

# MVRHS Field Project

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To: Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>; Oak Bluffs Planning Board <planningboard@oakbluffsma.gov>; Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>;

To the members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

It feels like almost daily I see a new article emerge or hear about a scientist doing research about plastics and how detrimental they are to our health. The vast amount of new information that is emerging in this area of study makes me continually ask how our community could possibly think it is a good idea to install a plastic field on our Island. The argument that "so many other schools have plastic fields, so we should too" is just not good enough.

Our advantage is that we are considering installing a plastic field at a time when we know more. While we are learning more and more about plastic pollution impacts, we are also learning about regenerative land care and new technologies, including electric mowers that allow us to maintain grass fields far more efficiently and with a smaller carbon footprint. And our Island doesn't always do things like everyone else. I would like to think that quite often we are different. We think critically about issues and don't always do things just because everyone else is. Our land conservation on the island has been remarkable over the years, we have children pushing to ban plastic bottles, straws, etc., and our towns are committing to bold environmental initiatives.

The Field Fund has been demonized as the only organization against this plastic field, but I have to remind you that many, many island organizations – about 20 now – have very publicly spoken or written against this field. We are not alone. We are all in favor of grass. Grass, worms, a soil microbiome, the life of our earth is where we want our children to spend their time. Not on chemical laden, barren plastic.

I know you have been presented with two very different versions of answers to your benefits and detriments checklist. The applicant has managed to demonize grass and soil and is trying to tell you that a petrochemical product is better for our environment. The high school is threatening to clearcut trees to create more grass fields if the Commission conditions this project as grass. This is a false choice.

The most unfortunate thing to me is that while improvements to the athletic campus are needed, there is still no master plan for the high school. I have one child that is an athlete and one that is not. My older son, who is not the athlete, will be a freshman next year. His passions are math and technology. He would have benefited from a new high school and all the technologies that would be incorporated into that build. Where is the new robotics classroom or computer lab for him? I said years ago that both my kids would go through the renovation/rebuild of the high school and how challenging that would be but how necessary it was. The way things are looking now, it seems that both of them will graduate before any of the improvements are made.

When I spoke to the Commission representing The Field Fund I gave you a bit of my background but I just wanted to recap here. I grew up in Chilmark and graduated from the MVRHS where I played field hockey and ran track. I went on to play field hockey in college and coach as well. My mom, Sheila Muldaur, was a teacher at the Oak Bluffs School. She taught me, by setting the example, that you have to advocate for your children. My involvement with The Field Fund and my desire to see an all grass campus at the high school is me advocating for my own and the kids of this community.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this project. I look forward to your decision and hopefully watching my younger son play soccer and lacrosse on a grass field inside a new track in the coming years.

Sincerely,  
Dardanella Slavin