

**Nantucket School Committee
Workshop Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2022**

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2 Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice Chair Pauline Proch, Laura Gallagher Byrne, Anthony Fox, Esmeralda
3 Martinez, Nantucket Public Schools Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett, and as Guests: Wannacomet Water Company
4 Director Mark Willett, Nantucket Land Council Executive Director Emily Molden, Board of Health Director Roberto
5 Santamaria, Weston & Sampson Toxicologist Marie Rudiman and Hydrogeologist Steve Larosa, SMRT, Inc.
6 Landscape Architect Richard Webb. This meeting is a live webinar filmed by NCTV and is allowing six guests to
7 participate remotely: PFAS Action Group Representatives/Scientists Kyla Bennet, Graham Peaslee, Heather
8 Whitehead, Courtney Carignan, Jamie Dewitt, Attorney Kristen Mello.
9

10 The meeting was called to order in the Nantucket High School Auditorium when a quorum was present by Chair
11 Timothy Lepore at 5:00pm. Chair Lepore asked for a motion, Pauline Proch made a motion to approve the agenda,
12 seconded by Esmeralda Martinez, and the Committee approved unanimously by roll call vote. The Chair adjourned,
13 moved to a Workshop with the same approvals. He began the Workshop describing the gathering's purpose is to hold
14 a public meeting designed to allow School Committee members to ask informative questions and hear information
15 pertaining to the Campus Wide Master Plan Synthetic Turf Athletic Fields (Phase 9) and PFAS. The decision to have
16 synthetic fields or grass fields will be decided by voters at the Annual Town Meeting. Dr. Lepore explained that the
17 questions being asked in this Workshop were developed by the School Committee and there are also index cards for
18 the public to write their own questions to be hand-delivered to the School Committee and read by the Chair during the
19 meeting. Dr. Lepore made a statement to clarify some recent news press regarding a misunderstanding about his
20 personally paying the cost for the live webinar provided by NCTV as a special request; instead Dr. Lepore stated that
21 the School Committee will be voting at the next regularly scheduled meeting to pay for the NCTV costs associated
22 with this Workshop meeting; subsequently, the Chair publicly withdrew his payment/donation to cover the NCTV
23 costs.
24

25 Some general questions asked during this meeting:

- 26 ▪ Can you tell us about PFAS, and PFAS in synthetic turf?
- 27 ▪ Can you share information regarding soil testing, outcomes, and safe levels?
- 28 ▪ Are we monitoring ground surfaces?
- 29 ▪ Can PFAS impact the water supply? Does it leach into the aquifer?
- 30 ▪ How many other sources impact the aquifer?
- 31 ▪ Are you aware of the Nantucket Airport and PFAS/foam spray?
- 32 ▪ Are you aware of the Nantucket Firefighter turn out gear and the impact of PFAS?
- 33 ▪ Do we need more PFAS, are we adding to what is already present?
- 34 ▪ Is there oxidation in PFAS after about 10 years in the sun?
- 35 ▪ Are athletes that play on synthetic fields impacted by exposure, dermal contact, long term studies?
- 36 ▪ Has PFAS exposure from turf fields been tested on people?
- 37 ▪ Do you have research about injuries, long term studies?
- 38 ▪ Recycling possibilities of the synthetic product and/or cost of removal
- 39 ▪ Difference between harm caused by PFAS versus natural grass fertilizers
- 40 ▪ Is there an alternative material? What about heavy metals?
- 41 ▪ What about the biologic life underneath the turf?
- 42 ▪ Are there peer reviews concerning PFAS and synthetic turf?

43
44 Among the guests, the opinion of PFAS, its cause and effect(s), and the decision to use synthetic turf or natural grass
45 for the NPS fields were polar opposite of one another. The five invited scientists and one attorney, who participated
46 virtually in the meeting from off-island locations, gave multiple reasons for why PFAS is not an option to be considered.
47 They stated while PFAS is present in thousands of consumer products and is present in the natural environment, it is a
48 man-made polymer processed containment that will never break down, thus will leach into the water system/aquifer.
49 They stated there are over 12,000 types of PFAS with only half of those with any research behind the numbers. They
50 further that while currently there are no federal regulations to date, the EPA will regulate at least two PFAS types
51 within the next year. While there are no formal studies and even though it has been written that levels below .0006

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52 parts per trillion and .0029 parts per trillion are considered safe levels, it is their cumulative opinion that no safe level
53 of PFAS exists. Although they did not offer statistics, they continued to share opinions that emerging data could show
54 the effects on the human body with ingestion, inhalation, or dermabrasion exposure of PFAS, which is claimed to
55 reduce the ability to absorb vaccines or could cause liver, kidney, reproductive issues and certain types of cancer.
56 There were some questions, discussion, and comparisons to fields and soils in Vermont, New Hampshire, and
57 Connecticut, all of which are currently under scrutiny because of PFAS, but no studies were offered to support the
58 possible negative effects of determined PFAS. In summation, this group of scientists are strongly advising against
59 installing synthetic fields and state there should be zero intentionally added PFAS, especially because PFAS is
60 considered a “forever chemical”.

