

**Mount Greylock Regional School District School Committee  
Phase II Capital Gift Subcommittee**

Location: MGRS D145  
1781 Cold Spring Rd, Williamstown, MA

Monday, December 9, 2019  
5:00 pm

**Open Meeting Agenda**

- I. Call meeting to order
- II. Approval of minutes
  - A. October 1, 2019
- III. Review design and estimate for engineered grass field option
- IV. Next steps
- V. Motion to adjourn

Phase II: October 1, 2019

Present: Steve, Al, John, Dan, Lindsey

Also present: Andrea, Kim, Tim

Absent: Julius, Talia, Art

Called to order 5:05pm

Art in London, will try to call in.

Two sets of minutes. Steve moves to approve minutes from Sept 23 and Sept 26, Lindsey seconds, passes unanimously.

Note: The minutes on September 26, 2019 are from the joint meeting of our sub-committee and the School Committee, and reflect all that was said.

John: main purpose is to give Art direction for next steps. Look at what is needed for grass fields, for value engineered.

Question is end of the day is playability and accessibility, need to discuss how to compare grass and artificial turf.

Dan: concern, and some committee members will remember, is that there are different levels of grass available. Could engineer grass to various levels of quality, if the community is just looking at grass can take a budget and figure out what features you want and can afford. I think that my hearing of what the community said is that there is demand for a high quality field, and most of the debate is what is the field going to be. Engage our designer to create a field that is as comparable from a performance standpoint on areas of priority that sub-comm consider important. I would defer to Art with respect to that. While one member of the school committee looked at convention versus organic grass, this is the first time I heard anyone in the community make a pitch for a conventional grass option. Most people expressing option have asked for an organically managed grass field, saying that is what they want to have and to compare to artificial turf. Costs more for the architect to design more and more options, my understanding is community is looking for an organic field.

Steve: create a list of what we care about: installation cost, annual cost, pesticide cost, playable hours, accessibility, disposal cost of artificial turf, years till need to replace.

John: qualifiable and quantitative differences. Many of these in grass and synthetic.

Dan: I don't think anyone in this room believes that you can compare the two options just by price tag. It is the people who are not in this room who get their information in bits and chunks that are most likely to jump to false conclusions is when what they see first and foremost is a headline number comparison without the benefit of the effort both sides on the debate have put into this.

John: That is my concern. It's not just artificial turf, also softball, ADA access....

Al: Friend on committee of a golf course, asked about different types of grass. Walked away and confused. Took months to learn about artificial turfs, now do we need to learn about all the different types of grass.

John: This is why we have an architect, we save a variety of synthetic turfs, can build without a shock pad, don't want to value engineer out b/c of safety, but options.

John: Trying to get consensus on what we want to give Art.

Lindsey: Tough, as Kentucky blue-grass is not the best quality. Agree with the reason it was suggested is how the high school will use it. Will have more wear and tear, and an organic field will not hold up with the way we use it. I think there are nicer playable surfaces, I believe Art knows his stuff.

Al: They flip the fields in Springfield, we don't have the capacity to do that.

Dan: May be need for testing, to evaluate surface. May need professionals to come here. Question I have for Art is how much / would it be possible to work with individuals like suggested members of the community (specialists in organic fields) who can do these tests and hopefully give Art views on challenges / characteristics our playing surface has.

Lindsey: Hope can include stuff to have a good comparison.

Al: Do we need a new person on staff if have an organic field, or can anyone do that?

Dan: Part of what the school committee asked for is info not just on the design but on the cost of maintaining the various surfaces.

John: In our due diligence, talking to people in the community at golf courses, Clark, countryside, Williams, all expressed thoughts on the challenges of the costs, maintenance. Field about 2 acres. When we end up with the design Art has we will be able to get just as before estimates.

John: Art is coming up with his cost for what this is going to be, goes to Dan Colli. New grading, drainage, materials, layout plan, irrigation, technical specifications. Will get an estimate of his costs (Steve: I believe the School Committee authorized this). Matter of bidding: doing it as an alternate deduct: if done as an alternate in the rebid, the alternates go in sequence by priority, you cannot take one if you want to take two. So where it falls matters.

Dan: Can I ask for guidance?

Andrea: Will have to do some research.

