Revised Zoom Turf Field Testimony (with important addenda, especially final 2 paragraphs)

Gregory Coutinho <lightstep@hotmail.com>

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To: Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>; Oak Bluffs Planning Board <planningboard@oakbluffsma.gov>; Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>

Hello, (insert introduction here), I grew up year-round on MV but am broadcasting live and direct from New York City, where I've lived since 1999 as an artist and former bartender. In 2015 and 2016 I took some courses in, and earned certificates for small building energy auditing and efficiency, as well as solar energy, which led to more independent research on Plastic pollution, jolting me into to a challenging lifestyle of avoiding the consumption of plastic whenever possible, including polyester fabrics, the shedding microfibers of which are among the leading sources of microplastic pollution.

Plastic pollution. Those 2 words are synonymous. Most of us already know that Plastic is made from fossil fuels(strike 1) and is not biodegradable(strike 2). Those 2 facts should be enough, regardless of PFAS, but in between its beginning and unforeseen end, we've been misled to believe that plastic is extensively recyclable. But how many of us in the world know that Plastic can only be recycled a maximum of twice? How many of us know that in the past 10 years, more brand new(NOT recycled) plastic was produced than had been produced in the entire 20th Century? All plastic ever produced still exists on planet Earth except for the small amount that's been incinerated, and it's only increasing every day. This is all according to ecowatch.com, ScientificWorldInfo.com among other sources. Synthetic athletic fields are just another of many examples of how more and more products than ever... are either made of, packaged in or bottled in plastic that until not long ago, never were before.

But I'll move on from that subject for a minute

As a 1987 Martha's Vineyard Regional High School graduate who played basketball and ran Track & Field all 4 years, and played football freshmen year, I'm certainly not unsympathetic to the need for a renovation of the outdoor athletic facilities, and am mostly a proponent of the project, so when I hear some of the heartfelt testimonies I get it, but I hear comparisons being made between 2 choices that this project doesn't present. The choice presented here is not a choice between a plastic field OR the patchy, lumpy, sometimes muddy, poorly maintained natural turf field that currently exists at the high school. This project is a commitment to maintain the quality of the 5 other natural grass fields already in the plan for many years to come, is it not? So if a 6th grass field were installed instead of plastic, would it not be held to the same if not higher standard of upkeep as the other 5?

I may not have gone on to play sports for my college, other than intramurals, but my experience as a high school athlete, as well as an outfielder for the past 16 years in multiple softball leagues and as a wide receiver in a flag football league during summer into late fall, on all manner of surfaces in New York City, from patchy poorly maintained fields in Queens to pristine natural grass fields of Central Park, to a brand new "woven" synthetic field in the West Village not unlike the one being proposed for the Vineyard, has shown me that the athletic transition from a natural surface to a plastic surface is almost seamless. In fact, the opposite transition is more difficult. How many MLBaseball or international Soccer superstars grew up in 3rd world countries learning to play on sand lots or pavement? If you can learn to excel on those surfaces in those conditions, then transitioning to an immaculate surface would be much easier, and put you at a greater advantage, not the opposite. So my experience playing in NYC affirms that as well. But again, this not the choice being presented by his project. Every remedy being sought out by a plastic field in terms of injury safety and aesthetics can also be provided by a thick, plush, well maintained, well drained natural grass field even with the challenges presented by winter. Case in point- the natural grass fields of Central Park vs. the artificial woven turf field in the East Village. Central Park wins. No contest. Also, when I played at the high School in the mid-1980s, our field was by no means immaculate, albeit better than its current condition, but injuries as a result of poor field conditions was never an issue. Yet though, this project offers a much higher quality natural grass field than we had in the 1980s. The goose population has dramatically increased since then but I think we're smart enough to come up with a humane way of deterring them from grazing/pooping on the field.

If money for maintenance is an issue, I remind you of a slide presented by the MV Commission at the public Zoom hearing on January 14, illustrating the cost of a synthetic field vs a natural grass field over 20 a year period. The synthetic field costs $1,725,830, The natural grass field- $901,680. Ironically, the 20 year plan shows the plastic field costing $824,150 more than a natural grass field, so the monetary argument seems to be put to rest right there.

What argument remains? back to the beginning-

Again, the biggest one- Plastic pollution. With the exception of the brockfill, this plastic field, along with the colossal bed of polypropylene plastic "shock pad" beneath the surface, is no exemption from this truth, and serves to perpetuate the already out of control plastic pollution pandemic that we've all been participating in for decades. The only way you'd keeping up with the Joneses by installing a synthetic turf field is by

keeping up with the rate at which the Joneses pollute the world with more unnecessary plastic.

So, the artificial turf is guaranteed in an escrow account to be monitored and eventually recycled. Then what? If those recycled materials are somehow guaranteed to be recycled through this proposed "closed loop" or "closed cycle" system a second time, since plastic can only be recycled a maximum of twice before its polymers weaken beyond recyclability(which renders the idea of closed loop or closed circle plastic recycling a myth), what can be guaranteed at that point? Only 2 things: Either it sits there(wherever there is) not biodegrading, but gradually breaking down into smaller and smaller bits, shedding and spreading everywhere as microplastic pollution unless it's contained in a room or warehouse forever; or it gets downcycled into something no longer recyclable, like polyester fabric or carpet, where again, it will continue to pollute the world with microplastics from the polyester microfibers that shed and spread everywhere on land from regular wear, or worse, down the drain from our laundry into the ocean. And when initially installed, if the turf field isn't guaranteed to have been made from 100% recycled materials, then the purchase of it will have fed the demand for new plastic/fossil fuels- Exactly the opposite direction we should be going. No matter how we slice and analyze this- the chemical/PFAS angle, the athletic angle, the aesthetic angle, the financial angle, the "recyclability" (or lack thereof) angle- the elephant in the room is that IT'S PLASTIC. Bottom-most of bottom lines!

Additionally, I must rebut the "carbon footprint" argument I heard from a proponent of the plastic field. Carbon Footprint is more a measure of emissions from combustion and/or in the gaseous state, not the solid state. Obviously plastic is a solid. Although it does still emit small amounts of greenhouse gasses, if we suddenly stopped producing plastic the ocean and soil would not cleanse itself of the millions of plastic/microplastics nearly as quickly (not for hundreds or thousands of years) as we saw the air/atmosphere start to cleanse itself early on in the pandemic when there was a dramatic reduction in travel/burning of fossil fuels. Therefore, the detrimental impact of plastic cannot be measured solely by its carbon footprint.

Also, I recall a question from an MVCommission member to one of the turf field reps, asking exactly how much force or pressure it would take to extract a plastic blade of grass from its weave, to which the rep replied "a lot". What does that mean? Can it be guaranteed that not a single blade of plastic grass will be extracted from that field over its entire duration of use? Every artificial field on which I've played, whether new or old, easily shed countless blades of plastic grass that clung to my clothes. This is a tremendous source of plastic pollution when you multiply that by players per day, days

per year and years before replacement. I find it hard to believe that this design will keep a single blade of grass from being extracted.

Thank you again,

Gregory Coutinho
MVRHS Class of '87