

From: [Mark Bernstein](#)
To: [Carol Ann Desiderio](#); [Emily Granoff](#); [Amanda Linehan](#); [Karen Hayes](#); [Craig Spadafora](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Roosevelt Park
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 1:22:55 PM

My name is Mark Bernstein, and I live at 24 Chestnut St, in Malden's Ward 3.

The acrimonious discussion of Roosevelt Park has spanned years. I have followed the debate with some attention, and have yet to hear a cogent explanation of why a synthetic field for organized sports is the very best use of this very valuable resource, or of the very substantial resources to be devoted to it.

I am told that a Councillor-At-Large recently said to a Malden resident that "nobody in the neighborhood cares" whether the field is synthetic or grass. That seems demonstrably false, but it may have a core of truth: today, the Council is asked to spend many millions of dollars, and to dedicate land worth vastly more, to sports activities that will primarily benefit privileged children who live elsewhere in the City and in adjacent towns. Going by the recent precedent of Howard Park, perhaps neighbors will not even be permitted to visit unless the Ward Councillor deigns to unlock the gates to them as a personal favor and act of grace.

No adequate explanation has been made available for the necessity of artificial turf, or the cost of alternatives. Indeed, it is not clear that the park is the optimal use of this piece of land, which many have argued is not well suited to this use.

With the resources to be dedicated to kicking balls and glorifying childish skills, we could create, for example, one of the best student robotics programs in the state — or, indeed, the nation. Salemwood could lead the way in teaching kids to master AI, telerobotics, and augmented reality. All this can be great fun! It can teach teamwork and collaboration as well, if that's what you like. Kids who happen to be short, clumsy, or slow would not be left to be onlookers.

Whenever the City of Malden has money, it is inclined to spend it on parks that once were, a century ago, the centers of vibrant neighborhood life. Those days are gone: we have air conditioning now, electric buses, and efficient e-bikes. Kids carry a networked supercomputer in their pocket and use it to keep in touch with friends who might reside in a different ward, on a different continent, or in the middle of the war from which this kerfuffle is a foolish distraction. We should use our resources to prepare for the crises of 2050, not to provide an extra venue for silly sports. But if we must spend all we have on a park, let it be grassy and designed for the school and all its neighbors, not for organized athletics.

Yours very truly,

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