



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: March 27, 2024
Meeting Time: 7PM-8:30PM
Location: Zoom

Objectives:

- 1) To discuss the first draft of the ATSC Report
- 2) To discuss logistics of holding a public input meeting
- 3) To discuss the project timeline, remaining deliverables, edits

Committee Members present: James DiTullio, Chair; Natasha Waden, Clerk; Mike Gildesgame; Leslie Mayer; Joseph Barr; Jill Krajewski; Marvin Lewiton; David Morgan

Agenda

- I. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes
Motion to approve meeting minutes from 03/19/2024 was made by Jill Krajewski.

2nd by Marvin Lewiton.

Vote:

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

Approved (7-0)

- II. Correspondence Received

Natasha Waden reported that the following correspondence was received:

- 1) Two emails from Susan Chapnick
 - a. Concerns about data that was provided to the Committee in the 3/12/14 memo from Phil Lasker.

- b. Article: Environmental Chemical Exposure and Mental Health Outcomes in Children: A narrative review of recent literature.
- 2) An email from Beth Melofchik with 6 links:
- a. An Article: PFAS Coats Skin of Children athletes after playing on Artificial Turf.
 - b. An additional link to the Guardian which references the findings of the article above.
 - c. Peer document: Test results for preliminary study PFAS on hands of soccer players and coaches: grass vs. artificial turf.
 - d. An Article: Dermal Uptake: An Important pathway of human exposure to perfluoroalky substances.
 - e. Peer Article: Industry in a dither about PFAS in synthetic turf.
 - f. Peer document: "Forever Chemicals" Disposal is Creating a Health Nightmare.
- 3) An email from Phil Lasker forwarding turf specifications from the Malden, MA Roosevelt Park project specifically for testing heavy metals and PFAS
- 4) An email from Mike Gildesgame with links to the following:
- a. An updated narrative section from the Environmental working group.
 - b. An updated chart: The Wetland Values Table.

III. Discussion: Draft Report

Before discussing the draft report the Chair informed the Committee that he attended the Select Board meeting on Tuesday 3/26/24 to present the Committee's letter requesting an extension for the submission of its final report. The Select Board voted in support of the extension and discussed their satisfaction with the Committee's efforts as outlined in their draft report. As a result, the Select Board voted "No Action" on the proposed Warrant Article for the 2024 Town Meeting which would grant an extension of Committee to continue with their study.

The Chair clarified that minor changes were made to the draft report over the last few days in regards to some wording, grammatical corrections, formatting, and citations. These changes were mentioned as each section was discussed.

The Committee went through each section of the draft report to address all comments, questions, concerns and potential edits. As such, discussions within each section have been summarized below:

Introduction

One change in this section, made by the Chair, was the wording in the 3rd paragraph in reference to "skeptics". This term was removed and replaced with the word "opponents". Members of the Environmental group pointed out a couple of grammatical errors which had already been changed by the Chair. Members of the Safety group raised concern about the wording in the 3rd paragraph related to "regularly replacing artificial turf fields".

The Committee agreed to change the wording in a way that was clearer about the frequency of replacing both artificial turf and grass fields.

Scope of Work

The Environmental group suggested that the specific areas related to turf fields be formatted into bullet points as opposed to the narrative format.

The Committee did not feel it was necessary to change the format.

Access to Youth Sports and Its Impacts on Mental and Physical Health

The Environmental group pointed out a few minor grammatical edits and recommended adding two additional footnotes: 1) a reference to Tom Irwin Advisor's webpage which provides information "About" the company; and 2) an explanation of "Linear sand injection system".

The Committee agreed to the grammatical edits and additional footnotes.

Heat Impacts on Human Health and Heat Related Injuries

The Environmental group pointed out a few minor grammatical edits. Multiple Members of the Safety group suggested that clarification be added in the 2nd paragraph as it relates to what region of the country surface temperatures averaged from 140 degrees- 170 degrees F. Members expressed that this seemed confusing when the 3rd paragraph discusses actual temperatures taken on Arlington fields by the High School Athletic Director.

The Committee agreed on minor edits and that additional language should be added to clarify the specific region of the country in which those temperatures are associated with.