John: was told before order matters.

John: Motion for Art for a design for an organic field that meets the sustainability objectives, maintenance objectives

John: Key to get to Art is organic, comparable to synthetic.

Dan: If this is the extent of what you think Art needs, then that's fine, I want to make sure he has the level of specificity. If he is on the phone could ask.

John: referencing what he sent.

Matt Sheehy: I listened closely to what was said at the meeting. There is one shot at the bidding. What I am hearing from the community they don't have a sense of costs, life cycle. If spending money with an

architect do both: grass and organic. If going out to bid, from what I heard from Jamie was “grass field”. If going to do it, spec it all now, do all three. Do synthetic, natural grass, organic. Have three different types.

David Armet: What did we vote on last night? If getting specs is this for just the new field or all grounds? What is the issue that we’re looking to get a bid on? To Matt’s point, there is going to be pushback, if trying to do apples to apples comparison, will there be issues with students playing on chemically fertilized fields then there is going to be hypocrisy again.

Lindsey: I interpreted as just on the new field. I like Matt’s idea so not doing things again in a month. This will up the cost on Art. School committee did not approve a number.

John: Could be overlap between the grass and organic, ...

Andrea: Looking like up to three different designs. Need to create a matrix and weight what want: performance, durability, ....

John: Think making it comparable what the two or three afford us. If we give him directions to do both or just stick with one?

Steve: Next school committee meeting is Oct 8<sup>th</sup> – can we have him start now and add another if we decide?

Dan: Can we get an estimate by the 8<sup>th</sup> as to his costs?

John: Yes.

Dan: Would be interesting to know what the cost of only organic is an option vs organic and natural grass for bidding. To Matt’s point, until Jamie said it I hadn’t heard anyone saying grass. To me seems Pareto inferior, seems to be worse, losings (Pareto comparison) to both. If an extra \$20,000 to \$30,000 to design then compelling to me not to do. Value in asking Bridgette Spahn and Peter Lowe thoughts on natural grass?

Tim: If using fertilizer on these, then people who don’t like the plastic run-off will not like this.

Dan: They are here, let’s ask.

Bridgette: One of concerns on grass field is a huge installation fee and ripping it out, organic turf management is a different procedure and more cost-effective over time. Marblehead case study, just emailed school committee, they have many more playable hours of scheduled use than suggested by return of investment. My concern with artificial turf is all the surrounding grass fields and no plans to maintain. Suggestion is look to hire organic turf management consultant, shared.

Dan: This is what I meant when asking about Art working with someone. I know he would ordinarily have people he would use to make sure it meets standards, would it be possible to sub in whomever he uses some people if have a specific suggestion.

John: Not comfortable telling him whom to use.

Dan: This is why was hoping he was here. Is it a big deal?

Steve: Agree with Dan, let's ask the people here. Bridgette?

Bridgette: I feel organic is the better option.

Peter: Not speaking as a specialist, agree with Dan that those advocating an alternative to turf is organic. Lapperson's view. Agree with Matt on being thorough.

Al: Concern about the cost. When taking all the money, because we take the money out of the endowment it is no longer earning interest and not growing. If we double every eight years, then eight years from now there is a cost.

Steve: When spending millions, value of spending tens of thousands to protect.

Steve: Agree with Dan that the committee should just do organic and artificial, as those are the ones that the community are supporting and both dominate natural.

John: We can recommend that.

John: Motion: Art to design an engineered grass field that is maintained utilizing organic practices with a performance level as comparable as possible to a synthetic turf. Steve moves, Al seconds.

Al: School committee could add back natural grass.

John: Correct, we know this one is what is expected.

Steve: I believe this is in line with the views of the community. Passes unanimously.

Al: should cut Art some slack, we are not his only client. He has been very responsive, being an OPM.

John: Moving on to value engineered items for project bid. Order only matters in alternates, not in value added.

Dan: Didn't hear any expression in priority between the two when it formalizes the bid process. Want to be clear that we are not prioritizing an order, want to give the school committee maximum flexibility to consider all alternatives. Up to the school committee to work with people in administration to work to set up the bids. Kind of appalled at this point that if the bids came in differently would have to take the brock fill if want the track as that was listed higher.

Kim: No, had them in the right order. Art knew the order.

