



## Field4Hull Frequently Asked Questions

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## *Who uses the field located at Hull High School?*

The field is currently used for high school physical education and both boys and girls team sports (football, lacrosse, soccer, cheerleading). The field is also used for youth football (HYFA) and youth lacrosse (HYLAX) home games. Hull's largest youth sport, Hull Youth Soccer, has boys and girls teams for pre-school age 3 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade but spends many thousands of dollars per year renting field space in Cohasset because use of the current grass field must be limited. Additionally, the field is used for events such as the Coast Guard Band concert and high school graduation ceremony. Currently, the field is not used in the summer but this is due to the condition and the need to 'rest' the grass surface, not a lack of demand. The number of Hull children using the field annually for gym class, high school and youth sports would be between 500-600 (over 200 youth soccer, 100 youth football, 250+ high school). Over a 15-year period, over 2000 Hull children would benefit from use of the field.

## *Why can't we just maintain our grass field?*

In 2005-2006, the field saw over 750 hours of use. Due to the continually deteriorating conditions, usage has been dramatically reduced over the last decade. After eliminating all practices from the playing field, usage was 565 hours per year. In 2014 the youth soccer program moved its "home" games to a neighboring town, and field usage has remained at 513 hours per year since. The field is not used for any athletic activities during the summer since it needs every possible day to recover. An independent study from an outside consultant in 2016 confirmed that a single grass field cannot support more than 300 hours per year and remain in good condition. A synthetic field would allow 800-900 hours of use during the school year, meeting the needs of all of our teams, students and youth sports (many thousands of children over the life of the field). The history of usage for the High School field is outlined below:

2005 - 2006: 750 +

2006 - 2007: 700 +

2007 - 2014: 565

2014 - 2015: 513 (Year that Hull United Youth Soccer moved games to Cohasset)

2015 - 2018: 513

Years ago, the field primarily supported football. There are now several sports each season played on the field, both male and female teams, some with both varsity and junior varsity. A single grass field simply cannot support the number of hours of usage required. As a result, the current field is extremely compacted, and grass will no longer grow along the center of the field. The area around the goals can best be described as a mud pit. Lacrosse players fight through dust clouds when the ball is on the ground. Falling or being tackled on the field is dangerous, as the surface is hard-packed, and similar to concrete.

## *Why can't our High School teams use the field for hosting playoff games?*

The current field condition does not meet MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) standards. MIAA is the governing body for high school sports and the state tournaments. In 2016, the Hull High Boys Lacrosse team earned the #2 seed in the State Tournament and were forced to play their first ever "home" playoff game at the field of our biggest rival, Cohasset. In 2017, both the boys lacrosse and girls soccer teams made the playoffs and used alternate 'home' fields in other towns. In 2018, the girls soccer team made it to the division championships for the first time in program history and played their earned 'home' games at fields in other towns. Again in 2018, the boys lacrosse team made the playoffs and used the Cohasset High School field to host their games.

### *Is it true that other teams are refusing to play games against Hull High School teams on the current field?*

In the spring of 2018, a JV baseball team traveled from a town on Cape Cod for a regular season game but refused to play when they arrived and assessed the field condition, due to safety concerns. In October of 2018, East Bridgewater's Athletic Director formally sent correspondence to Hull's A.D. from his soccer coaches about the condition of the field and associated safety concerns. He requested alternate locations for games played against Hull. When his request was not accommodated, East Bridgewater travelled to Hull to play the final game of the girls soccer season, but played their Freshman team against Hull's Varsity team, as the timing of the game was the week prior to playoffs. East Bridgewater didn't want to risk injuries to Varsity and JV players by playing on the Hull High Field, and willingly accepted a lower seed going into playoffs to avoid the risk of injury.

### *Are there any alternate locations in Hull for a field? What about the HRA land?*

There aren't any other publicly owned locations in Hull that are large enough for a field. The HRA land is not wide enough at approximately 200 feet wide. A football field requires 160 feet, which would only leave 20 feet on each side of the field for stands and a building. A regulation soccer field is 180 feet wide at a minimum, leaving only 10 feet on each side. The fields at L Street are also not large enough, and they also are fully utilized with Little League, Softball, High School Baseball, Men's & Women's League Softball, Hull Youth Football practices, tennis and a playground serving the Alphabet streets along with summer Park & Recreation camps, Middle School PE and overflow High School and youth sport practices. Other towns (Marshfield, for example) have multiple grass fields in addition to synthetic fields and follow a schedule in which the grass fields are rotated through a complete year of rest every few years to keep the field usable. In Hull, we don't have the space.

