

TO: Chilmark Board of Selectmen
FR: Matthew Poole on behalf of MV@PLAY
DT: June 23, 2016
RE: MVC Referral

We are requesting this memorandum be read and entered into the permanent record regarding your decision to refer to the MVC the proposal by MV@PLAY to reconstruct the track at the MVRHS and build a multi-sport, synthetic turf field with organic infill. Given the goals of our group – to deliver a competition-worthy track and field for the Spring of 2017 season – we urge you to make a prompt submission.

However and as you know, we were disappointed that the BOS would take any vote on our proposal – one done in consultation and to the specifications of the MVRHS athletic department and administrators – without including us in your deliberations. Each of us are volunteers and parents of current or former student-athletes dedicated to finally creating an athletic campus, through private fund raising, that properly serves and accommodates a vibrant community of athletes of all ages.

As a matter of record and going forward we would urge that the BOS adopt a stated policy to include participation from both sides of a given issue, not simply one side, whenever practical. And in this case – as in others on a small Island – this was a discussion prompted and pushed by those opposing this effort despite a vote of the MVRHS school committee, two public forums, and a signed agreement with the Superintendent of Schools on behalf of the school system. Doing anything less endangers the public process, prohibits an impartial hearing and denies the fundamental right to be heard and represent oneself.

Nonetheless, we welcome the referral to the Martha's Vineyard Commission and, in fact, were in the process of making it ourselves. The delay, which we would have told the BOS, has simply been due to the demands of work and retrieving final schematics from our engineering team.

It's worth repeating that our proposal – at this stage, Phase 1 – was developed according to very specific and stringent requirements outlined by the high school athletic department and school administrators. The full master plan (including Phases 2 & 3) leaves 65 percent of the 41 acres of public athletic fields natural grass. Phase 1, which is the only part currently proposed for immediate construction, would rebuild the track which is likely to be condemned by state athletic officials, threatening the Spring 2017 season and a 80 yd by 120 yd multi-sport synthetic turf field with organic infill of coconut husk, sand and cork. The track and synthetic turf infield (Phase 1) are upgrades to existing facilities used by current teams in both the spring and fall.

We are incredibly lucky on this Island to have a booming crop of student and adult athletes. Unfortunately, we do not have fields that can accommodate the amount of practice and play produced by multiple sports – football, soccer, field hockey and lacrosse – mens' and women's – boy's and girl's – that strain is illustrated by the worn condition of the current grass fields. I encourage you to educate yourself about the conditions our student athletes have been enduring by visiting the high school fields on an evening in late August, during pre-season, to see the rock-hard bare ground the football team holds daily practices on.

Natural grass fields must be rested on a schedule so the root system can repair and heal from use. Synthetic fields, which can be played on rain or shine, allow for that rotation and additionally produce zero nitrogen run off or leaching, unlike grass, which is threatening our aquifer and coastal ponds. They also don't require importing fertilizers or pesticides, fungicides and herbicides to the island, the Lagoon Pond watershed or the high school property. Cleaning turf – on the very rare occasion it's necessary – is done with certified "green" products. Our plan also includes natural grass multi-sports fields to be used by our young players (pre-junior high). These natural grass fields will receive lighter wear from smaller, lighter players and will be easier to maintain in good condition with less import of turf management chemicals.

There is much more to say about our proposal – a proposal by a group of volunteer parents, business owners and MVHRS alumni – that we are happy and anxious to share with the Martha's Vineyard Commission which we know values facts. We're incredibly excited about what can happen at the high school. It can be a safe and healthy center of activity for players young and old. That's been our vision from the beginning and we welcome any opportunity to present the proposal.