



Suburban Football Club

Field Conditions Advocacy Package

Member Overview & Communications - Reporting Guides, Campaigns, Letters

May 2026

What's Inside This Package

1. Background & Overview
2. 311 reporting guide (how to log issues so they count & are heard)
3. One-pager (the facts on field conditions, soccer, and HRM)
4. Social media campaign (sharing the voice - captions and hashtags)
5. Historical record (what we've done over the last several years)
6. Councillor contact list
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1. Background

The pattern, plain and simple

Every year, Suburban FC starts the outdoor season knowing that the grass fields rented from HRM will not be ready to play on as for our & the sports needed standards

This isn't speculation. It's the same situation we've documented and escalated for years. Here's the cycle:

- HRM does not begin field maintenance until the second week of May, with sport fields generally targeted for June 1st.
- Our paid field rental contracts begin June 1st (ex: we paid \$5,668 for one Sackville block alone in 2025).
- Fields are routinely not ready by June 1st (long grass, no lines, potholes, rocks, weeds, mud, safety risks, etc.)
- We have offered, multiple times, to fund maintenance ourselves or provide our own equipment and staff - at the time, rejected as there were contracts with third-parties
- Our members and your families pay for programs, show up, and find conditions that aren't safe, let alone playable for soccer.
- Members complain. Some quit. Some request refunds. In 2023, we lost hundreds of U3-U8 participation across one summer with the primary reason being due to field conditions.
- We meet with HRM, we're told they're working on it..the next year, we're back at square one. Some good people come to the table and it always sounds positive, but nothing changes - for their reason on bigger political/HRM policy constraints

A note on HRM's "standards"

- When we raise field conditions, HRM's most common response is that the field meets their internal *Playing Field Maintenance Classifications*. We want our members to understand what that actually means.
- HRM's standards were written by HRM, for HRM, to grade their own work. They are generic playing-field standards (not soccer standards)
- They do not require a field to be safe and playable on June 1st. They do not measure usable, regulation-appropriate playable hours. They allow a field with long grass, no lines, divots, weeds and exposed rocks to technically "pass" on paper while being unfit to put a U6 child on.
- So when HRM tells us a field meets their standard, that is often true, and the field can still be unsafe.
- We want to be clear with our membership: this is the second fight we are having.
 - The first fight is to get the fields you pay for ready on time.
 - The second fight is to change the standard itself, so "meets HRM's standard" can't be used as a final answer to a parent whose child can't safely train. We will not let HRM use their own standard as a shield to scapegoat or ignore real, observable conditions on the ground.

What we're asking from you

- We've taken this as far as a club can take it on its own.
- We need our membership to make their voices heard directly to the people elected to represent them.
- This package gives you everything you need to:
 - Email your HRM councillor with a clear, accountability-focused message, or pick up a printed letter from the SFC office, sign it, and we'll mail it for you.
 - Log every field condition issue with HRM 311, properly, so it goes on the public record.
 - Help spread the message on social media.
 - Understand the bigger picture - soccer participation in HRM, the indoor and outdoor capacity gap, and what's at stake for our community.

Why this matters beyond soccer

- **Physical activity & health**
 - When kids drop out of organized sport early, the long-term effects on physical and mental health are well documented.
 - Field conditions are one of the top reasons kids stop coming.
- **Healthcare system**
 - Lower youth physical activity feeds into long-term costs on our public healthcare system.
 - Sport infrastructure is preventative healthcare.
- **Equity & accessibility**
 - When grass fields fail, programs get pushed to expensive private indoor turf, paid travel, or simply cancelled.
 - The families hit hardest are the ones who can least afford alternatives.
- **Newcomers & community connection**
 - Soccer is one of the most accessible sports for newcomer families in HRM.
 - Poor public infrastructure shuts the door on a key entry point to community life.
- **World Cup 2026 moment**
 - Canada is co-hosting the men's FIFA World Cup this year.
 - Soccer participation is at record highs nationally.
 - HRM has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in the sport, and instead families are showing up to fields covered in mud, weeds, and rocks.

