



**CITY OF NEWTON
SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS
MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**

**1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449
Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor**

Members: Steven Ferrey, Alan Gordon, Sunwoo Kahng (Chair), Meryl Kessler (Vice Chair), John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Vince McKay, Marian Rambelle, Karen Slote, Miles Smith, Carl Valente (Secretary)

Ex-Officio Member: Jim McGonagle, DPW Commissioner

Advisory: Waneta Trabert, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division Director

July 30, 2023

City Council
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

RE: Safe and Appropriate Disposal of Artificial Turf at Newton South High School

Honorable Members of City Council,

The Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC) met on July 27 and devoted significant discussion to the disposal of artificial turf. As you know, the SMMC's role is to advise the Mayor and City Council on issues related to municipal waste, including materials that can be hazardous to humans and to the environment. Of particular concern is the safe and appropriate disposal of the turf, base material, and fill that is currently being replaced at Newton South High School, is intended to be replaced at Newton North High School, as well as the disposal of any new installations in the future. It came to light recently that insufficient safeguards may be in place to ensure the waste materials are being thoroughly captured at the football field at Newton South. The lack of transparency by the city leaves more questions about how these materials might be handled at Newton North High School, as well as at any future installations.

There are many known toxic components of artificial turf, made up of a number of petrochemical substances. These materials include a composite base material, strands of plastic "grass," and a fill material that is poured onto the surface. The Newton South field contains a fill composed of ground rubber from used tires. The removal process has resulted in significant quantities of crumb rubber being strewn throughout the area: on a playground, near wetlands, and around a storm drain that will inevitably flow into the Charles River. According to photos we received,

the removal process appears to be sloppy and poorly done. In addition, it is likely that heavy rains have already washed large quantities of crumb rubber into the storm drain. The city needs to hold the disposal of potentially hazardous materials to a high standard and ensure that it is safely and completely removed.

As an advisor on issues related to solid waste, the SMMC respectfully asks you to ensure that the contractor properly cleans up the football field site. In addition, better safeguards must be established to avoid hazards such as the spilling of crumb rubber during the removal and on and off-site transport of the soccer field turf.

I am enclosing some photographs demonstrating the issues of concern. Thank you, in advance, for your concern and for your attention to this situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sunwoo Kahng". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sunwoo" and the last name "Kahng" clearly distinguishable.

Sunwoo Kahng
Chair, Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission



Crumbs of old fill material lying near stormwater drain



Fill material spilled onto ground



Old turf and fill material lying on unprotected ground