

Betsy Dripps
57 Middle Road
Chilmark, MA 02535

January 19, 2021
Martha's Vineyard Commission
PO Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

To The Martha's Vineyard Commission:

I wrote a letter to you February 12, 2020 supporting an all grass athletic complex up at the high school. I am enclosing another copy of that letter in this email with the hope you will have a chance to reread all my reasons for not installing a synthetic turf field. I will not restate my concerns that I already made in that earlier letter, but I do have two new comments to make.

First off I know I am one of the few coaches who are opposed to the synthetic turf field. For 21 years I coached along side of many excellent coaches at the high school and many of them are still my good friends. I have listened to their thoughts and I would just hope that they would be open to listen to my thoughts and others who oppose the project. The one thing I cannot accept is that the supporters of the synthetic field all seem to say that those of us who oppose it do not care about our athletes. That is just not true. I have coached lacrosse for 35 years, the last 21 of those years coaching on the Vineyard. I have always cared deeply about the health and well being of my players. I cared about not just their athletic contributions on the lacrosse field, but about their successes and contributions in the classroom, in the art studio, in the music and theater departments and their contributions to their community and family outside of school. When I was the Youth Education Director at the Polly Hill Arboretum I worked with the Island Environmental Educators Group. I know that many of them and their organizations have written letters to you expressing their concerns. Please read their letters carefully. This passionate group of young environmental leaders on the island are intelligent, have done their homework, and care deeply about the health and well being of not only our high school athletes, but all the children growing up on the island. They have chosen to live here and raise their families and are looking ahead to protect our fragile island for everyone. So please don't accept anyone saying that those of us that oppose the synthetic field do not care about our athletes.

Secondly I cannot accept the comment that our athletes will get more athletic scholarships if they play on a synthetic field. In my 21 years of coaching lacrosse on the Vineyard only 2 of my players went on to play at D1 schools. Many of my players extended their athletic career and played on D111 college teams. Students

who get athletic scholarships are exceptional athletes who have worked hard every practice and in every game to improve their skills. They not only have athletic talent, but have excellent sportsmanship and leadership skills along with being a team player. Many of them also excel in the classroom showing that they will be able to handle a competitive college athletic program and at the same time do well in their academic pursuits. These athletes are also successful because they have had excellent coaches along the way. Whether an athlete plays on a synthetic turf field or a grass field does not in any way give them more chances to get an athletic scholarship and it is unfair to tell our players that this will happen. There is no guarantee.

You have a tough decision ahead of you and I hope we will do the right thing as we look to the future of our island and take care of all the wonderful families that call this place Home!

Sincerely,
Betsy Dripps