



Dear RTM,

May 16th, 2022

At the time of this writing, the FAF has been copied on 66 emails from taxpaying residents to the RTM general inbox supporting the turf project at Roger Ludlowe Middle School. This does not include the emails you've received in which the FAF was not copied and is in addition to the 50+ emails that were sent to First Selectwoman Kupchick, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the RTM back in January in advance of the Capital Planning Meeting. Comparatively, we understand from our discussions with various RTM members, that the number of emails for the other projects COMBINED is less than 10. These other projects include Rooster River flood mitigation, town-wide facility systems upgrades, a Tide Gate system project, a Transfer station repair project, and an AC upgrade and HVAC replacement at various schools. All of these are important and impactful projects, yet the email support for turf was over 6 times the email volume of all these other projects COMBINED. We hope that this is a strong signal to your body that people in this town are behind this effort. They support this effort because they know from travelling to fields in other towns that Fairfield is woefully behind and the time is now to change that.

We also know during this process that you have received emails suggesting that there are health and environmental concerns to consider. We wanted to take a minute to address these concerns. With respect to both of these issues, we'd like to remind you that there are 3 turf fields in town, although only 1 is for public use. These fields, at Warde, Ludlowe, and Tomlinson, have been around for roughly 15 years. These three fields have caused NO environmental issues. There have been NO stories about these three fields causing health problems with our youth athletes. Any health concern due to turf fields is unfounded. To be sure, even if a Fairfield athlete hasn't had the privilege to play on turf in their hometown, they're surely playing on turf when they compete against Westport, Darien, New Canaan, Trumbull, Stratford, Milford, and Norwalk. As outlined in the graphic below, those towns have invested in their athletic infrastructure and their kids. Indeed, neighboring towns have built 42 turf fields within a 15 mile radius of Fairfield. Not surprisingly, there have been NO stories about Fairfield athletes getting sick from playing on turf in other towns.

The fact of the matter is, turf fields have been around since the 70s, with a strong surge in popularity over the last 20 years. Questions and concerns about the environment and the impact on the health of our kids are not new and certainly not unique to Fairfield. We are certain that the governing bodies of Westport, Darien, New Canaan, Trumbull, Stratford, Milford, and Norwalk all had to address these concerns. And as the graphic below shows, they have built 42 turf fields within a 15 mile driving radius. We are likewise certain that these towns did their homework, and deemed turf fields safe to build. It defies logic that all 7 of these towns failed to consider, or even slightly consider, the impact on health and environment, then took a gamble building these fields at \$3 million a pop. Back when cars first replaced the horse, I'm sure there were some holdouts who preferred the horse because cars were new and unproven and potentially unsafe. If they were still riding a horse 20 years after the introduction of the car because of safety concerns, you'd have to wonder if they're simply being cautious or obstructing a technological advancement to their detriment. The same people who express concern about the health and safety risks of a turf field probably drive a gas-powered car. Those people

will not tell you, however, that their gas-powered car is MORE harmful to the environment than a turf field. Similarly, the maintenance of a grass field relies on gas-powered lawnmowers. Where is the environmental outcry about the grass-field-maintenance-related emission of CO2 and other pollutants?

Of course there will be some who will say, “show me the data.” These always seem to be the same people who send a sensationalized headline about supposed issues. The University of Washington example is often thrown around because of the number of former athletes who had cancer. But if you read the data (see: Investigation of Reported Cancer among Soccer Players in Washington State) you’d see these conclusions:

Based on what we know today, the Washington State Department of Health recommends that people who enjoy soccer continue to play regardless of the type of field surface. Our recommendation is based on our investigation and the available research on crumb rubber which currently does not suggest it poses a significant public health risk. Assurances of the safety of artificial turf with crumb rubber are limited by the lack of adequate information on potential toxicity and exposure.

With very few exceptions, no one knows if someone will develop cancer in their lifetime. That being said, our investigation did not find the number of cancers on Coach Griffin's list to be concerning, and the available research does not suggest that playing soccer on artificial turf causes cancer.

The FAF would love for you to read the data. Luckily, the state of Connecticut Department of Public Health has made it easy and posted enough data to read for days. There are studies from Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Washington State, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, and even the Environmental Protection Agency. Their conclusion: turf fields are safe. You can find it all here - <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Environmental-Health/Environmental-and-Occupational-Health-Assessment/Artificial-Turf-Fields>.

It’s also important to remember that Fairfield will be using a non-rubber infill for the Roger Ludlowe Turf Project as well as future turf projects. The aforementioned health and environmental concerns with turf fields have ALL stemmed from rubber infills. The infill that will be used is called Envirofill and is used in turf fields, playgrounds, parks, and private landscaping. Its benefits are that it’s low maintenance, is extremely durable, and proven safe and clean. You can read all about it here - <https://usgreentech.com/infills/envirofill/>

Do we at the FAF know for sure that these fields will not, with absolute certainty, cause some sort of problem? Of course not. We don’t have crystal balls. We can only tell you, based on everything outlined above, that turf fields are an important part of a healthy youth athletic infrastructure, and the data has shown them to be safe.

Thank you,

The FAF Board of Directors

Turf in Other Towns

Fairfield has 50- 300% less turf field availability compared to its neighbors

- Westport – 4 new turf fields approved in April 2019 for 5,358 students
- Darien – 5 turf fields in town for 4,682 students
- Norwalk – 5 turf fields in town for 11,579 students
- Stamford – 8 turf fields in town for 16,273 students
- Stratford – 5 turf fields in town for 6,699 students (2 recently built)
- Milford – 9 turf fields in town for 5,433 students; 2 new fields began construction in Sept 2020 for \$5 million
- New Canaan – 6 turf fields in town for 4,232 students (2 recently built)
- **Fairfield – 1 turf field for public use (TMS) and 2 HS turf fields for limited public use for a town of 9,444 students**