

January 29, 2021

To: Martha's Vineyard Commission

From: Kris Vrooman, Oak Bluffs, MA

RE: Opposition to artificial turf proposed at MVRHS

Hello,

I am an Oak Bluffs resident, an environmentalist, a person who shell fishes and swims in Sengekontacket Pond and who believes the Vineyard needs to be as plastic free as possible. Artificial (plastic) turf is not in the best interest of the Vineyard environment. I am not a scientist. I was trained as a physical therapist which extended into overall health of the human body.

One argument made by the proponents is specious at best. I read a while ago a pro-turf person said that turf was the best option to increase MVRHS student athletes' potential for sports related scholarships to universities. (Better the playing field, better the player...?). I suggest that becoming a better athlete has more to do with physical training, good coaching, and a mental willingness to be the best one can be.

Research has shown turf to increase severe knee injuries. Perhaps this is why many professional baseball and football teams are returning to natural grass playing fields in their stadia and ball parks. And, the NFL Players Association union has pushed for the changeover to natural grass.

<https://nflpa.com/posts/only-natural-grass-can-level-the-nfls-playing-field>

Additional microbial research has shown that there is risk of infection when skin is broken and comes in contact with the turf. The microbiota in plastic turf is different than that in soil. Think about sweat droplets, spit (athletes do that!), dogs peeing (people let their dogs off leash everywhere), etc.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6728760/>

Lastly, because Sengekontacket and Lagoon Ponds' watersheds run under the high school property, there is risk to our precious ponds. Small pieces of plastic will eventually come into the air, the water table, etc. And it is well known plastic takes centuries to decompose in the ocean. And if we are so against small plastic bottles (think of the school kids in WT and they are right!), how can we justify an acre of plastic turf? And how is this turf to be recycled after its 10-year (max) lifespan?

The person who has donated the money for plastic playing field installation – can we not ask that person to instead donate money for maintaining grass playing fields? Over \$7 million for plastic! Yikes!

Thanks for reading.

Kris Vrooman
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Oak Bluffs