

To: Board of Education

From: Rick Doll, superintendent

Re: Recognition of Coaches at Lawrence High School

Date: June 23, 2016

Background:

Several months ago, Ms. Jennifer Nauertc, daughter of former Lawrence High School football coach, Bill Freeman, spoke to the Board of Education requesting that the school's football stadium be named after her father following his recent passing. At the time, a board member asked the Lawrence High administration to investigate the request and bring back a report.

Bill Dewitt, assistant principal and athletic director at Lawrence High School, chaired a committee to address this specific request and to provide other options for the board to consider. The committee's report is attached.

## RATIONALE

In the spring semester 2016, USD 497 was approached with a proposal to name the Lawrence High School Football stadium after a coach who had previously worked at Lawrence High School. None of the athletic facilities at Lawrence High School are named after or for individuals at this time.

Lawrence High School currently claims the most number of state championship teams in the entire state of Kansas with 108 over its long athletic history. During this time period, Lawrence High School has been fortunate to have several outstanding coaches who have won multiple state championships, established national records and have been inducted into state and national halls of fame.

Of Athletic Note:

- Lawrence High School has 27 State Championships in football. The first one came in 1919 and the most recent championship came in 1995. Al Woolard won 91 percent of his games at Lawrence – a record of 153-12-5 – and led the Lions to a 47-game winning streak from 1950 -1968. The school won 10 mythical state championships five straight from 1956-60. Bill Freeman's LHS squads won titles in 1979, '84, '86, '87 and '89. Dick Purdy coached nine years and won five Class 6A state high school championships in '90, '91, '92, '93, & '95.
- One of the true pioneers of high school volleyball in the state of Kansas, Joan Wells was the head coach at Lawrence High School for 27 years (1971-97) and posted a remarkable 865-89 record (a .907 winning percentage), which included 26 trips to the state tournament, 15 state championships and seven runner-up finishes. She also won the only softball state championship in LHS history.
- Bob Manning guided Lawrence high boys' gymnastics to the national record for state championships at 21 and included a national record dual streak of 116 consecutive victories.

While any of these individuals would be worthy of naming right's consideration, giving exclusive naming right to any one individual might be counter to the overall philosophy of inclusion that our district strives to achieve. A board policy of allowing schools to prohibit them from entertaining proposals to name a significant position of a school facility after people, living or dead would be appropriate. This perspective is consistent with the notion that naming a major facility after a person would be an exercise in exclusion, not inclusion, and therefore not good practice for a school fortunate to have many successful and influential coaches during its history.

Given the athletic history at Lawrence High School how could anyone in good conscience pick someone to honor above everyone else. Even if we tried, it would be an exercise in adults picking other favorite adults with our choices likely biased to coincident timing more than anything else. Do we pick the last coach who retired, or passed away? Do we pick some famous alumni who came from Lawrence? Inherently, there is no way one could meaningfully and objectively judge. Therefore, the process becomes inherently political and, even more importantly, none of this has to do with furthering the educational experience of our students.

However, if a donation from a person or company were so significant as to create a facility or program that otherwise wouldn't exist in that form while preserving equity across the district, then we will have served students by accepting such a donation. Every community and school board has a different set of standards as to both what is "significant" as well as what maintains consistency with their values.

As an alternative, an effort to install new public markers in and around the stadium may be a project worth pursuing. The school district could assist the school in adding statuary, plaques, or other markers in and around Lawrence High Stadium to honor individuals who better represent our commitment to diversity and inclusion and contributions to the century-old athletic history at Lawrence High School.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR DISPLAY

For permanent exterior displays that would be aesthetically appropriate with the existing facilities, a brick pedestal with a bronze plaque would seem most appropriate, but estimates for this type of project would be about \$3000 per display and would be an expense that the school could not bear. The district would have to be willing to contribute funds. The most appropriate location as the campus exists now would be the walk up on the south side of the football stadium. However, with a bond study currently underway, it is unknown how this area would be developed in a new campus master plan and perhaps another area might be more suitable.



### SELECTION PROCESSES

The Lawrence High Coaching Ring of Honor honors individual coaches, establishes pride and preserves the tradition of the Lawrence High athletic program by honoring those who have made a significant contribution to an athletic program. Each member will be honored with a ring of honor plaque.

Nomination forms must be submitted by June 30<sup>th</sup> for consideration by the Ring of Honor committee for the upcoming year.

### **Committee Members (10)**

- 6 LHS Head Coaches
- 1 Faculty Member
- 2 Former Coaches
- Athletic Director

## **Induction Criteria and Process for Nomination**

The committee will evaluate the nominations based on the completed forms submitted and personal knowledge committee members may have regarding each coach. A nominee must be a former coach who has distinguished himself/herself by demonstrating exceptional leadership, character and athletic achievements during his/her tenure at Lawrence High School. The nominee must have coached a minimum of six years at Lawrence High. An inductee may be living or deceased.

Any person residing in the USD 497 School District or employed by USD 497 may nominate a former coach for induction to the LHS Coaching Ring of Honor. Each nominator is allowed one nomination per year.

Nominations will be taken from the LHS community through June 30<sup>th</sup> and the committee will convene in July for discussion and voting to select new members. These new inductees will be honored at half-time of a designated football game the following fall season.

In order for a nominee to be inducted, they must receive 8 “yes” votes of the 10 votes available.

In the initial year, it would be hard to determine exactly how many coaches would be nominated and selected, but 5-7 seems like an appropriate number.

After that, there is no guarantee that a coach is selected each year.