Dan: OK, didn't realize.

Matt: Any comments on the \$300,000 change?

Kim: The spec was the issue, he's asking that someone assess the scope and spec that it is reading the way, if a particular thing is wrong (misunderstanding with softball), someone has to read that scope and spec and make sure no misunderstanding.

Dan:

Matt: that is consistent with what I just said. I think it would be valuable to understand the bid process. The bid process has a question in section 1 that says you cannot negotiate and cannot value engineer, want to make sure that Art's specs are what we want, the whole 20% things, I can't find that on the AG's

website, want to make sure that what we spec is what we want. Three contractors bid differently, want to make sure we get the right spec. Understanding is just changing the infill would save hundreds of thousands of dollars. Understanding there is no changing, no value engineering after accept low bid.

John: not that specialist, know cannot do that.

Lindsey: legally cannot talk to Clark and ask what they would've changed.

David: Want to go back to what you just voted on, organic maintained grass field and then comparing to turf field, in essence to some of opposition to turf. See some school committee members concerned about costs, members of select boards weighing in (heard from Lanesboro), for select boards it can come down to what people feel about taxes, make sure lay out costs of long term maintenance. While I love the idea of keeping simple, I think at this point (you know where I sit on this), has become political whether like or not, I believe in over-preparing and over-communicating to avoid potential for blowback. I think we still have the option for that, we want to do every bit of due diligence. Want to make sure mindful of these.

John: Thank you.

Chrissie: When budgeting out, bids do not include extra expenses, concern is kids and grass field and cost of transportation. Right now in cars, not safe or effective, buses a better option, is the cost of adding a bus? I want to make sure the cost of having a bus goes with the cost of the organic field.

John: Absolutely.

Paul: is there a rendering as to what it would look like? Is there one of the whole place? Asking as seems to be a lot of questions as to what will happen to existing fields. Can we agree as a community what we are looking for? Substrates aside, if everyone is nodding that this is what we would like to get, how do we get there?

Peter: If talking about attendant costs, why not looking at maintenance of other fields?

John: This plan was handed to this committee, rescrutinized plan, brought the track back in, only so much, three pieces of pie: Phase I (admin/multi-purpose), Phase II (fields, ADA, softball, Title IX), endowment. Synthetic turf allows Allen to get better as don't have to play on bad weather, don't have to use in the spring. By default those are in a better position to approve.

Peter: What if could improve all fields at lower cost?

John: School committee can consider later.

Dan: Hearing that at budget time there could be views set out in looking at expenditures in athletics that might consider things along these lines for things beyond the original scope.

John: Shall we look at list?

Lindsey: Might have been more things, would be good to have Art here. Number 4, fence beyond dugouts, apparently, never should have been something in outfield of softball. Interferes with cross country. Wish more items to look at. What would we do to the softball team for two seasons? If will take three growing seasons.... Might be great.

Al: What is 11?

John: Go in order. Gives them something to work with, not committing us.

1. Tabling.
2. Supporting.
3. Partial support: make sure outfield.
4. Partial support.
5. Dugout equipment: could be capital budget: possible.
6. Backstop and fencing: Lanesboro with donation, but legalities that lose warranty if moved. Rob: tried that with the MtG, sadly didn't save much, was cheaper and more cost effective. Lindsey: wouldn't be against for JV. Keeping.
7. Netting. Suggesting shrinking some. Maybe 7.2, reduce to 200 feet at shooting areas. Would cover soccer and lacrosse. Keeping.
8. Eliminate portable benches: agree.
9. Portable bleacher system: Can reduce to 2, gives them something to work with. Agree with 9.1
10. Athletic field lighting. Maybe have lights an alternate. Big item. Table, ask Art.
11. Change walk from concrete to bituminous. Tim: tough, durability is not even close, concrete costs a lot more, cost of concrete is an all-time high, nice thing about tar is pulled out and put right back down, not like old deal and throw out. Tim would not want to value engineer out. Replacing is only two days work to replace. Cost to replace. Don't take.
12. Eliminate shock pad: don't take.

Andrea: as part of the green community, have grants to offset costs of the lighting. Usually schools utilize when changing heating system, parking lot lights. Couldn't for lot as part of project, worth exploring.

