

**From:** [Katie Wallace](#)  
**To:** [City Council](#); [City Clerk Contact](#)  
**Subject:** Grass Please  
**Date:** Thursday, February 13, 2020 3:17:38 PM

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Dear City Counselors,

I wish I could be with you at your meeting on Thursday night where you will determine whether current and future generations of Somerville's children will play on artificial turf or nature's green grass at Conway Park. I had already made a commitment to attend Senator Ed Markey's Town hall meeting taking place at the high school auditorium, just next-door to your meeting at City Hall at the same time.

Ironically while some of you will be voting for artificial turf, an auditorium full of people will be discussing the Green New Deal for the future and survival of our city, our country and the world.

Most of you talk all the time about the need for more open green space in our city. Green paint on cement and artificial green turf made of plastic and rubber is not green space. We already have two new artificial turf fields at the Healey and High School that will be opening next year. Somerville City Council has banned plastic bags and most recently plastic straws. I do not understand how or why a majority of you would be voting in favor of more plastic fields, especially at Conway Park.

Artificial turf is not good for the environment and it is far from maintenance free. Why create an urban heat island with this new field? Instead please have the courage and fortitude to vote for natural grass and invest in the resources for the proper maintenance required.

I hope you will consider the impact of artificial turf on our environment and on our children when you vote. And I hope you will vote for soft, cool, gentle, sweet smelling, real green grass.

Be bold, be true.  
Thank you,

Katie Wallace



Democracy Demands Participation! Thanks to everyone who participates. You can change the world.

"For all at last return to the  
sea - to Oceanus, the  
ocean river, like the ever-  
flowing  
stream of time,  
the beginning and the end."  
Rachel Carson

**From:** [Gary S. Trujillo](#)  
**To:** [City Council](#)  
**Cc:** [City Clerk Contact](#)  
**Subject:** Conway field surfacing decision  
**Date:** Thursday, February 13, 2020 4:16:40 PM

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Dear City Councilors,

I have recently become aware that the matter of funds outlay for the Conway field is on the agenda for your meeting tonight. Though I have not been as engaged in this matter as some other citizens, I have attended a few meetings, such as the one held at the police station on 16 December at which representatives of the City and contractors for the project made presentations concerning what type of surfacing is most appropriate for that area. My impression of those presentations is that they were fairly one-sided in that, though there was some effort made to define the problem, which made use of photos and charts, the primary considerations discussed had to do with the amount of usage that would be possible given the two primary alternatives, namely natural and artificial surfacing materials. Though there was some discussion regarding the difficulty of implementing each of those options, the main consideration seemed to be playing time and the relative costs, measured solely in actual financial outlay, of the two alternatives. Other sorts of costs, such as health concerns for those using the field (dangerous mainly due to heat, since we were assured that the materials to be used would be non-toxic (*not crumb rubber!*, we were told)) were not talked about in what I would have felt to be a thorough and responsible way, despite the fact that several members of the public attempted to talk about those matters. My impression of the matter is that a decision had already been made, and this "hearing" was only for the purpose of describing what would be done, not soliciting statements of opinion, especially those that dissented from the views being expressed by the presenters and members of the public whose only concern seemed to be how much playing time would be available for their children under each of the two possible scenarios.

The high point of the evening for me came at the point when a pre-teen girl stood up and talked briefly about a friend who had collapsed on an astro-turf field in the city one hot summer day last year. Though she was given a polite hearing, her comments and the obviously concerned sentiments that went along with them were not in my view well addressed. Another remarkable comment came from a parent who stated in what I felt to be a rather cavalier way that kids would go on playing on such fields even under conditions that would be hazardous to their health, which we all know will become more frequent in future as the number of extremely hot days increases in future. Actually, I agree with that comment, which for me is all the more reason to not try to rely on simply giving warnings to the users and dealing with the health conditions that arise as necessary, rather than doing our best to prevent such conditions from arising.

I am quite aware that, as stated at that event, the immediate financial cost for using a natural turf surface would be about double that of the artificial alternative that is has been proposed and is being promoted by the City in a way that appears to indicate that the choice is obvious, which remains unclear to me and others. What may be less obvious in my view is the long-term costs connected with employing the astro-turf option. Others have already expressed the basis of those costs, which include not only the health costs already mentioned, and contribution to the "heat island" effect, which raises temperatures in an area in a cumulative fashion -- where

is also the matter of the virtual irreversability of the artificial option -- after such a surface has been laid down, the cost of going back to a natural surface at some point in future, as I understand the matter, is entirely prohibitive.

