

**Nantucket School Committee
Workshop Meeting Minutes
November 6, 2025**

Present Members: Vice-Chair Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Timothy Lepore, Esmeralda Martinez, Vincent Murphy, and Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett

Guests: Superintendent Hallett, Director of Facilities Charles Clunie, Director of Athletics Travis Lombardi, Coach/Parent, Kate Garrette, Student Grace Hanlon, Student Eli MacIver (7:37 PM arrival), Parent Ayesha Khan Barber, Parent Graham Veysey, SMRT Inc. John McMeeking, SMRT Inc. Nick Vaughn

The November 6 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM in the Nantucket Intermediate School Cafeteria by Chair Laura Gallagher-Bryne. A motion was made by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Vincent Murphy. Roll call was then taken to enter the workshop portion of the meeting.

Chair Gallagher-Bryne announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded and opened the floor for public comment.

Mary Lepore, parent, quoting Churchill, raised concerns about toxic materials and noted that the American Chemistry Council targets high schools rather than being random. She urged the committee to consider modern, low-maintenance solutions and requested rejection of unsafe options.

Jim Pignato, former swim coach and parent, expressed concern that an asphalt track does not absorb shock and cited existing tracks on the island, noting they do not meet regulations and could not host home meets. He emphasized the increase in youth running programs.

Kim Lattlippe, serving on the soccer club board, highlighted heavy field usage by students and 200 youth soccer players. She noted that non-PFAS turf materials are available and offered support from the soccer club.

Heather Woodbury, parent of two girls, reported that fields are severely worn, particularly the CPS varsity soccer field. She stressed that fields are at maximum capacity and encouraged involving coaches and parents in planning decisions.

Doug Massey emphasized that a short-term fix would not solve the lack of field space, advocating for a plan that lasts 20 years rather than a few seasons.

Nicki Drew, health and fitness professional and Parks and Recreation board member, expressed strong opposition to asphalt, noting the town's reputation for health and the importance of safe, up-to-date facilities to prevent injuries.

Tom Hanlon, parent of two and dedicated to athletics, noted field overuse and PFAS concerns, highlighting that current football fields contain more PFAS than new turf. He emphasized proper maintenance and providing students what they need.

Jami Lower, girls lacrosse coach since 2012, shared that overused fields make it difficult to attract teams to the island and read a letter from an off-island coach highlighting these challenges.

Doug LeBrecht, parent of three students and women's varsity coach, cited unsafe field conditions, including rocks in the goalie area, and noted injuries such as a pulled hamstring during a homecoming game. He reported that PFAS water testing has been conducted.

Rich Brannigan, 25-year boys soccer coach and parent of four, opposed option one as short-sighted, noting that new playground surfaces also contain PFAS. He deferred to Elizabeth Webber to speak next.

Elizabeth Webber, field hockey coach, reported that overused and unsafe fields limit opportunities for play and college exposure, citing instances where grass length prevented team usage.

Meghan Perry shared that she grew up without a girls soccer team and highlighted PFAS as a concern, stressing that safe drinking water is the top priority.

Jill Veith encouraged a cost-benefit analysis and shared that her daughter and peers are embarrassed by current field conditions.

Madden Myers, student-athlete, described the importance of athletics in fostering discipline and Whaler pride. As a soccer goalie and captain, she emphasized the need for facilities that reflect that pride and urged action to avoid returning to unsafe conditions in the future.

Lisa Weisentaner acknowledged past facility upgrades but stated that the proposed track and field plan is not an improvement. She stressed the need for a transparent conversation, prioritizing safety and quality, and called for elected officials to make a decision that the community can support.

Superintendent Hallett emphasized that her primary responsibility is always to consider the well-being and needs of the students. She noted that the project has been delayed since 2017 and stressed the importance of keeping student interests central when evaluating next steps. She highlighted that both the stands and track are currently out of compliance and underscored the need for a plan that could gain approval at Town Meeting while supporting students. Superintendent Hallett then introduced John McMeeking and Nick Vaughn from SMRT Inc., inviting them to begin the presentation.

Mr. Vaughn explained that the original plan was for a turf field and noted that items marked with blue dots have been completed, while those in yellow still need attention. John McMeeking presented the 2025 proposal, which included three track options. He noted that the “Unequal” track is the most popular, featuring six distance lanes, eight lanes overall, and a 210 x 360 field that can fit inside the track. The proposal outlined Options 1, 2, and 3 for consideration.

Mr. Lombardi asked whether any other districts had ever considered a project requesting an asphalt track. Dr. Lepore inquired about the use of rubber tracks. Mr. McMeeking explained that approximately 90% of tracks are constructed on an asphalt base. Dr. Lepore asked about the longevity of rubber tracks, and Mr. McMeeking noted they typically last around 20 years, with periodic line repainting required. Dr. Hallett asked about the expected lifespan of an asphalt track, and Mr. Vaughn explained that it generally lasts 8–10 years with regular sealing and patching.

