



City of Pompano Beach Planning & Zoning Board

Commission Chambers
100 West Atlantic Blvd.
Pompano Beach, FL
33060

MINUTES

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

6:00 PM

(00:21)

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Coleman at 6:02 PM.

(01:15)

B. ROLL CALL

Gigi Doubek
Paul Fisher
Robert Hartsell
David Mingus
Keriann Worley
Carla Coleman

Marianne Edge (absent)

Also in Attendance:

James Saunders, Assistant City Attorney
Bobby Adkins
Jean Dolan
Maggie Barszewski
Lauren Gratzner
Max Wemyss

intentionally blocked / see relevant item below

intentionally blocked / see relevant item below

3. [LN-687](#) **TEXT AMENDMENT - ARTIFICIAL TURF**

Request:	Text Amendment
P&Z#	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Project Location:	N/A
Folio Number:	N/A
Land Use Designation:	N/A
Zoning District:	N/A
Commission District:	N/A
Agent:	N/A

Project Planner:

Max Wemyss

Mr. Max Wemyss, Project Planner, introduced himself to the Board and presented a text amendment on synthetic turf regulations in Pompano Beach. Currently, the city's code does not address synthetic turf directly but requires a percentage of pervious area on residential lots. Many property owners have installed artificial turf and are subject to violations, prompting the city to consider regulations.

Mr. Wemyss outlined concerns about synthetic turf, including reduced air and water filtration, heat retention, and improper drainage. Other cities vary in their approach, treating it as either pervious or impervious and setting quality, installation, and maintenance standards. The proposed amendment includes defining synthetic turf, ensuring proper drainage, requiring a minimum pile height and fiber density, and prohibiting its use in swales and rights-of-way. Installation would require a permit and compliance with stormwater management plans.

Given the information provided to the Board, the Development Services Department provided the following alternative motion options, which may be revised or modified at the Board's discretion:

Alternative Motion I

The Board recommends approval of the code amendment as it finds the proposed revisions consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and meets the review standards for the zoning code text amendment.

Alternative Motion II

The Board recommends the item to be tabled to give staff time to address any issues raised by the Board, Staff, or general public.

Ms. Worley asked if installing synthetic turf would require a permit, noting that natural sod does not. Mr. Wemyss confirmed it would and explained that synthetic turf is not allowed in swales per the city engineer's office. Existing violations would need to be corrected, though compliance options may be available. Ms. Worley questioned if the goal was to limit synthetic turf installations, expressing a preference for natural grass. Mr. Wemyss emphasized balancing community preferences with responsible regulations, ensuring a clear compliance path while maintaining city standards.

Mr. Fisher asked about discussions with the urban forester, and Mr. Wemyss confirmed that landscape code standards, including ground cover requirements and tree protection, were considered in the ordinance. Mr. Fisher then raised concerns about drainage, noting that swales are typically adjusted when driveways are redone to ensure proper water absorption. He emphasized the need to prevent synthetic turf from causing water runoff into streets, acknowledging that while drainage plans are required, clogged drains can still lead to flooding.

Mr. Hartsell raised concerns about artificial turf maintenance and storm drainage. Mr. Wemyss explained that properties using synthetic turf must submit a stormwater management plan. Enforcement relies on code compliance, but testing during dry conditions is challenging. Ms. Jean Dolan added that drainage master plans ensure proper swale profiles rather than direct water flow testing.

Mr. Hartsell questioned the need for changes, noting the high costs of compliance. Mr. Wemyss explained that artificial turf is allowed within the 70% impervious limit, but stricter standards apply beyond that to maintain environmental benefits. He acknowledged the expense but emphasized that violations often occur on high-value properties. Regarding compatibility, he confirmed that artificial turf can extend to the property line, with no setback requirement in the draft regulations.

Ms. Doubek noted that synthetic turf is common in townhouse developments, creating inconsistency among units. She questioned how compliance would be managed for owners unaware of code requirements. Mr. Wemyss explained that code enforcement regularly addresses unpermitted work, and properties must be brought into compliance before sale, often requiring removal of noncompliant turf. He added that for townhomes, artificial turf would remain limited to allowable impervious areas, with new applications specifying expansion limits to ensure compliance with pervious area requirements.

