

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Regular Meeting held in the Media Center on April 19th, 2023. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Amanda Haber, at 7:30 P.M. Mrs. Haber read the following Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: "In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Laws of 1975, a notice for this meeting was posted at the respective offices of the Essex Fells School as of January 4th, 2023. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, and the Star Ledger.

**I. Call to Order – 7:30 P.M.**

- The meeting was called to order by the Board President.

**II. Roll Call**

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President- Present  
Mr. John Toth, Vice-President-Present  
Mr. Raj Mehta-Present  
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present  
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke-Present

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, and (4) Members of the Public.

**III. Flag Salute**

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

**IV. President's Report**

Good evening and thank you for joining us.

On behalf of the Board we offer our condolences to the DaCosta/Mitchell family for the loss of our beloved former teacher Kelly DaCosta. Mrs. Dacosta was an exceptional educator that made an enduring and tremendous impact on so many lives during her teaching career and beyond. We deeply appreciate all that she did to serve our school community. Essex Fells School was so fortunate to have her serve for so many years. She will be deeply missed.

I also want to thank Dr. Gadaleta and the staff of EFS. While you endured your own grief, you were there for our students as they returned to school. You have handled this beautifully and that is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

**V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only**

- None

**VI. Superintendent's Report**

- Dr. Gadaleta spoke about the passing of Mrs. Kelly DaCosta (Mitchell). Dr. Gadaleta thanked the EFS community for supporting the EFS staff and children. Dr. Gadaleta also was thankful for the community's understanding and allowing the district to be closed on Monday for the funeral services. Dr. Gadaleta thanked the BOE for their support. Counselors were on site on Tuesday when school reopened for the staff

and children. Jayson DaCosta, Kelly's husband, sent a letter thanking the EFS community for all of their support over the past 3 years.

- Dr. Gadaleta presented the revised school calendar to utilize 2 days for the Memorial Day weekend.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that Bring Your Child to Work Day will be on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

## VII. Superintendent's Resolutions

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–05.

1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the payment of the following travel related expenses in accordance with the travel policy 6471 for Professional Development:

Staff Member(s): Stefania Focarino  
 Event: K-6 Co-Teaching in Inclusion Classrooms – Effective Small Group Structures and Strategies  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 4/24/23  
 Cost: \$159.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Scoras  
 Event: K-6 Co-Teaching in Inclusion Classrooms – Effective Small Group Structures and Strategies  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 4/24/23  
 Cost: \$159.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Scoras  
 Event: Strengthening the Executive Functioning Skills of Students with Special Needs, Grades K-12  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 5/8/23  
 Cost: \$159.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith  
 Event: Hot Topics in Special Education  
 Location: Caldwell, NJ  
 Date: 5/12/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith  
 Event: Using PSW to Identify SLD  
 Location: Caldwell, NJ  
 Date: 6/2/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Danielle Butler  
 Event: NJSLs Year 1-3 Stages of Learning, Operations & Algebraic Thinking  
 Location: Conquer Math  
 Date: 6/1/23 (make-up for 2/1/23 cancellation)  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Jaclyn Carroll  
 Event: Differentiated Instruction Across All Content Area in the Secondary Classroom – Proven Strategies Grades 6-12  
 Location: Virtual



Regular Meeting Minutes March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie                      Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for April in the amounts of \$131,116.58 & \$21,058.94, as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for March as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$368,020.94 including \$342,945.10 for the gross payroll, \$5,408.52 for the Board’s share of FICA/Medicare and \$19,667.32 for the State’s share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie                      Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

3. **WHEREAS**, the Board of Education has received the Reports of the Board Secretary (Secretary) and the Custodian of School Monies (Treasurer) for the Month of February;

**WHEREAS**, in compliance with N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)3, the Secretary has certified that as of the date of the reports, no budgetary line-item account, in accordance with the minimum chart of accounts as established by the New Jersey Department of Education, has obligations and payments which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the Board of Education;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that in compliance with N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)4, the Board of Education certifies that, after review of the Secretary’s monthly financial report, and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of its N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.11(c)4, and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district’s financial obligations for the remainder of the year; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that pursuant to P.L. 2004 C73, the Board certifies that after review of the Secretary’s monthly financial report and certification, that there are no budgetary transfers that cumulatively exceed 10% that would require the approval of the Commissioner of Education; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the financial reports for the months be accepted and shall become a part of the official minutes of this meeting.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie                      Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds for the month of March as certified by the Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie                      Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education acknowledge receipt of and accepts the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the Essex Fells School District and the Auditors’ Management Report, prepared by the auditing firm of Samuel Klein and Company for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**IX. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta reported that she and Mr. Lella had spoken to and are working with Stephen Fogarty to address the outstanding Class III Officer SSA. The borough returned a version with removed language and an increased potential cost from 60k to 70k. The attorneys will continue to address the changes. The Board discussed.

**X. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board of a parent concern regarding the chick hatching project.
  - Mr. Toth asked how long the project has gone on and has there been any concerns in the past. Dr. Gadaleta noted the project has gone on for 10+ years and this is the first time. Mr. Toth also asked if there have been any issues with children, and Dr. Gadaleta noted the children are not required to participate if they don’t want to. Dr. Gadaleta explained the project.
- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board of the PTA Fundraiser on April 28<sup>th</sup>. It will be a Ho-down with a mechanical bull.

**XI. Public Comment**

- Mrs. Content spoke on behalf of the chicken hatching project and her concern on how the chicks are being treated.
- Mrs. MacKenzie thanked Dr. Gadaleta and the Board for their support during the past week.

**XII. Adjournment**

At 8:05 P.M. the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
 Business Administrator/  
 Board Secretary