



Martha's Vineyard Commission  
P.O. Box 1447  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

re: Martha's Vineyard Regional High School  
Artificial Turf Athletic Field

January 13, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed artificial athletic field at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School.

The mission of Tisbury Waterways Inc. (TWI) is to provide a community presence in matters involving the quality and improvement of waterways in the Town of Tisbury. The proposed field lies within the watershed of Lagoon Pond, a valuable Tisbury resource that is already stressed by septic, fertilizer and storm water runoff. Installation of this artificial athletic field can only make water quality worse.

We do not provide comments as experts in artificial turf vs. grass. However, we have followed the discussion, read the literature and have worked in the community to improve water quality for the benefit of all. We support efforts to provide the best facilities, educational and athletic, within our capacity for our youth. In making these decisions, we also should seek to do no harm to the health of our island resources, upon which so much of everyone's health and well-being depends.

The Board of Directors of TWI is concerned about the long-term impact of installing, maintaining, and disposing of the proposed field. Chief among our concerns is the leaching of toxic contaminants from the field into surrounding groundwater. These contaminants may include micro plastics, PFAS, disinfectants and biocides, as well as the herbicides, fungicides,

and adhesives required to maintain the plastic carpet. Most worrisome, these contaminants are difficult to detect, impossible to remove, and may enter the island's food chain. We are all familiar with the unanticipated PFAS contamination at our airport and the time and expense, both public and private, that has resulted once its toxicity was known. TWI fully supports local environmental efforts to reduce the use of plastics on the island. Installation of this artificial field runs contrary to this effort and the emerging culture of the Vineyard. We believe that natural grass athletic fields can be constructed to provide similar benefits to local athletes, while helping reinforce local environmental stewardship.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors, TWI  
Melinda Loberg, President

Note: There was one dissenting vote on our board – not on the content of this letter, but on the timing of its delivery. We may update our comments based on new information prior to the closing of the public hearings.