

Greenwich Environmental Action Task Force

March 27, 2008

To: Peter Tesei, First Selectman
Peter Crumbine, Selectman
Lin Lavery, Selectman

Re: Routine application of pesticides to Town athletic fields

At our March 26, 2008 meeting, the Greenwich Environmental Action Task Force discussed the issue of routine pesticide application to municipal properties, specifically the athletic fields, and the apparent threat to the health of our children and to the environment.

As you may be aware, the State of Connecticut has mandated that all towns cease the routine application of pesticides on K through 8 school properties by the summer of 2009. The Town of Greenwich is in a unique position to take the lead in this area, as the Town has already trialed a successful IPM program, which does not utilize routine pesticide applications. The Department of Parks and Recreation Division of Parks and Trees should be commended for their foresight and efforts.

In keeping with this success, we do not believe that the yearly application of pesticides to our athletic fields for the pre-emergent treatment of crab grass should continue. Despite the fact that the Town is clearly staying within the 'letter of the law', we strongly feel that putting the health of our children at risk for these final applications is unnecessary. Although fields that are not on school grounds are not covered by this mandate, we believe that all fields should be pesticide free.

Recognizing the pressing need for an appropriate Town response, the Task Force unanimously voted to ask that the Board of Selectmen adopt the following resolution:

Whereas there is sufficient and compelling data to support that any exposure of pesticides to our children represents a significant health risk, and

*Whereas the State of Connecticut has passed HB 5234 which bans the routine application of pesticides to all schools K through 8 beginning 2009, and
Whereas the Conservation Commission passed a resolution in 2004 asking the Board of Selectmen to adopt a town-wide policy on pesticide use, and*

Whereas the Greenwich Department of Parks and Recreation Division of Parks and Trees has developed an effective Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program without pesticide use at the North Street Elementary School athletic

field, and now utilizes many of these same strategies at all municipal athletic fields, but continues to routinely apply pre-emergent crab grass pesticide each Spring to these other fields;

Therefore, the Greenwich Environmental Action Task Force recommends to the Board of Selectman, that the Town of Greenwich through the Department of Parks and Recreation Division of Parks and Trees take a leadership role and immediately cease routine application of pesticides to our municipal athletic fields including the planned application on April 14, 2008.

There has been growing concern about the indiscriminant use of pesticides in our society. Locally, residents are expressing their concern by sponsoring educational forums, writing letters to the editor, and in their communications to the Town staff. Compelling data now point to the significant human health risk, particularly to children, and to the growing environmental contamination associated with pesticide use.

Thank you for your consideration of our resolution. The Task Force hopes to assist in the development of a comprehensive Town policy regarding pesticide use, however feels there is now an opportunity and need for the Town to act quickly and place the health of our children and environment ahead of the current practice of routinely applying pesticides to our athletic fields. Why wait for the 2009 State mandate when the Town is perfectly poised to change now, especially when the change is the right thing to do? Please don't hesitate to contact me at 863-3115 or Denise Savageau, Conservation Director for more information. We look forward to working with you on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Michael J Franco, MD
Chairman, Pesticide Subcommittee
Greenwich Environmental Action Task Force

Cc: Caroline Baisley, Director
Department of Health
Michael Long, Director
Department of Health
Division of Environmental Services
Denise Savageau, Director
Conservation Commission
Joseph Siciliano, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
Bruce Spaman, Superintendent
Department of Parks and Recreation
Division of Parks and Trees