In my view, the city already has enough artificial turf fields (ESCS, Capuano, Winter Hill, Dilboy) or planned (high school, Healey, Foss) and only five grass fields (Trum, Nunziato, Lincoln Park, Hodgkin, Dilboy Auxiliary). I sincerely hope that long-term costs can be taken into account in making this important decision, and that the possibility of operating under a "false economy" thinking can and will be avoided in doing so. As I said, I was quite dismayed that the presentation I attended was so biased, so focussed on immediate financial concerns and so driven by the desires of those members of the public who appear to be so unwilling and/or unable to think about the larger set of considerations that bear upon doing what is best for all of us in the long run.

I trust that in thinking about the matter of budgeting for the project you will keep these longer-term factors in mind.

Respectfully,

Gary Trujillo



**From:** [David Turin](#)  
**To:** [William A. White](#); [Stephanie Hirsch](#); [Wilfred Mbah](#); [Matthew McLaughlin](#); [Ben Ewen-Campen](#); [m.niedergang@comcast.net](#); [Katjana Ballantyne](#); [JT Scott](#); [Mary Jo Rossetti](#); [Jesse Clingan](#); [Lance Davis](#)  
**Cc:** [City Clerk Contact](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Appropriation of \$250,000 to fund Conway Park fields design services  
**Date:** Thursday, February 13, 2020 4:37:16 PM

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Dear City Councilors:

I understand that on 11 February the finance committee declined to approve [209311 : Requesting the appropriation of \\$250,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance \("Free Cash"\) to the Conway Park Construction Special Revenue Account in order to fund Conway Park fields design services.](#) I urge the full council to uphold this decision for the reasons below.

1. The City does not have enough green open space and should be taking measures to the few acres it has rather than converting them to artificial turf. To this end, the City should excavate the contaminated soil down to the EPA-recommended depth of 36 inches. Preserving this existing green space is both a quality of life issue for Somerville residents in a extremely heavily built environment and a stand, even if incremental, against the support of redevelopments that contribute to climate change and the local heat island effect in heavily urbanized ares, like Somerville.

2. Even, if the City is unwilling to take a stand for green open space for this space now, the City should still excavate the contaminated soil down to the EPA-recommended depth of 36 inches. By doing so, the City would be taking a more protective environmental approach and preserving its ability to reconvert the space to grass in the future at a significantly lower cost than going back and excavating the additional required soil at that time. Indeed, it is safe to suggest that if the City doesn't remove this additional soil between 18 and 36 inches now, it will likely never reconvert this park to natural grass.

I would like to point that I am a soccer and ultimate parent that cares about access to fields, but not at the cost of of additional losses of grass and natural open space in Somerville. There are issues at stake than the ability of our student athletes being able to play on these fields irrespective of the weather. Somerville, with cause, touts its progressive ideals and there may be no more significant issue than climate change. It is time for the City to begin to act in step with its environmental rhetoric.

I am happy to discuss my comments with Councilors that are interested.

Sincerely,  
David Turin



**From:** [Tori Antonino](#)  
**To:** [City Clerk Contact](#)  
**Cc:** [Katjana Ballantyne](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Comments on Conway Park and Healey School funding requests  
**Date:** Thursday, February 13, 2020 10:35:17 PM  
**Attachments:** [Comments on funding for Conway Design, Healey School bond, and Tom Irwin Consultants.docx](#)

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Hello City Clerk,

I sent the below communication on Conway Park and Healey School to Peter Forcellese to be included in the public record. I was looking at agenda item **22579** and did not find my commentary. Would you be able to amend the item to include my commentary?

Thanks,

Tori

[https://somerillecityma.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail\\_Legifile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=3065&MediaPosition=&ID=22579&CssClass=](https://somerillecityma.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Legifile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=3065&MediaPosition=&ID=22579&CssClass=)

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Tori Antonino [REDACTED]  
**Date:** January 21, 2020 at 7:51:19 AM EST  
**To:** JT Scott <jtforward2@gmail.com>, Wilfred Mbah <aldermanmbah@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** forcellese@verizon.net  
**Subject: Comments on Conway Park and Healey School funding requests**

Honorable Councilors,

Attached are my concerns regarding three items on tonight's agenda: funding for Conway Park design, Tom Irwin athletic field training services and Healey School bond.

Please read.

Call or email me any questions.

Thank you,

Tori Antonino

To the Finance Committee members and board as a whole,

Below are concerns I have for three agenda items for the January 21, 2020 committee meeting. They are regarding funding for Conway Park design, Tom Irwin athletic field training services and Healey School bond.

### **Agenda Item #[209311](#)**

#### **Requesting the appropriation of \$250,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Conway Park Construction Special Revenue Account in order to fund Conway Park fields design services.**

Recommendation: DO NOT APPROVE

My main question is if we approve the funds for design services does this mean that we are making the decision on the extent of remediation and on installing an Artificial Turf field? If this is the case, then I ask you not approve funding until the design services integrate maximum soil remediation and the potential for a grass field.

