

# **EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2013-2014**

## ***IS THE PONDEROSA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD DANGEROUS?***

Case Number GJ-13-05

### **REASON FOR REPORT**

A citizen complaint was received regarding dangerous depressions on the surface of the Ponderosa High School football field's 4-year-old artificial turf.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2008, the voters of the El Dorado Union High School District (EDUHSD) approved Measure Q which would provide \$66.3 million in general obligation school bonds to renovate and modernize educational facilities in the district. The EDUHSD consists of nine schools, which include four comprehensive high schools (El Dorado, Oak Ridge, Ponderosa, and Union Mine), three continuation schools, one charter school and one community day school. All Measure Q funds were to be spent exclusively on school improvements – not on administrator or teacher salaries. The EDUHSD Board of Trustees created a Citizens' Oversight Committee (COC) to inform the public concerning the expenditure of bond revenues. The COC actively reviews and reports on the proper expenditure of taxpayers' money for school construction.

### **ACTIONS**

1. The Grand Jury inspected the football fields at El Dorado, Oak Ridge, Ponderosa, and Union Mine high schools.
2. The Grand Jury interviewed relevant staff at three high schools, relevant EDUHSD staff and a member of the EDUHSD Board of Trustees.
3. The Grand Jury met with representatives of Roebbelen, the general contractor involved in the installation of the artificial turf at Ponderosa's football field.
4. The Grand Jury interviewed FieldTurf, the contractor that installed the artificial turf.
5. The Grand Jury reviewed documents chronicling the events and communications regarding a drain trench remediation effort at Ponderosa during the installation of the football field's artificial turf.
6. The Grand Jury inspected the construction plans for Ponderosa's football field.
7. The Grand Jury reviewed the EDUHSD Consolidated Expenditure Reports and the COC's annual reports for Measure Q.

## FINDINGS

1. The cost of replacing the track and football fields with synthetic all-weather materials at El Dorado, Oak Ridge, Ponderosa, and Union Mine high schools was \$10,018,000.
2. At Ponderosa high school, the Grand Jury observed two rows of depressions on the football field's surface running the length of the field. These depressions are located near the middle of the field and parallel to the hash marks.
3. The other football field installed by the same contractor, Roebbelen Construction, was within specified limits.
4. Roebbelen representatives stated that the standard variance for artificial turf installation is 1/4" to level. Measurements were taken of the football field's depressions and it was found that the west hash mark depression has a variance up to 7/8". The east hash mark depression is slightly less, but still outside of the 1/4" variance in many places.
5. The Superintendent stated the new field is better than the old grass field and that it would cost too much to fix the depressions. In a follow-up email, the Superintendent wrote that Ponderosa's football field is inspected each year by the artificial turf's company representatives, FieldTurf Company. The FieldTurf Company is aware of the depressions and has indicated that the depressions have not affected the field's warranty.
6. A member of the EDUHSD Board stated that the Board was advised of these depressions only after the initiation of this Grand Jury investigation. However, the Grand Jury learned that the district was notified three years ago about the field's depressions during the installation of artificial turf at Ponderosa's football field. At that time mitigation efforts were undertaken to address depressions that developed in the field's drainage trenches. The mitigation work that was done was to remove the existing crushed rock to a depth of 6" from all drainage trenches and replace it with larger 3/4" crushed angular rock. The construction plans for Ponderosa's football field showed that the drainage trenches are 24" in depth.
7. Ponderosa High School staff indicated that students have tripped while using the field during school hours.

## EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

Measure Q bond monies totaling \$10,018,000 were spent for the replacement of the track and football fields at the EDUHSD four high schools. Unfortunately, the depressions in the surface of the Ponderosa football field are a constant reminder to the taxpayers that they are paying for a potentially dangerous football field and nothing has been done to make it right.

The Grand Jury is concerned about the field's condition, as it presents a significant safety and liability issue to the school district and its taxpayers. As time passes, the depth of these depressions in the football field may increase and create an even larger safety and liability issue.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Grand Jury recommends the EDUHS District arrange a meeting within sixty (60) days from the publication of this report. Representatives from all involved parties are to work out a remediation action plan to fix the field depressions.

This meeting should include at least the following parties:

- Roebbelen Construction, Project General Contractor
  - Beales & Alliance, Project Architects
  - Joe Vicini, Inc., Project Grading Contractor
  - FieldTurf Company, Turf Installation Contractor
  - Representatives from Ponderosa High School, and EDUHSD
2. The Grand Jury expects that within 60 days of the meeting the EDUHSD will report back to the Grand Jury with a plan including accountable parties, deadline dates and status update.
  3. The Grand Jury recommends that the cost of this repair work not be paid with Measure Q monies, nor borne by the EDUHSD and its taxpayers.
  4. The Grand Jury recommends that EDUHSD adopt a policy to ensure that completed capital projects are reviewed for proper standards and contract compliance.

## RESPONSES

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this Report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, presiding judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This Report has been provided to the El Dorado Union High School District Board for their review and response.

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that the responses be sent electronically as a "Word" file or "PDF" file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to the El Dorado County Grand Jury at:

[courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org](mailto:courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org)

**ATTACHMENT** [ Adobe Reader is required to view attachment ]

El Dorado Union High School District 6/30/2013 Consolidated Expenditure Report