



Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District

1500 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, NY 14223, (716) 874-8400

Kenmore-Tonawanda Board of Education Statement on Turf Installation

October 26, 2016

The School Board would like to take this opportunity to address questions and concerns related to our decision at the October 11th regular board meeting to temporarily suspend for the fall the installation of crumb rubber turf infill at the Crosby and Kenmore West athletic fields.

First, any preliminary work that can be done—with the exception of turf installation—such as storm drainage, retaining tanks, etc., will proceed this fall as time and weather permit.

However, unanimously as a school board we feel that we are doing the right thing for the health and safety of our students, families, and community members in pausing to re-examine crumb rubber as our turf field infill of choice, until the EPA and other agencies release the results of their joint, comprehensive, crumb rubber study at the end of 2016. A 2009 EPA study found potentially harmful substances in the crumb rubber material, but only enough to merit “a low level of concern.” This year, the EPA stated it could no longer stand by the 2009 study and, coupled with continuing public concerns, announced a sweeping, multi-agency research study that is well underway. The former EPA study had a limited focus and only drew samples from eight sites. The 2016 study is collecting tire crumb samples from around forty field locations and nine tire crumb manufacturing plants. Last week, trustee Reigstad spoke with an EPA official who said the late December study deadline for releasing a draft status report is on target. The 2016 crumb rubber study is a collaborative effort conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). A link to “Tire Crumb Questions and Answers” prepared by the EPA (last updated on August 18, 2016) is attached.

With the results of this newly announced EPA study due at the end of 2016, it seemed prudent to adopt a wait and see posture for fall turf installation at Crosby and Kenmore West. At the October 11th board meeting, after the board voted unanimously to temporarily suspend installation for the fall, trustees Reigstad and Pashler agreed to serve on a turf subcommittee that would, in the meantime, consider potential contractual contingencies and turf infill alternatives, in case the EPA study suggests significant health hazards derived from crumb rubber turf. Within days of the October 11th board meeting, Superintendent Mirand formed the turf subcommittee, which included this membership: Superintendent Mirand; Assistant Superintendent Brucato; Athletic Director Banker; Facilities Director Ames; Trustees Reigstad and Pashler (appointed as co-chairs); Tom Caruso and John Robinson from Campus Construction Management; Rick Krysztof from A-Turf; and Steve DiMatteo from Gordon W. Jones Associates Architect.



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The turf subcommittee had a productive meeting on Friday, October 21. There was a detailed presentation on the background and approximately five-year planning process for the District's Capital Project athletic complexes. There was a presentation on available turf infills and synthetic surfaces that might be alternatives to crumb rubber. There were case studies offered of turf fields installed at other local school districts. There was also discussion of various scenarios and cost estimates dependent on the news from the EPA research study. And it was reiterated that full public access continue for the running tracks at Adams and Crosby fields.

Ironically, the day after the board's vote to temporarily suspend turf installation for the fall at Crosby and Kenmore West, the administration's finance office declared that turf installation at those sites would not begin anyway until spring of 2017. So, as it turns out, the board's action for the fall is a largely symbolic gesture and a moot point.

In a best-case scenario, crumb rubber will be deemed safe by the EPA in late December and everything can proceed at Crosby and Kenmore West as planned. In a worst-case scenario, some sort of change will need to be decided upon by mid-January, probably at the January 10, 2017, regular board meeting. The turf subcommittee will be ready to meet as needed in early January.

To sum up:

- (1) The board's decision to temporarily suspend turf installation at Crosby and Kenmore West for the fall has no impact on the project's cost or timeline.
- (2) The late December results of the EPA study will either (a) show no cause for alarm, and will allow us to move forward as planned; or (b) show cause for alarm, in which schools across the country will be seeking ways to undo already completed crumb rubber fields, in which case Ken-Ton will face remediating only one—not two—turf complexes. Either way, it's an outcome that the board has endeavored to thoughtfully prepare for.
- (3) For the record, the unavailability of Adams field to this date is unrelated to the board's decision about suspending turf installation at Crosby and Kenmore West this fall; the board's decision has nothing to do with Adams not being ready for activities.
- (4) We join the rest of the Ken-Ton community in hoping for the best of news from the EPA study at the end of 2016.

<https://www.epa.gov/chemical-research/tire-crumb-questions-and-answers>