From: christian leicham
To: ParksnRec
Subject: Public Comment
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 8:39:50 PM

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in response to the possible replacement of the artificial turf soccer field at Luchessi Park with a grass field. While I think replacing the turf is necessary and the appropriate thing to do both fiscally and environmentally, I do not agree that the turf should be replaced with natural grass.

From a purely fiscal standpoint, replacing the artificial turf, with new artificial turf makes sense. It will save the city over 1,000,000 gallons of water every year (1,032,000 to be exact and this is a conservative estimate). Using this much water every year would be irresponsible considering the state's recent history of years of drought. The city itself is encouraging the switch from grass to drought-resistant mulch for residential homes, so using so much water for a grass field that does not need to exist is wasteful.

The maintenance costs of an artificial turf field pale in comparison to the maintenance required for a natural grass field. Natural grass needs constant attention in order for that field to be usable, and safe, for sport. Unfortunately, the city just does not have the budget, or resources, to continually monitor and maintain a soccer field to the level it needs to in order for that field to be used continually, year-round. I have coached sports teams in Petaluma and I love this town, but the fact is that the park fields are in quasi-disrepair and are in need of maintenance. Fields in need of maintenance are dangerous for players; Gopher holes abound, as do rocks, roots, and other oftentimes unseen dangers.

No one would doubt that we saw massive amounts of rainfall this year and when natural grass fields become saturated, they are unplayable and can be severely damaged if play continues on such a field. Artificial turf fields are playable year-round. While studies show there may be an increased risk of injury on turf fields, what the studies fail to show is that injury can be minimized by using proper footwear and equipment. Turf-specific shoes are designed specifically to help reduce injury while increasing performance and a requirement to wear such shoes might help mitigate the risk of injury on turf fields.

Petaluma needs a year-round artificial turf soccer field. Replacing artificial turf with new artificial turf Is the only fiscally, environmentally, and responsible way to move forward. It is good for Petaluma, it is good for the players and it is the only conclusion that addresses the needs of Petalumans as a whole.

Thank You,
Christian Leicham, Jennifer Leicham, Annabel Leicham, and Eloise Leicham