Matt: question about replacement is an important conversation, going back to what Peter is saying, sensitive about tax bills going up, I think what we're missing is the on-going maintenance. Get numbers from Art on cost of conversion and maintenance. These are questions that will come from towns, select boards, .... What is the total plan, what is the total number, what are we giving Tim once have the fields... Outside scope of committee but is money well spent.

John: Think great, this is where talk to Tim, if takes it on then it is his job responsibility, if you can work on that with Art independently now that is great, only so much this committee can do, have the right guy in the room.

Dan: here not as school committee members but as sub-committee members. Whole different set of people at the school committee meetings. We take the comments here and try to figure out where they apply the best, if going to be in the full school committee's area to figure out, if this issue is important and need a strategy, if above and beyond the sub-comm let's go thru and figure out who has time. We have people who know things, we have professionals who have the knowledge, asking stuff all the time. Just trying to keep balance, see where we are going to be in the long run.

Al: this is really the same argument when we built this building. People who were against had these arguments. People against turf had these arguments. Heard when we know what the costs are going to be we can plan, what gets us in trouble is when we don't know what is going to be the cost. If we know

what the cost is, we can plan for it, can think of E&D, take money from one account, .... Heard these arguments before, Taj Mahal, have heard these exact same arguments.

Matt: Just want to make sure, going forward, that this information is out there and can share.

Andrea: Superintendent builds budget, recommends to school committee, finance committee, can project future costs, how we make sustainable, put in amounts to account so in ten years have enough to replenish. Or buy stuff for organic field.

Kim: Instead of tasking another sub-comm, superintendent can make a working group: Myself, Tim and others can make a working group to get future costs, I will own that.

Paul: Here to help you get this done, Matt is saying hear what is out there.

John: Appreciate all of this.

David: trying to understand role of sub-comm and what is the charge. Challenging, not how would run my business or home finances. When I look at the concept of the lighting, the pushback I hear, trying to advocate for the field, are you trying to tell me that there will be two lighted fields, is that overkill? Be mindful of what is going on in the community, concern on street lighting and bulbs. Seems like something that is an easy thing to remove, given that John Allen will have light. Maybe I'm mis-reading, maybe not supposed to consider what is on the grounds.

John: Looked at that, considered other things, realized that to get a new field in the vacant site and the economics, the lights are LED, dark sky, not the lights that are there now. Adds value to turf field.

David: So I can say new lights are environmentally friendly.... Adds value.

John: In FAQ, met with Musco.

Lindsey: In the bid: if considering these as things to get rid of, Andrea can consider, then bidders are NOT picking and choosing. If you remove it, then it is NOT in the bid.

John: I cannot answer, repeating what I was told

Andrea: What is in the bid is what they bid on.

Dan: Discussion between Art and admin to make sure talking about the same thing. Maybe not value engineering as don't have a bid (had three bids, gone).

Kim: To bring down need to decide what to take out, or keep in and hope they come down.

Dan: But bid is gone. What we were directed to do was to make changes to make the cost lower. So not an a la cart menu later on. We would need to alternate it in. Would have to deal with priority.

Lindsey: Would like more from Art on other options to add and things to adjust and not eliminate.

Dan: School committee asked us for \$500,000 of deductions, wanted the bid down to \$2.3 million.

John: Guideline, not on us, hope they come in. Someone already came in at 2.5.

Steve: could come in lower as a rebid.



Al: should we talk about the endowment?

Dan: No, goal is to reduce \$500,000.

John: I didn't take that literary, faith that cost will come down a bit.

Dan: To what David and Matt have said there could be some school committee members with something less than that then we need to explain. Every dollar we get closer in hand we get everyone comfortable.

John: Next steps: will speak to Art, hopefully Dan will come to meetings.

Dan: what will be available on the 8<sup>th</sup>? If it is a short discussion on just what Art needs to move forward, don't think it will get in the way of that school committee meeting. Otherwise might want a special meeting.

Kim: Andrea not available that evening, be mindful of who will be present. If number from Art that school committee is approving then that's fine.

Steve: Move that John, Lindsey and Dan be authorized to talk to Art to finalize things. Dan seconds, passes unanimously.

Al moves, Steve seconds, to adjourn, passes unanimously. End 6:53.