



Town of Arlington  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of the Board of Health  
27 Maple Street  
Arlington, MA 02476

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## Artificial Turf Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 9, 2024

Meeting Time: 5PM-6:30PM

Location: Zoom

### Objectives:

- 1) To review research findings and materials within each of the working groups.
- 2) To provide feedback/guidance to each working group on current research findings.
- 3) To further clarify additional research needs within working groups and any additional topic areas relevant to Artificial and Natural Turf fields.
- 4) To discuss additional research methods such as testimony/presentations from Subject Matter Experts.

Committee Members present: James Ditullio, Chair; Natasha Waden, Clerk; Mike Gildesgame; Leslie Mayer; Joseph Barr; Marvin Lewiton; Joseph Connelly; Claire Ricker

### Agenda

- I. Discussion: Committee Member update:  
This discussion was moved from agenda item II to agenda item I

Natasha Waden and James Ditulio introduced Claire Ricker, Director of Arlington's Planning and Community Development Department. Waden explained that Ms. Ricker would be temporarily assuming the duties of David Morgan on the Artificial Turf Study Committee while he is out on leave.

- II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

Motion Made by Mike Gildesgame to approve the meeting minutes from 12-19-23.

2<sup>nd</sup> by Leslie Mayer

Vote:

Mike Gildesgame, Yes  
Leslie Mayer, Yes  
Joseph Barr, Yes  
Jill Krajewski, Absent  
Natasha Waden, Yes

Marvin Lewiton, not present for vote  
James Ditulio, Yes

Approved (5-0 with 2 Absent)

III. Discussion: Review of 2024 Meeting Schedule

This discussion was moved from agenda item VII to agenda item III

James Ditulio recognized that with the start of a New Year it is important to revisit the meeting schedule. After a brief discussion, it was determined that Natasha Waden would distribute a doodle poll to all Committee Members to evaluate the meeting days and times. However, the Committee agreed that the next meeting would be on Tuesday January 16<sup>th</sup> at 5pm via zoom. Natasha Waden also informed the Committee that due to the Martin Luther King holiday and a planned vacation, the meeting packet would be posted by Thursday morning 01/11/24. Therefore, any materials to be included in next week's packet must be received by 4pm Wednesday January 10<sup>th</sup>.

IV. Correspondence Received

Natasha Waden provided the Committee with an overview of the correspondence received.

Natasha Waden first acknowledged that the chat comments from 12/19/23 were not included in meeting packet for 01/09/24, but will be included in the next packet; and that an email with attachments from Joseph Connelly was received on 12/12/23 which should have been included in the meeting packet for 12/19/23.

As such, Connelly's email was included in the meeting packet for 01/09/24. Waden also clarified that an email with attachments was received by Wendy Heiger-Bernays, Chair of the Lexington Board of Health, in response to the materials sent via email on 12/19/23 by Connelly. Waden clarified that Heiger-Beranays attachment #2 was the same as Connelly's attachment #4.

There was no additional discussion by Committee Members.

V. Working Group updates

Whereas a Committee member on the Environmental Health working group had another meeting commitment, the order of updates has been adjusted.

a. Environmental:

This group is composed of Mike Gildesgame, Joseph Barr, and Claire Ricker who is temporarily filling in for David Morgan.

The group has begun reaching out to other communities to determine what steps/measures/actions they are doing, have taken, or plan to take in terms of Artificial and Natural turf fields. Although they are still waiting to hear back from some communities; so far they have found very different responses as to what the concerns are/were and what/how decisions have been made or will be made in regards to the

installation of artificial or natural turf fields. The group has also reached out to the Athletic Department at MIT and colleagues at the Mass Municipal Association to learn more about their experience with Artificial turf and to help identify additional resources as it pertains to environmental health and artificial turf. The groups current research to investigate the environmental impacts on non-crumb rubber infill has not lead them to any reliable assessments on these alternatives, other than to acknowledge that regardless of the infill composition, the infill will move off the field. The group plans to continue to refer back to their five topic areas to help continue to guide them in their research.

Joseph Barr made reference to the Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and an amendment by the State in 2012 which prohibited the use of CPA funds for the installation of Artificial Turf fields. Barr explained that in the past communities had tried to find work arounds, such as paying for everything but the actual artificial turf, but this practice has become controversial. Barr stated this information is relevant because CPA funds have been a big funding resource for recreational facilities.

Additional conversation was had about the importance of referencing the costs associated with the installation and maintenance of artificial vs. natural turf fields. The Committee acknowledged that this topic does not fit into any one particular working group, and although the cost analysis is not explicitly stated in the charge of the Committee, it seems to be something that all Committee Members agree is an important component that should be included in the final report. This conversation was continued under agenda item VI.

