

OAK GROVE FARM COMMISSION

Millis, MA 02054

October 5, 2014

Board of Selectmen:

After listening to discussion for approximately two years, the Commissioners of the Oak Grove Farm (OGF) Commission wish to "weigh-in" relative to proposed construction, scheduling, and maintenance at OGF. As no formal request for approval regarding new fields at OGF has been made to the Commissioners, we have nothing on which to vote. However, rather than waiting for any joint meeting, we feel now it is imperative to begin a discussion concerning the proposed construction of an athletic field behind the farmhouse.

Please note that these comments are in no way to be construed as the Commissioners' support for a town-wide override to fund any proposed fields.

As has been publicly stated by the Commissioners on many occasions, the size of the field as proposed by the Fields Committee is both too big and unnecessary. Although it has been stated during meetings of the Field Committee that it is economically prudent to construct a larger than currently needed field while a field is being constructed - perhaps for future use - it will, among other things, increase the scope and cost, as well as dominate the area and take away any historical vista, and eliminate other passive uses.

It is the consensus of the Commissioners that the Board of Selectmen reconsider and adopt our original proposal for an 8 on 8 field with two 6 on 6 fields to be located within the 8 on 8 field. Our plan did not encroach into the wetlands buffer zones. The Commissioners support moving the proposed field in a northerly direction so as to be further away from the farmhouse. Of course, any movement of the proposed location of the field would enter into a buffer zone but certainly to a lesser extent than the location of the field currently proposed by the Fields Committee - at least according to the plans last seen by the Commissioners. The Commissioners went with this plan based on

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the number and size of fields currently in use by teams using OGF, and more importantly, after taking into consideration the other youth program in town - the Millis Recreation Department soccer program which requires 6 on 6 or smaller fields. Also, a new field in this location would give the Commissioners an opportunity to rest other fields at OGF.

With minor renovations, the existing upper field at OGF can accommodate a full size 11 on 11 field that could be used by high school teams. It is the strong opinion of the Commissioners, including those with years of experience regarding soccer programs, that there simply is not enough need for an additional 11 on 11 field at OGF to warrant the size proposed by the Fields Committee behind the farmhouse.

The Commissioners further request that, prior to construction of any field behind the farmhouse at OGF, the Millis Historical Commission be given an opportunity to locate and catalog any stone foundations. If at all possible, any proposed field would be "built up" rather than "scraped down" to prevent destruction of any historical and valuable foundations located subsurface.

Regarding scheduling and maintenance of the current and any proposed field at OGF, these issues must be discussed and determined at the outset, maintenance, rest, and renovation are of the utmost need of our current fields at OGF. Field scheduling at OGF currently, and since organized sports has been using it, has been done by a Commissioner at no cost to the users or the town. The Commissioners are willing, albeit skeptical, that some person or organization could take over this task without a cost that will be borne by a town department.

As for a maintenance fee per user, per team, or however the Board of Selectmen determines it will be done, is something that needs to be discussed. As we are sure the Board is aware, OGF no longer has the John Smith Soccer Academy (JSSA) currently renting a field for the fall. We were told by a source that "threats" were made by telephone calls in the fall of 2013 and the spring of 2014. These calls were anonymous and made directly to the business offices of JSSA. These threats were not of a criminal nature, but the caller(s) essentially told JSSA that

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they would no longer have a place to play in Millis and that they better start looking for new location to run the program. As a business, the JSSA needed to secure a location to run their premier soccer program. This loss not only affected those Millis residents that were playing with the JSSA Club but at a greater impact financially to OGF and the town, the OGF Commission no longer has that stream of revenue that has been forthcoming for many years and which funding has provided the bulk of funding in for maintenance on the entire 108 acres of Oak Grove farm. The Fields Commission was provided documentation that the OGF Commission received \$18,170 in fiscal 2013, and \$10,420 for fiscal 2014. Although there is money remaining from previous years, it is expected that those funds will be gone in two and three years if OGF no longer receives the funding from an outside user, or the fees for Millis residents would have to rise considerably to cover the maintenance of the entire farm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen G. MacInnes, on behalf of the
Commissioners of Oak Grove Farm