We know that artificial turf is hot. It can be 140 degrees on a 90 degree day. We know that the blades contain forever chemicals called PFSAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances,) We know it off-gasses volatile organic compounds (VOCs). We know that incidences of heat stroke increase on these surfaces, that cleats melt and that turf burns are painful and at risk of infection. We know that even though there are claims of recycling, it is rarely done.

We know artificial turf is poisonous, contributes to heat island effect, creates plastic waste and is not safe, yet we continue to add fields. The administration is not being proactive on finding healthy solutions to our lack of fields space. One answer would be to build more fields. Another would be to investigate better field maintenances practices and see why Springfield gets so many more hours out of their fields than we do. Yet another would be to commit to building an indoor large indoor recreational facility.

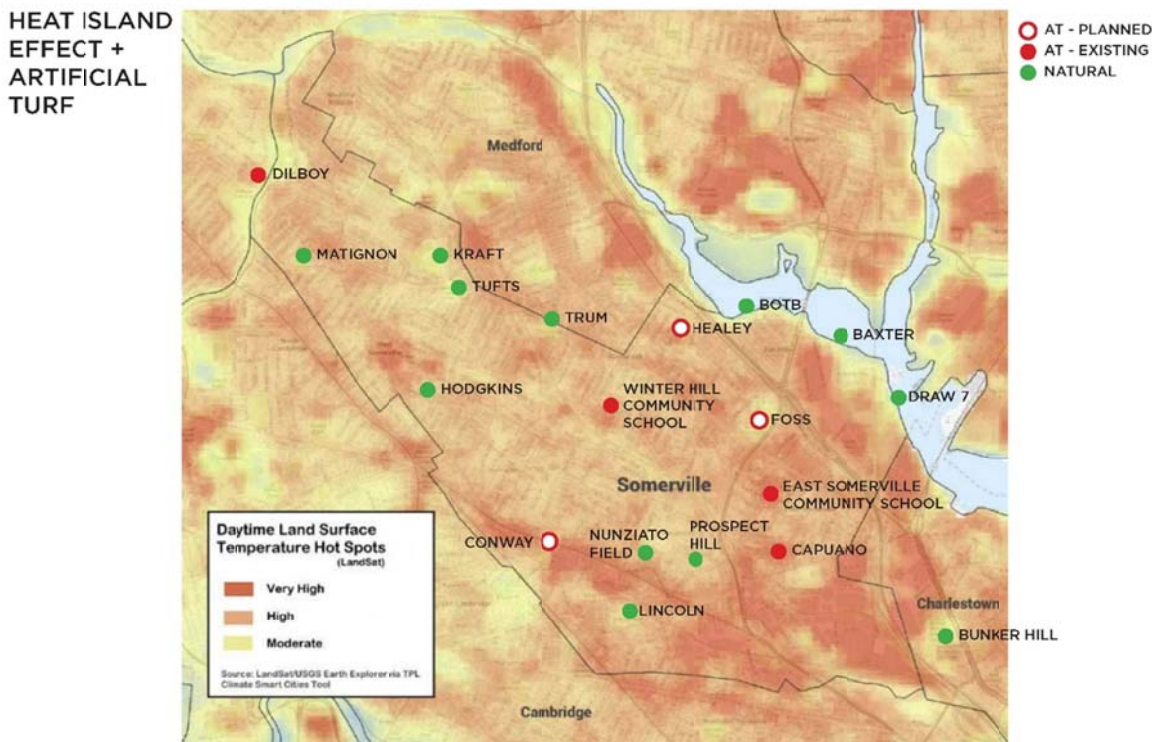
An option that the city doesn't even seem to want to investigate is developing other non-field using sports. Why is there no youth basketball league that is robust as the soccer one? Why are we not trying to increase youth crew participation and make that an option for a fall and spring sport? Why are we trying to add lacrosse when our fields can't handle our soccer use? Can we make parkour not just a pastime, but an active Somerville youth league? What a perfect sport for kids growing up in urban environments.

Our green space is precious and limited. SYSL and pop warner coaches have advised me to concentrate on green roofs and planting trees, instead of keeping our fields green. But we need to fight for our ground level green spaces. We cannot just give them up because the administration prioritizes field sports over green spaces.

I also want you to consider the historic environmental injustices to the Conway park neighborhood and the children who used that field growing up. The Bay State Smelting company did a lot of damage to that neighborhood and those who used the field, physically and psychologically. Periodic checking of

lead and other hazardous materials for Somerville children were commonplace as black smoke consistently overwhelmed the neighborhood, the park and people's homes. Calling firefighters because residents thought their house was on fire was commonplace. My point here, is that another environmental injustice is about to happen to this neighborhood. With 43 days over 90 degrees by 2040, this neighborhood will be significantly hotter than if the field remained grass. These residents may not be calling the fire department for fear their house is on fire, but heat related deaths in the upcoming years will be a real thing in urban areas.

