

# Artificial Turf Playing Field

South Hadley High School

# Current Use of Field

- ▶ Football (youth/high school)
- ▶ Field Hockey (high school)
- ▶ Boys & Girls Lacrosse (HS)
- ▶ Boys & Girls Soccer (HS)
- ▶ Physical Education Classes
- ▶ Band Practice



Picture from masslive.com



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# Why South Hadley Needs A Turf Field

- ▶ Best option for South Hadley with variety of sports that are offered - We don't have enough fields and the ones we have are overused.
- ▶ Current conditions are unsafe and embarrassing to the community
- ▶ Field size is not compatible to all sports - there is no field wide enough for soccer
- ▶ Wear on current fields unsafe for other sports - lacrosse goals are in the same area as soccer penalty kick spots for example.
- ▶ Makes South Hadley an attractive place to live and/or for school choice

# Current Field

- ▶ South Hadley High School - only field with lights (high school/youth football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse). Pictures from October 2014.



# Current Field

- ▶ South Hadley High School - only field with lights (high school/youth football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse). Pictures from May 2015 - Courtesy Teresa AB Gauthier.



# Michael E. Smith Middle School

- ▶ Current fields at the Middle School (Soccer and Boys Lacrosse Player here)
- ▶ Courtesy Teresa AB Gauthier.



# Town Farm Fields

- ▶ Fields at the Town Farm (Soccer and Girls Lacrosse played here)
- ▶ Courtesy Teresa AB Gauthier.



# Who Has Turf???

- ▶ Local High Schools
  - ▶ Chicopee High, Chicopee Comp, East Longmeadow, Holyoke, Mahar Regional, Springfield Public Schools, and West Springfield. Construction begins this summer in Agawam.
- ▶ Local Colleges/Universities
  - ▶ AIC, Amherst, Elms, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Springfield, UMass, Westfield State, WNEU
- ▶ Private facilities
- ▶ About half of the NFL stadiums

# Quote From Mount Holyoke Athletic Director - Facilities

- ▶ The artificial turf field that we have is great! The fact that we do not have to mow it, line it, or fertilize it is great. One of the biggest factors is that it does not have the wear and tear a natural grass field has. The goal mouths are never worn out and there are no wear patterns where teams run/play. It is dragged about once a week (by a tractor pulling an upside down piece of turf) and before games.
- ▶ We do plow our turf field because the NCAA lacrosse season begins in January but you do not have to plow it.

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Bardee Sadlier  
Associate Athletics Director- Facilities  
Mount Holyoke College

# Artificial Turf Field



# Benefits of Artificial Turf

- ▶ Available usage time increases from the current use of 150 hours a year to potentially over 2,000 hours a year.
- ▶ You are able to use it during all weather conditions
  - ▶ Earlier start for spring sports
  - ▶ Extended season in the fall
  - ▶ Can be used during the summer months without damage
  - ▶ Can be used during rain, snow, etc...
- ▶ Less burden on other town fields/sport specific fields
- ▶ Additional programming

# Additional benefits of Turf

- ▶ Centralized facility for sports for high school programs
- ▶ Civic/Community pride in our facilities
- ▶ Very low maintenance required. It needs to be groomed about 3 times per season and we already have most of the equipment that is required for this. The rest is supplied when you purchase the turf.
- ▶ Quality of surface: it is even, flat, consistent and soft.
- ▶ Limited “shut down” period during replacement versus what happens when you install natural grass.

# Some Financial Considerations

- ▶ Total cost expected to be a little under \$900,000 for the turf, drainage and protective fencing around the field.
- ▶ DPW/Parks Department would save \$12,000-\$15,000 annually which could be used to improve other fields and parks in town. Gale Associates says this number is higher with equipment depreciation and total labor.
- ▶ The big savings is Parks Dept time; they can spend more hours working on our other town facilities.
- ▶ If we funnel more play to the turf field, it will lessen the burden on our natural grass fields and allow some fields to be shut down for a growing season or two.
- ▶ While the warranties on these fields typically last between eight years; both Umass Lowell and Holyoke are both on year 14 with their original surfaces. With regular grooming, 14-15 years can be expected out of this surface.

# Grass versus Turf

- ▶ The original request from the School Dept was for \$225,000 to seed, improve drainage and grade the field. This would involve a two year shutdown (same thing we did in 2001 and 2002) and would leave us in the same place with wear and tear as well as limited hours of use.
- ▶ When you shut down a grass field, our teams have to play away games which results in more expenses and loss of revenue (concessions and gate).
- ▶ Gayle Associates estimates that for \$350,000 we can also sod the field, irrigate it, etc... This will involve some shut down periods initially, as well as when new sod will get installed in future years. We wouldn't gain any hours of play.
- ▶ Mt. Holyoke College is currently renovating their grass soccer field for a cost well over \$500,000 per Athletic Director for facilities Bardee Sadler.
- ▶ Gayle estimates that over a 14 year period, the cost of a natural grass field and an artificial turf field are very similar when you factor in maintenance, renovations, etc... Over a 30 year period, the costs favor artificial turf.

# Health Concerns

- ▶ There is no data or research that ties the crushed rubber pellets to cancer despite a few recent media reports.
- ▶ There are currently two facilities in South Hadley that already use this product; the turf field at Mt. Holyoke and the playground at the Beachgrounds Park.
- ▶ The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services has issued numerous letters to various cities and towns on this subject. Their summary states:
  - ▶ *While available information does not indicate exposure opportunities of health concern, MDPH/BEH continues to recommend common sense ways to minimize and potential exposure to chemicals that may be contained in synthetic turf field made of crumb rubber. MDPH/BEH suggests washing hands after playing on the field and before eating,...and taking off shoes before entering the house to avoid tracking in any crumb rubber particles."*

# Health Concerns

- ▶ From the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health:
- ▶ *Federal and state authorities have taken seriously the concerns that artificial turf fields may present a health risk due to contaminants in recycled rubber. The best way to investigate these concerns is via an exposure investigation. Studies conducted in CT and elsewhere have shown a very low exposure potential, less than from typical outdoor sources of air pollution.*
- ▶ The Penn State College of Agricultural Services has numerous studies on the subject as well.

# Alternative Infill Products

- ▶ There are some options for materials other than the recycled rubber pellets.
- ▶ Those items are much more expensive. We have attempted to do this project within a reasonable budget and some of these would be excessive.
- ▶ There have been limited studies on some of these materials; how long they last, adverse effects when they break down, etc...
- ▶ Some of the natural materials promote mold and weed growth, can freeze in cooler climates, must be kept moist, etc...