### *Is it safe to locate a synthetic turf field in a coastal flood zone?*

Yes. Setting aside the fact that there is no open space in Hull large enough for an athletic field other than at Hull High School, siting the field at that location would be safe for both the field and the local environment. First of all, the vast majority of the field (and the Hull High School building) is located in an Area of Minimal Flood Hazard (Zone X) on the most recent flood map. Only the northwestern and southern edges of the field are in Zone AE (elevation 10 feet). According to institutional memory, the field has not flooded other than the northwest corner of the end zone during the historic Nor'Easter in early January 2018.

There are no less than 18 similarly situated synthetic turf fields on the East Coast between Gloucester, MA and Long Branch, NJ. The School Committee has provided the name, location, elevation, and an aerial photograph of each field in a document on its website. In recent years, three of those fields suffered coastal flooding with no ill affects to the field or the local environment. The Coast Guard Academy field in New London, CT flooded during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The entire field was covered with 6 to 8 inches of water for two days. The field drained through the sub-base as designed, and there was no migration of the crumb rubber infill. Officials reported that the field has not been damaged by exposure to the salt water environment. In addition wind has not caused any infill migration at any time.

The Tabor Academy field in Marion, MA has flooded once with 2 to 3 inches of water. The crumb rubber infill did move around the field, but did not migrate off site. The infill was moved back into place with a groomer. Officials report that there were no issues with breakdown of the turf due to salt water exposure. The Gloucester High School field in Gloucester, MA flooded during the Nor'Easter in January 2018. While some of the crumb rubber infill moved around the field, it did not migrate off site. Their athletic director enthusiastically endorsed our plan to replace our grass field with synthetic turf.

### *How much would the project cost?*

The most recent bids from February 2019, including contingency, start at \$1.85M for construction of a synthetic surface field and walking track at Hull High School. The bid covers site preparation, sub-surface drainage, all field material, track, lighting and athletic equipment. Because of the increased usage that a synthetic field can offer, the cost per use is half of the cost per use for a grass field over both 15 and 30 years. The number of hours that the field can be used is 2-3 times that of a grass field.

### *How much does it cost to maintain a turf field?*

Synthetic surface fields are groomed with a towed groomer that is included in the cost of the project cited above approximately 4-5 Times/Year. The Hull High School Athletic Director would groom the field at no additional labor cost. Line markings are semi-permanent and need to be replaced every 4 years. Maintenance of a grass field can cost from \$20,000 - \$30,000 per year and includes mowing, water, irrigation system winterize/de-winterize, fertilizer/lime/pesticides, aeration, topdressing, overseeding and weekly line markings. Detailed cost comparisons for maintenance of a grass field versus a synthetic field were included in the informational presentation given by Gale Associates to the Hull School Committee in February 2016.

### *What is the expected life of a synthetic field? Is there a replacement plan for the carpet when needed?*

The turf 'carpet' can be expected to last 15 years. At year 15, the carpet must be replaced for approximately \$425,000. For the project proposed in 2015, Hull Boosters made a commitment to raise a substantial portion of the carpet replacement cost privately. The School Committee also voted to create an account to save field rental income, which could be put toward the carpet replacement cost and annual maintenance. The expected life of a synthetic field is 30+ years.

### *Can't the field be paid for privately by fundraising?*

We're trying, but finding it challenging. Field4Hull, operating under the Hull Boosters, is the private fundraising group working toward securing funds for a new field. Since inception in May of 2016, the group has raised \$75,000 through private donations, grants, corporate donations, selling shirts and stickers and hosting fundraisers. The largest grants and donations obtained were from the Bill Belichick Foundation, the CCA Group, Hingham Savings Institute and some private donors. We have also submitted several grant applications for which we have not been selected. Many grant organizations require a minimum amount to be raised before providing a matching amount or accepting an application. In neighboring towns, substantial field funding has been raised by selling engraved bricks and conducting phone solicitation of residents. In Hull, we have a much smaller population of full-time residents, lower average income and a higher percentage (30.4%) of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch. Additionally, the Boosters already ask residents for donations and hold events (like the summer carnival)

to fund significant portions of student athletics, arts programs, music programs, educational enrichment opportunities, field trips and milestone/graduation celebrations. Many Hull residents are already generously giving all they can, so the field fundraising must be conducted in such a way that doesn't pull critical money from other areas that the Boosters support. Many other South Shore towns have used CPA funds for portions of new athletic fields/facilities, but in Hull there are so many other needs to be met with the CPA revenues. Understanding this, Boosters does not plan to submit a project proposal to the CPA committee for the field. Put simply, raising enough to fund a new field privately is easier said than done.

