Track and Turf Field Project
Frequently Asked Questions (2012)

Why do we have to do this now?
We've been doing everything we can to extend the life of the track and field, but we've now reached the point where there are no easy or cheap solutions. The track is about twice as old as its useful life, and although it has been propped up a few times over the years, this can no longer be done and it must be replaced. The field has deteriorated and is becoming a safety issue. Maintaining the grass field is difficult because a nearby well restricts the materials that can be used on the field. We've also added new varsity sports, putting an even bigger burden on all five of our high school fields.

Why artificial turf instead of grass?
For us, artificial turf offers many advantages over grass. First, the annual maintenance cost is $3,000 versus $20,000 a year for grass. Second, the synthetic turf is more durable than grass, which means more games and practices can be played on the stadium field. The high school teams will be able to play more than 100 games per school year on the stadium field versus only 27 on grass. And PE classes will be able to use it as well. This will take a lot of the pressure off of the other fields at the high school, which will allow the district to keep them in better condition.

Third, we'll be able to expand use of the field not only within the school but to the community as well – accommodating youth sports such as Pop Warner football, lacrosse and soccer, special events, athletic camps, regional and state tournaments and championships and public use as well. We could use the field 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if we desired without worrying about it being too muddy or unsafe for use. The synthetic field will give us the use equivalent of three grass fields, but at much less than three times the cost. Fourth, we'll be able to take better advantage of the stadium infrastructure and lighting that is already in place. The other fields do not have lights.

But isn't grass a lot less expensive than turf?
Yes, the cost to put in a new grass field is about $400,000 compared to the artificial turf, which is about $800,000. However, the artificial turf is guaranteed for 8 years and expected to last for 15-20 years. We'll need to re-sod the grass field every four years or so (at an estimated cost of $40,000-50,000 each time), and that's with only football games and a few soccer matches played on it.

Even though grass has the lower price tag, turf is the better value because it will accommodate so many more teams, games and community uses. A natural grass field would not alleviate the pressure on our other fields, which would continue to deteriorate from overuse. The turf field also can be rented out to other groups and potentially bring in revenue to offset the cost. In fact, youth lacrosse and youth football are ready to spend $10,000 a year each to rent the field.

How will we pay for all of this?
The total cost of the rebuilt track and the artificial turf field is $1.28 million. The School Committee has voted to bond this over 10 years with special financing that is estimated to cost approximately $159,000 per year. This amount will be managed through the District Operating Budget and will not be an additional expense to the towns.

The District has begun a capital campaign to raise the funds to offset these costs each year. We have already sent a letter to alumni and community members seeking donations, and have started a plan for ongoing fund raisers. In addition, there is an expected $17,000 annual maintenance savings over grass so this amount would no longer be needed in the annual budget. Several local sports groups have committed to assist in raising funds, and will be paying rent annually for the use of the field.

Revenues from renting the field out to community groups as well as other groups will also assist in offsetting the cost. So far, we have identified about $25,000 in rental revenues, and we believe that is a conservative number. The School Committee has also discussed a possible increase of $50 in athletic fees, which would bring in $36,000 a year.

Overall, we've identified savings and potential revenue amounting to more than $75,000 a year, or nearly half the annual cost of building the new track and synthetic field. The remainder of the cost would be about $82,000 a year. Based on the 2008-09 assessment percentages for the high school this amounts to $25,000 a year for Bolton and $29,000 a year each for Stow and Lancaster. Our goal is to offset as much of that cost as possible through annual fundraising.

Is the turf safe for the kids? I've heard rumors that there are more injuries on turf than grass.
Some studies show that there is a lower incidence of head and ligament injuries on synthetic turf than on grass, but others show that's there's not much difference between the two surfaces. The new generation of turf is a lot safer than the old AstroTurf that many people are familiar with. Synthetic fields stand up well to natural grass when it comes to safety.

There was a recent article in the Boston Globe about lead in synthetic turf. Is that a problem?
The New Jersey Health Department found lead in both of the nylon fields it tested, but in none of the 10 polyethylene surfaces it examined. The synthetic turf we would use at Nashoba is made of polyethylene, so we don't anticipate lead being a problem with our field.

The rubber granules in the synthetic turf are made from old tires. Isn't that a health risk?
We are reviewing our plans with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. In a letter to the Town of Wayland on its synthetic turf field, the MassDEP said: "The use of tire crumb as infill in synthetic turf fields is a well-established practice where the tire crumb substitutes for virgin rubber materials or rubber and soil mixtures.

Synthetic turf fields have been constructed at numerous locations within Massachusetts. This use of tire crumb is in a restricted setting where the material will be disposed at the end of life of the field. MassDEP believe this use of tire crumb in synthetic athletic fields to be an acceptable recycling/reuse of tire rubber that does not warrant further review by Mass DEP."

How many students use the field today?
Today, approximately 60% of our high school student population participates in athletics as part of their high school experience. With a turf field, more of them will be able to play games on the stadium field and benefit from a better playing surface. Physical Education classes will also get much more use of the field – about 700 hours a year compared to very limited use today.

Will it only be used by the high school teams?
No, this will be both a school and community resource, available to other groups and the public as well as the high school sports. Time for field use will be scheduled by the Athletic Director and will be coordinated so that we can get the most use out of it for our community needs.

How many teams could use the field?
With grass, we estimate that 7 teams could make use of the field with some limited use by the Physical Education classes at the high school. It is estimated that we could handle 27 games per year but no practices in order to keep the field in good condition.

With artificial turf, we estimate that 17 teams could make use of the field with extensive use by the Physical Education classes at the high school. Turf could also support about 100 games per year as well as practices and extensive community use for other sports or events.

How can I help?
Donations of any size are needed and appreciated.