HUNTRESS ASSOCIATES
Landscape Architecture & Land Planning

November 16, 2020

Mr. Alex Elvin, General Planner
Martha's Vineyard Commission
PO Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Re: Questions raised by MV Commissioners at LUPC meeting 10/19/20 (Amended DRI # 352)

Dear Mr. Elvin;

I received your final LUPC commissioner questions dated October 19, 2020, regarding the MVRHS's Application for an amended DRI, as referenced above. I have coordinated our reply with the MVRPS and project team. The following is a listing of your questions and our responses.

1. **(Fred) Appreciate overall campus plan. Please confirm the phase one scope includes the following: 400m track (Field #1) and natural grass field (Field #2).** *Response: Confirmed. Phase one includes the new 400m track, field #1, field #2, grandstands, pressbox, sports lighting and associated site improvements, as shown on the record plans.*

2. **(Richard) Is there a plan to remove the old track?** *Response: The existing 400m track is not scheduled to be removed as part of Phase One. MVRHS plans to remove the existing track within the next five (5) years.*

3. **(Linda) Plans are hard to see on screen. Reduce printed commentary, make plans larger. Can we enlarge and color the cursor in future presentations? What are the reasons for moving the track? Dislikes acronyms and initials.** *Response: We can zoom in on any section of the plan the LUPC would like to see. We will also include the plans with limited printed commentary. We will review options for modifying the cursor so it is easier to follow and will minimize the use of any acronyms moving forward.*

   The reasons for moving the track include the following:

   a. *The existing 400m track is at its end of useful life and needs a complete rebuild. The existing layout and location are limited in their ability to accommodate the new program. Some of the concerns with the existing layout location include: 1) Long Jump facilities are too close to the edge of the playing field sideline, 2) Discus event is in conflict with the athletic field and presents a hazard to those using the jumping events, 3) Common finish line is on the opposite side of the track, 4) Limited storage of athletic supplies, 5) Limited spectator viewing, 6) Natural grass condition is poor, 7) The facility is not ADA compliant. To be ADA compliant the facility needs an "accessible route" from the parking area to the track, field and spectator areas. This route should be a*

paved surface with a minimum of 4' width, 8) Neighbors have complained about the proximity of the field to their homes and the resulting impact from noise during sporting events.

4. **(Doug) How long can we expect the existing 400m track will last with routine maintenance. How can we extend it's life? Will the new grandstand be designed so that it can be expanded? What would be involved in putting in a natural grass field instead of synthetic?**

   a. *Response: The existing 400m running track is currently beyond its life expectancy. The 3" asphalt wearing course is over twenty years old. As asphalt ages, it dries out and the loss of moisture creates shrinking and cracking in the asphalt. As the asphalt cracks it allows for the penetration of water enabling the freeze/thaw cycle to accelerate the cracking until the surface becomes unstable. The owner spent approximately $170k three years ago to repair the rubber wearing course and seal the surface. Although this will help in the short term, the additional sealing does nothing to mend the cracking and shrinking of the asphalt base course below, as it needs complete replacement.*

   b. *Response: It would not be cost effective to continue to apply new rubber and binder to seal the surface. The asphalt has exceeded its useful life expectancy, consequently it will continue to cause instability of the surface.*

   c. *Response: Yes, the grandstand could be expanded in the future, if desired.*

   d. *Response: The introduction of a natural grass surface would require new detailing of a subgrade drainage system, modified topsoil specification, irrigation plan and athletic field seed mix. It is not the owner's desire to install a natural grass surface within the 400m track infield. Please see our response to Questions 5 and 13 below.*

5. **(Doug) Is a synthetic turf field appropriate for the island in light of available alternatives. We are an Island – Does salt affect the 400m track or synthetic turf field surfaces?**

   a. *Response: The synthetic turf system specification we have prepared for the MVRHS project includes a woven synthetic turf system, eliminating the backing and polyurethane binders which have complicated the recycling process for synthetic turf in the past. The woven turf is made from one family of polyolefin material allowing for a simplified recycling process at the end of life. Further, the MVRHS has elected NOT to use crumb rubber as an infill product. The infill product proposed for this project is*

made from sustainably grown and harvested loblolly pine from Georgia and Tennessee. Finally, the resilient shock pad which is placed under the field has a cradle-to-cradle certification and a twenty-five year warranty. The synthetic turf system proposed for MVRHS is the most sustainable system available on the market today and has been shown to reduce the rate of concussion and serious head injury by over 50%.