A further explanation was given to assure Members that the information was initially provided in the narrative report, but when combining sections to create the final report this may have been left off.

Heat Impacts on the Environment

A lengthy discussion was had among Members in reference to the 3rd paragraph regarding "hot spots" and the use of the word "avoid" as it pertains to the installation of artificial turf fields. This discussion also led to a discussion about similar wording in the "Findings and Recommendations" section of the report (specifically, bullet 4). This discussion is also referenced under that section.

Some Members were adamant that the use of the words "hot spots" and "avoid" were strong and gave a negative connotation towards the installation of artificial turf. Members discussed that rather than "avoiding" the installation near hot spots, it should be worded in a way that recommends this factor should be part of the case by case consideration for artificial turf fields. There was additional discussion about the wording in this section (under Environment) vs. the wording in the Recommendations and Findings section. The Environmental group pointed out that the language seemed appropriate in the Environment section, as it pertains to the environment; however, they recognized that in the "Findings and Recommendation" section, that the wording does seem to suggest heat islands should be a consideration to placement of artificial turf, but not necessarily avoided.

The Committee agreed to leave the language in this section as it stands, whereas it is worded differently in the “Recommendations and Findings” section. However, another Member wanted to acknowledge that limiting placement in “hot spots” may also be perceived as an equity issue. A Member of the Safety group acknowledged that the Parks and Recreation Department do regularly hear from residents that “nicer” fields are in certain areas of Town. As such, the Committee agreed that an additional talking point should include equity, perhaps to be discussed in the “Findings and Recommendations” section.

Skin/Bacteria

There was no discussion about this section of the report.

Injury Rates

There was no discussion about this section of the report.

Chemical Impacts on Human Health and the Environment

The Environmental group pointed out a few minor grammatical edits. Multiple Members referenced confusion in the 2nd paragraph after “Microplastics” as it relates to 6-PPD Quinone, specifically about where it has been discovered in artificial turf fields. As such, the Committee agreed to change the language from “some artificial turf” to “used tires”.

Additional conversation was had about the 6-PPD Quinone section, in which the Environmental group made the following suggestions: 1) the need to change “6-PPD Quinone” to “6-PPD” and clarify that it transforms into 6-PPD Quinone when exposed to ozone and oxygen; 2) add an additional sentence which refers the reader to the “Chemical and Particulate Runoff Impacts” section, where 6-PPD Quinone is discussed further; 3) strike the last sentence about coho salmon; 4) strike, in the 3rd paragraph after 6-PPD Quinone the words “Committee believes” and replace with “it seems advisable”; and 5) add additional language in the last sentence of the section (under the chart: comparing infills:) which clarifies that testing should be completed by an independent lab and provide additional explanation for the rationale.

Committee Members agreed to the edits and additional language suggested.

Alternative Infills

Multiple Members questioned the 1st paragraph in reference to the “benchmark study”. Upon further review of the footnote (56) it appeared that the link to this source was not accurate, as such both the Clerk and Environmental group will look into this to clarify the reference.

The Committee expressed some confusion in this section as it pertains to the reference of neighboring towns using “plant-based infills” as well as another reference to “natural” infills. Members wanted to clarify that neighboring towns were using “plant-based infills” as that

was not their understanding. Additionally, Members discussed that not all alternative infills are plant based or natural. As such the Committee agreed to strike the words “plant based” and “natural” and replace them with “alternative infill”.

Members also discussed that Milton should not be considered a neighboring town, but that the Committee had several discussions about Malden and their decision to change their artificial turf infill from crumb rubber to BrockFill. The Committee agreed to strike the word “neighboring” and elaborate more in this section about Malden.

Chemical and Particulate Runoff Impacts

The Chair clarified that for formatting purposes, the hyperlinks in the narrative of this section (“Wetlands Protection Act”; “regulations”; “Bylaw”; and “regulations”) would be removed in the final draft.

The Environmental group pointed out some minor grammatical edits and also suggested the following: 1) that the majority of the language in the 2nd paragraph starting with “contaminants of concern...” and ending with “Furthermore, microplastic particles from infill...” Should be removed and referenced in a footnote, as many aspects of these chemicals have already been discussed under the “Chemical Impacts on Human Health and the Environment” section. 2) To strike “This concern is not theoretical”.

