

At the May 2022 Town Meeting, a warrant article was passed directing the town to form a task force to evaluate the use of synthetic turf fields through Brookline and to create guidelines for any future installation. With Select Board Member Mike Sandman as the chairperson, the Athletic Field Surface Task Force worked diligently to develop recommendations for using synthetic turf fields in Brookline, including school fields and play spaces. The Task Force is in the final stages of completing its report, which will be available to the public once finalized.

The Co-Chairs of the Driscoll School Building Committee, in consultation with the Director of Operations for the Public Schools of Brookline and the Principal of the Driscoll School, have reviewed the recommendations in the report. Based on the existing Driscoll School outdoor plan (attached) and in compliance with the guidance of the task force report, we have advised the Driscoll Building Committee that the current plans are consistent with the task force's recommendations. Specifically, the area slated for synthetic turf at the Driscoll School has a high use rate, more than 800 hours, and a history of difficulty maintaining grass. Furthermore, the synthetic turf infill chosen for Driscoll is made of natural materials, in this case, coconut infill. The vendor has already verified that there are no regulated PFAS products in any of the layers. In addition to meeting these recommendations made by the task force, there are also several non-turf outdoor play options specifically designated for younger students.

Finally, we would like to address the issue of heat. There may be times when the field will have to be closed for organized sports due to heat and humidity. Based on the historical experience of synthetic turf versus grass fields in Brookline, closures due to rain and seasonal closures in order to allow grass growth far outnumber the days of closure due to heat and humidity. On average, in Brookline, grass fields are closed down 12-15 times more often for rain than for heat. With this information and based on the task force's recommendations, the Driscoll playground will be a combination of synthetic turf, and non-turf play areas, with some grass as well.

We want to thank The Athletic Field Surface Task Force members for their thoughtful deliberations and careful consideration of the Town of Brookline residents' needs, especially the Driscoll students and families. We appreciate the collaborative nature of the task force, the clarity of the recommendations, and the timely manner in which they were reached. As a result, we look forward to having new green and play space, both synthetic turf and grass, for the Driscoll students and community to access soon.

Miriam Aschkenasy, Select Board, and Val Frias, School Committee
Co-Chairs, Driscoll School Building Advisory Committee