

Dear members of the Oak Bluffs planning board,

Thank you for carefully considering the MVRHS proposal for a new sports complex. I am the mother of 2 high school kids that both play football, hockey and baseball. I also have a daughter that will be entering high school in a few years. I fully support the kids, coaching staff and booster clubs that put in hundreds of hours to our athletic programs. I also work for a local environmental organization and so have been very close to both sides of this controversial issue from the beginning. The two sides both want a beautiful new sports complex for our youth, we just disagree on what makes up what is the 'best' for our kids. I wholeheartedly agree that our fields need major improvement but I cannot support this proposal by MVRHS with a synthetic turf field.

A synthetic turf field is nothing less than an environmental disaster. It's pretty straightforward when you think about a football field sized blanket of plastic grass. The plastic grass will shed microplastics and other potential toxins into our natural environment. There has been testing done to confirm very high levels of PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) on synthetic turf grass blades and turf backing.

The extensive transformation to the infrastructure of the athletic field that would need to be done in order to install a synthetic field is fundamentally irreversible. The layers of gravel, larger rock, and drainage systems may be below ground but should be carefully considered as part of the building envelope. Once the plastic turf goes in we will then be committed to replacing it every 8-10 years, which leaves us with the huge responsibility (and expense) of disposing tons of rolls of used up turf. There is nowhere in the US to recycle used turf right now. I fear that once we go synthetic, there is no turning back (to grass).

If properly managed, grass is absolutely the best product for our kids, for the environment, and for our wallets. Unfortunately, we have never seen a properly managed grass field at MVRHS because of lack of funding and properly trained field maintenance.

A properly managed organic grass field absorbs 99% of nitrogen, is a known quantity, has no concerns of MRSA, or other bacterial growth, no need for fungicides or anti-bacterial sprays. There is also less risk of concussions and injuries on lower extremities.

I support a new sports complex with a grass field that is organically managed. We are so fortunate to live on an island where we are able to raise funds for projects otherwise financially prohibitive. We are also fortunate that we are able to choose the best possible facility for our children, GRASS!

Respectfully,

Signe Benjamin