Members also discussed concerns that this section did not equally address the runoff impacts associated with the use of pesticides or synthetic fertilizer treatments on natural grass fields; nor was there any information about what types of chemicals might already be in the existing soil on grass fields. Additional conversation was had about the possibility of elaborating a bit more in this section about the ubiquitous nature of chemicals found in the environment/soil. One example mentioned was how PFAS are found everywhere in the environment, including on clothing and in food packaging.

A Member of the Safety group inquired about whether or not there was any research that referenced the difference between runoff on natural grass vs artificial turf surfaces. The Environmental group responded that although they could not recall a specific study in the moment; they surmised it would largely depend on site specific field conditions

The Committee agreed that either this section or another section should be edited to include additional information about runoff impacts from the use of pesticides/fertilizers on grass fields and the ubiquitous nature of chemicals found in the environment.

Stormwater Management Impacts

A Member of the Safety group inquired about the status of Mass DEP’s proposed change to the definition of permeable surface. The Environment group reported that Mass DEP was expected to adopt the change in April.

The Environmental group suggested, in paragraph 6, to strike the words “are at best permeable” and replace them with “do impede infiltration of water into the underlying soil”.

The Committee agreed to the wording change.

Climate Change Resilience Impacts and Ecological Effects

Members of the Safety group were concerned that this section was a bit subjective, as there were not many footnotes that can direct the reader to references. One example mentioned was a lack of reference to carbon sequestration.

A Member of the Health group pointed out that footnote 18 is not referenced on the page. It was determined that this footnote was left in from the Environmental group's narrative report, but that it would be corrected in the final version of the report.

The Committee agreed that additional footnotes linking the reader to references are needed in this section.

A Cost Comparison of Artificial Turf Fields to Natural Grass Fields

A Member of the Health group inquired if others felt that this section relied too heavily on information presented by Ian Lacy of Tom Irwin Advisor's. The Chair discussed that in his opinion Mr. Lacy's presentation was neutral and balanced on the topic of artificial turf and natural grass fields. No additional conversation was had amongst the Committee and it appeared that Members agreed he was viewed as a neutral subject matter expert on both topics.

The Environmental group suggested adding a paragraph to this section about the two major Town funding sources that might be applicable to future field projects: 1) Capital funds; and 2) CPA funds. Additional conversation was had in reference to restrictions for the use of CPA funds (state funding) for projects related to the installation of artificial turf fields. A suggestion was made to review the CPA guidelines prior to adding the paragraph to ensure that the information is accurate in regards to the restrictions and to include a citation.

The Environmental group also suggested that a sentence should be added at the end of the 4th paragraph which indicates that the costs outlined in this section do not include other typical elements associated with a field such as bleachers, lighting, fencing, etc. or other soft costs for design and construction management. Another suggestion was made to consider reformatting this section as more of a narrative description as opposed to using multiple tables.

The Committee agreed to 1) add additional information about Capital and CPA funds with special attention to the CPA guidelines associated with artificial turf field installation, including a reference; 2) incorporating an additional sentence outlining what is not included in the costs as outlined above; and 3) to reformat this section as more of a narrative description.

Importance of Field Maintenance / Organic & Non-Organic Maint. of Natural Grass Fields

The Committee had a lengthy discussion about these two sections of the report. Members expressed the following concerns: 1) these sections do not clearly inform the reader that maintenance alone will not lead to increasing field usage, especially as it pertains to grass fields; 2) changing the maintenance program on natural grass fields from organic to non-organic treatments will not increase access to the existing fields, nor will it increase the field usage in the shoulder seasons or during periods of inclement weather; 3) this section does not adequately address that given Arlington's limited playing fields (primarily grass), that simply improving the maintenance program will actually decrease field usage because it would require fields to be rested, and 4) converting one or two fields to artificial turf will not necessarily increase access or allow for the expansion of current programs, it would likely help alleviate pressure on natural grass fields, provide users access earlier and later in the seasons, and reduce cancellations as a result of inclement weather.