2. How to Report a Field Issue to 311

Every 311 report goes on the public record. The more reports HRM receives about a specific field, the harder it is for that field to be ignored. This is one of the most effective things our members can do.

Two ways to submit

- **Phone:** dial 311 from anywhere in HRM
- **Email:** contactus@311.halifax.ca

What to include in every report

Strong reports follow the same structure every time. Use this format:

Detail	What to write
Field location	Full name and civic address. ex: "Sackville Heights Elementary School - Sport Field" or "West Bedford School field."
Date & time of observation	When you saw the issue. Photos help & note the time stamp.
Specific issue(s)	Be specific. "Grass approx 8 inches tall" beats "grass too long." Examples: long grass, no field lines, potholes, exposed rocks, large divots in front of net, mud, weeds, dog waste, broken glass, needles, ticks.
Approximate location on field	"Centre circle", "penalty area on the south end", "entire surface," etc.
Sense of urgency	Dangerous / Severe / Moderate / Minor, and <u>why</u> . Safety risks (rocks, glass, needles, large holes) should always be flagged as Dangerous.
Impact on programming	"My child's U6 session is on this field tonight" or "Suburban FC has paid bookings here through August." This makes the cost real.
Photos	Include them. Wide shots and close-ups of specific hazards. Photos are by far the most powerful part of a report.
Reference number	Save the 311 reference number you receive. Forward it to your councillor and to admin@suburbanfc.ca so we can track it.

A few rules to keep this effective

- One report per field per session. If a coach is reporting, only one staff member files for that group - don't have ten parents and three coaches all submitting the same complaint about the same field. It clogs the system without adding weight.
- Different fields = different reports. If you see issues at two fields, submit two reports.
- Stick to facts. Describe what you see. Skip the editorial - the photos and the specifics do the work.
- Forward the reference number to admin@suburbanfc.ca. We're tracking these as a club so we can show HRM the cumulative volume.

HRM's own standards: know them, cite them, push past them

- HRM publishes a Playing Field Maintenance Classifications document (It is the minimum standard you and the club are paying for)
- Two things to keep in mind:
 - **First, hold them to the standard they wrote.**
 - When a field fails the basics on a paid rental day, that's a service failure, not a weather story:
 - Sport field maintenance is targeted to begin June 1 each year.
 - Additional seasonal turf maintenance (fertilizing, top dressing, overseeding) "may occur" April to June, per HRM's own document.
 - All field classifications include grass cutting, line painting, and basic safety inspection as part of the published service standard.
 - If a field fails to meet that standard during your paid rental window, that is not a weather issue. That's a service-level issue.
 - **Second, don't let "meets the standard" be the end of the conversation.**
 - HRM's standards are generic, written by HRM to grade HRM. They were not designed around what a soccer field actually needs to be safe and playable. A field can technically "meet the standard" and still:
 - Have grass too long for ball roll or fair play.
 - Have no lines or incorrectly sized lines for the age group using it.
 - Have divots, exposed rocks, weeds, mud, or thin grass coverage that would fail any reasonable safety check for a U6 player.
 - Be entirely unmaintained on a Saturday morning your child is paying to play on it.
- When HRM tells you the field meets their standard, that may be technically true - it does not change what you are seeing in front of you.
- Report what you observe in plain terms (long grass, no lines, exposed rocks, mud, divots) and let the photos do the work.
- The point of these reports is not to win an argument about HRM's internal classification.
- The point is to build a public record that the standard itself is not fit for purpose for soccer.
- That's a fight Suburban FC is having on your behalf at the policy level, in parallel with what you're doing on the ground.

3. One-Pager - The Facts

Use this for context, share it with friends, attach it to councillor emails, post it where it helps!

