

Correspondence in reference to DRI 352 M4 2020: MVRHS Athletic Fields, Oak Bluffs

To the Martha's Vineyard Commission and Oak Bluffs Planning Board,

We Stand Together/Estamos Todos Juntos MV (WST/ETJ) is a local non-partisan community group dedicated to engaging local and state efforts in support of equity, justice and a healthy environment. WST/ETJ has been active on the island in addressing climate change and environmental justice, furthering racial justice, immigrant rights, LGBTQ rights, education reform and more. We have worked collaboratively with MVYPS administration and policy makers on multiple efforts over the past four years.

Given our commitment to environmental and educational advocacy, we have a number of concerns regarding the proposed sports complex at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School.

It is clear that the island community cares deeply about the importance of well-maintained accessible playing fields for its youth. These fields provide a place to promote healthy physical development through sports for both fun and competition, and an outdoor community gathering space which the last ten months have taught us to value more than ever. However, there is a larger context in which our young people are growing up — and that is a world significantly impacted by the climate crisis and environmental pollution. The climate crisis is happening at a rate faster than many of us anticipated and we need to consider it in all decisions that we make. In addition, plastics are overwhelming our world and there is no truly effective way to dispose of them. It is said that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than marine life. Microplastic infiltration of sensitive watersheds is widespread. Increasing the use of plastics is not a healthy sustainable choice for our island community or for our world.

We support a grass playing field which:

- Removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stores carbon in the root system below, a process considered to be a critical tool in mitigating climate change while improving soil health
- Is a pervious surface where the soil acts as a sponge: absorbing rain and holding water, providing reserves to plant roots in times of drought and serving as a sink to soak up excess water during a hard rainfall
- Provides a natural environmental cooling effect through the evapotranspiration process
- Can be maintained sustainably: using compost and organic fertilizers, drought-resistant grass seed, managed watering and electric maintenance equipment, as has been previously proposed and successfully demonstrated in actual practice on island by the Field Fund at K-8 district schools
- Avoids the use of plastic. In addition to being a petrochemical product, plastic ultimately becomes trash: there is no comprehensive or effective way to dispose of it. Microplastic contamination risks the safety of the local watershed.

A synthetic field does not offer the beneficial characteristics of a natural grass field and is not helpful in combatting climate change.

We thank you for your thoughtful review of this complex proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

We Stand Together/Estamos Todos Juntos MV (WST/ETJ) Coordinating Committee

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