Ms. Garrettte asked who developed Option One and how it was approved. Dr. Hallett explained that no new plan has been brought forward since 2021 and that, due to the School Committee’s lack of support for turf and track, the plan remains unchanged. Ms. Shantaw Bloise-Murphy asked for clarification regarding which School Committee members were involved, noting she was not on the board at the time. Dr. Hallett responded that the members included Pauline Proch, Rocky Fox, Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and Timothy Lepore.

The discussion shifted to the number of hours the Nantucket fields are used for practices and games. Ms. Garrett reviewed the expected field conditions, noting they should be maintained around 600 hours of use. Ms. Vesey asked whether, under the proposed plan with no additional fields, teams would still need to travel to Nobadeer for practices and games.

Mr. Lombardi expressed support for Option 3, thanking Jami Lower for her public comment and noting her points were accurate, highlighting that 75 students participate in track and field. Ms. Garrettte requested current usage numbers based on today’s student population.

Dr. Lepore commented on PFAS levels in the district’s water. A participant mentioned full turf recycling through Turf Recyclers in Brockton, and Ms. Khan clarified that the company only accepts ten fields per year for recycling.

Mr. McMeeking went through the maintenance process on both materials of fields.

Mr. Murphy asked about the estimated cost, if it was Nantucket prices.

Mr. McMeeking confirmed they are nantucket numbers from Mr. Clunie. The conversation moved onto track materials. He explained these are the proposed products from 2021.

Superintendent Hallett confirmed that the grandstand requires an elevator. Mr. McMeeking then discussed field lighting, noting the difficulty of catching a ball under the current conditions and presenting plans for upgraded LED lighting.

Student athlete Eli McIver arrived at 7:17 PM

Ms. Khan-Barber presented research from Santa Clara Medical and public health expert Dr. Sara Evans regarding track and field safety. She emphasized selecting the safest materials, noting concerns with plastic tracks, respiratory exposure to lead, zinc, and micro- and nanoplastics, which pose higher risks for children than adults. She reported that approximately 40,000 pounds of plastic and 20,000 fibers, or 3–5 tons, can be released from fields 2–5 times per year. PFAS levels were measured at 12 parts per trillion annually, with turf companies claiming either zero or extremely high PFAS levels. Ms. Khan-Barber also highlighted safety concerns related to heat, noting that field temperatures can become unsafe, reaching 85°F with 60% humidity, potentially causing burns. She addressed disinfectant and pesticide-free field practices, citing a case study from the University of Lowell and Marblehead, where schools successfully transitioned to organic field maintenance in collaboration with UMass. Chair Gallagher-Byrne asked how long it took. Ms. Khan-Barber responded within the first year.

John McMeeking and Nick Vaughn - SMRT Inc. departed 7:56 PM

Ms. Bloise-Murphy emphasized that asphalt is not a viable option and expressed concern about turf, noting that there is no truly PFAS-free material. Chair Gallagher-Byrne invited input from the student representatives. Grace Hanlon raised concerns about field usage for field hockey and lacrosse, particularly the dust, and asked what solutions might address it. She also noted challenges on the track, such as long jump and high jump events where cleats cannot be used. When asked if she feels embarrassed when other teams visit, she confirmed, citing difficulty seeing the center line and the lack of home meets where parents can watch her compete.

Mr. Murphy raised several requests and concerns regarding the project, noting that the 2021 table data, while presented clearly, should be supplemented with more relevant and current data to better understand actual facility usage. He recommended presenting both pro- and anti-turf perspectives and suggested engaging a neutral material scientist to provide objective analysis. Mr. Murphy questioned whether the track should be located elsewhere and, if so, where it would be relocated. He also expressed frustration with the project timeline, stating that discussions began in 2017 and the project remains in the design phase eight years later. Additionally, he raised concerns about timing, noting that he had heard the process could take 8–12 months, questioned how long approval through the Finance Committee and subsequent votes would take, and emphasized the difficulty of securing Town approval for large-scale projects.

Superintendent Hallett noted that time is limited and the proposal is expected to be presented to the Town by the end of the year, leaving little opportunity for additional workshops. She emphasized that the actual design of the project is not changing.

Student-athlete Eli MacIver commented that a proper track would be beneficial, noting that practicing on grass provides a home-field advantage. He also observed that while the middle of the field is periodically redone, it becomes worn and damaged quickly.

Chair Gallagher-Byrne allowed student athlete Madden Myers and parent/coach Lisa Wisentaner to reiterate their concerns about the asphalt track and grass field.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:29PM by Esmeralda Martinez, seconded by Vince Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk

DRAFT