### *Will my property taxes go up if the field article is approved at Town Meeting?*

No. The article being proposed at Town Meeting, with the support of the Board of Selectmen and School Committee, would borrow money to pay for the site work, materials, and installation of an artificial turf field. The funding for the repayment of the bonds will come from the Town's existing Tax Levy. There is not a Debt Exclusion tied to this article. The Town Manager, who is responsible for proposing the budget to Town Meeting, has identified savings in the Town Budget from bonds that are being paid off that would cover roughly half of the payments for this bond. Town Manager and School Committee have agreed in principle to a Memorandum of Understanding that would place the burden for the other half of the bond payments on the School Department Budget. This is a very different proposal than the one presented and passed at Special Town Meeting in 2015 and Town Meeting 2016.

### *How is this bond request different from the one proposed in 2015?*

The Bond that passed Special Town Meeting in 2015 was tied to passage of a Debt Exclusion which would have raised taxes. That Debt Exclusion was to exclude the repayments of 3 previously bonded projects from the Operating Budget. This money would have paid for the bond payments on the field and the remainder would have allocated annually to pay for other capital projects including a 5 year street paving plan and playground refurbishment. Deposits into and expenditures from the Capital Outlay Budget would have been voted at Town Meeting each year. This process was confusing to some and others felt that there were no guarantees that the street paving would have ever taken place under this plan.

In 2018 Town Meeting approved borrowing \$10 million to implement a street repaving and maintenance plan subject to passage of a debt exclusion. That debt exclusion passed at the May 2018 Town Election. You may have noticed that the street paving has not started yet. This is due to the difficulties encountered in coordinating utility work to coincide with the opening up of streets throughout town. It would have been imprudent to undertake this work while the National Grid employees were locked out for over 6 months. Now that National Grid Employees are back to work, DPW has begun scheduling utility work that needs to be done before street work begins.

### *Is a synthetic surface safe for our students and residents?*

There was an evaluation done of injury rates for Major League Soccer players in the 2017 - 2018 season. It showed MLS teams that play on turf average three and a half injury absences per game, and so do MLS teams that play on grass. There was no difference in the rate of injuries between turf and grass teams. The condition of the surface has a much greater impact on the likelihood of injuries than the type

of field. In the case of Hull, the condition of the current high school athletic field poses far greater risk of injury than a turf field would to the athletes.

There is no proven causal link between crumb rubber infill and cancer. While many studies have been conducted, there is no conclusive evidence to link playing sports on crumb rubber infill to an increased risk of contracting cancer. Crumb rubber infill is made of recycled vehicle tires. Both the crumb rubber infill and the tires of the vehicles we are all exposed to daily contain the same materials and chemicals. But the link between playing sports on these materials and cancer has not been established, despite several studies by states, federal agencies, universities and organizations within other countries. The most widely recognized study to attempt to establish the link between cancer and turf in female soccer goalies was debunked years ago, when it was found that the general population of females experienced higher rates of cancer than the athletes studied. While there hasn't been the same level of scrutiny on 'natural' grass playing surfaces, the chemicals in fertilizers, weed control products and pesticides are also thought to be harmful, and in a recent lawsuit were also found to be cancer-causing to those exposed.

In making any decision, it is helpful to weigh the risks against the benefits. The risks have never been proven conclusively, but the benefits of exercise and involvement in team sports have been demonstrated in thousands of studies, as summarized in the next question. A synthetic surface would allow us 2-3 times the usage (therefore more of the benefits) at a much lower cost per use over time, accessible and convenient in Hull, than a grass field can.

After gathering all available information, parents may decide they would rather not allow their children to play on a synthetic surface. However, all children playing Hull Youth Soccer currently use a synthetic surface field in Cohasset as their 'home' field. All High School soccer, lacrosse and football teams play most of their away games on turf fields. In 2019, it simply wouldn't be possible to play any field sport without playing 'away' games on turf surfaces, as all other South Shore towns host teams on one or more synthetic surface fields.

