

Opposition to Agenda Item 12 25-3720

Greetings Key West City Commissioners,

I'm writing to express my concerns and contention to the proposed agenda item #12 allocating \$1 million to resurface the Pepe Hernandez Field at Bayview Park with AstroTurf.

There are a whole host of reasons why artificial turf fields are problematic — extreme heat index, microplastic runoff, increased instances of injury to name but a few — but the main issue I have is that the field is already in good shape and the funds would be better used elsewhere.

Over the past year or two, there were community input opportunities with feedback that included talks of a splash pad, basketball court upgrades, and other improvements to the rest of Bayview, but it appears now that none of that input has been considered. Instead, the full amount of funds will be thrown at artificial turf when there seems to be no real advantage — even if “lower maintenance” is touted as the excuse.

City records suggest that the Pepe Hernandez Field cost in the vicinity of \$15k annually to maintain as is. A quick calculation tells us that it would take 65+ years of grass maintenance before the turf makes financial sense. The reality is, artificial turf fields need to be fully replaced regularly — data indicates every 10 to 20 years depending on usage — and they STILL need regular maintenance which includes spreading and dispersing small plastic beads. These beads are microplastics, and on a small island, inevitably end up in the ocean.

Outside of the above reasons that are easily quantifiable, on an island that has such a storied baseball history, Pepe Hernandez is the last remaining grass and clay field on the entire island. So for the historic significance of the game and the culture, I believe it is imperative that one traditional field remain.

Outside of Key West, there are organizations, leagues, and municipalities across the country that moved to artificial fields decades ago for the perceived benefits — but over time, the movement reversed course, and now many of those same groups are rethinking the investment and switching back to grass for all of the reasons I've mentioned and more. Considering this, I would ask the commission to learn from real data and industry trends rather than putting on blinders at the expense of the community.

There are no good reasons for artificial turf at Pepe Hernandez Field, so I would ask you to please consider using the funds and the effort elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

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