Soccer in Nova Scotia, by the numbers

- 25,329 registered soccer players in Nova Scotia (2025).
- 23% increase in participation since 2019.
- HRM accounts for 54% of all Soccer Nova Scotia members.
- Suburban FC alone has 6,000+ annual members (one of the largest community sport clubs in Atlantic Canada & largest soccer east of Montreal)
- Halifax CMA population: 503,037 (July 2024). Halifax County: 517,115 (July 2025). The region keeps growing - demand is not flattening.

Outdoor field reality

- HRM lists 134 municipal sport fields and 11 all-weather fields.
- HRM's own strategy acknowledges grass fields cannot sustain turf quality under heavy use.
- In practice, that means a large share of the "available" inventory is not playable, regulation-appropriate, or safe.
- HRM's Playing Field Maintenance Classifications are written by HRM, for HRM. They are generic playing-field standards (not soccer standards)
- A field can "meet the standard" on paper and still not be safe or playable for the age group renting it.
- The metric that matters is playable hours on safe surfaces, not field count, and not the internal classification.

Additional / Alternative Indoor field reality (to raise awareness)

- BMO Soccer Centre runs at 85-88% utilization during high-season prime time (Jan-Mar weekends), and 71% across all weekend prime time in 2023 (Soccer Nova Scotia Fieldhouse Feasibility Study, October 2024).
- Documented HRM-area shortfall: 1.6 full-size indoor fields short today, 2.5 short by 2031, 4.5 short by 2051, just to maintain the current level of service for registered soccer participants. The Feasibility Study calls these figures a minimum representation of need.
- In 2023, 13,447 of HRM's registered Soccer NS members were in the three HRM districts (Halifax, Harbour East, Suburban), 60% of all members in the province. The Suburban district alone had 3,547 registered participants.
- Soccer NS's consultation found that 16 of 17 surveyed member clubs reported their growth is constrained by lack of indoor facilities. Clubs are turning families away for lack of space.
- Other provincial sport organizations (basketball, volleyball, baseball, rugby, football, squash) all reported the same shortage. This is not a soccer-only problem (it's an HRM problem)
- HRM has 5 indoor turf fields serving roughly 13,500 users (compared to 26 ice surfaces.)
- HRM's current position is that indoor need has "not been identified." Soccer NS's 2024 Feasibility Study, supply/demand reconciliation, club consultation, and PSO consultation all say otherwise.

What we've offered HRM as a club

- To fund field maintenance directly - declined
- To bring our own equipment and staff to maintain fields (declined on basis of current third-party contracted maintenance group in effect)
- To partner on long-term planning for hub fields and indoor capacity...ongoing, no commitments.

What we want

1. Fields that are playable and safe by June 1st, every year, across the Suburban region & HRM
2. A review of HRM's Playing Field Maintenance Classifications, co-developed with the user groups who actually pay to play on the fields, so the standard reflects what soccer needs (not what HRM finds easiest to grade itself against)
3. HRM to adopt a playable-hours service-level standard (measured and reported, not aspirational.)
4. Acceleration of all-weather (turf) field expansion using HRM's own hub model.
5. Indoor turf treated as essential public infrastructure, planned, funded, and built like ice surfaces have been. The Soccer NS Fieldhouse Feasibility Study (October 2024) lays out the demand and the path forward; HRM's capital partnership is the missing piece.
6. A genuine partnership model with the user groups who pay for and rely on these facilities.

4. Social Media Campaign

A short, sharable campaign to amplify the message. Members can post, repost, or share the SFC posts. Tag councillors directly when posting in your area.

Campaign hashtags

- #FixOurFieldsHRM
- #UnplayableHRM
- #HRMNoFieldsForCanadasGame

Member share caption (short)

For members reposting or sharing on their own pages.

*"My kid (**age**) plays for @SuburbanFC. This is the field they're paying to play on. Every year it's the same story - HRM doesn't get the grass fields ready in time, and our families pay for it"*

If you're a HRM resident, email your councillor or call 311. The club has a letter you can sign at the office and they'll mail it for you.