Members discussed that the topic of maintaining fields (including resting and treatment of fields-organically or not), has not really been researched or discussed very much by the Committee. Members also discussed that some of the challenges with this has to do with the limited number of fields and what the goals would be in terms of utilizing the current fields. For example, is the Town looking to increase access to playing, expand programs, or maintain high quality fields? The Committee seemed to come to the conclusion that Arlington could not accomplish all of these goals given the current number and types of fields, even if an existing field were to be converted from grass to artificial turf. Another Member inquired whether or not the new fields at the High School would help to alleviate this issue. A representative from the Park and Recreation Commission explained that the High School fields fall under the jurisdiction of Arlington Public Schools and charge a higher rate for use than those fields that fall under the Recreation Department. Additionally, whereas the school programs take priority, the current field, as well as the new fields to be installed, is less accessible to the broader community programs and users. Although, some of the high school programs also utilize Recreation fields (grass), it may take some of the burden off of those fields. However, a point was made that the high school activities are typically occurring right after school, whereas the community programs (run by volunteer coaches/parents) are typically running a bit later in the afternoon after the typical work day. Members also discussed how maintenance and specific types of field treatments may fall within the purview of Arlington's Public Land Management Plan, but this also has not been reviewed by this Committee.

Members recognized that the Committee has not done enough research regarding the specific concerns outlined above but that there are important points that should be made. As such, the Committee agreed that the "Organic vs. Non-Organic Maintenance of Natural Grass Fields" section should be removed but a few sentences about organic vs. non organic maintenance should be folded into the "Importance of Field Maintenance" section. Additionally, a reference to Arlington's Public Land Management Plan should be included in this section.

The Committee agreed to allow the Chair and Clerk to edit this section to reflect the above conversations.

Findings and Recommendations

The Environmental group made a suggestion to strike, in the 2nd paragraph, the word “undeniable”. All Members were in agreement with this edit.

The Committee had a lengthy discussion in regards to the language used to describe when artificial turf fields should be considered; specifically in the sections outlined below:

- 3rd paragraph regarding “The Committee believes that artificial turf should be an option for future field planners in Arlington, but it is an option that should not be considered until natural turf options have proven unworkable, impractical, or financially infeasible”;
- 4th paragraph (before the bulleted considerations) regarding “(after exhausting natural grass options)”;
- 5th paragraph (after the bulleted considerations) regarding the last sentence as it pertains to the “default option”.
- Last paragraph regarding the last sentence as it pertains to “only (a) when natural turf options prove to be unworkable, impracticable, or infeasible..”.

The Chair explained it was his understanding that Members were in agreement that the Committee’s field preference is natural grass. Other Members expressed their understanding was that artificial turf should be considered on a case by case basis and in conjunction with the points outlined by the Committee. Members expressed concern that some of the language, in the above mentioned paragraphs, were worded to strongly and/or seem to carry a negative connotation towards the installation of artificial turf fields. The conversation went on to discuss the perceived and various interpretations of what the decision makers and/or the public classify as a grass field that is unworkable, impractical or financially infeasible option and to what extent and through what type of proof. One Member pointed out that anytime a field renovation is discussed, the decision makers are already taking these factors and others into consideration. These conversations involve a decision making process to determine what makes sense for the site. These conversations do not consider whether or not natural grass is more workable than artificial grass. The case may be that both are workable but there is no assumption that the default surface is grass. It is this Member’s belief that by stating the “default” is natural grass, it may discredit the decision makers and create a “turf war” in the community. Most Members were adamant that they wanted to make it clear that the Committee’s preference is for natural grass fields, but there was an acknowledgement that some of the language should be changed slightly to convey that message and remove any negative association with the installation of artificial turf.

The Committee agreed to the following;

- 1) Strike the word “undeniable” in the 2nd paragraph;
- 2) Edit the last sentence in the 3rd paragraph to state: “The Committee believes that artificial turf should be an option for future field planners in Arlington, but it is an option that should be considered after careful evaluation of the practicality and feasibility of natural turf options”.
- 3) Strike the parenthetical in the 4th paragraph;
- 4) Strike the last sentence the 5th paragraph starting with “ Nevertheless...”;
- 5) Edit the last sentence in the last paragraph to align with “part a” to match the wording agreed upon by the Committee in item #2 above.

