West Tisbury Board of Health BAN
The Installation of Artificial Turf Playing Surfaces
In the Town of West Tisbury

Findings and Purpose:

WHEREAS, Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic chemicals widely used since the 1940s in industrial, consumer, and commercial applications. PFAS are often referred to as "forever chemicals" because they persist in the environment and the human body, resist natural degradation, and are highly mobile in water and soil. PFAS are found in products such as non-stick cookware, take-out containers, upholstery, carpets, firefighting foam, and synthetic turf.

WHEREAS, The West Tisbury Board of Health seeks to protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents, and to safeguard the quality of the town's water, wetlands, and wildlife resources in accordance with local, state, and federal environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act.

Specific Risks from Synthetic Turf, PFAS, and micro- and nanoplastics:

- Laboratory reports show that synthetic turf contains PFAS and other hazardous substances such as micro- and nanoplastics, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), phthalates, bisphenol-A (BPA), heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

- PFAS from synthetic turf leach into stormwater, soil, and groundwater, directly threatening the Island's sole-source aquifer, which provides nearly 100% of West Tisbury's drinking water.

-Synthetic turf also releases hundreds of pounds of micro- and nanoplastics into the soil, air, and water annually. These plastic particles also threaten the Island's sole-source aquifer.

- Synthetic turf is classified by the EPA as an impervious surface, which reduces natural water absorption and exacerbates stormwater runoff pollution.

- There are three routes of exposure of both PFAS and micro- and nanoplastics: ingestion, inhalation, and dermal absorption. PFAS exposure is associated with serious health effects, including cancer, developmental harm, reproductive issues, immune system toxicity, thyroid and kidney damage, high cholesterol, and metabolic disorders. Micro- and nanoplastic exposure increases oxidative stress, cell division changes, DNA damage, immune responses, metabolic disruption, intestinal dysbiosis, cancer, respiratory, and neurodegenerative diseases.

- PFAS bioaccumulate in animals, humans, and bio magnify up the food chain, compounding risk through long-term exposure via ingestion, inhalation, and skin contact.

Legislative and Regulatory Context:

- In April 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a rule setting the Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) for PFOA and PFOS at zero, acknowledging no safe level of exposure.

- In Massachusetts, the 2022 PFAS Interagency Task Force recommended banning products with intentionally added PFAS by 2030 and regulating PFAS as a class.

- Pending legislation (HD 3324 & SD 2053) would prohibit PFAS in many consumer products by 2026 and require all products to be PFAS-free by 2030.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final rule on April 8, 2024, regulating several PFAS chemicals individually and in mixtures in drinking water.

- Scientific evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that continued PFAS use and environmental contamination pose a clear and present danger to public health and the Island's environment. In addition, micro- and nanoplastic contamination also threatens human health.

The Unique Vulnerability of Martha's Vineyard:

- West Tisbury and Martha's Vineyard rely entirely on a sole-source aquifer located within glacial outwash deposits.

- Contamination of this aquifer from PFAS, microplastics, and synthetic turf runoff would have severe and costly impacts on public health, property values, wildlife, and natural resources.

- The Island's closed hydrological system leaves little margin for error in preventing contamination.

Policy Objective:

To protect public health, natural resources, and water quality, West Tisbury's Board of Health is acting to prevent further introduction of PFAS and related contaminants from artificial turf and synthetic surfacing into the environment. Ban on Installation and Requirements for Removal:

1. Ban on New Installations
   - The installation of artificial turf and synthetic playing surfaces on any land within the Town of West Tisbury is hereby prohibited until further notice.

2. Existing Installations
   - Residents and businesses with existing synthetic surfacing must remove and replace such materials with non-synthetic alternatives once they show visible signs of wear, degrade, or no longer adequately manage stormwater.

- Wear and degradation include but is not limited to: holes, tears, discoloration, seam separations, surface lifting, buckling, heat damage, material loss, and excessive wear.

- If synthetic surfaces are damaged to the extent that 25% or more of the replacement cost is required, they must be replaced with non-synthetic surfacing.

3. Enforcement and Compliance

- Failure to comply constitutes an unlawful property nuisance and may be abated by the Town.

- Agents of the Board of Health are authorized to enforce this Order under G.L. c. 111, § 30, and 310 CMR 11.05 (1).

Review and Modification

- The Board of Health may rescind or modify this Ban if credible scientific evidence emerges demonstrating that PFAS pose no threat to human health, or if safe, PFAS-free alternatives are developed and approved by the Board.

- Any such changes would require a formal vote of the Board of Health.

SO, ORDERED

Passed by vote of 3 members voting in the affirmative, 0 members voting in the negative, and 0 members abstaining, on this 23rd day of September 2025.