



NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

3 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812

Fax: 203-312-5609

www.newfairfieldschools.org

Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D., Superintendent
203-312-5770

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Dear New Fairfield Board of Education Members,

Re: Framework for Determining Appropriate Levels of Athletic Recognition

This document has been developed to establish benchmarks for evaluating whether an individual's contributions to New Fairfield High School warrant recognition through a facility naming. Its purpose is to align such decisions with Board of Education Policy 7000 and the district's past practice, ensuring that recognition is applied thoughtfully, consistently and with respect for precedent.

For your reference, the criteria for the Hall of Honor have already been clearly defined in the New Fairfield Rebels Hall of Honor [Bylaws](#).

Included in this letter are:

- Key criteria for evaluating athletic recognition requests;
- An athletic recognition rubric comparing plaque vs. field naming;
- Summaries of historical examples of past recognitions;
- Summaries of the Garbowski family contributions;
- Application of criteria and rubric to the current request; and
- Appendix A: Full résumés for Marty Morgan, John Zinser, Mike Garbowski, and Joe Garbowski.

Over the years, the Board and administration have considered several forms of honors, such as field namings, plaques and Hall of Honor inductions, and each pathway reflects a different level of impact and visibility. By compiling examples of past recognitions, this document is intended to serve as a practical guide to help the Board distinguish when a request rises to the level of naming a school facility and when a plaque or alternate form of recognition may be more appropriate in special circumstances.

The accomplishments of individuals such as Coach Marty Morgan and Coach John Zinser demonstrate the types of significant contributions that have historically supported field naming or plaque recognition. Marty Morgan's decades-long record of competitive success and community impact provides precedent for naming an outdoor athletic facility, while the commemorative plaque honoring Coach Zinser illustrates how the district has recognized significant contributions short of naming a field. These examples provide a benchmark against which future requests, including the current proposal regarding the NFHS Baseball Field, can be evaluated.

By grounding its decisions in Policy 7000(d)(3) and established patterns of past practice, the Board can ensure that all naming and recognition requests are considered equitably and in a

manner that reflects the district's values. Ultimately, this document is intended to support that process by offering a clear, consistent framework for determining the level of recognition warranted in each case.

Key Criteria Reflected in Prior NFHS Recognitions

Coaching Longevity

- Decades of strong leadership aligned with the district's mission
- Consistent high-level winning seasons
- Builds lasting, exemplary program culture

Team Accomplishments

- Competitive success (e.g., conference championships, state championships)
- Sustained program excellence over multiple seasons
- Notable milestones or historic team achievements

Player Development

- Demonstrated impact on athlete growth over time
- Number of athletes advancing to college programs
- Development of All-State, All-American or Academic All-American players

Coaching Accomplishments

- Local, state or regional coaching awards
- Significant influence on the sport at the district/state/national level
- Contributions to the broader athletic community or sport

Community Involvement

- Founding or growing youth programs
- Volunteer work supporting NFPS athletic facilities or school initiatives
- Engagement that positively influences the school community

NFHS Playing Accomplishments (if applicable)

- Significant athletic achievements as a NFHS student-athlete
- Records, awards or leadership roles earned while playing at NFHS
- Contributions to the legacy, culture or tradition of the program as a former player

Athletic Recognition Rubric

Criterion	Plaque Recognition	Field Naming
Coaching Longevity/ Program Success	Consistently active in the program over multiple seasons; good record of success; positive team environment	Decades of leadership with sustained winning; program stability; consistent high-level performance across many years; lasting, exemplary team culture
Team Accomplishments	Some championships or notable achievements; competitive seasons of moderate success	Long-term dominance; multiple conference/state championships; historic team milestones; undefeated or perfect seasons
Player Development	Some All-State, All-American, or college-level players developed	Significant development of athletes; many All-State/All-American players; strong record of athletes advancing to college programs or professional levels
Coaching Accomplishments	Local or regional awards; meaningful contributions to program culture	State/national awards; firsts in program history; long-term leadership and innovation; significant influence on the sport at the district/state/national level
Community Involvement	Consistent leadership and contributions; supportive presence; volunteer contributions that positively influence the program	Transformative leadership and significant contributions; founding programs; leading major volunteer initiatives or creating lasting enhancements to the school community
NFHS Playing Accomplishments (if applicable)	Notable achievements; local or regional awards	Exceptional achievements; state or national recognition; leadership as a player; significant contributions to program culture

