

# Molly Glasgow

22 South Road  
Chilmark, MA 02535  
molly@thegreybarnandfarm.com

November 10, 2020

The Martha's Vineyard Commission  
33 New York Avenue  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Member of The Martha's Vineyard Commission,

As a parent and Martha's Vineyard year-round resident, I understand the frustration of not having sufficient playing field availability to meet the needs of our community, which is why I support the need for more fields for local activities. However, I strongly oppose development of fields with artificial turf at any of our schools or playgrounds. Every resident of Martha's Vineyard should embrace and celebrate the fact that so many of our young residents are getting outside to exercise and participate in athletics in one way or another. Childhood obesity may be a national trend, but our community has always ensured that an adequate array of athletic opportunities exist to prevent it being an overwhelming issue here.

Some have argued that grass fields do not allow enough play time for our residents and students. They believe that with turf we would be able to offer more outdoor playing time. This might be true - that turf fields allow for more hours of use than a natural grass field. But I ask you, at what cost to our health, our children's health and the health of our island. Who pays for the replacement in 8-10 years? Where are the students playing while it is being replaced? And where does the old field go? Does it get composted and put back onto the earth to be added back to the fields? No, it gets shipped to a foreign country where we don't have to worry about it affecting 'us'. Let 'those' people deal with our waste and our trash.

Dr. Robert Wright, Director, and Sarah Evans, PhD and Assistant Professor Environmental Pediatrics from Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center wrote in a letter to the Greenwich Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) earlier this year:

“The proposed turf fields at Greenwich middle schools would be utilized by a population that is exquisitely vulnerable to the health effects of toxic environmental exposures. This vulnerability is due to a number of factors including, but not limited to, children’s unique physiology and behaviors, rapidly developing organ systems, and immature detoxification mechanisms. Additionally, because of their young age, children have more future years of life and therefore more time to develop chronic diseases.”

With real grass, the stuff that ruminants eat (they don’t eat turf in case you were wondering), when taken care of and maintained properly will last for generations to come. The community can employ a team of Vineyard residents with full-time, year round work, including benefits and a future for them and their families for a fraction of the cost of installing one grass field. Not to mention the ongoing maintenance costs of turf and its inevitable replacement needs. We can create a system of rotation, just like we do with cows, that allow for students to use different fields at different times. Rotation for regeneration of grass fields works.

How can we, as the guardians of future generations, as the guardians of Martha’s Vineyard and as the guardians of our own health, vote to rip out the earth and replace it with plastic? There is a belief that science and new turf formulations have made artificial turf safe and/or acceptable. How can towns advocate bans on plastic straws and drinks sold in plastic bottles in an effort to reduce residents’ exposure to plastics and to protect the environment yet agree to synthetic fields?

I uphold you to do what is right for our community. If we work together we can do this and not install a problem waiting to happen. Instead we can create a place that we are all proud to be a part of and uplift our community.

Most Sincerely yours,

*Molly Glasgow*

Molly Glasgow

Co-founder & Owner of The Grey Barn and Farm