### *What are the benefits of co-curricular activities/recreation & team sports on kids, academically & otherwise?*

Sports and physical activity play an important role in the development of a child. Their benefits span not only the obvious health and wellness gains, but also have a positive impact on children academically, socially, and in behavior management. There are vast amounts of research that prove that active kids have better outcomes in all these categories than inactive children. Below are just a few highlights of that research in each of these key areas:

- Academic: There is substantial evidence that physical activity can help improve academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores. Further, such activity can affect cognitive skills, attitudes and academic behavior, including enhanced concentration, attention, and improved classroom behavior (GAO, 2012). For example, A 2014 study at the University of Kansas found that athletes had higher percentages of days of school attended, graduation rates, and assessment scores and lower dropout rates than nonathletes.
- Behavioral: Data collected by the Women's Sports Foundation showed that high school male and female students who participate in sports scored healthier on six psychological categories. "Multisport athletes were also less likely to smoke cigarettes, less likely to cut class, and more

likely to receive grades of A or A- in school and to expect to graduate from a four-year college.” (*Monitoring the Future*, Women’s Sports Foundation, 2015).

- Community: A Cornell study surveyed working adults and found that men who participated in varsity-level high school sports “demonstrated higher levels of leadership and enjoyed higher-status careers”. They also had higher frequency of volunteerism and charitable giving. (Kniffin, Kevin M. *Sports at Work: Anticipated and Persistent Correlates of Participation in High School Athletics*, Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies. 2014).
- Health: Regular physical activity benefits youth in many ways, including helping build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints; helping control weight and reduce fat; and preventing or delaying the development of high blood pressure (GAO, 2012).
- Social: A University of Michigan study found high schools with high sports participation rates reported lower levels of major crime and suspensions, indicating if sports participation increased by 10%, serious crime rates would drop by 5%. (*High school sports participation lowers major crime and suspensions*, University of Michigan, 2012).

People often think that children providing sports and co-curricular activities is a luxury, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Giving children opportunities to move their bodies, challenge their minds, be part of a team, and learn control and self-discipline helps them to become great people and community members. Providing sports and physical activity opportunities to our children today will help them be better neighbors tomorrow.

### *I’ve heard that the schools need \$1.5M of building updates in the near future. What is the plan for addressing those updates and balancing the costs of both large projects?*

The Memorial Middle School is in need of significant capital repairs. Some of the capital repairs include window replacement, brick masonry wall façade work, front stairs repair and roof top HVAC replacement. These are some of the needed repairs and replacements that were not part of our last major renovation. For instance, the brick façade and front stairs are original to the building. Although we feel these repairs are a top priority, no immediate safety concerns exist. The High School and Jacobs Elementary School are currently in good shape. We have been keeping up with maintenance repairs as needed. The estimated cost of repairs to the Memorial Middle School are \$1,155,000.

The Hull Public School District has worked with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for the last 3 years to request funding for the repairs needed at Memorial Middle School. Funding approval is a long process through the MSBA. They have invited us into the "Eligibility Phase" of the approval process. This takes 270 days to complete. Assuming all goes well with the Eligibility Phase, we will be invited to participate in a Feasibility Study that will define the project in greater detail. The Feasibility Study will cost us approximately \$46,000. Funding for this study will come from the school department's revolving "facility use" account. Therefore, we will not burden the taxpayers with additional cost to fund the Feasibility Study. After successful completion of the Eligibility and Feasibility Phase, the MSBA will take up our request for one final vote, which will occur sometime after July 1, 2021. If funding is approved through MSBA, they normally fund approximately 48% of the cost of the project, which would save Hull

residents approximately \$554,400. To pay the balance of the project, the town will need to seek a bond authorization vote to fund our share of the commitment.

### *When can the walking track be used by residents of Hull?*

Currently there are no plans to limit access to the walking track. The Hull Public School District is consulting with other towns to review their policies. It is common in other towns for residents to walk or run during practices and sporting events and throughout the day during weekdays and weekends. The track would allow all town residents a safe, well-lit, off-street place to walk or run.

