



# NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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December 17, 2025

To: New Fairfield Board of Education

From: Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools &  
Carrie DePuy, Director of Business and Operations

Cc: New Fairfield Board of Finance

Re: Non-Tax Revenue Comparison 2025-2026 School Year

## Introduction

In response to a [request](#) from the New Fairfield Board of Finance, this report provides an analysis of the New Fairfield Public Schools' non-tax revenue sources and benchmarks them against northern Fairfield County districts. While public schools are not structured, nor intended, to function as revenue-generating entities, they do oversee a limited set of fees and non-tax income streams tied to programmatic, facility, and operational needs. To support the Town's effort to assess all municipal and educational non-tax revenue, this review outlines the current sources within the school district, examines how they align with regional practices, and identifies areas where modest adjustments may be feasible.

For this analysis, New Fairfield Public Schools was benchmarked against a neighboring group of northern Fairfield County districts. These districts were chosen because they represent neighboring communities with comparable operational models and fee structures, providing a relevant basis for evaluating New Fairfield's non-tax revenue practices. The comparative districts include:

- Bethel Public Schools
- Brookfield Public Schools
- Newtown Public Schools
- Sherman School District (reviewed specifically for tuition comparisons)

The review focused on the revenue categories that typically fall within the purview of school districts and that are most directly influenced by Board of Education policy decisions. The following non-tax revenue streams were assessed:

- Preschool tuition
- High School athletics pay-to-participate fees
- High School parking fees
- Sherman tuition rates

- Facilities use fees
- Field use fees

### **Early Education (PreK) Programs Revenue Analysis**

Public school districts have a legal obligation under Child Find to identify children who require specialized supports and services. Under FAPE, districts must provide these special education services at no cost to families. To meet these mandates while fostering inclusive learning environments, districts typically operate integrated preschool programs that enroll both students with special needs and typically developing peers. While services for special education students are provided at no cost, districts generally charge tuition for their typically developing peers to offset a portion of program costs.

New Fairfield Public Schools operates its Early Learning Center, an integrated preschool program serving both groups of students, at New Fairfield Elementary School. Tuition revenue from typical peers is applied directly as an offset to program staffing costs, consistent with regional practices. A comparison of tuition rates across neighboring districts is provided below:

**Table # 1: Early Education Comparison**

| <b>Town</b>   | <b>Program</b>               |          | <b>Annual Fee</b> |
|---------------|------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| New Fairfield | Early Learning Center        | PreK 3-4 | \$3,500           |
| Bethel Public | Circle of Friends            | PreK 3   | \$2750            |
|               |                              | PreK 4   | \$3250            |
| Brookfield    | Integrated Preschool Program | PreK 3-4 | \$4,466           |
| Newtown       | Play Partners                | PreK 3-4 | \$2,400           |

New Fairfield's current tuition rate of \$3,500 is above Newtown and Bethel and remains below the rate charged in Brookfield. The last adjustment to New Fairfield's tuition occurred in the 2022–2023 school year.

Based on this comparative analysis, we are recommending that the Board of Education increase the tuition rate for the 2026-2027 school year from \$3,500 to \$3,750. This adjustment maintains New Fairfield's position within the regional range, reflects rising programmatic and staffing costs, and continues to support the program's ability to offset a portion of instructional expenses.

### **Athletics Pay-to-Participate Fee Analysis**

New Fairfield Public Schools charges a pay-to-participate fee to help offset the non-payroll expenses associated with running a comprehensive high school athletics program. These expenses typically include equipment replacement, officials costs and other operational costs. Families pay this fee per student, per season, and unlike some districts, New Fairfield does not offer a family cap. A comparison of regional fee structures is provided below:

| Table # 2: Pay-to-Participate Comparison |                             |            |            |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| School District                          | Per Student, Per Season Fee | Family Cap | Cap Amount |
| New Fairfield                            | \$150                       | No         | N/A        |
| Bethel                                   | \$150                       | Yes        | \$300      |
| Brookfield                               | \$0                         | N/A        | N/A        |
| Newtown                                  | \$205                       | Yes        | \$500      |

New Fairfield's current fee of \$150.00 is aligned with Bethel and falls within the standard range for districts in the region that charge participation fees. Brookfield is the only neighboring district in this comparison that does not assess a fee.

