



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

JOINT BUILDING COMMITTEE DOVER HIGH ATHLETIC COMPLEX MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Regular Meeting / Community Forum
Meeting Location:	Library, Dover High School., Dover, NH
Meeting Date:	Thursday, March 14, 2024
Meeting Time:	6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Meeting called to order at 6:07pm.

II. ROLL CALL ATTENDANCE

- a. Present: Fergus Cullen, Linnea Nemeth, Craig Flynn, Ronan O'Doherty. Ernie Clark joined at 7:03.
- b. Attending Remotely: Michelle Clancy, at home due to surgery.
- c. Also present were Recreation Director Gary Bannon, Principal Peter Driscoll, Athletic Director Peter Wotton, and Business Administrator Michael Limanni.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

- a. Christine Baber, Gerry's Lane - Spoke about work on a project to reduce plastics in the city and state. She highlighted the amount of research available on artificial turf. Requesting that both turf and natural grass be included in RFP and RFQ and that scientific evidence be used in making a final decision.
- b. John Atherton, West Concord St - Spoke about concerns on artificial turf and related injuries. In favor of organic natural grass.
- c. Allison Davis, Hidden Valley Drive - Spoke in favor of installing natural grass fields citing environmental, injury, and funding concerns.
- d. Susan Smith, Susannah's Xing - Spoke in favor of a natural grass field.
- e. Cynthia Walter, West Concord St - Expressed concerns on the costs of the project given other needs for schools. Requesting estimates to include long term costs [2 decades] and bids for both grass and turf. Provided research on grass.
- f. Gary Dickerman, Sandra's Run - Presented questions for JBC based on prior minutes. Would like to know when/where upcoming grass field visits are? How does Exeter compare to Dover in regards to practice/use? Requesting to provide handouts with data to be included with the minutes. Would like to see the cost and lifespan of natural fields presented.

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - Ronan made a motion to approve the 2/20 and 2/29 meeting minutes. Linnea seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

- A. Regular Meeting – February 20, 2024
- B. Facility Tours – February 29, 2024

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Field Trips Discussion:

- a. Craig highlighted the bleacher structure at Exeter would be beneficial to study further.
- b. Fergus noted that he visited Hanover on Saturday. Separate track and athletic field, but overall small area. Fergus also noted that Ernie visited Newburyport, and will provide a report at the next meeting.
- c. Craig provided a report on his trips to Salem and Merrimack. He attempted visits to



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Merrimack and Salem for grass. Salem is in the middle of converting to artificial turf. He did visit Merrimack with their Athletic Director. They prefer grass due to the personal feel of grass and that it encourages teams not to use late at night for younger kids. Field is only used for games. Practices are held on the outfields of other fields and small grass areas.

Maintenance is required to fill in grass in high use areas. Built on 20 feet of sand, which helps their drainage. Can't use it until at least April 1st. Moved to a 6 round, 8 lane straight track, allowing them to hold championship meets. Lights are twenty years old. Facilities are in the school.

- d. Linnea noted she will be visiting Plymouth, which has natural grass. She has a meeting with the Athletic Director on 3/15 and will provide a report at the next meeting.

B. Guest speaker: Discussion with Joe Persechino and Neil Hanson, Tighe & Bond

- a. Extensive experience in designing athletic fields in NH: UNH, St. Thomas, Exeter High. After a tour of Dover facilities, he is presenting some ideas and recommendations.
- b. Process notes with the Goal to have fields playable by Fall '25. The only way to accomplish this would be with turf, not enough time for growing. Grass would be in '26, as it needs a full growing season.
- c. Design & Permitting 6 month process, out to bid in Fall. Need specialty contractors for this type of project. It is a tight schedule, but common for this type of project, not impossible.
- d. Other Considerations: Track Materials, Artificial Turf, Fills both synthetic and natural.
- e. IAAF tracks have wider turns & wider infields
- f. Discussed pros and cons and grass and turf. Practice field may not need as much cushioning.
- g. UNH: Uses sport specific turf. Would recommend that for a high school we use all purpose pile.
- h. Orientation and Layout:
 - i. Current layout is not ideal for solar orientation. Ideal would be to flip the baseball field location with track/football.
 - ii. Other track/field sports are taking up space by not being able to take place in the track.
 - iii. Bleacher use and facilities details would want to start bringing in an architect for that discussion.