The group has not yet decided on if or who they may suggest to present to the Committee as a Subject Matter Expert. Ditulio encouraged all groups to start thinking about this and if possible to bring some suggestions to the next meeting.

b. Safety

This group is composed of James Ditulio, Leslie Mayer, and Joseph Connelly.

The group has conducted a lot of research and is constantly trying to find new and more relevant studies. In reviewing the materials, the group reported that some appear more balanced than others, but overall the group believes they have a good balanced sample of research material. Additionally, the group has reached out to the MIAA and athletic departments to inquire about injury reports and general protocols as it pertains to both natural and artificial turf fields. The group learned that there this no central data base or good reporting structure in place that collects information about injuries that happen on fields. One thought the group has is to reach out to the athletic trainers at the high school to get an opinion on what they are seeing as it relates injuries on fields and whether or not they see a difference on one field vs. another. The group is also reviewing the MIAA policy as it relates to temperatures and playing conditions/restrictions. The group acknowledged that it is somewhat challenging to find studies that are relatable to Arlington. For example, the studies seem to focus more on professional or collegiate athletes, as opposed youth sports players that make up the

majority of field users in Arlington. In addition the group mentioned that another challenge with the studies is related to the geographic location/environment of the study and the comparison to similar weather patterns/conditions to Arlington. For example, one area of the country may see significantly higher temperatures when compared to New England. The group highlighted that Arlington fields are not heavily used in the summer months when temperatures are usually highest; the fields are in highest demand in the spring and fall months. Another challenge identified, similar to the environmental group, is that the majority of the studies focus on crumb rubber infill and there is not much information the group has found about alternative infill materials as it relates to safety issues. Additional research areas include looking at the effect heat has on the field user, as well as issues related to skin abrasions and inhalation. The group reports that they are starting to see some patterns in the research but acknowledge that more work needs to be done.

Comments from Committee Members:

Marvin Lewiton acknowledged that while there is a difference between heat/temperature conditions in more southern states compared to Arlington, it will be important to look at the heat differences between grass and artificial turf fields around here, especially in the hotter months June, July, August, and September.

Lewiton also shared information about Heat Stress that he learned from his attendance at this past year's National Industrial Hygiene Conference. Two points of particular interest were discussed: 1) the physiological effects severe heat stress can have on the body, even days after an exposure and particularly how residual effects from the first exposure can carry over to a second exposure; and 2) the lack of awareness/training that coaches have as it pertains to identifying early signs of heat stress.

Lewiton also shared information about specific research the health working group has been evaluating. This information is listed in the next section (Health update).

c. Health

This group is composed of Marvin Lewiton, Jill Krajewski, and Natasha Waden. Krajewski was unable to attend this meeting, but did provide feedback during the health working group meeting which was incorporated into the report provided by the group.

The group reported that they have collected and started to evaluate a variety of research materials including but not limited to studies/materials related to heat stress/strain on athletes/field users, phthalates, PFAS, plastic components in artificial turf, crumb rubber and cancer risks; health impacts of artificial turf, children's potential exposure to harmful metals, and the role physical activity plays on overall mental and physical health. Additionally, the group reported they have found materials from a variety of sources related to the health effects and/policies associated with artificial turf including the following; a study from the State of Connecticut which investigates the health risks associated with five fields; as well as material from Penn States Center for Sports Surface Research, the State of California, New York State Department of Public

Health, the State of New Jersey, as well as the Burlington Mass Public Schools and Town of Brookline MA study committee on artificial turf.

The group acknowledges similar challenges and limitations that were mentioned by other groups, such as most studies are related to crumb rubber and there is not much information on alternative infill material. Additional challenges identified include the following: most studies related to crumb rubber use cancer at the end point but do not consider other potential effects such as asthma or endocrine disruption; studies tend to focus on only one specific component as opposed to a mixture of components that are present in the material. For example, OSHA has established a permissible exposure limit for a mixture of solvents, but no exposure limit has been established for an exposure to a mixture of carcinogens. The group reported that in the majority of studies reviewed they acknowledge that there are limited studies that have investigated the potential health effects of artificial turf exposure and more research is needed in this field.

The group also indicated, similar to the environmental health group that one area of interest that seems relevant but does not fit into any one specific category is the accessibility of Arlington fields and the data associated with closure of fields as it relates to weather conditions.

The group plans to continue to evaluate the current research mentioned and continue to look for additional materials specifically in health areas that may be lacking. The group will then determine what seems relevant and then plans to be able to provide a more formal/detailed report or present it to the larger committee. The intention is to provide a logical straight forward summary of the reports that the group believes are relevant to the Health issues associated with Artificial and Natural Turf. The summary would be intended to provide committee members with an understanding of the study, its relevance, and credibility without having to read the entire study.