#FixOurFieldsHRM #UnplayableHRM #HRMNoFieldsForCanadasGame

Story / quick-post versions

- "Soccer is the most-played youth sport in HRM & Canada. You'd never know it from the fields. #FixOurFields"
- "Canada is co-hosting the World Cup. Our kids' first soccer field is mud and weeds. #FixOurFields"
- "HRM says the field meets their standard. The standard was written by HRM, for HRM, without us. That's the problem. #FixOurFields"
- "BMO Soccer Centre runs at 85-88% in high-season prime time. HRM says indoor need has 'not been identified.' The data says otherwise. #UnplayableHRM"

Posting tips for members

- Tag your district councillor in the post.
- Use real photos. Wide shots of the field, close-ups of hazards.
- Keep it factual. Skip insults - the photos do the work.
- Tag @SuburbanFC so we can reshare and amplify.

5. Historical Record

This is a short, factual timeline of what Suburban FC has done over recent years to address field conditions through the proper channels.

2023

- Critical loss U3-U8 participation across one summer, attributed largely to grass field conditions (these grassroots ages are primarily grass field users)
- Multiple meetings held with HRM Parks & Rec staff.

Late 2024

- Suburban FC introduced itself formally to all newly elected and returning HRM councillors in our region.
- Offered partnership opportunities, charity events, and open dialogue.

2025 season

- May-June: Suburban FC staff inspected and documented every field ahead of the season opener.
- Detailed condition reports submitted to HRM via 311.
- HRM Parks & Rec confirmed receipt and shared the maintenance standards document.
- June 1: Paid contracts began. Fields were not ready - long grass, no lines, rocks, mud.
- June 4: Suburban FC sent an urgent letter to all five area councillors. Photos attached.
- June 12: HRM Parks management requested a meeting.
- June 25: In-person meeting held with HRM leadership at the Mackintosh depot.
- Outcome: relationship built, frustration acknowledged, no systemic change.

April 2026

- West Bedford School field documented as less than 30% grass coverage, six weeks before the U4-U8 programs were due to start.
- Constituent reached out to District 16 councillor; response cited "may occur" rather than "will occur" language in the maintenance standards.
- Lockview/Fall River turf field: Suburban FC's requests for storage, signage, and a community recognition wall remained unresolved despite the club's role in helping bring the facility forward.

What hasn't worked

- Polite, behind-the-scenes communication alone.
- Offering to fund or perform maintenance ourselves.
- One-off meetings without service-level commitments.
- Relying on HRM's published standards being met without external pressure.
- Accepting "the field meets HRM's standard" as the end of the conversation. The standard itself was written by HRM, for HRM, without soccer-specific input. Meeting it does not mean a field is safe or playable for our youngest players.

What we're trying now

- Mobilizing membership to engage councillors directly.
- Treating 311 as a public record, not a complaint line.
- Connecting field conditions to broader public-policy issues (health, equity, growth, the World Cup moment)
- Continuing direct dialogue with HRM Parks staff while applying public pressure in parallel.
- Pushing at the policy level for HRM's Playing Field Maintenance Classifications to be reviewed and updated with user-group input, so "meets the standard" cannot be used to shut down legitimate concerns about safety and playability.

6. Your HRM Councillor

Find your district below and email the relevant councillor. If you're not sure which district you're in, look up your civic address at halifax.ca/city-hall/districts-councillors/district-look.

District	Area	Councillor	Email
1	Waverley - Fall River - Musquodoboit Valley	Cathy Deagle Gammon	deaglec@halifax.ca
10	Bedford Basin West	Kathryn Morse	kathryn.morse@halifax.ca
14	Middle/Upper Sackville - Beaverbank - Lucasville	John A. Young	john.young@halifax.ca
15	Lower Sackville - Beaver Bank	Billy Gillis	billy.gillis@halifax.ca
16	Bedford - Wentworth	Jean St-Amand	jean.st-amand@halifax.ca

Optional: who else to copy

- Your provincial MLA (for school field issues - since most of our fields sit on HRCE/provincial school sites).
- Your federal MP - for sport infrastructure funding context.
- admin@suburbanfc.ca - so the club can track every report and message going out.