Assistant City Attorney Saunders confirmed that the City Commission initiated the discussion on synthetic turf regulations. Mr. Wemyss clarified that the draft ordinance would not include an amortization schedule since noncompliant properties were never permitted. If new standards are adopted, they would not apply retroactively to legally permitted turf installations. Most noncompliant properties exceed current pervious area requirements, meaning compliance would likely require reducing synthetic turf coverage rather than modifying material standards.

Mr. Fisher noted that most applicants install small putting greens in their backyards. Mr. Wemyss stated current artificial turf regulations are treated like patio space. Mr. Fisher suggested a long-term study to assess its impact on water usage and potential cost savings for the city if the ordinance is enacted.

Chair Coleman opposed allowing synthetic turf to replace pervious surfaces, citing drainage concerns, especially in waterfront areas. She suggested requiring a barrier between lot lines, restricting turf near seawalls, and maintaining a percentage of natural pervious surfaces. Mr. Wemyss clarified that artificial turf would be allowed with proper drainage, but Chair Coleman questioned feasibility and emphasized natural soil's superior absorption. She also supported restrictions around tree drip lines to protect roots. She requested revisions incorporating these concerns for the next meeting.

Mr. Hartsell emphasized the heat retention of artificial turf, noting that children playing on it during sporting events experience extreme temperatures. He stressed that turf lacks the cooling effect of natural grass and becomes significantly hotter.

Chair Coleman emphasized the need to require a certain amount of living material in yards to prevent excessive use of synthetic turf. Mr. Wemyss clarified that properties must still meet landscaping code requirements, including trees and shrubs. If synthetic turf is used in the front yard, additional landscaping such as shrubs, trees, or palms would be required unless already present.

Mr. Wemyss noted key points for follow-up, including incorporating a physical barrier between properties except where abutting a waterway, providing examples and recommended dimensions, and consulting the city attorney on the necessity of an amortization period. He also acknowledged concerns about permeability and plans to clarify the language regarding the drip line.

Mr. Hartsell expressed interest in reviewing the March 12, 2024, City Commission meeting to understand their perspective on artificial turf regulations, as he was not present for the discussion. He hopes this will provide insight into their intentions and potentially generate new ideas.

Mr. Fisher cautioned about runoff near seawalls, noting that inadequate setbacks could lead to significant erosion, similar to water pooling at a home's foundation.

Assistant City Attorney Saunders reminded the board that staff is responding to the Commission's request, and that the board's role is to review text amendments. If the board opposes the amendment but staff proceeds, the board can still recommend prohibitions or considerations for inclusion.

MOTION by Robert Hartsell and seconded by Paul Fisher recommends the item to be tabled to the March 26, 2025 meeting to give staff time to address any issues raised by the Board, Staff, or general public. All voted in favor. The motion was approved.



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MINUTES

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

6:00 PM

(00:25)

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Stacer at 6:03 PM.

(00:30)

B. ROLL CALL

Rich Dally
Gigi Doubek
Paul Fisher
Robert Hartsell
Tundra King
Carla Coleman
Fred Stacer

Also in Attendance:
James Saunders, Assistant City Attorney
Meredith Rollins
Nguyen Tran
Lauren Gratzner
Max Wemyss

intentionally blocked / see relevant item below

intentionally blocked / see relevant item below

(1:07:03)

4. [LN-687](#)

TEXT AMENDMENT – SYNTHETIC TURF

Request:	Text Amendment
P&Z#	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Project Location:	N/A
Folio Number:	N/A
Land Use Designation:	N/A
Zoning District:	N/A
Commission District:	N/A
Agent:	N/A
Project Planner:	Max Wemyss

Mr. Max Wemyss, Project Planner, introduced himself to the Board and presented the proposed text amendment. He began his presentation and reviewed the following: Use of Synthetic Turf in Pompano Beach; Rationale for Regulation of Synthetic Turf; Review of Regulation for Comparable Municipalities; Relevant Regulation within the City; Drafted Regulation; and Additional Information as requested by P&Z.