An additional conversation was had amongst the Committee Members about using the summary report outlined in the Health group across all of the working groups to help provide a uniform structure for each group to report their findings to the larger Committee. Committee Members were in favor of this idea and agreed that Ditillio and Waden should meet to discuss the details and possibly develop a template for groups to use.

#### VI. Discussion: Additional research needs/gaps

This discussion was started under the environmental working group update. A brief discussion was had about various research needs/gaps as it pertains to areas of Turf that do not necessarily fall within any particular working group, but that Committee Members believe are important factors that need to be considered in the report. One such example is the cost associated with the construction and maintenance of both Artificial and Natural turf fields. Committee members ultimately agreed to table this agenda item and revisit it at the next meeting.

VII. Discussion: Subject Matter Experts

James Ditulio asked each of the working groups to begin thinking about who they might want to invite as a subject matter expert and to bring their suggestions to next week's meeting.

VIII. New Business

The Committee had no new business to discuss.

Natasha Waden reminded Committee Members that any information to be included in next week's meeting packet must be received by Wednesday January 10<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.

IX. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mike Gildesgame.

2<sup>nd</sup> by Marvin Lewiton

Vote:

Mike Gildesgame, Yes  
Leslie Mayer, Yes  
Joseph Barr, not present for vote  
Jill Krajewski, Absent  
Natasha Waden, Yes  
Marvin Lewiton, Yes  
James Ditulio, Yes

Approved (5-0 with 2 Absent)



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**ARTIFICIAL TURF COMMITTEE MEETING COMMENTS FROM THE CHAT**

Date: January 9, 2024

Time: 5PM

Location: Remote Participation

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From Natasha Waden to Everyone:

Just checking to make sure this is working

17:27:55 From Joe Connelly to Everyone:

yes

17:28:42 From Natasha Waden to Everyone:

thank you, working in a new zoom account

17:41:59 From Susan Chapnick to Everyone:

For Heat / Safety information - might be good to reach out to neighboring towns and what are their policies on use of artificial turf fields and heat. For example, the Burlington has a town policy on limits of practice on artificial turf fields at certain temperatures and if surface temp of the field is greater than 121 degrees F, then all activities must be moved to grass fields.

17:51:18 From Susan Chapnick to Everyone:

Please consider the real impact of climate change and increased number of days > 90 degrees/year in Arlington. These data are available - also reference the Town of Arlington Hazard Mitigation Plan.

18:06:36 From Susan Stamps to Everyone:

Did the group agree at an earlier meeting that research that is done by a federal/state agency with peer review would take precedence over other research? That's what my notes say.

18:15:01 From Susan Stamps to Everyone:

I agree a fairly comprehensive report (although not long) is a good idea because other towns will be using it too

18:15:32 From Susan Chapnick to Everyone:

Reacted to "I agree a fairly com..." with 👍



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Artificial Turf Study Committee Meeting 12/19/23

CHAT Comments

Susan Stamps

36:42

**SS**

I missed who Joe said he will reach out to for safety data-did he say artificial turf companies?

Susan Chapnick

43:29

**SC**

I sent a communication to the BOH email last Friday, Dec 15th, but I don't see it included in the communications for this meeting today. I thought the deadline was the Friday before the Tuesday meeting. Please advise for future communications what the deadline is for the upcoming meeting. Thank yo

Susan Chapnick

46:42

**SC**

I think it is a great plan to have experts at a meeting so that the study committee can ask specific questions. I would caution to space them out among different meetings so that it does not devolve into "dueling" experts.

Susan Stamps

50:08

**SS**

There may be very little data on the non-crumb rubber infill alternatives since they are fairly new

Wynelle Evans

53:21

**WE**

Please keep in mind that, regardless of the infill, many issues with the turf carpet itself remain: micro plastic breakdown and run-off, off-gassing, the lack of any recycling facilities in the US; health impacts on workers who manufacture, install, and remove; introduction of PFAS in the extrusion process as the blades are made; etc.

Susan Stamps

59:45

**SS**



Agree with Joe and Jim

Susan Chapnick

01:03:46

**SC**

6ppd-quinone also affects certain types of trout - newer studies that have been peer-reviewed and published

Susan Chapnick

01:06:20

**SC**

The date of the study should not be the issue - the type of data collected on what type of material is more to the point to compare the science. If the material is still used, or the chemical is still used, then even if the data are 15 years old they are still relevant. For example, data on lead toxicity is generally quite old but still very relevant.

Wynelle Evans

01:10:30

**WE**

Thank you, and happy holidays to all!

Susan Chapnick

01:12:30

**SC**

There is a conflict for ConCom training for next meeting