Here's a heat map. You can see where the green spaces are by the cooler sections of the map. The Conway area is already very hot. It does not need to be hotter. Also note the relative coolness of Foss park, but that is not for long. This heat map will change with each new installation of artificial turf.



In December at the public safety building, the city closed ranks and gave a biased presentation of why the city has made the decision to install artificial turf. It was insulting. The Office of Sustainability dismissed the heat impacts of the field saying that it did not qualify as a heat sink (something that retains heat at night), a conclusion about which I have doubts. The city cited reasons of carbon footprint when making the decision to only excavate to 18" to install the AT; but they did not estimate the carbon footprint of artificial turf field products, their installation and removal. In their reasoning for 'needing' this AT field, the city did not include the new one coming online at Foss Park. At that meeting a young athlete brought there by her pro-artificial turf father surprisingly gave testimony to the unsafe conditions of AT, that two of her fellow athletes suffered heat exhaustion on the same day. There was surprise amongst the soccer coaches that this incident was not reported.



The young athlete speaks at 1:25:40, after her father speaks on supporting AT fields.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoBP5-Oo19U&feature=youtu.be>

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue.

Sources

<https://www.ewg.org/childrenshealth/22912/new-studies-show-pfas-artificial-grass-blades-and-backing>

<https://www.theintell.com/news/20191228/running-out-of-room-how-old-turf-fields-raise-potential-environmental-health-concerns>

[https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Parker-Solomon-decades%20of%20deceit-baystate%20smelting-1995.pdf?token=AWxQpHv65znYwBujJB2d95bESR0tJvofWJgqiLjADPcPA9j4Jb459y25B6PGBv0qkJUIN4CuWveXhQrr7or\\_yuEsZxJ1EJGnecBSnBOjfhkTeg-zvW5jVSbtXR4NBzUI9fb8W5WVvKLSd2P263aLGeiS5](https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Parker-Solomon-decades%20of%20deceit-baystate%20smelting-1995.pdf?token=AWxQpHv65znYwBujJB2d95bESR0tJvofWJgqiLjADPcPA9j4Jb459y25B6PGBv0qkJUIN4CuWveXhQrr7or_yuEsZxJ1EJGnecBSnBOjfhkTeg-zvW5jVSbtXR4NBzUI9fb8W5WVvKLSd2P263aLGeiS5)

### **Agenda Item #209483**

#### **Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$6,000,000 in a bond for the renovation of the Arthur D. Healey Schoolyard.**

Recommendation: Do not approve if there is at not least one full basketball court.

I can't seem to find a basketball court in the new design. If there is at least one full basketball court then I support this design, even though I object to the AT field. If there are no courts, I ask myself 'Who is the AT really for? Somerville Youth Soccer or the children living closest to the schoolyard?' Please have Arn confirm that there is a full-sized basketball court. If not, I would want the Ward 5 Councillor to check in with the residents who live in the Mystic Valley Apartments to make sure that they are ok with no basketball courts before this item is approved.

### **Agenda item [29043](#):**

#### **Tom Requesting approval to extend the contract with Tom Irwin Advisors for another year to complete specialized training of the Parks and Recreation Department field laborers.**

Recommendation: Conditional approval with commitment and follow up to this council by the city to apply for a TURI organic field maintenance grant

In general, I would be supportive of this item, but clearly something is not working with our fields and it could be our consultants. The Toxic Urban Reduction Institute rewarded organic maintenance grants to Springfield. They get 1,000 hours out of their grass fields. We are limiting Lincoln to 500 hours of play. Unless people are actively making effort to get this field to fail, then something we are doing is wrong. The city has confirmed that we use organic maintenance, but organic maintenance varies greatly. Are we using compost tea or sprinkling organically sourced fertilizer on our field? TURI has a grant for using organic grass field maintenance. I would like us to apply to that to see if we can improve whatever we are currently doing.

[https://www.turi.org/Our\\_Work/Community/Organic\\_Grass\\_Care](https://www.turi.org/Our_Work/Community/Organic_Grass_Care)

[https://www.turi.org/TURI\\_Publications/Case\\_Studies/Organic\\_Grass\\_Playing\\_Fields/Natural\\_Grass\\_Playing\\_Field\\_Case\\_Study\\_Springfield\\_MA](https://www.turi.org/TURI_Publications/Case_Studies/Organic_Grass_Playing_Fields/Natural_Grass_Playing_Field_Case_Study_Springfield_MA)



September 9, 2015. 90 degrees. This is the readout from the thermometer of the artificial turf.

Thank you and contact me with any questions,

Tori Antonino (781) 934-6873