



## **CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL**

### **Planning and Zoning:**

### **Staff Report on Artificial Turf Ordinance**

May 23<sup>th</sup>, 2023

On April 5th, 2022, former City Manager Bob Francis presented an ordinance to place a moratorium on using artificial turf in residential districts. The discussion item was introduced to the City Council due to the number of complaints from code enforcement regarding installing the unpermitted product. Other residents have approached City Staff to inquire about the approval process to install artificial turf. As of now, the code does not explicitly prohibit the use of artificial turf in residential areas. The Planning and Zoning Board has since been tasked with determining whether artificial turf should be allowed and included in the Land Development Code.

During the August Planning and Zoning Meeting, Staff provided data and references to other Artificial Turf Land Development Code ordinances among eight Florida municipalities. Staff reviewed the commonalities among the ordinance language to better understand the requirements, restrictions, and permitting procedures for allowing artificial turf in residential zones. The ordinances determine the allowable material types of artificial turf, where such turf can be installed on-site, conditions for the installation, and product maintenance practices over time. Board Member Woods and City Staff outlined the benefits and consequences of allowing synthetic grass on residential properties. However, the positive and negative aspects of the product are evolving as new types of artificial turf are created, and the long-term environmental impacts have yet to be seen.

At the end of the August Planning and Zoning Meeting, the Board requested additional information about the code languages for artificial turf among the examined Florida municipalities. City Staff were asked to communicate with other municipality Planning Departments to determine potential issues they have faced with the material and the public's response to the product. City Staff were also to gauge the public's interest in artificial turf for the Board's consideration.

At the January 2023, Planning and Zoning Board meeting, the survey results were reviewed, and new information about the regulations of artificial turf among other Florida municipalities was further examined. Among the ten questions presented to the public, the responses were split between those strongly favoring artificial turf on residential properties and against the use. Based on the written responses provided in the public opinion survey, the most common concerns for allowing artificial turf within the city dealt with the product's environmental impacts (specifically with Lake Conway's water quality, storm runoff, toxic pollutants, and natural preservation). Discussion ensued that strict guidelines and a variance process could be applied for reviewing artificial turf requests on a case-by-case basis. Attorney Langley recommended drafting an ordinance based on such aspects.

The January 2023 Planning and Zoning meeting motioned for the artificial turf moratorium to be extended for six months for further research and discussion.

The attached ordinance language is based on the Lighthouse Point, Florida ordinance.