61
62 The scientists from Weston & Sampson (in person), offered some alternative opinions: They have physically tested
63 the current football and soccer fields on campus to discover soluble PFAS in the soil with concentrations as “expected”.
64 These concentrations are less than the Federal and State limits found in drinking water, which is 7 parts per trillion.
65 They made the point that Massachusetts has the most conservative standards for drinking water; direct contact with
66 and leaching from what is currently there (grass) would have more PFAS than the proposed synthetic turf. The turf
67 would not impact the aquifer because 1) the concentrations of identifiable PFAS are lower than even the rainwater,
68 which is 5-10 parts per trillion; 2) there is a sophisticated drainage system within the buildable plan; and 3) the type of
69 proposed product includes a Brock infill (the underlayer) which is made up of recyclable Georgia yellow pine, not a
70 synthetic product. Sampson & Weston scientists described the stringent and aggressive testing methods done to
71 simulate sun exposure and oxidation and talked about the values of PFAS from these tests being so low that they are
72 “non-detectable.” These scientists hoped to ensure the community that they are strong advocates in protecting health
73 and environment and they would never support a product that would be damaging to either. They state the turf field
74 will offer lower concentrations of PFAS than what is currently in and on the ground now - natural grass, fertilizer,
75 herbicide, and rainwater.

76
77 Ms. Emily Molden, the Executive Director of the Nantucket Land Council read a statement that the Land Council has
78 reviewed the projects and proposals. It is their job to advocate for the water(s) and they worry the site is near the
79 wellhead and harbor, causing concern. She furthered the science is too young for risk assessment and feels it is not
80 appropriate to move forward at this time.

81
82 There were other questions and concerns brought up during the workshop:
83 **Injury rates to athletes for grass versus turf** – Richard Webb gave some information about comparing playing
84 surfaces. Fields are rated 1-5, comparing professional, Division 1 and high school. Injury reports would be inconsistent
85 when comparing the different levels of fields and play surfaces. Dr. Lepore stated he sees little injury on the current
86 grass field. Laura Gallagher Byrne asked about seeing some studies for injury rates; Richard Webb said he could
87 submit a number of reports from medical journals and synthetic turf writeups, but there are fewer concussions with the
88 type of shock pads proposed.

89
90 **Information concerning the recyclable factory plant in Pennsylvania** – Dr. Lepore was not convinced such an
91 industrial factory is available in the United States for if/when this turf needs to be recycled (15 + years from now). He
92 stated while it may be available in Europe, it is not currently available in the U.S. Richard Webb assured him the
93 company is building the center and is expected to be open and functional by the first quarter of 2023.

94
95 **Biologic life underneath the ground** – Dr. Lepore was concerned about living things underneath the turf and the
96 impact of earthworms. Richard Webb said he was not sure how to answer that, but it would be no different than life
97 under roads (concrete, asphalt, etc... and top surfacing all around the island. He furthered the turf would actually work
98 better with filtration and would only disturb the top layer surface soil.

99
100 **Nantucket’s airport PFAS issue and the Nantucket Firefighter turnout gear** – It was agreed by all guests that this
101 issue is of enormous concern and the NFD has led the nation in PFAS education in advocating for PFA-free gear and
102 limiting what has been tremendous exposure through their fire retardant foam and disposal of such. However, it was

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104 noted: 1) there is a magnitude of difference between exposure to firefighters through sweat, water, heat, 100 to 1000
105 times higher than would ever be to an athlete on a field and the exposure to athletes; 2) the PFAS in foam or firefighter
106 gear is not at all the same product that would be used in the proposed synthetic turf.

107
108 **Alternative materials** – Pauline Proch asked about the possibility of using an alternative material. The response was
109 for now remains, the turf product proposed the economics drive how they make synthetic turf, and it does not
110 necessarily offer a different product as manufactured.

111
112 Debate furthered with those adamant about PFAS being a detriment and those stating that the PFAS used in
113 manufacturing the turf is safe. Mrs. Proch announced for the record, it was important the School District staff and
114 community understand the Campus Wide Master Plan has been in place for over ten years as a complexly staged plan,
115 devised and revised to arc with the growth of the district in the best possible way. She furthered each stage is designed
116 to work as a layer upon which one plan evolves to assist in the next stage. She also wanted to assure everyone teacher
117 housing (part of the plan) has nothing to do with the turf installation. This will continue to be discussion to support the
118 entire district and community.

119
120 Chair Lepore thanked everyone for participating and with no further questions or comments asked for a motion to close
121 the meeting. Pauline Proch made a motion, with Esmeralda Martinez seconding, at 6:47 the School Committee
122 adjourned by roll call vote.

123
124 Respectfully submitted,
125 Logan O'Connor, School Committee Clerk