Ms. King asked how the proposed standards differ from what is currently in place at parks with artificial turf. Mr. Wemyss explained that existing parks already use artificial turf systems similar to what is proposed. However, those installations were permitted through a public purpose adjustment, which allows administrative variances for public projects that would not otherwise meet current code requirements.

Chair Stacer expressed concern about potential inconsistencies but noted the practicality of artificial turf for residential use differs from city-maintained fields. He acknowledged that while the city uses turf for high-traffic areas like football or soccer fields, a homeowner installing turf is unlikely to have that level of activity. He stated he could accept the difference in standards, given the distinct purposes and maintenance realities.

Chair Stacer supported the restriction on synthetic turf in swales, noting their importance for drainage. Mr. Wemyss confirmed turf with infill was incompatible with swale systems and outlined requirements for stormwater retention on single-family lots. Chair Stacer asked about drainage on waterfront properties and was assured new applications must include plans to retain runoff. He also asked about trees, and Mr. Wemyss confirmed the urban forester would review each case to account for long-term root growth.

Vice Chair Coleman raised concern about runoff from full artificial turf yards along canals. Mr. Wemyss clarified stormwater regulations prohibit discharge of initial rainfall off site, including into canals, and that a stormwater plan would ensure retention of the first inch of rainfall. Chair Stacer suggested drainage plans for waterfront properties should be reviewed for potential runoff and that options like small berms or other techniques could be used to retain water on site. Vice Chair Coleman suggested including language requiring special consideration in drainage plans for waterfront properties to ensure runoff into canals is not increased.

Mr. Fisher supported language similar to the suggestion provided and emphasized trusting the experts to implement it. He stated agreement with the fourth slide from the prior presentation, specifically the recommendation for a 36-inch setback along the fence line, and believed it addressed the concerns raised during the earlier meeting.

Mr. Hartsell asked about grass absorption compared to synthetic turf. Mr. Wemyss said the synthetic standard is 30 inches per hour per square yard but no direct comparison exists. Mr. Hartsell said he would be more comfortable if rates were similar and raised concerns about turf damage during hurricanes, microplastics, and landfill impact.

Mr. Dally said he does not expect a rush toward synthetic turf and prefers natural lawns. He viewed turf use as a minority issue and supported allowing homeowners some flexibility, provided drainage guidelines are followed. He did not believe hurricanes would result in large amounts of turf debris.

Chair Stacer said that while he opposed synthetic turf from a broader environmental and heat impact perspective, he acknowledged the need to be practical and supported efforts to find workable solutions.

Vice Chair Coleman agreed synthetic turf was problematic but praised staff for a balanced, well-researched approach. She stated the proposed rules offered strong guidance and enforcement if the City Commission moved forward.

Mr. Hartsell stated the board had brought the item to a point where the City Commission could decide. If the Commission supports it, they can move forward and write the policy accordingly.

Mr. Fisher noted synthetic turf is heavy and unlikely to float away in a storm. He raised a concern about the minimum pile height requirement affecting homeowners who want to install small putting greens, which require shorter turf. Mr. Wemyss explained such installations would not meet the proposed standard but could be permitted similarly to patios or other hardscape features, as long as they were limited in scope and not used for full-yard coverage.

Mr. Dally agreed with Mr. Hartsell and emphasized the item was a commission-based matter. The board was helping to establish the foundation, but the City Commission would ultimately determine the policy.

Mr. Wemyss stated the Commission's concerns also involved properties where grass would not grow, often due to lawn parking. Synthetic turf would not support vehicles, and cheaper alternatives are less durable. He suggested exploring drought-tolerant living ground covers and recommended creating a brochure to share these options.

MOTION by Rich Dally and seconded by Tundra King that the Board recommend approval of the text amendment to the City Commission for their consideration, with updated staff recommendations. All voted in favor. The motion was approved.

intentionally blocked