Appendix A - Member Email Template

This is the digital version. Copy the template below into your email client, fill in the highlighted sections, and send it to your HRM councillor. Their contact details are in Section 6.

A few quick notes before you send:

- Send it from your personal email (not your work email)
- CC your local MLA and MP if you'd like additional reach (optional).
- If you've already submitted a 311 report, mention the reference number (it strengthens your message)
- Keep it factual and direct. The most effective messages name the field, name the issue, and ask a specific question.
- Prefer paper? Pick up a pre-written, printed letter at the SFC office (59 Damascus Road), sign it, and we'll mail it for you. See Appendix B.

Template

Subject: Field Conditions in [INSERT YOUR DISTRICT] - Action Requested

Dear Councillor [LAST NAME],

My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am a resident of [YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD/DISTRICT]. My [child / children] play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I'm writing about the condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our area, specifically [NAME THE FIELD ex: West Bedford School, Sackville Heights Elementary, Harold T. Barrett, Millwood High, etc.].

On [DATE], I observed the following at this field: [DESCRIBE: long grass, no lines, potholes, rocks, mud, safety hazards, etc.]. I have submitted a 311 report (Ref #: [INSERT IF YOU HAVE ONE]).

This is not a one-off issue. Suburban FC has paid HRM for field rentals for years and has documented the same problems season after season. Meanwhile, our paid contracts begin June 1 each year, and the fields are routinely not ready for play by that date.

I'm also aware HRM may respond that the field meets its Playing Field Maintenance Classifications. That standard was written by HRM, for HRM, without input from the user groups who pay to play on the fields. A field can technically "meet" that standard and still be unsafe or unplayable for the age group using it. "Meets the standard" should not be the end of the conversation.

I'd like to ask four direct questions:

1. What is the maintenance plan and timeline for [FIELD NAME] for the 2026 season?
2. Why are paying user groups receiving fields that do not meet HRM's own published Playing Field Maintenance Classifications?
3. If HRM's position is that the field meets its standard, will HRM commit to reviewing the standard itself with input from the user groups (clubs, PSOs) who actually pay to use these facilities so the standard reflects what soccer needs, not just what HRM finds easiest to grade itself against?
4. Will HRM commit to a service-level standard tied to actual playable hours, not just field count, and report on it publicly?

This affects more than just my family. Suburban FC & others are losing members and a main feedback is due to poor field conditions. We're heading into June having the 2026 FIFA World Cup year on Canadian soil, and the grass fields where our youngest players experience soccer for the first time are not safe or playable. That is a community failure, not a soccer-specific one.

I would appreciate a direct response. I'd also welcome the opportunity to be kept informed about HRM's broader plan for outdoor playing field investment, all-weather field expansion, and the indoor turf capacity gap that has been documented by Soccer Nova Scotia.

Thank you for your time.

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR ADDRESS]

[YOUR PHONE / EMAIL]

Suburban FC Member

Appendix B - Printable Letters

These are the printable letters for the SFC office. Each district has its own pre-written letter. Members fill in their name, address, the specific field, and sign. Suburban FC mails the signed letters in batches to the relevant councillor.

Councillor Cathy Deagle Gammon - District 1
Halifax City Hall, PO Box 1749. Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Councillor Deagle Gammon,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of District 1.

My child / children play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I am writing about the ongoing condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our district, including but not limited to:

Field(s):

What I have observed at these fields (circle): Long grass no lines potholes rocks safety hazards

This is not a one-off issue. Suburban FC has paid HRM for field rentals for years and has documented the same problems season after season. The club has offered to fund or perform maintenance directly. HRM has declined. Meanwhile, paid contracts begin June 1 each year, and fields are routinely not ready for play by that date.

