



**WESTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD**  
*Bethesda-Chevy Chase-North Bethesda-Rockville-Potomac*

May 31, 2011

Artificial Turf Staff Work Group  
MCPS Department of Facilities Management  
2096 Gaither Road  
Rockville, MD 20850

To Whom It May Concern:

The Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board ("CAB") has studied A Review of Benefits and Issues Associated with Natural and Artificial Turf Rectangular Stadium Fields ("draft report"). We write in follow-up to our September 30, 2010 letter on artificial turf fields, included in the report's appendix. In addition to the CAB's own review of the report and discussion of the issues, we heard from community advocates at our May 16, 2011 meeting.

The CAB's original letter asked that the Montgomery County Council address the following issues:

1. A full life cycle cost analysis of artificial turf field,
2. A rigorous collection and review of existing scientific data on the safety and health of students and athletes using the fields with a particular emphasis on heat and sports-related injuries, and
3. A rigorous collection and review of existing scientific data on the environmental effects, including toxic chemicals in stormwater runoff and toxic particulates in the air.

The CAB appreciates that a significant amount of time and effort went into the draft report and that each of the above issues is at least touched upon. However, the draft report appears to come up a bit short. We are optimistic that the final report will take into account the concerns stated here and by others and provide a complete final product.

Full Life Cycle Costs Analysis

The draft report does discuss life cycle costs, but not with the requisite level of detail for the analysis to be considered "full." There is little discussion of the ongoing maintenance of artificial turf fields that will be required such as chemical cleaning and grooming. Appendix C lists the major lifecycle cost assumptions including some maintenance requirements. But it does not list the cost of these individual requirements. Appendices D-1 and D-2 provide cost comparisons for school and park fields, but do not breakdown the actual costs within the maintenance category. The costs also appear to compare a hypothetical perfectly maintained natural grass field with an artificial turf field instead of comparing Montgomery County's actual current practices.

**Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center**

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The draft report also makes several recommendations that may affect the life cycle costs but are not accounted for. For example, the draft report discusses heat issues and recommends an advisory policy so athletic personnel can keep users safe and cancel activities as necessary (pg. 40). But cancellations will affect the hours of use which the report does not factor in when calculating revenue from parks fields or when applying annual hours of use to its cost analysis (pg. 27). The draft report also recommends that future artificial turf contracts require the installer recycle the fields without calculating how this might raise the contract installation costs (pgs. 45-46). Certain best practices are also recommended for adoption in the draft report, but there is no explanation as to their effect on costs (pg. 49).

Rigorous Collection and Review on Safety and Health

The draft report's discussion of safety and health affects is also less than rigorous. The County's own Department of Health and Human Services said as much, recommending that at a minimum "a meta-analysis of all studies should be completed to ensure a complete literature review in this area" (pg. 30). Similarly, many of the reports cited recommend further study (pages 31-36). Some advocates on this issue have also noted that the report fails to review studies of the health effects of carbon black contained in the infill material.

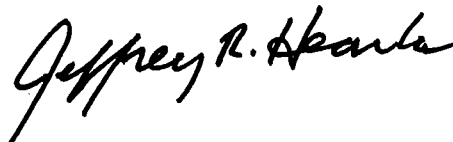
Rigorous Collection and Review on Environmental Effects

Similarly, the report is less than rigorous in studying the environmental effects on artificial fields. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), our county's lead environmental agency, had a "limited" role in the report which raises concern (pg. 41). A number of the studies cited in the report raise specific environmental issues including zinc in runoff, the potential of artificial turf to release toxic substances, and even lead in certain fields (pg. 42-43). Although further study would require some investment according to DEP (pg. 43), perhaps it is necessary for the analysis to be truly thorough and rigorous.

The above is by no means a thorough review of each page of the report. It simply represents some observations on the draft as it relates to the CAB's earlier letter. The CAB hopes that before the final report the working group will consider the above and strengthen the final product.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact us should you have any questions or like any additional information.

Sincerely,



Jeff Hearle, Chair

cc: The Honorable Isiah Leggett, County Executive  
The Honorable Valerie Ervin, Council President  
The Honorable Roger Berliner, Councilmember, District 1  
The Honorable Phil Andrews, Councilmember, District 3