



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

JOINT BUILDING COMMITTEE DOVER HIGH ATHLETIC COMPLEX MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Meeting
Meeting Location:	McConnell Center, Basement Cafeteria 61 Locust St., Dover, NH
Meeting Date:	Tuesday, June 11, 2024
Meeting Time:	5:30 p.m.

I. Meeting called to order at 5:31 PM.

II. ROLL CALL ATTENDANCE

- a. Present: Ronan O'Doherty, Ernie Clark, Fergus Cullen, Michelle Clancy, Craig Flynn (left at 6:40)
- b. Excused: Linnea Nemeth
- c. Among audience: Consultants Neil Hansen and Joe Persechino of Tighe & Bond

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- A. June 4, 2024 regular meeting: Ronan moved adopting as presented, seconded by Ernie, no discussion, adopted without objection

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

This was a special Community Listening Session. 44 members of the community spoke over the course of nearly 1.5 hours. A majority spoke in support of synthetic turf. A minority spoke in support of natural grass. Some focused their remarks on the condition of the existing track or baseball field. In addition, the Committee received written comments from 14 individuals. Of these, twelve expressed support for synthetic. One, who also spoke at the hearing, expressed support for natural grass. The remaining correspondence offered some history of Dover fields for perspective. Written comments are included with these minutes.

1. Jim Verschuere, Sixth St, opposed synthetic turf for environmental reasons, thinks it will cost more
2. Kevin Sprague, president of Dover baseball and a coach. City has two, 90-foot baseball fields used by HS teams, three Legion teams and three Babe Ruth teams. Woodman Park field is almost unplayable. Turf would reduce rainouts, allow for play the day after rain. Grass would need Fenway Park's grounds crew to maintain.
3. Gary Dickerman, Sandras Run, questions about number of athletes who use fields, inventory of existing playing fields, cited a ranking suggesting Dover High ranks lower than near-by towns academically, opposed to spending money on athletics
4. Kathy Surman, Sandras Run, discussed incident in Lynn Mass where kids experienced heat exhaustion, expressed concerns about injuries on turf
5. Bob Cote, Sixth St, girls soccer coach, supports synthetic, allows for earlier start to playing season



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6. Connor Lazarz, West Concord St, Dover High student-athlete. Field conditions often muddy, increases chance of injury, reduces quality of play. Turf provides a consistent playing surface, fewer canceled or rescheduled games and practices, more forgiving surface reduces chances of injuries. Has played on many other fields which he prefers to our home field. Said teammates hope for a facility like they see in other communities.
7. Christen Wilhelm, Henry Law Ave, HS track and MS soccer coach, limited space with 40-45 kids playing in the fall, plus HS team. No grass field can withstand 60 pairs of cleats every day, fields torn up by end of season, have to cancel games. Loves grass but what I love more is for our kids to be able to play all games on the schedule and avoid injuries. Spreading use to a synthetic field would also allow other remaining grass fields more opportunity to recover.
8. Taryn Litterbrant, Southwood Dr, parent of track athletes and competitive runner, supports a new track. UNH, Oyster River, and Portsmouth have excellent tracks. Athletics are a big part of many students lives, need better facilities.
9. Greg Kageleiry, Constitution Way, supports synthetic field. Has refereed three sports for 50 years. Sees the difference in other facilities. Dover needs a track with a turf field, allows for more practice time.
10. John Atherton, West Concord St, opposed to synthetic for financial and environmental reasons. Says organic high performance natural grass is engineering for the use we seek. Said turf threatens our credit rating due to ongoing maintenance, would increase taxes, said a grass field can be built for \$200K vs \$1 million for synthetic
11. Allison Davis, Hidden Valley Dr, opposes synthetic, says pro football players prefer grass, concerned about injuries, concerned about inhalation of microplastics, said temps can reach 180 degrees, landfilled materials can leach, advocated for high performance organic grass
12. Susan Smith, Susannahs Xing, opposes synthetic, says grass is one-third the cost of turf, cited replacement costs, opposed bonding, will require purchase of new maintenance equipment, has impression some want synthetic in Dover because everyone else is doing it
13. Yulia Rothenberg, Chartergrant Rd, opposed to synthetic citing environmental / disposal concerns
14. Oliver Davis, Mt. Vernon St, student athlete, travels to other towns to play on synthetic fields, supports building one at DHS
15. Abby Cote, Sixth St, student athlete, loves playing on turf, game is faster, opposing teams such as Oyster River have advantages due to familiarity with surface
16. Jeff Warach, Silver St, opposes synthetic, expressed concerns about injuries, heat, PFAS, hormone disruptors, higher cost & tax impact