b. *Response: Salt will not have an impact on the 400m track or synthetic turf surfaces. Please refer to the photos below of synthetic turf fields in Swampscott and Hull Massachusetts that are much closer to the ocean than the location proposed at MVRHS.*

Blocksidge Field – Swampscott, Massachusetts

Hull High School – Hull, Massachusetts

6. **(Christine) Asked if the new field replaces the existing football field. "Where will football be played once you put a new 400m track & field in its place?"** *Response: All varsity sports will be played on the new field within the proposed 400m running track.*

7. **(Joan) LUPC and MVC process - Could MVC staff get these questions/answers in one document? Can the answers be worked into the updated staff report before bringing it back to the LUPC?** *Response: to be provided by MVC staff.*

8. **(Fred) Synthetic turf at end of life – how is the end-of-life determination made?** *Response: We discussed GMax and HIC (Head Impact Criterion) testing, along with infill depth and fiber wear testing at the last LUPC meeting. The synthetic turf system installed at MVRHS will have a ten (10) year warranty. We have attached an end-of-life testing scope of services prepared by Firefly Sports Testing as an example of the type of testing the owner could consider to evaluate the safety and usefulness of the synthetic turf as it approaches 10-12 years in age.*

9. **(Richard) How does salt water/air affect the synthetic turf?** *Response: Salt will not have an impact on the synthetic turf surfaces. Please refer to the photos above of synthetic turf fields in Swampscott and Hull Massachusetts that are much closer to the ocean than the location proposed at MVRHS.*

10. **(Doug) Synthetic field and 400m running track are designed as a single project. Would you design the track any differently if the field was natural grass. Why must Field #1 be synthetic? Are there alternatives track surfaces that are not rubber or "less synthetic?"** *Response: No, we would not detail the 400m running track any differently if the surface was natural grass. The MVRHS asked that we take this opportunity to note that the School Committee retained Huntress Associate to do an independent review of MVRHS's needs based on facility usage which concluded that one synthetic field in combination with the renovation of our grass fields would provide the safest and best option for our students. Based upon the information provided by Huntress and during our public hearings, the school committee decided that this was the best option for our students and voted to proceed with the installation of one synthetic grass field. As mentioned at the LUPC, there are no viable alternatives for the proposed track surfaces.*

11. **(Linda) Will there be games played here between towns? She would like to see youth sports played in their own town. "When Tisbury and Edgartown play, it should be in Tisbury or Edgartown, not Oak Bluffs."** *Response: We agree that younger athletes should have the opportunity to play on their local fields. The High School fields*

will continue to be scheduled primarily for use by the High School sports. Historically, only the Junior High boys and girls basketball championship games are played at MVRHS, as well as Junior High track practices and competitions, because MVRHS has the only track on the island. These sports, are the only remaining Jr High School sports to compete town against town as youth sports have changed over the years into the organization-based models of MV United Soccer, MV Youth Lacrosse, and MV Little League. Children are grouped by age and compete within those groupings. Any facilities usage requests from these organizations are treated like all community user groups subject to approval and fees as outlined by MVRHS Policy created by MVRHS School Committee.

12. **(Adam) What is the synthetic turf field made of? How is it installed? How long is its life expectancy? Why are the fields in the condition they are? Would like to understand how we plan to maintain the other five natural grass fields.**

    Response: Our application, written documentation and responses to both peer review and staff questions since our submission last February have attempted to answer the questions above regarding the materials, installation methods and maintenance of the synthetic turf system. These documents include the following correspondence:

    a. *MVRHS DRI Application (Amended #352), dated January 24, 2020.*
    b. *MVC Staff Question Responses by HAI, dated April 3, 2020;*
    c. *MVC Staff Question Responses by HAI, dated May 1, 2020;*
    d. *MVC Staff Question Responses by HAI, dated May 26, 2020;*
    e. *MVRHS Field Use Analysis, dated July 15, 2020*
    f. *Horsely Witten Group, Peer review Response, Dated July 27, 2020*
    g. *MVRHS Turf Field Warranty Requirements, Dated July 28, 2020*
    h. *Horsely Witten Group, Peer Review Response, Dated September 28, 2020.*

    All of those materials remain part of the public record and available for review by the MVC staff and Commissioners. Our planned presentations to the LUPC over the next several weeks will focus on that documentation with the goal of explaining why the selected field surfaces are the best option for the proposed athletic field improvements at MVRHS.

