

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Workshop Meeting held in the Media Center on March 29, 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 March 21, 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, (4) Members of the Public and (2) Staff Members. (1) Member of the Public left at 8:40 P.M.

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

IV. President's Report

Good Evening and thank you for joining us tonight

As many of you may have seen, unfortunately, an elementary school in Nashville endured the unimaginable this week. I know many of you have reached out to express your concerns over the safety and security of Essex Fells School in the wake of those events. As a board, one of our priority goals is to provide necessary resources to support the health, safety, social emotional needs, and security of the students, staff, and school. I am proud of the efforts of the administration and the board to support the improvement of our security and safety specifically through the hiring of a Class 3 officer. I want to assure you that we will continue to address and identify any and all safety needs or concerns that arise to ensure that every effort is made to keep the students and staff safe while they are at Essex Fells School.

As we circle in on the last trimester, we still have great work to do and I am looking forward to what is arguably my favorite part of the year with all of the wonderful showcasing of success that our students have accomplished this year. I want to wish the staff, students and families a safe and healthy Spring Break.

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update on the status of the Class III Officer SSA. The district received a version of the agreement from the borough with changes. The BOE attorney will address directly with the borough attorney.
 - We had our first vendor come in to provide a quote for the security vestibule.
 - Dr. Gadaleta noted that we conducted a drill along with the presence of the EFPD, as we are required to do on a monthly basis. The staff was notified of the drill prior to due to the events that had just occurred in Nashville. We are still working on utilizing the Share 911 application to enhance communication. Dr. Gadaleta noted that there will be increased police presence on school property for the remainder of the school year.
 - Mr. Toth asked about the changes to the SSA and the compensation.
 - Mrs. Burke reiterated that she attended the borough meeting as a community member and not as a representative of the BOE. The Board discussed and agreed Mrs. Burke attended the meeting with good intentions as a community member. The BOE had agreed at prior meetings to move forward with the SSA.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the parent/teacher conferences took place this past week. The evening conferences went well.
- Dr. Gadaleta reminded everyone that Spring Break is April 7th – 16th.
- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board that NJSLA testing window would be May 1st – 12th for grades 3-6.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the Safety Team had a meeting on Monday afternoon, not being aware of the events that had unfolded earlier in Nashville. The End of Year Event was addressed.
- Friday the District will have a 1-year Memorial Celebration of Mr. Viggiano's passing, and Dr. Gadaleta explained the events of the afternoon, which will include an all-school balloon release.

VII. Buildings & Grounds

- The upper building lift installation would begin over spring break.
- The HVAC unit audit will take place over spring break.
- The tractor door replacement has finally arrived. The cost of the replacement was \$4,438. After the 1k deductible NJSIG covered the \$3,438 balance.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the modifications made to the playgrounds. The height of the bars were lowered. Pre-school drop off and pick up will now be at the kindergarten doors to prevent any playground injuries before or after school.

VIII. Curriculum & Instruction

- Dr. Gadaleta will be researching an SEL Screener for additional services.
- Start Strong is being discontinued and Dr. Gadaleta will review with staff.

IX. Finance

- Mr. Lella reviewed the 2021-22 Audit.
- Mr. Lella provided an update of the 2023-24 Budget, which will be presented on May 3rd.
- Mr. Lella informed the Board that he would be running 2 Bills & Claims in the month of April, one before spring break and one after.

X. Personnel

- Dr. Gadaleta welcomed Mrs. Axentiou, the Kindergarten Maternity Leave Replacement for Mrs. Fornini. Mrs. Axentiou will mirror Mrs. Fornini until she leaves.

XI. Policy

- The Board discussed the Homework and Attendance policies.

XII. Superintendent’s Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–02.

- 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): Laurie Fischer
 Event: NJSHA
 Location: Long Branch, NJ
 Date: 4/20/23
 Cost: \$309.43

Staff Member(s): Patricia Pakonis
 Event: A Practical Approach to Classroom Management and Discipline (Grades 3-6)
 Location: Virtual
 Date: TBD
 Cost: \$145.00

Staff Member(s): Patricia Pakonis
 Event: Restorative Discipline – Help Your Students Improve their Behavior & Strengthen Their Learning (Grades K-12)
 Location: Virtual
 Date: TBD
 Cost: \$159.00

Staff Member(s): Patricia Pakonis
 Event: Decrease Attention-Getting and Tantrum Behaviors – Practical Solutions (Grades PK-2)
 Location: Virtual
 Date: TBD
 Cost: \$159.00

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo
 Event: Best Practices for Deploying Apple Products & Managing MAC Software Updates Featuring SAP
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 4/5/23 & 4/19/23
 Cost: \$0.00

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Nicole Axentiou as Kindergarten Maternity Leave Teacher, BA Step 5, for the 2022-2023 school year at a prorated salary of \$17,875.50 beginning April 3rd, 2023 through June 30th, 2023, pending the usual criminal history and background check for new hires.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XIII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board that the district would be having NJQSAC review tomorrow.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the 2023-24 Calendar revision, giving back the 3 unused emergency days for an extended Memorial Day Weekend.

XIV. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board that Blackboard had been purchased by Finalsite. The district just rolled over our website with Blackboard in September, so we will need to make changes.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that the NJDOE and Rutgers have teamed up for an autism study.

XV. Public Comment

- Dr. LoCascio understands the discussion between the BOE and the Town Counsel regarding the Class III Officer costs. He also noted protecting the Democratic process as BOE members and parents and the differences between the two, noting we don't lose our rights as citizens.
- Mrs. Daniels thanked the Board for their efforts.
- Mrs. LoCascio asked if the PTA is required to attend BOE meetings, stating it would be nice for them to attend.
- Mrs. Daniels noted that she does typically attend on behalf of the Foundation.

XVI. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 8:53P. M. the Board made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss legal matters. The items discussed in Executive Session will be disclosed to the public when the need to maintain their confidentiality no longer exists.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XVII. Adjournment

At 9:01P. M. the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
School Secretary