

January 11, 2021

Dear MV Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to install a 2.7-acre synthetic field at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School.

The West Tisbury Energy Committee is an advisory body, which oversees, reviews and advises the town on energy use and measures. Our Town tends to support climate-focused initiatives. For example, West Tisbury passed a resolution to be 100% Renewable by 2040. In coordination with other committees in West Tisbury and across the island including the Martha's Vineyard Commission, the Energy Committee is encouraging our Town municipality, residents and businesses to take steps to decrease our contribution to climate change. It is in this spirit that we write this letter.

It is clear that the island community cares deeply about the importance of playing fields for its children. These fields provide a place to gather and play, which the last nine months have taught us to value more than ever.

However, there is a larger context in which our children are growing up — and that is a world significantly impacted by the climate crisis. The climate crisis is happening at a rate faster than many of us anticipated and we need to consider it in all decisions that we make. In addition, plastics are overwhelming our world and there is no good way to dispose of them. It is said that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than marine life. Using more plastic does not seem like a healthy choice for our planet.

A grass playing field:

- Removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stores carbon in the root system below -- a process considered to be a critical tool in mitigating climate change while improving soil health
- Is a pervious surface where the soil acts as a sponge: absorbing rain and holding water in its soil, providing reserves to plant roots in times of drought and serving as a sink to soak up excess water during a hard rainfall
- Provides a natural cooling effect through the evapotranspiration process
- Can be maintained sustainably: using compost and organic fertilizers, drought-resistant grass seed, managed watering and electric maintenance equipment
- Avoids the use of plastic. In addition to being a petrochemical product, plastic ultimately becomes trash and there is no good way to dispose of it

A synthetic field does not offer these beneficial characteristics and is not helpful in combatting climate change.

We thank you in advance for your thorough review of this significant proposal and for prioritizing energy use and climate action in your evaluation.

Respectfully submitted,

The West Tisbury Energy Committee