I am also aware that HRM's typical response is that fields meet HRM's own Playing Field Maintenance Classifications. That standard was written by HRM, for HRM. It is generic and was not developed with the user groups who pay to play on these fields. A field can technically "meet" that standard and still be unsafe or unplayable for a U6 child. "Meets the standard" is not an acceptable final answer.

I am asking you, as my councillor, to:

- Provide a clear maintenance plan and timeline for the fields named above for the 2026 season.
- Explain why paying user groups receive fields that do not meet HRM's own Playing Field Maintenance Classifications.
- Commit to a public, playable-hours service-level standard - measured and reported.
- Review HRM's Playing Field Maintenance Classifications themselves, with input from the user groups (clubs, PSOs) who pay to use these facilities. "Meets the standard" cannot be HRM's answer to a parent whose child cannot safely play on the field.
- Canada is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup this Summer, yet the youngest players in our community are still kicking off their first season on fields that aren't safe. That is a community failure.

I would appreciate a direct response.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Councillor Kathryn Morse - District 10
Halifax City Hall, PO Box 1749 Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Councillor Morse,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of District 10,

My child / children play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I am writing about the ongoing condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our district, including but not limited to:

Field(s):

What I have observed at these fields (circle): Long grass no lines potholes rocks safety hazards

This is not a one-off issue. Suburban FC has paid HRM for field rentals for years and has documented the same problems season after season. The club has offered to fund or perform maintenance directly. HRM has declined. Meanwhile, paid contracts begin June 1 each year, and fields are routinely not ready for play by that date.

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- Canada is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup this Summer, yet the youngest players in our community are still kicking off their first season on fields that aren't safe. That is a community failure.

I would appreciate a direct response.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Councillor John A. Young - District 14
Halifax City Hall, PO Box 1749 - Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Councillor Young,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of District 14

My child / children play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I am writing about the ongoing condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our district, including but not limited to:

Field(s):

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This is not a one-off issue. Suburban FC has paid HRM for field rentals for years and has documented the same problems season after season. The club has offered to fund or perform maintenance directly. HRM has declined. Meanwhile, paid contracts begin June 1 each year, and fields are routinely not ready for play by that date.

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- Canada is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup this Summer, yet the youngest players in our community are still kicking off their first season on fields that aren't safe. That is a community failure.

I would appreciate a direct response.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Councillor Billy Gillis - District 15
Halifax City Hall, PO Box 1749 - Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Councillor Gillis,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of District 15

My child / children play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I am writing about the ongoing condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our district, including but not limited to:

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- Canada is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup this Summer, yet the youngest players in our community are still kicking off their first season on fields that aren't safe. That is a community failure.

I would appreciate a direct response.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Councillor Jean St-Amand - District 16
Halifax City Hall, PO Box 1749 - Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Councillor St-Amand,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of District 16

My child / children play with Suburban Football Club, the largest community soccer club east of Montreal, with over 5,000 members across Bedford, Sackville, Fall River, Waverley, and Beaverbank.

I am writing about the ongoing condition of HRM-managed grass soccer fields in our district, including but not limited to:

Field(s):

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- Explain why paying user groups receive fields that do not meet HRM's own Playing Field Maintenance Classifications.
- Commit to a public, playable-hours service-level standard - measured and reported.
- Review HRM's Playing Field Maintenance Classifications themselves, with input from the user groups (clubs, PSOs) who pay to use these facilities. "Meets the standard" cannot be HRM's answer to a parent whose child cannot safely play on the field.
- Canada is hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup this Summer, yet the youngest players in our community are still kicking off their first season on fields that aren't safe. That is a community failure.

I would appreciate a direct response.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Appendix C - Evidence / Photos

These are photos from the 2025 summer season. These were used to report to HRM, 90% of these 'met' the HRM standards.