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17. Peter Schmidt, Fourth St, expressed preference for natural grass
18. Neal Stacy, Long Hill Rd, lacrosse coach, spring sports especially affected by non-playability of grass fields, often unusable for the first-third of season, JV lax games often cancelled because athletic director Mr. Wotton says field conditions can't sustain two games. Asked, if we only had one field, what would we choose?
19. Steven Fellows, Homestead Ln, parent, member of Garrison City Football Club board, member of Dover Conservation Commission. Prefers grass in a perfect world but that's not realistic. Dover has a lack of fields to begin with, soccer is down a field already this year. City needs high availability, high-capacity fields.
20. Bob Benincasa, Jackson Brook Terrace, described self as conflicted, urged working with maintenance staff on mowing and lining schedules, said striping fields with lining machines is labor intensive, staff have competing demands within their facilities jobs, tennis courts make us proud, want us to be proud of our facilities
21. Jean Schwab, Pond View Dr, opposed synthetic citing costs, disposal, new equipment needed, impact of microplastic ingestion, heat
22. Nick Piatti, DHS track coach, said he's seen 10,000 athletes in his nearly two decades at DHS. For eighth graders in towns that can choose between DHS, Oyster River, and Coe-Brown, when they consider Dover High, we don't have much to offer in terms of athletic facilities. Supports synthetic and a good track. Noted a synthetic field inside the track might harm his own program because lacrosse and track practices can't really happen at the same time.
23. Ronan Tullis, Hidden Valley Dr, student athlete, has played on many synthetic fields, there are weeks when they can't use the Dover field due to mud, or bump middle schoolers so they can't play, prefers turf, unreliable lining and mowing of fields, teams with turf have competitive advantage
24. Cynthia Walter, West Concord St, advocated for high performance organic grass and said the city could contract for its maintenance at a certain performance level for all fields. Called it "only way forward."
25. Haley Wood, JV FH coach, former college athlete, supports synthetic. Acknowledged concerns others have expressed. Said we are already exposed to PFAS every day – cooking products, personal care products. PFAS-free turf available.
26. James Davis, Mt. Vernon St, Garrison City Football Club. Supports synthetic. Observed that people who actually use fields have been unanimous in their support for synthetic
27. Travis Benincasa, Jackson Brook Terrace, DHS class of '24, competed in soccer, indoor & outdoor track. Said DHS track is the worst he ran on in HS. Said grass fields not much



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- better, spoke of unpredictable “Dover bounce.” Supports synthetic.
28. Mia Snow, Dean Drive. Youth athlete. Supports synthetic. Grass often unplayable for soccer. Synthetic would allow year-round use, avoid costs of fertilizer & seed.
 29. Rick Pelletier, Carriage Hill Ln, parent of athletes, varsity girls soccer coach at DHS, first game as a coach was cancelled due to unplayable conditions, this happens to 25% of games. Synthetic provides a better, cleaner faster more predictable game.
 30. Scott Dodier, Cottonwood Dr, soccer coach, seen a lot of fields and facilities. All the top-notch ones they play at are synthetic. Fall problems – shrinking daylight limits practice time as well so lights would relieve some of that pressure. If we’re going to make the investment do it right, supports turfing more fields, suggested we can try organic grass on another field to see how it works
 31. Mike Tullis, Hidden Valley Dr, son has played all over Northeast, everywhere he plays besides DHS is turf. Has seen some college fields that are grass but they are reserved for soccer-only, people aren’t allowed to even walk on them. Grass not feasible here.
 32. Doug McGregor, Ezras Way, focused on baseball fields. Hard to have a lot of pride in our facilities. Trailers, “mouse house” concession stand, dugouts lack screening for foul balls, need serious upgrade
 33. Alex Barbehenn, biz owner in Dover at 835 Central Ave, supports high performance grass, concerns about PFAS, supports mental health benefits of sports
 34. Eric Sweetser, Wallingford St. “High performance grass is new to me and I’m in the business of growing grass.” Supports synthetic. Different infill types available. Have to replace field maintenance equipment periodically regardless. We are putting an athletic load on fields that grass fields can’t handle.
 35. Brian Snow, Dean Dr, GCFC, MS boys soccer coach. The cost that we don’t see is the kids we have to say no to because we don’t have capacity for all the kids who want to play. Says 1000 kids in their program. Synthetic allows earlier start to season, other towns start Jan/Feb.
 36. Betsy Andrews-Parker, Gladiola Ln. Supports synthetic, spoke to issue from a band perspective and parent of athletes. Band show. Was on school board when DHS was built. Also spoke of unified program, lack of handicapped-accessibility. Seeks a space for whole community to come together.
 37. Carter Judkins, First St. Mother of young adults, she opposes synthetic, while saying her son supports synthetic. Said it’s a hard choice. Described herself as a cancer survivor, said turf scares her.
 38. Connor Snow, Dean Dr. Youth athlete. Concerned a grass field would not last. Said 85



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degree days are few. Said every soccer athlete supports turf.

39. Walter Chapman Middle Rd. Not happy about potential tax impact but thinks it's worth it. Praised young people who had spoken. He goes to lots of games. Sports keeps kids off the street.
40. Christine Baber, Gerry's Ln. Wished for more opportunities for interactive conversation around topic. Said everyone wants safe fields. Has concerns about health risks of synthetic, supports high performance organic grass, said it would be usable in early spring.
41. Rich Longuil, baseball coach, supports turf. Lose a lot of practice time esp in early season. Baseball field in need of upgrade. Eyesore.
42. Peter Wotton, outgoing athletic director, Poor, Rich, Right. We're a field poor town and a field poor school. Every field filled with students. Rich with programs. Jammed for space. Whatever you decide to do, do it right. Don't skimp on it. Fields are exhausted, facility is exhausted. Don't cut corners. Oyster River has two now. When it's time to replace a field, no one who replaces a field goes back to natural grass.
43. Eric Cumba, PE teacher at DHS & football coach. Takes pride in providing opportunities for students. Dunaway can only be used for a few special occasion games. Synthetic would provide more opportunities for more students.
44. Kevin Calhoun, Lucy Ln. Parent, field hockey booster, Dover baseball. Maintenance is an issue. Grass fields can't keep up with demand. Supports synthetic. Kids travel to Oyster River, Epping, Exeter to play on synthetic when they can't use our field. There is a rental & travel expense comes with that.

V. IDENTIFY NEXT MEETING DATES/TIMES

- A. June 18, 6:00 p.m., McConnell 306, workshop, deep dive on natural grass & synthetic

VI. ADJOURNMENT - Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.