places in their sports careers, but they are ALL at the beginning of their lives. We want them to have healthy, injury free bodies to enjoy all of their many future opportunities, on sports fields and off. We all know what it feels like to get older and feel a little creaky. It is not something our kids should be faced with in the heart of their young adulthood.

This is not an either or situation. We do not have to give up great fields to keep our kids safe, or expose our kids to unnecessary risk to have great playing surfaces. Grass fields can, and do, get the job done while minimizing injury and a host of other risks. This debate has ignited the community to get behind a great facility for our high school athletes. Let’s take that energy and really have something incredible.

I know the debate over this issue has taken valuable time, but it has also allowed us to see things evolve, and that evolution is not positive for artificial turf. More athletes are speaking out about its problems, and more places are ripping artificial carpets out. We can benefit from others mistakes and have a better, safer sports facility with grass fields!

ADDITIONAL ISSUES:

Dangerous for the health of our kids and the environment:

- Plastic grass sheds microplastics that will flow into our environment
- Plastic grass needs to be treated/cleaned with highly toxic chemicals and antifungals.
- Currently, there is no facility that recycles plastic turf. With the global recycling crisis, I don't see it happening anytime soon.
- All plastic turf is manufactured using PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) which causes the turf our kids to be playing on laden with these known cancer causing "forever chemicals". The stuff that doesn't get absorbed by our children will drain into our aquifer. PFAS is called the "forever chemical" because it never biodegrades.
- In 8-10 years, we will be responsible for replacing the plastic turf, throwing away many tons of contaminated plastic.

Costly and irreversible:

- The synthetic turf is extremely costly adding up to millions of dollars that MVRHS doesn't have.
- The debt is not sustainable if we must replace the plastic every 8-10 years for millions each time.
- Reverting to grass after going through the intense work to install the plastic field- dirt removal, addition of tons of gravel, drainage systems, etc. is nearly irreversible and cost-prohibitive.

YES, to properly managed organic grass fields:

Properly managed organic grass:

- Is the safest and best for our kids and the environment
- Absorbs 99% of the nitrogen in fertilizer so won't be adding nitrogen to our already burdened coastal ponds
- Is free of chemicals
- is more forgiving and results in less sports injuries
- does not have unknown long-term negative effects on our kids and the environment
- is cheaper than plastic!!!!

Respectfully,
Signe Benjamin and George Hearn, parents