The last adjustment to New Fairfield's athletics fee occurred in the 2022-23 school year, when the fee was increased significantly from \$100 to \$150. Given the size and recency of that increase, as well as the district's current alignment with regional practices, we are not recommending an increase at this time.

In addition to the district's fee, families already incur substantial out-of-pocket costs related to athletics—such as booster club contributions, sport-specific equipment, apparel, and optional training programs. Raising the fee further would add to this financial burden and could create barriers to participation for some students.

For these reasons, maintaining the current fee structure is appropriate and continues to support the athletics program by offsetting non-payroll expenditures without placing undue strain on families.

#### **High School Parking Fee Analysis:**

High school parking fees represent a typical non-tax revenue source for school districts and are applied directly as an offset to payroll. At New Fairfield High School, only seniors have been permitted to park on campus since the onset of the building project, which reconfigured parking availability. Previously, juniors were also allowed to park, but current policy limits parking to senior students due to available spaces. A comparison of regional parking fees is provided below:

| Table # 3: Parking Fee Comparison |             |         |         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| District                          | Parking Fee | Juniors | Seniors |
| New Fairfield                     | \$100.00    | No      | Yes     |
| Bethel                            | \$10.00     | Yes     | Yes     |
| Brookfield                        | \$80.00     | Yes     | Yes     |
| Newtown                           | \$100.00    | Yes     | Yes     |

New Fairfield's current fee of \$100.00 is aligned with Newtown, higher than Brookfield and Bethel, and reflects the limited number of available spaces and the privilege associated with on-campus senior parking. Given current regional practices and the constraints on parking availability, no increase to the parking fee is recommended at this time.

The most significant opportunity for increasing parking-related revenue is not through fee adjustments, but through the relocation of the bus lot to a permanent off-campus location. Once this issue is resolved, the district anticipates the creation of approximately 75 additional student parking spaces, which would generate additional revenue without increasing the per-student fee.

Maintaining the current fee structure balances affordability for families while continuing to offset costs. Any future revenue growth in this area should first be driven by infrastructure solutions rather than increases to student fees.

### **Tuition Revenue from Sherman Students**

New Fairfield Public Schools enrolls high school students from the Town of Sherman under a multi-year tuition agreement that generates more than \$400,000 annually in non-tax revenue for the Town. This represents the district's most profitable non-tax revenue source, and one that is uncommon to most Fairfield County districts.

In reviewing the existing agreement in 2025, the district identified a modest opportunity to expand revenue potential by allowing Sherman high school students to transfer mid-year. Historically, the contract permitted only full-year transfers, with Sherman required to provide a list of incoming Grade 9-12 students by March 15 of the preceding school year. Only those students identified by that deadline were accepted at New Fairfield High School.

To increase flexibility and create an additional revenue avenue, we initiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the districts. The New Fairfield and Sherman Superintendents agreed to an amendment in December 2025.

Under the revised MOU:

- Sherman may now send 10th or 11th grade mid-year transfer students to NFHS for the second semester.
- Written notification must be provided to New Fairfield by October 15.
- The student must be in good standing.
- Tuition for mid-year transfers is set at 50% of the full-year tuition rate.

For the 2025–2026 school year, the full-year fixed tuition rate is \$16,575, resulting in a mid-year tuition of \$8,288 per student. Based on current projections, the district anticipates enrolling at least one mid-year Sherman transfer for the upcoming second semester. A comparison of full-year tuition rates among the district receiving Sherman students is below:

**Table: # 4 Sherman Tuition Rates - 2025-26**

| District     | New Fairfield | New Milford | Shepaug  |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------|
| Tuition Rate | \$16,575      | \$15,218    | \$15,777 |