Summary of Historical Precedents

Field Naming Recognition - Marty Morgan Turf Field (2021)

- Boys Lacrosse Coach, 1993 - present
- 406-202 record
- .670 winning percentage
- Inducted NFHS Hall of Honor 2019
- Multiple conference and state championships, perfect seasons and notable player development
- Significant community involvement, founding youth programs and improving athletic facilities

Plaque Recognition - John Zinser, NFHS Football Coach

- Founder and first varsity football head coach, 1974-1982
- Led team to first football title, developed athletes who advanced to college and coaching
- Recognized for exemplary leadership, mentoring and long-term impact on program culture

Summary of Current Request - NFHS Baseball Field

Mike Garbowski - Volunteer Assistant Coach (1993–2005; 2009–2024)

- Supported SWC Champions 1998 & 2016
- 20 All-State players coached
- CHSCA Assistant Coach of the Year 2023

Joe Garbowski - Varsity Head Coach (2002; 2009–Present)

- Record: 185 Wins and 154 Losses
- Winning Percentage .546
- SWC Champions 2016
- Inducted into the NFHS Hall of Fame 1998
- 13 All-State players; multiple collegiate athletes; two MLB draftees
- Labor and enhancements to athletic facilities
- Significant involvement in New Fairfield Youth Baseball as a Board Member
- As a player himself, multiple All-State selections; All-American Honorable Mention

Application of Key Criteria to the Garbowski Supporters' Request

When applying the district's established criteria and historical precedents to the current request, it is important for the Board to distinguish between the types of contributions that have traditionally supported field naming and those that are better aligned with plaque recognition. The central question before the Board is whether they have reached the historic benchmarks that have previously justified naming an athletic field.

Additionally, supporters of the request are advocating for the field to be named after the **Garbowski Family**. This raises an additional question for the Board:

If the Board determines that field naming is warranted, would the recognition honor the Garbowski family as a whole, or should it specifically reflect the accomplishments of the varsity head coach, Joe Garbowski, whose work currently drives the program?

This distinction is important because past precedents have focused recognition on individuals whose professional careers and achievements reached the highest levels of program impact over many decades.

Benchmarking against precedent:

- **Field Naming:** Reserved for varsity head coaches with decades of leadership, multiple state championships, high-level player development, and extensive community impact (e.g., Marty Morgan).
- **Plaque Recognition:** Honors substantial contributions without naming a facility (e.g., John Zinser, volunteer or foundational coaches).

Potential recognition pathways (in no particular order):

- **Plaque for Mike Garbowski:** Honors decades of volunteer service and mentorship.
- **Combined Family Recognition Plaque:** Could recognize past contributions (Mike) and ongoing contributions (Joe), leading to enhancements to the baseball program.
- **Field Naming:** The Board may choose to (1) recognize the Garbowski family with a field naming, or (2) solely recognize Joe Garbowski's accomplishments with a field naming, or (3) he could be eligible for a field naming in the future after further historic achievements as the varsity head coach.

Final Note

I hope this information provides the Board, in its governance role, with a clear framework for evaluating the current request and for maintaining consistency with past practice and Policy 7000. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or if further clarification would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Kenneth G. Craw

Kenneth G. Craw, Ed. D.