### *When was the field last renovated and why hasn't it lasted?*

The last major renovation of the field was the fall of 2005. Each year we maintain the field to the best of our ability. The field does not have enough time to rest, grow grass and thrive, as we have many more sports teams using the field from years past. There are now as many girls sports teams as boys sports teams both using the field. During the school year of 2015-2016, Finlayson Field was used for at least 513 games / practices. Here in town, we only have a couple of other areas where the teams can practice, so they must use the high school field for most of their practices and all of their games. According to Gales Associates, the most aggressively maintained grass field can only sustain 300 uses per year, otherwise the condition of the field suffers. Our usage is way beyond that. A synthetic turf field usage can be unlimited, which would amount to 800-900 uses, according to Gale Associates. Currently we use our field every moment we can, and it does not get a rest period until summer. Ideally, a natural grass field should have a 30-day rest period during the active growing season (spring and fall when the field is used the most) to allow for repair of the root zone damage it has sustained and to propagate new crown growth. Having the rest period during the summer season is less effective as the grass is somewhat dormant during this season.

Each year we continue to spend over \$10,000 to maintain the football field. This includes watering, adding loam, seeding, mowing, weed-whacking, and line painting. We are also very fortunate to have landscape professionals who live in town and volunteer, donating many, many hours of their time and donating supplies to make sure this field is the best it can be.

In addition to the usage, the field was built incorrectly (during the 2005 renovation) with goal line to goal line pitch instead of sideline to sideline. This fact in combination with the extremely compacted nature of the surface has been a problem since day one. The town received money back for the failure of the design, but the issue has resulted in drainage problems and further difficulties in maintaining/growing grass.

### *How does the field renovation fit within the Town's overall capital plan?*

The Capital Outlay Committee maintains a list of necessary large capital projects for the Town of Hull as a whole, which includes roads, buildings, seawalls, recreation and other categories. The turf field has been one of the items on the capital projects list for many years. The projects are evaluated by the committee, who alongside the Town Manager, make recommendations as to how best to fund each project (operational budget, bond, debt exclusion, grants). These recommendations are presented to voters, either at Town Meeting or also as a ballot item. Often the best option to fund a project involves application for grants. During the last 5 years, the Town has invested almost \$29,000,000 in capital projects with the largest funding source being grants (62.63% grants, 30.82% bonds, 6.55% operating budget for FY14-18).

Over the past few years, the Town has made significant progress toward addressing capital and infrastructure needs. In May 2018, voters passed a Debt Exclusion that will fund \$10M in road repairs over the next several years, a \$1.2M bond for seawall repairs that also provides us the seed money necessary to apply for larger grants, and \$17M in bonds to upgrade the Sewer plant. In 2017, voters passed the CPA, which has accumulated tax revenues and state match funds that can be used for projects identified by the CPA committee if Town Meeting approves the spending for each project. The proposed list of CPA projects to be presented at May 2019 Town Meeting include parks and playgrounds that are on the Town's list of necessary capital projects. As presented at a public meeting in November 2018, the field article and the CPA park/playground projects will address a large portion of the town's recreational areas if passed at Town Meeting this upcoming May.

### *Are there possible economic benefits to the Town of Hull and local businesses associated with upgrading the field to a synthetic surface?*

Youth sports has become a \$15 Billion business. Improving the existing field with a durable field surface would allow Hull to better leverage this unique location to tap into this growing industry.

- *Athletic Business October 2017*
  - <https://www.athleticbusiness.com/outdoor/how-youth-sports-tournaments-became-big-business.html>
- *Time Magazine August 2017*
  - <http://time.com/4913687/how-kids-sports-became-15-billion-industry/>
- *WBUR September 2017*
  - <http://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2017/08/31/the-big-business-of-youth-sports>

Given the popularity of youth and amateur sports, field space is at a premium around the South Shore. Hull High School's remarkable location right off the ferry and its dramatic back drop of islands, ocean, lighthouses, and the Boston Sky Line would make this site an ideal and very valuable summertime location for youth and amateur sporting camps, sporting events, and other outdoor activities.

These new events, coming mostly in the summer during school recess, would open many opportunities to drive direct rental and gate receipt revenue while also contributing much needed economic impact for Hull businesses. It's been shown in a number of studies that visitors and participants in these sporting and special events spend money on local restaurants, convenience stores, merchandisers, gas stations, and local museums.

- <http://www.ibrc.indiana.edu/ibr/2015/spring/article1.html>

Further, bringing Hull Youth Soccer games back into town would allow HUYS to host games all day Saturday during the fall and spring seasons, bringing hundreds of out-of-town youth soccer players, siblings, parents and family members through Hull to attend their 'away' games. It would also keep our players and their families in town, meaning that our local businesses (especially those further into town than beachgoers normally frequent) would benefit from the purchase of coffee, snacks, drinks, gas and meals.