New Fairfield's tuition rate is slightly higher than both New Milford and Shepaug Valley, positioning the district appropriately within the regional market for high school tuition. Some town officials have questioned whether the rate should be raised higher to align with New Fairfield's full per-pupil expenditure. However, such an increase is not feasible for the following reasons:

- Market Constraints: Tuition agreements are negotiated within a competitive regional landscape. Districts such as New Milford and Shepaug offer lower rates; setting tuition at or near full per-pupil expenditure would make New Fairfield non-competitive and risk losing Sherman students, and the associated revenue, entirely.
- Contract Negotiations Structures: The existing three-year contract includes a 3% annual increase, ensuring steady, predictable growth over the life of the agreement. Each Sherman contract is negotiated collaboratively by a Board member, the Business Director, and the Superintendent to ensure rates reflect fiscal responsibility and the practical realities of regional tuition benchmarks.

For these reasons, New Fairfield's current tuition rate for Sherman students is considered fair, defensible, and appropriately aligned with regional comparables. Understanding the desire to increase revenue, the MOU for mid-year transfers provides another viable pathway, albeit a modest one, to increase tuition revenue within the constraints of the current contract.

### **Facility Use Fee Analysis**

Facility use fees represent a standard non-tax revenue source for school districts, intended to offset custodial, operational, and utility costs associated with maintaining auditoriums, gyms, classrooms, cafeterias, and pools. In New Fairfield, these fees also reflect the dual role of our school facilities as primary community spaces, given that the town does not have separate community centers.

**Table # 5: Facility Comparison**

| Facility   | NFPS  | Bethel | Brookfield | Newtown              |
|------------|-------|--------|------------|----------------------|
| Auditorium | \$150 | \$900  | \$250      | \$1,000/4 hr + add'l |
| Gym        | \$100 | \$400  | \$140      | \$500/4 hr + add'l   |
| Classroom  | \$25  | \$150  | \$70       | \$100/4 hr + add'l   |

|                       |   |                         |                 |                    |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Cafeteria w/o Kitchen | \$75                                    | \$350                   | \$70            | \$200/4 hr + add'l |
| Cafeteria w/Kitchen   | \$125                                   | \$550                   | \$150           | \$450/4 hr + add'l |
| Pool                  | \$200                                   | N/A                     | N/A             | \$800/4 hr + add'l |
| Custodial Fees        | \$35.85/hr (M–Sat);<br>\$47.46/hr (Sun) | \$24.15 -<br>\$59.07/hr | \$25–\$55.68/hr | \$42.66–\$73.58/hr |

Historically, New Fairfield Public Schools has intentionally maintained relatively low facility use fees in order to encourage community access and participation. This approach has supported youth organizations, civic groups, and school-affiliated activities, reinforcing the schools' role as a community hub.

However, when benchmarked against neighboring districts, particularly Brookfield, New Fairfield's facility use fees are consistently lower across nearly all categories, even before accounting for custodial and utility costs. While this differential has long been viewed as a community benefit, rising operational costs and increasing facility demand suggest that a re-examination of the fee structure may be appropriate to ensure fees more accurately reflect the true cost of use while continuing to preserve reasonable access.

Any future review of facility use fees would be guided by the following principles:

- Maintaining affordability and access for school-related and youth-based community organizations;
- Ensuring that fees fully offset custodial, operational, maintenance, equipment replacement, and utility expenses;
- Preserving consistency and transparency in how fees are applied across user groups;
- Remaining mindful of regional benchmarks.

At this time, no specific fee increases are being proposed. Rather, this analysis highlights facility use fees as an area where further study by the Board of Education may be warranted as part of ongoing efforts to balance community access with fiscal sustainability.

### **Athletic Field Use Fee Analysis**

Athletic field use fees represent a non-tax revenue source that offsets staffing costs, including grounds, maintenance and custodial services, utilities and lighting. Fees are also set aside to partially fund future turf field replacement, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the district's athletic facilities.

