



February 28, 2008

Board Member:

RE: STADIUM SURFACES

At its meeting of September 20, 2007, the Board of Education reviewed a plan to reconvene the Stadium Surface Committee that met in 2002-2003. At that time, the Committee's report was held in abeyance due to significant fiscal challenges facing the District and the need for all attention to be focused on those challenges. With the resolution of the fiscal challenges underway and other facility needs presently being addressed, it was deemed timely for the Board of Education to consider a recommendation regarding the installation of synthetic surfaces at each of our school's stadiums.

Proposed funding for the potential work includes several non-property tax sources realized in the Operations/Maintenance Fund including the sale of District 211 property on Ela Road several years ago, and, settlement proceeds from two asbestos cases where District 211 has recovered costs involved with the removal of asbestos from our schools in the late 80's and early 90's. Therefore, funding for these projects has been earmarked in the Operations/Maintenance Fund and is not related in any way to the Educational Fund referendum proceeds from 2005.

The Stadium Surface Committee was formed for the purpose of researching the costs and benefits of artificial surfaces at each school. To represent a broad perspective on the committee, I requested representation from the community, Board of Education, administration, and teaching staff. Board members were asked to provide names of community members that could serve on the committee. One individual name was submitted along with two others from our Principals. Those persons were named to the Committee. The Stadium Surface Committee included:

Anna Klimkowicz, Board Member	Jack Drollinger, Athletic Director
George Brandt, Board Member	Tim Kirby, Athletic Director
Bill Gill, Community Member	Thomas Newton, Assistant Principal
Gerardo Pagnani, Community Member	Jerry Trevino, Assistant Principal
Michael Stanbary, Community Member	Mike Donatucci, PE Teacher/Coach
David Torres, Associate Superintendent	Jim Macnider, PE Teacher/Coach
Steve East, Director of Facilities/Purchasing	Bob Erickson, Band Director
Otis Price, Director of Athletics/Activities	Willie Filian, Teacher/Coach
Paul Kuczek, Maintenance Supervisor	

Associate Superintendent David Torres chaired the Committee as it completed five Surface Committee meetings, and three sub-committees to further investigate artificial surfaces in the areas of: Stadium Usage, Maintenance, and Safety. Scott Triphahn and Jason Green of WT

Engineering served as resource experts for the Committee. WT Engineering has been involved in several synthetic surface installations in the area and many throughout the region.

The following highlights the Committee's activity over the past several months:

<u>Committee Meetings</u>	<u>Activity/Topic Discussed</u>
October 30, 2007	Overview of synthetic surfaces and project considerations including safety, cost, funding, and field use.
Nov.-Dec. 2007	Sub-committees meetings.
December 5, 2007	Several members of the Committee attended the Illinois Professional Turf Conference at Pheasant Run. The all-day workshop focused on synthetic turf research, need assessments, specification writing, maintenance requirements and panel discussions with current experts in the field.
December 11, 2007	Reviewed sub-committee preliminary reports.
January 8, 2008	Finalized sub-committee reports and discussed the process of developing a product/manufacture selection team and reviewed guidelines for essential considerations such as project scope, performance evaluation, and review of system components including drainage, base materials, and field markings.
February 7, 2008	Reviewed sub-committee follow-up information on usage, safety, drainage, and financial.
February 20, 2008	Coordinated synthetic turf product demonstrations with Field Turf, Astro Turf, and Mondo.
February 28, 2008	Presentation to the Board of Education

At the February 7, 2008 Committee meeting, I presented the following questions for review and understanding.

1. The function of any school facility is to provide opportunities for learning and student development. What are the strengths and/or advantages of natural turf vs. artificial turf? Please list the advantages of each in terms of opportunities for use, needs presently not being met including reasons we should remain with natural turf or that we should change to artificial turf.
2. Student safety is sometimes a concern when the issue of natural vs. artificial turf is considered. What did the Committee learn regarding student injuries, infections, etc in regard to natural turf and artificial turf? Is one better or worse than the other when viewed from a student safety or health perspective?

3. Groundwater drainage is an issue whenever the ground surface is changed to alter the absorption of water. In a recent meeting with the consultant, I learned that our present football fields are rated at 74% runoff (layman's terminology) and the artificial turf is rated at 84% runoff. This increase of 10% will need to be addressed by some type of underground storage capacity unless we compromise the limited site surfaces at several of our schools. What other groundwater issues did the Committee discover? Are groundwater issues present with any of our current football facilities? Are there any indications that our present drainage system is flawed or that it has been unable to handle field runoff?

4. Cost. Just because a school district has funds available does not mean that the money should be spent. If the Committee plans to recommend the installation of artificial turf, what is the Committee's justification for spending up to \$6 million to convert the football fields to artificial turf? What will that buy us that justifies the expenditure?

Members of the Committee and Scott Triphahn of WT Engineering addressed my questions to satisfaction on the issues of usage, safety, drainage, and cost. On this basis, and the Committee's research and findings, artificial stadium surfaces would afford wider use of existing facilities to include, but not limited to, physical education classes, marching band, football, soccer, and lacrosse practices and contests and are recommended for installation consideration at each of our five high schools. While the Committee has come to recognize the significant benefit of installing synthetic fields from an increased usage perspective, extensive work has been done to address safety, drainage, maintenance and funding considerations.

Should the Board of Education support action to advance the installation of stadium surfaces, it is essential that the Committee be directed to continue its work of reviewing product types, performance, specifications, and system components from many of the key manufacturers in the industry. In addition, it would be timely to engage engineering services to begin preliminary site planning work and ask building Principals to begin communicating the concept of stadium surfaces to each of their parent, booster, and music groups.

The following summarizes my recommendations to the Board of Education:

- Continued work by the Committee to develop product selection specifications (Turf types, fiber, backing systems, track surface, infill materials, user interface, maintenance, warranty, drainage, base materials, lines/markings)

- Engage engineering services for site plans, storm water management, and permitting work for two schools so that resolutions to potential problems and specific scope of the projects can be known prior to moving forward:

Cost estimates: (Fremd and Schaumburg High Schools):

Site Plan	\$4,000
Storm water Management	\$5,000
Permitting	\$7,000
Survey	<u>\$11,000</u>
Total Estimate:	\$27,000

- Administration and Committee members to begin discussion of the potential projects with student groups, booster and band groups, faculty and coaches, and other interested parties to gain input and perspective of support for the projects.

SUGGESTED MOTION:

That the Board of Education authorize the superintendent to seek proposals to engage engineering services for site plans, storm water management, and permit work for stadium sites at Fremd High School and Schaumburg High School a cost not to exceed \$27,000.

Roger W. Thornton
Superintendent