

To the West Tisbury Finance Advisory Committee,

I would like to request that the Finance Committee include MVRHS' proposal to build out the athletic facilities at the MVRHS campus on the upcoming meeting agenda. Because this is a regional project, a similar letter to this one is being sent out to the other five Finance Committees by concerned taxpayers in their towns.

As you may be aware, the athletic campus project is currently an Active DRI at the Martha's Vineyard Commission and also under review by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board. **Given the MVRHS' financial situation – with projections for additional shortfalls next year – it is shocking that the school committee continues to advance this project.**

Phase One of Huntress Associates' plan includes a new, relocated track, synthetic infield, grandstands for 1000 people, stadium lighting, and a 3,100 sq ft field house. Because it is categorized as a privately funded capital project, there has been no realistic cost planning regarding the lifetime costs associated with the build out. However, effective Day Two, it appears MVRHS will assume full financial responsibility for all costs associated with the project – including operating, maintenance, and replacement costs; and liability.

It is important to note that this is only Phase One of a multi-phase project, intended to be a sprawling athletic complex serving high school athletics, as well as youth and adult leagues, summer camps and other sporting events. In short, it seems the MVRHS committee is assuming financial responsibility for the upkeep of expanded facilities designed to host athletic events, which, according to the Huntress proposal, means approximately 40% of the "proposed athletic field use" (see page 14 and 15 of the HAI-MVRHS-Report-013119) will not be related to the high school.

I hope the Finance Committee will take a close look at the proposed project, particularly in light of the current economic crisis and tough choices MVRHS has to make. Here are some basic questions, which should serve as a starting point for this decision:

- Is this project financially viable? According to the application, the entire athletic campus (not including the enlarged field house) is projected to cost \$11,343,164 to construct. And according to Finance Director Mark Friedman's calculations (see attached), it will cost \$16.9 million over 20 years. Again, these calculations do not include the enlarged field house. Where is the money coming from?
- The Superintendent has repeatedly promised the public that the installation will be privately funded. Is there a financial guarantee? If so,

what is it? Does it include both Phase I and Phase II? Are there conditions attached to the donation? The terms of the deal should be transparent.

- Assuming the installation costs are indeed privately funded, what impacts will this have on the school's future MSBA requests where projects are approved based on demonstrable need? Does the Finance Committee think that taxpayers will be prepared to shoulder 100% of the MVRHS building renovation/rebuild costs estimated at over \$100 million?
- Please request MVRHS' long-term financial plan for the complex's operation and maintenance (including replacement). Given that synthetic turf is a perpetual system, where is the financial plan showing that the school will have the funds to replace the carpet, shock pad, and infill as needed to ensure that it is safe for the generations of students who will have to recreate on this field? There are plenty of examples of unsafe failed fields still in use due to a lack of replacement funding. And there are plenty of schools now burdened with the choice of replacing an unsafe, failed field for \$500,000+ or paying their teachers.
- Will MVRHS absorb all additional costs associated with this project including maintenance of the field house (and its 15+ toilets), the synthetic field, the periodic synthetic field replacement costs, and the eventual wastewater tie-in? If so, are all six towns prepared to absorb their share of these additional costs in perpetuity? Or will they be passed along to athletes in the form of higher registration fees, usage fees, and/or potentially a pay to play model? If the latter, this approach would exacerbate financial disparities in the midst of an economic downturn.
- According to the maintenance guidelines included in the MVRHS application, daily, weekly, and monthly maintenance of the synthetic field is required to maintain the field's safety and to maintain its warranty. What are the actual costs for the specified maintenance? Who will perform it? Will they be subcontracted or salaried? What is the quote from the certified, off island contractors who perform technical aspects of the maintenance? Please see the attached 2020 maintenance guidelines from Act Global, the carpet brand MVRHS is planning to use. (*Note: highlights are ours, not Act Global's.*)
- A Finance Committee review of the warranties for each constituent part of the synthetic field might be prudent. Typically a single warranty does NOT cover all aspects of the field's sub-grade infrastructure, irrigation, shock pad, carpet, and infill. Instead there are separate warranties and warranty voiding conditions for each element (some of which could contravene each other). For example, please see attached warranty information from Act Global.

- Will the school's current insurance policy cover this project? What will the incremental costs be? Please review the policy that covers this.
- Hurricanes (or tornadoes as we saw last summer) can be catastrophic to a synthetic field. If large quantities of infill are lost and/or the carpet is ruined, are replenishment and replacement costs covered in the school's insurance policy? If not, MVRHS could be looking significant costs following any major storm event. Where will these funds come from or will the school's game field sit unsafe/unusable until funding is somehow secured?
- MVRHS has already received two legal warnings from a law firm with expertise in toxic exposure (currently representing Martha's Vineyard Airport Commission in their lawsuit over PFAS contamination). The warnings relate specifically to environmental and human health impacts related to chemicals found in plastic fields. Who will be liable should a lawsuit be filed against MVRHS?
- Why is the MVRHS leadership focusing on fundraising for this particular effort when there is so much critical need throughout the school?

In light of all the financial uncertainty surrounding this ambitious project, in the midst of a global pandemic and economic recession no less, I sincerely hope the Finance Committee will do its due diligence before this project advances further.

Thank you for your careful consideration,

Rebekah Thomson

West Tisbury