



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

Tel: (781) 316-3170
Fax: (781) 316-3175

Artificial Turf Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: February 27, 2024

Meeting Time: 5PM-6:30PM

Location: Zoom

Objectives:

- 1) To hear from subject matter experts on various topics concerning the Health, Safety, and Environmental concerns associated with natural grass and artificial turf fields.
- 2) To discuss the draft bullet reports submitted by each working group.

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

Agenda

Jim DiTullio called the meeting to order and acknowledged that there would be no meeting minutes to approve, but that two sets of meeting minutes would be included at the next meeting. Natasha Waden informed the Committee that last week's recorded meeting and presentation had been uploaded to the Artificial Turf Study Committee website. DiTullio encouraged anyone who had not been present for the meeting to go back and watch the recording.

I. Correspondence Received

Natasha Waden reviewed the following correspondence received:

- One email from Robin Bergman which included one report: Tiny Particles of Plastic Now Pollute our Food, Water, and Even the Clouds;
- One email from Wynelle Evans with five links to reports:
 - 1) Acute Exposure to Microplastics Induced Changes in Behavior and Inflammation in Young and Old Mice;
 - 2) The Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Human Health;
 - 3) CDC Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances FACT SHEET;
 - 4) Our Community has been deceived: Turf Wars Mount over PFAS; and
 - 5) PFAS Free Synthetic Turf Standards
- One email from Beth Melofchick with two links to reports:

- 1) Personal injury firms look for people exposed to PFAS from Joint Base Cape Cod; and
- 2) Why parents and coaches of cancer-stricken athletes are worried about artificial turf.

Waden also explained that there was difficulty with the size of the packet, therefore, she was only able to include a few pages of one of the articles submitted by Melofchick, but the link with the full article was included in both the packet and email to Committee Members. Waden stated that if we continue to get large files, she will only be able to include the first few pages but will make note of that and provide the link so that Members and the Public have access to the full article.

There was no additional discussion.

II. Discussion: Draft Working Group Reports- continuation from 02/20/2024 Meeting

a. Environmental

This report had been discussed at the 02/20/2024 meeting. There was no additional discussion of this report.

b. Health

This group is composed of Marvin Lewiton, Jill Krajewski and Natasha Waden.

The group briefly provided a summary of their report and clarified questions/concerns raised by Committee Members.

A Committee Member from the safety group discussed the concerns about placing restrictions on one type of surface (artificial turf) vs. other types of surfaces (tennis courts, basketball courts, running tracks, playgrounds etc.) and the difficulties that may be associated with regulating their use during periods of time when heat/temperature may be excessive. The Member expressed caution to the Committee about the potential over regulation and an individual user's choice to utilize a recreational space during excessive heat events. An important point noted was that there are not permit requirements for activities such as playing at the playground, running on a track, or playing a game of pickup tennis/pickle ball. Additionally, it would be extremely difficult for the Town to close these open spaces during an excessive heat event. The Health working group members clarified that closure guidelines would be related to organized sports groups, not individual users, and focused on the Artificial Turf surfaces only, as studies have identified this surface temperature to get excessively hotter than other surfaces including tennis courts, playgrounds, and basketball fields. Additionally, the group clarified that their intention to propose shade structures as a mitigation measure is largely related to new construction or renovations to existing spaces. Whereas the number of excessively hot days will likely increase due to climate change, the Health group believes that implementing heat mitigation measures should be a consideration in various outdoor projects/spaces, regardless of playing surface. A final point made by a Committee Member was that any guidelines/mitigation measures that are adopted, in relation to the use of artificial turf fields during excessive heat, may likely be referred to as guidance for closure of other recreational spaces; therefore, it is important to ensure mitigation measures are attainable.

c. Safety

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

The group briefly provided a summary of their report and clarified questions asked by the Committee Members

A Committee Member from the Environmental group agreed with the Safety group's discussion about the inability to determine whether or not artificial turf is better than natural grass in terms of injury rates because there are a variety of factors, other than surface type, that seem to relate to how or why an injury occurs.

A Committee Member from the Health group discussed the importance of maintenance regardless of field type and was wondering where or if this should be included in the overall Committee report. Many other Committee members were in agreement about the importance of maintenance not only of fields, but in relation to all of the town's outdoor public assets and that unfortunately it has not always been a spending priority. The discussion touched the costs and labor associated with maintaining these assets. A Member of the Safety group revealed that there are only 6 town employees that currently maintain the parks, playgrounds, fields, and common areas of recreational spaces. As such, simply increasing the budget to maintain these assets wouldn't be effective; additional staff is also needed to properly maintain these areas.

III. Discussion: Reports, Deliverables, Project Timeline

Jim DiTullio discussed the upcoming deadline for working group narratives which is Friday March 1st and the possibility of postponing next week's meeting to provide the opportunity to compile the individual group narratives into a single document. All Committee Members present were in agreement with this approach, but the official decision to postpone next week's meeting will be made by the end of the week.

A Member asked whether or not the Committee was done collecting data and hearing from speakers. Waden clarified that the Committee would continue to collect data and consider potential speakers, until the final completion of the Committee report.

DiTullio discussed a potential warrant article that has been submitted for the 2024 Town Meeting which would grant an extension for the Artificial Turf Study Committee until October 2024. He further stated that based on the progress the Committee has made; an extension may not be needed. DiTullio informed Members that the Committee's report is due to the Select Board within 30 days of the start of Town Meeting. As such, DiTullio expressed interest in drafting a letter to the Select Board requesting a 2-3 week extension for submitting the report. DiTullio explained that the purpose of this would be to ensure the Committee can submit a comprehensive report and allow time for public input, but also deliver the report to Town Meeting members before the start of Town Meeting. Committee Members seemed to be supportive of a 2-3 week extension.

IV. New Business

Waden also acknowledged that David Morgan will be returning to the Committee at the next meeting and thanked Claire Ricker for her assistance during his absence.

A brief discussion was had amongst Members in regards to the use of terminology in the final report: mitigation measures vs. best practices. The Committee determined that the term mitigation measures will be used in the final report.

Waden addressed a comment in the chat regarding materials that had been sent via email for the distribution to Committee Members. Waden clarified that any information that had not been included in this week's packet was likely because it was received after the packet deadline (Thursday at 5pm, before a Tuesday Meeting), but that it would be included in the next packet.

Waden shared that she had spoken with Select Board Member Sandman from the Town of Brookline regarding their Artificial Turf Committee findings. Waden stated that she would provide a written memo to the Committee at the next meeting outlining the conversations with both Brookline and Malden and provide any additional links to information. One point Waden referenced from the conversation with Brookline was that a chemist on their Committee seemed to have referred to different and less hazardous type of PFAS material (referred to as PVDF) being found in Artificial Turf. Waden inquired if any other Committee Members had knowledge of PVDF, but none referenced they had. Some members of the public provided various links in the Chat, which Waden stated she would follow up on.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Natasha Waden.

2nd by Marvin Lewiton.

Vote:

Mike Gildesgame, Yes
Leslie Mayer, Yes
Joseph Barr, Absent
Jill Krajewski, Yes
Natasha Waden, Yes
Marvin Lewiton, Yes
James DiTullio, Yes

Approved (6-0, with 1 Absent)