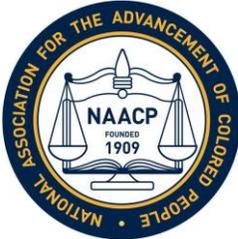


CONTACT:
Zane T Crute
President, Mystic Valley Area Branch NAACP
zcrute@gmail.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MYSTIC VALLEY AREA BRANCH NAACP
Addresses Environmental & Racial Injustices at Roosevelt Park**

Malden, MA – April 21, 2022

The environmental injustices occurring at Roosevelt Park disproportionately affect our Malden neighbors, mostly lower income residents and communities of color. We have met with the Friends of Roosevelt Park, and it has come to our attention that this city project poses not only a current threat to the Salemwood School population and its neighborhood, but that the future plan for this space will continue this cycle of environmental racism. We demand that the City of Malden, especially Mayor Christenson, Ward 5 Councilor Barbara Murphy, and Ward 6 Councilor Stephen Winslow, immediately pause the Roosevelt Park turf project, begin anew with neighborhood and community input, fully address all current pollution and contamination concerns, and maintain a living green grass space at Roosevelt Park for the Salemwood School children and neighborhood.

We adhere to the principle that Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when all Malden residents enjoy:

- **The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and**
- **Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.**

It is evident that the City of Malden did not consider all key stakeholders, which include the surrounding Salemwood School community and neighborhood. Over 78% of students attending Salemwood School do not speak English as their first language at home. Since all city-wide notifications, public comment periods, and hearings on Roosevelt Park had been conducted in English, the city left out its largest stakeholders in this project – the Salemwood families themselves. As a result, stakeholders were never properly notified or included in the designing and planning process of this park renovation.

The Roosevelt Park project is also removing the only living green space for passive recreation enjoyed by the lowest income earners in Malden. This project is located in the poorest Census tract in the city (Census tract 3418) where the median household income is \$32,155. The transition to synthetic turf actually becomes a prohibition to neighborhood usage of the field. Instead, the outcome of this project enacts a “pay to play” scheme which will only allow year-round, active participation on the field if a child or adult has paid to participate in organized sports. The purpose of placing synthetic turf in Roosevelt Park has always been to increase playing time throughout the twelve months of the year for organized sports teams from inside and outside of Malden.

Over two years ago, the City of Malden identified high concentrations of lead throughout the soil at Roosevelt Park. This lead contamination is the most recent contaminant to be added to the list of contaminants currently sitting in that soil. It has come to our attention that the city has delayed the lead remediation for over two years, and that it has not held any information sessions on the dangers of lead for school families and neighborhood residents. There is no amount of lead that can be considered “safe,” especially given that the field has been consistently used during this time by young children in grades K-8.

We are also concerned with the environmental impacts that the artificial turf being proposed for this park will place on the area, with increased heat island effect and flooding of the neighborhood. The City already has four other artificial turf fields within close proximity to Roosevelt Park. A fifth synthetic turf field would massively elevate the temperatures within the heat island already existing in this neighborhood due to lack of greenery, trees, and living green spaces. This will subject nearby households, students, and team sports to a possible increase in heat related illnesses. The synthetic turf will also remove the current positive properties of the soil by increasing the potential of flooding in the park and surrounding neighborhood.

We are aware that the City has taken on an aggressive schedule of park revitalization projects. Nearby Devir Park and Trafton Park are both undergoing major cosmetic makeovers at the moment, which include large influxes of funding. It is noted that these two parks are located in more affluent, and less diverse, sections of the city, and both projects have had extensive community outreach for design and planning input in the past few years than Roosevelt Park has had in the past decade. It is very concerning that the city would not prioritize a park that has active lead contamination and is connected to an elementary school.

We look forward to working with the City of Malden and the Friends of Roosevelt Park to end environmentally racist practices at Roosevelt Park.

Thank you,

Zane T. Crute
President, MVA Branch NAACP

Erga Pierrette
Chair, Environmental Justice, MVA Branch NACP

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