C. Stakeholders Listening Session with coaches and student athletes

- Megan Healy, Senior, Basketball/Soccer/LAX - Spoke in favor of turf due to ability to use year round and in poor weather.
- Dana Gray, LAX Coach - Would like to see a zone for games to be played at the same time, doesn't think we need away stands and would prefer the extra field, needing an outdoor restroom facility. Additional comments: Alumnae funding for additional items, like donating a brick.
- Kevin Sprague, Dover Baseball - challenged by the quantity of 90' baseball fields in the city, downtime in construction will be tough, but having a turf with lights would be a significant improvement. Turf allows for rain all day and playing in the afternoon. Need spectator space



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for baseball. Back-to-back bleachers an option. Space for batting cages, bullpens, handicapped parking

- Trevor Brooks, Soph, Soccer/Football - Used the Exeter lockers, integrity of field during the rain for soccer is tough. Dunaway is dirt at the end of the season.
- Ronan Tullis, Freshman, Soccer - When it rains, unsure if we can play for a full week. Half fields played on were turf, giving the other teams an advantage.
- Nick, Dover Football - Plays here at St. Thomas, the kids love playing at STA over Dover. Prefers the track to move somewhere else to have stands closer.
- Rick Pelletier, Girls Soccer Coach - Bellamy one of the worst fields they play on, terrible drainage. Turf is a better, cleaner game. Turf brings a higher level of play.
- Paul Barnes, Garrison City Football Club - Uses Shaws Lane. Playoff games held on turf, find themselves at a disadvantage. 250 participants. Additional comment: Getting in as much turf as possible for practice areas. Recommend pull through parking/one way.
- April McGough, Dover Little Green Cheer - Prefers turf as safer option for tumbling. Would want to see us keep spectator stands. Band sectioning off in stands creates congestion, and would be able to solve in the layouts.
- Evie McCooley, Fresh, Soccer - Slips in mud on current field. Holes in current fields create injuries.
- Jimmy Wares, Soccer Coach - Many teams competing for space if/when a turf. Practice space for turf is important to stay competitive.
- Hayley Wood, Field Hockey - High demand for turf space on the Seacoast, strong athletic community is apparent and would be a great gathering place.
- Rich Longuil, Varsity Baseball - Baseball field in need of a facelift, played on it in HS 40 years ago. Turf allows for more scheduling, reducing hours of planning. Additional comment: Could review foul ball issues with new issues for correcting.
- Scott Dubben, Baseball Coach/Org - No turf baseball fields on the seacoast. As much turf as we can get down the better. Division 1 Athletic school, but do not have the D1 facilities. Students have a choice in other towns, having a great athletic program would raise the bar.
- Christen Wilhelm, Middle School Soccer Coach/HS Track - Prefers to play on a good grass field, but do not have the budget to maintain a good grass field. Acknowledges that turf would help solve shared fields and flooding issues. Need a safe, reliable jumping pit. Need storage space with access to get to their resources. Additional comment: need to dodge foul balls on track currently. What extra space would we gain if the track moved to Bellamy? (It would need lights still)
- Nick Piatti, XCcountry/Track Coach - Important to have a D1 level facility. Power to the infield is an issue. Likes the idea of an 8 lane straight. Not tied to turf access for the track. Pointed out that Bellamy road corner gets sun first, clears.
- Gary Bannon, Recreation - No additional city owned options to expand fields, taking advantage of what we have is very important. A lot of research has been done more recently on the impacts and materials for turf.

Ronan provided a recap that given the numbers provided by those in attendance, there are 1500+ athletes' feedback represented in the community groups.



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Ronan requested a show of hands for natural grass vs. artificial turf - All hands for turf from the community stakeholders in athletics.

Five-minute recess for teams to adjourn at 8:05, resumed at 8:10.

Discussion on Feedback from Community and Layout Concepts:

- Craig: Helpful to hear ideas we didn't think about. Having a visual on potential concepts is helpful to generate next steps.
- Ernie: Bellamy Field discussion - poor drainage, does have irrigation. Essentially built in the 1930's, used to be a state park. Not part of the original scope, but should be taken into account in the concepts and how we use it.
- Craig: Grass is preferred when properly maintained, was the point made by speakers. They have to be maintained and used not frequently.
- Michael Limanni: Need to review newer data on artificial turf as a lot has changed in the last 20 years.

D. Discussion on hiring initial professional design & engineering services

- a. Fergus raised the question on the process of RFQ or selecting a known business. However, group consensus was to proceed with RFQ for transparency and following standard procedures.
- b. Timing for an RFQ in 1 week sounds possible. Turnaround for this would be 14 days.
- c. Fergus/Michael Limanni working on RFQ. Looking for 1 week turnaround and then 2 weeks for

E. For the Good of the Order

Ernie: Recommends a visit to Newburyport HS, very well planned. Phillips Exeter has excellent turf. Benefit to keeping visitors and home bleachers separate due to conflict.

V. VI. IDENTIFY NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

- a. April 9th to review proposals. 5pm. Superintendents Conf Room.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Ronan, seconded by Craig. Meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.