New Fairfield Public Schools directly manages the majority of the town's athletic facilities, which function not only as school grounds but also as the primary community facilities. Unlike some

neighboring districts that rely on separate municipal Parks and Recreation facilities, New Fairfield's schools serve as the de facto community center, hosting youth organizations, PTO events, and other community activities. Field fees are designed to balance affordability for these community users with the costs of facility upkeep, maintaining reasonable access while recovering operational expenses and generating revenue.

**Table # 6: Field Fees Comparison**

| Category                       | New Fairfield                                | Bethel                            | Brookfield                                      | Newtown   |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Youth Participation</b>     | \$50/player/season<br>\$65/hr camps (<40hrs) | \$50/hour for youth organizations | \$10/player (resident)<br>\$20/player (non res) | \$35/player (resident)<br>\$70/player (non res)               |
| <b>Field Hourly Use</b>        | \$150/hr first day<br>\$100/hr add.cont days | \$175/use                         | \$150/hr  | \$1,000/hr (first 4 hrs)<br>+\$250/hr (each add hr) (Stadium) |
| <b>Premium Field Use</b>       | \$200/hr first day<br>\$150/hr add days      | N/A                               | N/A   | N/A   |
| <b>Custodial/Grounds Daily</b> | \$50/hr                                      | \$24.15 - \$39.38/hr              | \$25/hr   | \$42.66 - \$55.18/hr  |
| <b>Custodial/Grounds Sat</b>   | \$50/hr                                      | \$36.25 - \$59.07/hr              | \$41.76/hr                                      | \$42.66 - \$55.18/hr  |
| <b>Custodial/Grounds Sun</b>   | \$70/hr                                      | \$36.25 - \$59.07/hr              | \$55.68/hr                                      | \$56.88 - \$73.58/hr  |
| <b>Field Management</b>        | District                                     | Town                              | Parks & Rec                                     | Parks & Rec   |

In 2024-25, the district implemented a \$50 per participant, per season user fee, which represented a \$10 per participant increase. New Fairfield's recent increase aligns the district with regional practices while preserving reasonable access for community and youth organizations. Given this recent adjustment, regional norms, and community access considerations, no additional increase in field fees is recommended at this time.

### **Summary of Revenue Findings**

To provide additional context for the non-tax revenue sources discussed in this report, the following budgeted amounts and fund balances are anticipated for the 2025-26 school year:

| <b>Table # 7: Revenue Findings</b> |                       |   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Revenue Source</b>              | <b>Revenue</b>        | <b>Finding / Recommendation</b>   |
| Early Learning Center              | \$168,000             | Increase rate from \$3,500 to \$3,750 for 2026-27   |
| Athletics Pay-to-Participate       | \$95,000              | Maintain current fee  |
| High School Parking Fees           | \$10,000              | Maintain current fee; Relocation of bus lot will generate more spaces and revenue in the future     |
| Sherman Tuition                    | \$466,755             | Rate reflects market; MOU allows for add'l revenue  |
| Use of Facilities                  | \$35,000<br>(6/30/25) | No increase proposed at this time; Further study warranted; Funds offset costs incurred (custodial) |
| Field Fees                         | \$77,000<br>(6/30/25) | Maintain recent increase to fee structure; Revenue goes directly to turf replacement account        |

These figures represent anticipated annual non-tax revenue and are applied as offsets to programmatic, staffing, and operational costs within the district's operating budget. Sherman tuition remains the single largest source of school-based non-tax revenue and plays a meaningful role in supporting the overall Town budget while remaining competitively aligned with regional tuition rates.

### **Conclusion**

New Fairfield Public Schools' non-tax revenue practices are reasonable and regionally consistent. The review identifies a modest increase to integrated preschool tuition for the 2026-27 school year. In most other categories, recent increases or existing conditions support maintaining current rates at this time. The district's tuition agreement with the Town of Sherman continues to represent the most significant non-tax revenue source, and a recently executed MOU allowing limited mid-year transfers provides a small but meaningful opportunity for additional revenue without jeopardizing regional competitiveness. In addition, the use of facilities fees may warrant further review by the Board of Education to determine whether current practices and rates continue to align with district goals, community access, and regional norms.