

## **Safety Committee Report November 2009**

**Chair: Laurie Halverson, [lauriehalverson@verizon.net](mailto:lauriehalverson@verizon.net)**

### **Athletic Turf Forum**

Our Safety Committee and the MCCPTA Health Committee hosted an Athletic Turf Forum on October 7 at Carver. We had a great group of panelists:

- Joe Lavorgna, Director, MCPS Department of Facilities Management
- Dr. William (Duke) Beattie, MCPS Director of Systemwide Athletics
- Jay Nalls, Superintendent, Norbeck Country Club
- Kevin Morris, Executive Director, National Turfgrass Evaluation Program in Beltsville
- Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Montgomery County Department of Parks
- Kevin Mercer, Superintendent of Grounds, St. Mary's College
- John McShane, FieldTurf Tarkett
- Robert Patton, Turf Center Lawns.

Joe stated that schools would receive artificial turf during scheduled modernizations. The artificial turf fields cost \$1 million which he said would be "absorbed" as part of the \$100 million makeover at each school. His point was that it is only 1% of the modernization cost so it wouldn't be a problem (or a process) to include.

Replacing the Artificial Turf field after the expected 10 years costs \$500,000 at this time. FieldTurf had not replaced any of its fields yet.

The natural turf folks all discussed our area being a transition zone between warm and cold weather grasses. Bermuda seemed to be the grass to go with but it's not easy.

Duke Beattie said that starting in late August, the fields are used continuously (except for Sundays) making time for natural turf field maintenance difficult.

Per the MCPS/FieldTurf panelists: The maintenance of artificial turf costs \$10,000 per year. They noted that includes the "sweeper" to groom the rubber nuggets. That did not seem to include any type of cleaning...no one addressed that issue clearly. The issue of vomit on the field was discussed-bacteria breaks it up on a natural turf field, yet artificial turf requires staff to clean and disinfect it. The FieldTurf yearly maintenance would include "1 or 2" visits.

Vandalism of fields was discussed. Artificial Turf can apparently be quickly, easily fixed. The FieldTurf rep said artificial turf fields could also be quickly repaired/replaced and then said that he and another rep would be out game days. They went through how you could light fire to the field but only the accelerant would burn. Nobody addressed how spray painting would be handled.

Duke stated that \$10,000 was well below what the average Athletic Director was paying for natural turf maintenance. Some Athletic Directors spend upwards of \$25,000. BUT, apparently each Athletic Director is responsible for contracting out turf maintenance.

The St. Mary's college panelist stated that it costs him only \$5,000 per year to maintain his four natural fields using organic fertilizers and also said his fields are heavily used and in fantastic shape. \*It should be noted that MCPS and MC Parks fields may take more wear and tear from a

variety of different sports venues (a large variety of sports activities coming from the recreation department programs, private groups, nonprofit organizations, and school groups) compared to a managed college sports venue.

Joe stated that the total costs of natural and artificial turf are comparable at the end of a ten year period. Duke mentioned that some school Athletic Directors have much less, some much more to spend based on booster club funds raised by schools. MCPS relies on Booster Clubs to pay for much of the cost of maintenance, whether natural or artificial turf and plans to continue to depend on Booster Clubs for maintenance funding as more high schools are modernized and artificial turf fields are added. Concession stand profits managed by the booster clubs can be used to pay for maintenance of fields.

The recurring mantra was maintenance, maintenance, maintenance. The natural turf experts all agreed that it is important for MCPS to maintain natural turf and warned that that the track record needed to be improved no matter what type of field was installed.

Regarding the field temperature issue, Jay (a pro natural panelist) stated that similar temperatures are found on asphalt surfaces (basketball, tennis, track). The FieldTurf rep said that it might get hot at the surface but gets progressively cooler with each foot above the surface and nobody has died yet from heat exhaustion on artificial turf. Laurie Halverson spoke to the ICB Director before the forum who said that temperature requirements can be added to the contract field users sign when they rent the facilities.

The point was emphasized that they're looking at 25 rectangular fields in the county...not at middle schools...not at elementary schools...only one field at each high school to be installed over decades of modernization.

Duke elaborated how 3 games (1 1/2 hours each) every day after school could be played on the artificial turf versus how the fields are "saved" for Friday night games now.

Duke and Joe informed us how currently players are carted off site to other fields every afternoon, which aren't necessarily any better than the school field, to practice. Their counterpoint to the safety issue of artificial turf is the safety issue of all teenagers driving on the road every afternoon instead of staying on site.

The "greenness" of the turfs was discussed with the FieldTurf rep saying that cut turf doesn't provide any oxygen. The turf experts disputed that. The FieldTurf rep assured us that their product (the grass overlay) does not contain lead and there are scientific studies to back his statement, but when asked if the recycled tire infill contained harmful contaminants, he answered that soil probably contains more harmful contaminants than tire infill.

### **Anti Bullying Policy**

On October 26, 2009, the Board of Education tentatively adopted Policy JHF, Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation to comply with Maryland law and to demonstrate commitment to addressing this issue. The policy includes professional development for administrators and staff; encouraging student involvement in prevention efforts; facilitating communication with families and the community and implementing strategies for supporting their children; ensuring collaboration with community health and mental health resources; and providing a range of interventions developed to prevent bullying, harassment, or intimidation while ensuring the safety of students who are victims.

Individuals who wish to provide comments should respond in writing by January 18, 2010. All responses should be sent to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850 or emailed to the Board of Education at [boe@mcpsmd.org](mailto:boe@mcpsmd.org). All responses will be shared with the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools

Other MCPS Policies out for public comment:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdfcomment/JHFcomment.pdf>

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the MCCPTA Safety Committee Chair, Laurie Halverson, [lauriehalverson@verizon.net](mailto:lauriehalverson@verizon.net)

### **Safe Routes to School**

Jennifer Cope spoke about her advocacy in improving safe access to Kensington Parkwood ES at our October 28 Safety meeting. When the school was rebuilt, the new traffic patterns were causing congestion and parents were concerned about the safety of students. Here are some things the school and PTA did to advocate successfully for improvements:

- Bringing together decision makers: By meeting together with a state delegate, an urban planner, a Safe Routes to School Coordinator, an MCPS staff member, and some actively involved parents, the need was expressed and everyone was on the same page in understanding the reason for improvement.
- Following the steps listed in the Safe Routes to School Website.
- PTA committee met regularly over the summer.
- The PTA set up a table at Back to School Night and recruited “Block Parents.” Block parents sign up and volunteer to put a recognizable sign on their door or window that identifies their house as a safe haven. Kids learned through school morning announcements and posters in the school that they can go to block parents whenever they need to (such as if they fell on a bike and got hurt or if a stalker is following them.)
- The Safe Routes Coordinator created a safe walking route map for the school.
- The Principal included safe driving procedures in a letter in backpacks to stress the importance of changing behaviors.
- The PTA Committee Created “walking buses” which are groups of walkers to and from school and supervised by adults.
- Bike racks were purchased (FYI-a great fifth grade gift for schools)
- Signs were added including a right hand turn only sign to improve traffic flow.
- After the program was implemented, the committee met to assess their success.

For more details, please contact Jennifer Cope at [jencope@hotmail.com](mailto:jencope@hotmail.com).

Our next Safety Committee will be on Monday, December 7 at 7:00 PM. We planning to invite some Educational Facility Officers to be our guest speakers.