

## High School Athletic Field

Deborah Tully <tullytwins@hotmail.com>

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To: Oak Bluffs Planning Board <planningboard@oakbluffsma.gov>; Meegan Lancaster <mlancaster@oakbluffsma.gov>

 1 attachments (15 KB)

OB Planning Board Letter Deb Tully.docx;

As a Martha's Vineyard resident who recently moved to the island, I am respectfully submitting the attached letter and linked relevant articles for your consideration regarding the Martha's Vineyard High School Athletic Field Project.

<https://patch.com/massachusetts/wayland/wayland-consider-3-new-grass-athletic-fields-town-meeting>

<https://patch.com/massachusetts/wayland/big-mess-after-storm-floods-wayland-hs-crumb-rubber-field>

Thank you,

Deb Tully

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508-314-8490

September 21, 2021

Oak Bluffs Planning Board  
Oak Bluffs Board of Health

To whom it may concern:

I write this letter as a new full-time resident of Martha's Vineyard, having moved here in January of 2021 from Wayland, MA. I have been coming to the island over the past 15 years with my husband and two daughters, initially as visitors but now as a permanent member of this community.

My previous permanent residence was in Wayland, MA. Wayland is a Boston suburb with a strong focus on its children, which was a large part of what drew my family there. My daughters played soccer on the fields of Wayland from first grade until senior year in high school and my husband coached them all along the way. Like Martha's Vineyard, Wayland has had a long-standing debate around grass vs. turf fields and this conversation continues to this day. Wayland currently has a high school turf field and proposals to bring more synthetic fields to town have been made throughout the years but have not succeeded to date because of all of the human and environmental health concerns. As a parent of children who grew up playing soccer on the grass fields around town, I never felt that their lack of access to additional turf fields diminished their experience or opportunities for success.

Recently, Wayland has seen the direct effects that a synthetic surface can have on the waterways surrounding the town. Earlier this year, Wayland had to restrict usage of the town's public drinking water due to PFAS contamination. The contamination was detected thanks to advances in testing and regulations. It required distribution of bottled water to residents (the irony that bottled water has been found to contain PFAS as well and that the increase in plastic consumption is likely compounding contamination is not lost on me as I write this letter). It also prompted those homeowners who could afford them to install special water filtration systems in their homes and/or identify additional external sources of drinking water. Like many other towns, Wayland is just now starting to understand the many possible sources of PFAS contamination and that synthetic turf may be among them.

In addition, the high school turf field recently incurred damage in the form of large quantities of runoff of the synthetic materials into the adjacent Sudbury River. This put a spotlight on the risk not only to the potential water safety in the area for humans but also the unique ecosystem that exists there. The flooding took place in early September and while it was unusual, it seems storms such as these are expected to increase in frequency and intensity because of climate change. As a result of these recent events, a special town meeting is being held in October to vote on a potential turf field moratorium to mitigate future contamination risk. Hopefully the town will vote to invest in its grass fields instead.

I urge the Town of Oak Bluffs to carefully review the Martha's Vineyard Regional School athletic field project and the damage it could have on our island and the island aquifer for years to come. Attached for reference are articles specific to the situation in Wayland. I encourage you to review this and consider the importance of critical actions that we can take now to avoid a similar future outcome for Martha's Vineyard that cannot easily be reversed.

Sincerely,

Deb Tully  
Chilmark, MA