



Parks & Recreation Committee - Board of Representatives

Jennifer Matheny, Chair

Daniel R. Sandford, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday, June 23, 2025

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: *This meeting was held remotely.*

The Parks & Recreation Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Matheny, Vice-Chair Sandford and Committee Member Reps. de la Cruz, Gilbride, Kuczynski, and Weinberg. Also in attendance were Reps. Camporeale and Summerville, Melanie Hollis, Commissioner Parks & Recreation. Absent or excused was Rep. Saftic.

Chair Matheny called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. Due to technical difficulties, Chair Matheny officially called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. PR31.044	REVIEW; Ordinance for Discussion, Regulating The Use Of Existing Artificial Turf Fields And Banning Future Installation Of Such Fields. 06/04/2025 – Submitted by Reps de la Cruz, Camporeale, Berns, Walston, Figueroa, Campbell, Saftic, Strain, Adams and Curtis	Motion to recommit 4/2/0

Representative de la Cruz provided background on the ordinance review:

- The city initially planned a needs assessment study for its athletic fields. This study was meant to guide decisions on how to use or upgrade the fields.
- Funding for the study was removed despite the recognized need for it.
- Demand for field use has shifted: baseball participation has declined, while interest in soccer, pickleball, and basketball has increased.
- Instead of funding the study, the city allocated \$1.5 million to begin converting fields to artificial turf.
- This decision was made without data from the needs assessment.
- Artificial turf may have higher long-term costs compared to natural grass.
- Multiple medical organizations have issued warnings about artificial turf:
 - Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 - National Institutes of Health (NIH).
 - Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
 - Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

- Reported health risks include:
 - Increased cancer risk (e.g., brain cancer in athletes).
 - Endocrine disruption.
 - Thyroid disease, high cholesterol, immune dysfunction.
 - Impaired neurodevelopment and pregnancy outcomes
- Investor Jeremy Grantham has raised alarms about chemicals in plastics and their long-term effects. These chemicals are linked to:
 - Hormonal disruption.
 - Lifelong weight gain.
 - Fertility declines and reduced sperm count.

Representative Weinberg countered a few points:

- The Phillies players who developed glioblastoma played on a field built in the late 1960s using early artificial turf technology.
- Even if that field contributed to a cancer cluster, it's questionable whether that outdated technology is relevant to today's turf materials.
- The NFL Players Association has advocated for a return to natural grass due to injury risks.
- Most NFL and MLB stadiums have already transitioned back to grass.
- However, professional athletes are significantly larger and faster than high school athletes, making their injury risks less comparable.
- Interviews with Connecticut high school athletic directors (conducted two years prior) revealed:
 - All reported a decrease in student athlete injuries after switching from grass to turf fields.
- Microplastics are acknowledged as a concern, but government studies suggest turf-related microplastic exposure is minimal.
- Multiple peer-reviewed studies and government agency reports conclude that health risks from artificial turf are negligible:
 - Connecticut DEEP: Cancer risks from turf are only slightly above minimal levels, even under worst-case assumptions.
 - California EPA: No significant health risks found for players, coaches, referees, or spectators.
 - Washington Department of Health: Recommends continued play on synthetic fields; current research does not suggest significant public health risks.
 - Federal EPA & CDC: Chemicals are present in crumb rubber, but exposure is likely limited and not a major health concern.
- According to the Baseball Tomorrow Fund (a joint MLB and Players Association initiative):
 - Annual maintenance costs for professional fields range from \$50,000 to \$200,000 per field.

A motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved by a vote of 4-2-0 (Chair Matheny, Reps. de la Cruz, Gilbride, and Kuczynski in favor, Vice-Chair Sanford and Rep. Weinberg not in favor).

Chair Matheny adjourned the meeting at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Matheny, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).