Appendix A - Full Résumés

Field Naming Recognition

Location: Marty Morgan Turf Field
Date: 2021

Marty Morgan, NFHS Boys Lacrosse Coach

- 1993 to present
- Record: 406 Wins and 202 Losses
- .670% winning percentage
- NFHS Athletics Hall of Honor, Inducted 2019

Team Accomplishments

- 8 SWC Champions: 2004, 2008, 2010, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021*, 2025*
- 5 State Champions
 - Class S - 2008, 2024* & 2025*
 - Class M - 2018 & 2019
- 5 SWC Sportsmanship Awards: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015
- Achieved 2 Perfect Seasons:
 - 23-0 in 2008
 - 22-0 in 2018
- Connecticut High School Team of the Year 2018

Player Development

- 71 All-State First Team Players
- 12 All-American Players
- 3 Academic All-Americans
- 1 Connecticut High School Coaches Association (CHSCA) Player of the Year

Coaching Accomplishments

- First and Only Boys Varsity Lacrosse Coach in NFHS History
- Class S Coach of the Year - 2008
- Western Connecticut Lacrosse Officials Association; Coach of the Year - 2008
- US Lacrosse Growing the Game Award - 2009
- CHSCA; Coach of the Year - 2015
- Class M Coach of the Year - 2018
- CHSCA Class S/M Coach of the Year - 2025*

Community Involvement

- Founder and President of New Fairfield Youth Lacrosse: 1992 - present
- Donating labor, time and equipment to create and enhance the athletic facilities at New Fairfield High School

*Denotes earned after field naming

Plaque Recognition
Location: Stadium Field
Date: 2000

John Zinser, NFHS Football Coach

- Founder and first Varsity Head Coach of the NFHS Football Program
- Coached from 1974 - 1982

Team Accomplishments

- Led the Rebels to their first football title
- Western Connecticut Conference; Wild Division Champions - 1981

Player Development

- John was instrumental in guiding many student athletes into playing college football.
- Some of these athletes eventually became coaches as well, most notably Richard Bisaccia of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
- All of John's sons had outstanding college football careers - John and Douglas at the University of Pennsylvania, and Scott at Western Connecticut State University.

Coaching Accomplishments

- John Zinser served as a positive role model for his players as well as other coaches in New Fairfield.
- John truly loved the game of football and he coached with exuberance and passion. He inspired his players to have great pride in being "New Fairfield Rebels."
- After John's coaching career at New Fairfield, he served as an Assistant Football Coach at Wesleyan University and Western Connecticut State University.

**Naming Request
NFHS Baseball Field
Date Proposed - December 2025**

Proposed Recognition for Mike Garbowski, Volunteer

- Volunteer Assistant Baseball Coach
 - 1993-2005
 - 2009-2024
 - (Took a hiatus from 2005-2008 for medical reasons)

Team Accomplishments

- SWC Champions 1998 & 2016

Player Development

- Coached 20 All-State Players 1993-2024

Coaching Accomplishments

- CHSCA Assistant Coach of the Year - 2023

**Naming Request
NFHS Baseball Field
Date Proposed - December 2025**

Proposed Recognition for Joe Garbowski, Current NFHS Baseball Coach

- Inducted NFHS Athletic Hall of Honor - 1998
- Varsity Baseball Coach
 - 2002
 - 2009 - Present
- Record: 185 Wins and 154 Losses
- Winning Percentage .546

Team Accomplishments

- SWC Champions 2016

Player Development

- Has coached 13 All-State Players.
- Numerous players have gone on to play at all collegiate levels. This includes multiple Division 1 players.
- Coached two players selected in the MLB Draft. (Hickey '02 & Quinn '21)

Community Involvement

- Donated countless hours of labor to the maintenance of the New Fairfield High School Baseball Field.
- Has been instrumental in countless upgrades to the facilities over the last 25 years.
- Board Member heavily involved in New Fairfield Youth Baseball (Travel Commissioner).

Playing Accomplishments

- **Sophomore (1993)**
 - All-WCC Utility Player
 - All-State Class L Catcher
- **Junior (1994)**
 - All-WCC Catcher
 - All-State Class M Catcher
- **Senior (1995)**
 - All-State Catcher
 - All-Area News Times 1st Team Catcher
 - All-American U.S.A. Today Honorable Mention