Footnotes

The Committee had a lengthy discussion about the final footnote, #94, which references that the Committees findings and recommendations concern *future* projects not yet in the planning stages and specifically mention the Arlington Catholic and Arlington High School fields.

A Member of the Environmental group expressed concern that this footnote limits the options that Town Meeting can have in regards to this report and suggests that the Town should ignore this information when looking at current or future projects. And while the Member acknowledged contracts are in place for field construction, it should not mean that a contract can't or shouldn't be amended based on new information. As such, the recommendation was to remove the footnote altogether.

The Chair addressed the Committee to make 2 points in reference to the Footnote

Point 1: The Chair summarized the history of this Warrant Article by explaining the following proceedings at Town Meeting that led to this Study Committee outlined by bullet points..

- The original substitute motion, from Beth Melofchik, was for a moratorium on Artificial Turf Fields, but included an exemption for the High School field.
 - That motion was voted down.
- A different substitute motion was approved, (Stamps/Benson)
 - That motion had 2 parts: a) to establish the Artificial Turf Study Committee and b) to place a one year moratorium on the construction of artificial turf fields which included an exemption of the High School field.
 - The substitute motion was passed, but divided into 2 separate parts:
 - Part A was the formation of this Study Committee; and
 - Part B included a 1 year moratorium, exempting the High School Field
 - Part A was passed and Part B was voted down by Town Meeting

Point 2: The Chair acknowledged that this Committee has never really discussed the High School field until our last meeting. He summarized that this Committee has never consulted with the High School Building Committee, has never requested any documents or asked to see any of the contracts, as such, this Committee knows very little about what stage the project is in, other than that it seems to be very far along. The Chair also acknowledged that at this point any change order of the project would potentially cost the Town a lot more money.

As such, the Chair was adamant that the footnote should remain, as it is an honest statement and consistent with the history of the Warrant Article and of the work of this Committee.

Multiple Members were in agreement with the Chair's comments. Although further discussion was had in regards to the possibility of the Committee removing the comment and/or removing the specific locations (Arlington High School and Arlington Catholic fields) from the comments. Additional conversation was had in regards to the need to reference the High School project because it is an active project, whereas there are no other projects

going on at other fields in Arlington with regard to artificial turf. Other Members did not have a concern with referencing the only 2 artificial turf fields in Town. A brief conversation was had amongst Members to express that if they had known or thought this report would influence decisions for the current High School project, they would have expected the Committee to take a different approach as to its research and investigation and consider additional factors. After extensive conversations related to cost and politics the Committee agreed to the following:

- 1) Strike the words “findings and recommendations” and replace with the word “scope”.
- 2) Strike the word “concern” and replace it with the words “was focused on”.
- 3) Remove the italics front from the word “*future*” to regular font “future”.

IV. Discussion: Project Timeline, Edits, Deliverables

The Chair discussed that next week the Committee would hold the Public Input session as a Hybrid meeting on Tuesday April 2nd at 5pm. The physical location of the Meeting would be held at 27 Maple Street, the Senior Center, in the Health and Human Services Conference room, but that zoom would also be available. The Chair express that not everyone would need to be present but if the majority could be that would be preferable.

The Chair discussed the following ground rules for the meeting: 1) limiting speaker time; 2) requesting the public to register ahead of time as a speaker; 3) requiring speakers to discuss specifics in the report; and 3) to allow for an engaging conversation among the Committee and the public.

At the end of the input session, the Committee will reserve time (30 minutes) to discuss the feedback and suggest additional edits.

The Chair discussed that the last Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday April 9th at 5pm and the sole purpose will be to vote on the report.

V. New Business

There was no new business discussed.

VI. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Mike Gildesgame.

2nd by Joseph Barr.

Vote:

- Mike Gildesgame, Yes
- Leslie Mayer, Yes
- Joseph Barr, Yes
- Jill Krajewski, Yes

Natasha Waden, Yes
Marvin Lewiton, Yes
James DiTullio, Yes

Approved (7-0)