



Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department
246 Dudley Road, Newton, MA 02459
Office: (617) 796-1500
parks@newtonma.gov
Nicole Banks, Commissioner

December 12, 2022

Re: Request to Docket Funding Request for NSHS Synthetic Turf Field Replacement and Track Resurfacing Project

Dear Mayor Fuller,

I write to respectfully request that you submit a docket item to our Honorable City Council for the sum of \$3,240,000. These funds will cover the cost of turf carpet and infill materials, installation, and construction oversight to replace the (2) synthetic turf fields at Newton South High School and to resurface the perimeter track at the school's Winkler Stadium. The age and condition of these amenities requires replacement promptly as they have exceeded their expected life (currently 13 years old), are requiring more frequent maintenance and repair, and are delivering a diminished quality for our athletes. With timely funding City Council approval, we will be able to order products so that we may remove existing turf and infill and install new products during the summer to minimize scheduling impacts to our school athletics programs and youth sport leagues. Construction operations will also not interfere with school traffic and activities.

Earlier this year the City Council approved funds for engineering services so that we could plan for this replacement and resurfacing work. We have met with product manufacturers to evaluate synthetic turf replacement options, visited neighboring communities to evaluate products in person, held community engagement meetings to explain the project process and answer questions, performed site evaluation work, and begun the preparation of bid documents.

As part of our community outreach effort, the project team presented before the Council's November 9th Programs and Services Committee meeting. During this meeting we discussed the need to retain synthetic turf playing fields at these locations in order to meet the ever-growing demands of our school and youth sport athletic programs. We also presented the project to the Conservation Commission. The team has also submitted a Notice of Intent to that Commission and received an Order of Conditions for the project.

We are aware of the importance of selecting products that minimize negative impacts to our environment. We have also explained how these fields do the work that would require multiple grass fields, which would require multiple acres of new land, potential clearing of trees, and the attendant grass maintenance work required including significant fertilizer product applications, irrigation, mowing, aeration, seeding, and field maintenance and weather closures. To be clear, we value and cherish our grass fields, we believe that meeting the needs of our youth and adult athletes requires a mix of synthetic turf and natural grass playing fields, particularly where our playing fields double as open park space.

About the products:

The products were evaluated on longevity, maintenance, player safety, environmental impacts, and playability.

We have communicated with product manufacturers the importance of materials that are longer-lasting and cleaner than the currently installed at high schools. We have also stressed the need for proper disposal and adequate product testing to ensure materials meet current PFAS testing standards under EPA guidelines and other standard PFAS testing methods.

For the turf carpet, we have selected Shaw Sports Turf. The carpet material is a combination of slit film and monofilament fibers. This is the most appropriate turf carpet for multipurpose fields. The product is manufactured in Georgia. The company can recycle existing turf carpets at end of life to produce shock pads that can be installed under a turf field when the infill material requires additional shock absorption properties to meet proper Gmax and HIC ratings for player safety. These ratings are critical in reducing player injuries. This turf carpet is available to see in person at Brookline's Ridley School field. The turf carpet can also be seen at DeFazio and Memorial fields in Needham. The product has an 8-year warranty.

For our infill material we have selected TPE (Thermoplastic Elastomer) pellets mixed with sand. This is a manufactured product that is not sourced from used tires, sneakers, or other products. It retains less heat than the existing crumb rubber infill material currently at our high schools. TPE is also more stable and less prone to migrate in a flooding event. This property also makes TPE ideal from a reduced maintenance perspective, as it requires less replenishing than many other alternative infill materials in the market. The material is reusable and can be transferred to a new field when a carpet is replaced in the future. The material properties of TPE negate the need for an additional shock pad and does not require irrigating. The infill material is viewed favorably by our athletic directors and representatives from our youth soccer league as it does not freeze like other alternative infills, thus resulting in near year-round playability. It is in use at Wellesley's Sprague and Hunnewell fields. They report being satisfied with the infill material.

Respectfully,

Nicole Banks
Commissioner of Parks, Recreation & Culture