

Opposition to MVRHS Athletic Fields Plan

Lonni Phillips <lonniphillips@gmail.com>

Mon 5/3/2021 8:33 AM

To: Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>;

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lonni Phillips. I grew up on Martha's Vineyard and am a proud alumnus of MVRHS, class of 2010. I played field hockey and lacrosse at the MVRHS. And because of my experience, I continued on to play for club teams at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

As an athlete and an islander, who holds great respect for the values of this community, I feel the responsibility to express my opposition to the installation of any artificial turf surface at the high school.

I am not writing to get into the science or environmental health impacts of this topic. I know that the commission has heard a great deal of testimony regarding all of this. However, I would like to make a much more simplistic point about youth athletic programs. The primary purpose of these programs is to help our kids become contributing members of their community. These programs provide immediate examples of accountability and show kids how their actions can impact one another. They learn resilience, responsibility, compassion, accountability, patience, humility, drive, and some truly important communication skills out on those fields. Team sports encourage a mentality of "we" and not "me." This is the value in youth athletics.

It has been 10 years since I graduated from MVRHS. And it has been interesting to talk with old friends and teammates to discuss what memories have stuck with us over the years. I can remember the teammates who called to check in when someone didn't show up to practice. I remember the teammates who scored a goal and then turned to immediately embrace and thank the person who passed them the ball (because they knew that they wouldn't have been able to do it alone). I remember how much a player's action on the field was a clear reflection of who they were as a person off of the field.

What I cannot remember is who our team's leading scorer was. I cannot remember which schools had the "nicest" fields or the most modern athletic department. I do not remember how many games we won in a season. Or how far we made it into the playoffs each year. The truth is, that for many high school athletes, those stats are not what matter. Not in the long run. Not years after graduation when they moved into a world - more fast paced and diverse than our island community. What matters is how as athletes, we have carried forth these lessons of resilience and accountability and how they have helped us show up in the world outside of sports.

It is clear that there is no scarcity of empathy and want to do right by our island youth athletics. And because this is Martha's Vineyard, we are privileged to have a variety of resources to help advance these programs in an environmentally responsible way. Sustaining the longevity and well being of this beloved island environment far more important than any athletic complex.

Thank you for all listening to our community members as a whole. I can see that this is a difficult process.

Best,
Lonni Phillips