TOWN OF
POOLESVILLE
MARYLAND
EST. 1867

Testimony in Support of a Synthetic Turf Field at Poolesville High School

Good afternoon, President Fani-González and fellow councilmembers. My name is Alan Hobbs, and I am here to provide testimony regarding the urgent need for the construction of a new synthetic turf field at Poolesville High School.

Capacity and Access Issues

- Currently, Poolesville has only four fields available on campus to accommodate 14 athletic teams during the fall and spring seasons.
- Due to limited facilities, six teams are forced to practice or compete off-site, which results in:
    - Loss of valuable instructional and practice time as a consequence of travel.
    - Heightened safety concerns and supervision challenges.
    - An athletic trainer cannot provide medical treatment at off campus locations, compromising student safety.

Field Reduction and Community Strain

Due to design updates during the recent modernization at PHS, two fields were removed: one was replaced by a larger parking lot, and the other was lost because of an extensive Forest Conservation Plan.

- Consequently, multiple sports teams have relied on Town parks for practice over the past four years, creating additional maintenance strain and expenses for Town staff and the Town's budget.
- Poolesville partners with Whitman High School for spring preseason facility use

Weather and Safety Concerns

- Several low-lying areas on the current grass field frequently experience pooling, especially along the visitors' sidelines. This results in last-minute cancellations or relocations of athletic events.
- Our teams often play "home" games at other high schools' turf fields, which lessens school spirit and weakens community engagement.

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Irrigation System and Water Problems

- The existing irrigation system is over 40 years old, plagued by frequent leaks and requiring ongoing repairs. It can only be operated manually, as the main valve and several heads leak if the system remains on creating additional saturated spots leading to field damage.
- The antiquated storm water management infrastructure dates back to the 1970's.
- Given its age and inefficiency, further investment of a new system costs approximately $1,400,000 (including new Bermuda grass) is impractical.

Environmental Perspective

- The Ag Reserve covers 93,000 acres, while a turf field represents only 0.00000148% of that total footprint.
- The Town would conserve approximately **one million gallons** of water annually for residents by installing a turf field.
- Poolesville leads Maryland in PFAS remediation, having installed the state's first, two-fully operational PFAS filters.
- Well 2, closest to the athletic field, had the second-highest PFAS concentration in our water system, but its new filter system removes PFAS to undetectable levels.
- Town staff, including our town hydrologist, reviewed materials related to the turf field and met with county officials to ensure no risk to the Town's water supply from PFAS.
- If MCPS proceeds with the turf field, the plan must comply with the Town's Wellhead Protection Ordinance and undergo review and approval from the Planning Commission.
- A turf field would prevent the costly and harmful application of paint, pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals, resulting in savings of approximately $100,000 per year.

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Equity and Modernization

- Poolesville is **the only** newly constructed MCPS high school that did not receive an athletic campus upgrade through the modernization project.
- All other new or renovated schools are equipped with turf fields, creating a clear equity gap in access to safe and modern sports facilities.

To conclude, I am seeking your support and financial backing to help tackle these persistent issues that impact our students, staff, and community. Thank you.

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