13. **(Adam) Need to address player safety, health & environment. He went on to say field use is one reason the fields are in poor shape, but it can't be the only reason why they're so bad. Can grass fields be better maintained and withstand the HS use.**

    Response: Our application materials contain information regarding player safety, health and environmental consideration. We have also provided a thorough breakdown of anticipated athletic field use and annual activity in the submitted letter report to Adam

Turner, dated July 15, 2020. This document is posted to the MVC website under our DRI Review Folder.

The current natural grass athletic fields can be better maintained. That maintenance starts with soil testing, amendments to improve drainage and encourage stronger root growth, and irrigation. For long term and continued improvement of the natural grass surfaces it is also important to rest and rotate field use to allow the grass ample opportunity to recover from the type of activity that is part of a healthy and active high school sports program. Much of the damage to natural grass fields used for high school athletics is done during the early spring season, in March and April during the start of spring sports. At this time the grass is dormant, and the roots are still frozen within the hardened topsoil. The start and stop activity associated with sports like lacrosse and soccer tear the grass blades from their frozen roots and, by so doing, make it very difficult for that grass field to recover over the balance of the season. For evidence of this condition one need not look further than the existing field hockey field at MVRHS, which is bare through much of the fall season. By introducing one (1) synthetic turf surface to the high school campus, staff can shift the early spring activity to the synthetic surface, thus improving the condition of all remaining natural grass fields on campus. Further, a synthetic turf surface can withstand the use of up to three (3) natural grass athletic fields. Scheduling an increased athletic program on the synthetic turf surface can allow for the opportunity to rest one field per season, further improving the condition of natural grass through the campus. We have often found that the answer to synthetic turf or natural grass for our clients is not "this or that", but rather "this and that". That by using both natural grass and synthetic surfaces on a high school campus our clients can achieve safer, more healthy playing fields overall.

14. **(Jim & Christina) Is the proposed new pedestrian walkways and parking along Sanderson Road part of this proposal?** *Response: Yes, the proposed new pedestrian walkways, crosswalks and parking area presented to the LUPC on October 19, 2020 are part of the proposed improvements and will be installed in phase one.*

15. **(Christine) Asked Alex if the OBPB has lots of good information, will there be a link to the OBPB website on the MVC DRI website?** *Response: Agreed. The OBPB website has a collection of plans and documents submitted to date, we will defer to the MVC staff on whether to link the two pages.*

16. **(Christina) Cost is an issue. Consider how to handle that discussion at the hearing.** *Response: The applicant has indicated that this project is contingent upon private funding for the installation cost. In addition, the applicant has submitted information regarding both short-term and long-term costs. We are prepared to discuss long-term and short-term costs at the LUPC meeting and at the MVC DRI Public Hearing.*

17. **(Linda) Stated that the amount of time necessary to review this amount of material is much greater than we usually take for an application. How can we structure the LUPC so that we don't randomly limit the applicant's presentation time.** *Response: Agreed. We will continue to work with MVC staff to make sure our LUPC hearings are productive and informative, and the Applicant will make itself available to as many LUPC hearings as may be necessary in order to answer any and all questions posed. We would suggest that it may make sense to divide these meetings into topic specific sessions in order to thoroughly cover all issues.*

18. **(Adam) At the close of the LUPC meeting Adam said we would pick up at the next meeting with issues and questions; then will move forward.** *Response: Agreed. We are prepared to pick-up where we left off at the last LUPC meeting. We would suggest that it may make sense to divide these meetings into topic specific sessions in order to thoroughly cover all issues.*

19. **(Doug) Cautioned all parties about two degrees of separations and how close we all are. Asked the public to please not lobby the commissioners. He then asked commissioners if they are approached by anyone, please decline from engaging.** *Response: Agreed.*

20 (Fred) Encouraged all the commissioners to look at the DRI website as there is so much information. Discussion continued about how to identify on the website what is old and what is current. Suggest the most recent plans could be separated out. Possibility of creating separate sections for old, outdated plans and documents. *Response: Agreed.*

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions or require any additional information to begin your review.

Sincerely;
Huntress Associates, Inc.

Christian C. Huntress
President

Cc: Matthew D'Andrea – MVPS Superintendent
Richard Smith – MVPS Asst. Superintendent
Kimberly Kirk – Chair, MVRHS School Committee
Joseph Sullivan – Daedalus Projects, Inc.