

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Regular Public Meeting held in the Media Center on February 15, 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 4, 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 (1) Member of the Public.

**III. Flag Salute**

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

**IV. President's Report**

- None

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

- None

**VI. Board of Education Member Training by Fogarty & Hara, Esqs.**

- School Ethics, Board Governance, and the Role of a Board Member.

**VII. Superintendent's Report**

- Dr. Gadaleta provided the Board with an EFS Health Update. It appears there is more of a stomach bug going around. Dr. Gadaleta will be changing the current method of communication to the public, with a reduction in notifications of illness being sent. Beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>, updates will be provided in the WAAG or sent out only in the case of an outbreak. Mr. Mehta asked about testing guidelines in general, and Dr. Gadaleta noted in speaking with Dr. Nitti it appears the WHO is lessening up, the CDC is not there yet but could be changing shortly.
- Dr. Gadaleta recognized the resolution to approve new curriculum, with 2 more still to come.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained to the Board the events of the PD Day for the staff on February 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Mr. Lella and Dr. Gadaleta explained Superintendent resolution #10 and the language of the Superintendent's contract.
- Mr. Toth asked about resolution #6 and the computer to the EFPD. Dr. Gadaleta noted that Mr. Pannullo has been working with the EFPD to improve their access of the school district's cameras. Dr. Gadaleta also noted we will be increasing our bandwidth which we hope will help.

- Mrs. Burke asked about curriculum.

### VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01 –10.

- 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): Steven Lella  
 Event: NJSABO – Pensions Update  
 Location: Whippany, NJ  
 Date: 12/13/22  
 Cost: \$135.81

Staff Member(s): Jaclyn Carroll  
 Event: Build Better Relationships and More Effectively Manage Student Behavior  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 2/7/23  
 Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Nicole Criscione  
 Event: Helping Your Unmotivated Underperforming Writers Succeed  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/6/23  
 Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Kimberly Trafford  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Montclair State University  
 Date: 3/7/23  
 Cost: \$6.40

Staff Member(s): Deana Hromoko  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/8/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Danielle Butler  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/8/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Michelle Truchel  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/8/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Katie McNish  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Montclair State/Virtual  
 Date: 3/7/23 & 3/8/23  
 Cost: \$6.40

Staff Member(s): Katie McNish  
 Event: Using Technology and Social Media to Document Student Learning Outcomes  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/13/23  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro  
 Event: enhance Therapy Effectiveness for Auditory Processing Disorder, Memory Deficits, ADD and Language Processing  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/13/23  
 Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Rosalie Takkel  
 Event: Conquer Math Mileage  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 1/31/23  
 Cost: \$10.81

Staff Member(s): Rory Duarte  
 Event: Conquer Math Mileage  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 1/31/23  
 Cost: \$10.81

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo  
 Event: TechSpo Meals  
 Location: Atlantic City, NJ  
 Date: 1/25/23 – 1/27/23  
 Cost: \$65.92

Staff Member(s): Rosalie Takkel  
 Event: Cutting Edge, Best Strategies for Second Grade  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/17/23  
 Cost: \$279.00

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 2023 Math Curriculum:

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2023 Language Arts Curriculum:

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2023 Social Studies Curriculum:

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2023 Science Curriculum:

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the laptop computer donation to the EFPD in the amount of \$1,901.28 for use of Essex Fells School Security monitoring.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Maternity/Disability Leave of Absence for Molly Fornini from April 12, 2023, through December 29, 2023, using the following days:

April 12, 2023 - June 9, 2023 = 38 sick days

June 12, 2023 - June 16, 2023 = 5 personal days

June 19, 2023 - June 22, 2023 = 4 days unpaid leave of absence

September 5, 2023 - November 30, 2023 = FMLA

December 1, 2023 - December 22, 2023 = 16 days unpaid leave of absence

January 2, 2024 = Return date

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Erika Pilato as full time School Counselor, MA Step 15, for the 2022-2023 school year to expand the Essex Fells counseling program, at a prorated salary of \$34,674, beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**9. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the second reading and adoption of the following policies:

- P 0152 Board Officers (Revised)
- P 0161 Call, Adjournment, and Cancellation (Revised)
- P 0162 Notice of Board Meetings (Revised)
- P & R 2423 Bilingual and ESL Education (M) (Revised)
- P & R 5200 Attendance (M) (Revised)
- P 8140 Student Enrollments (M) (Revised)
- R 8140 Enrollment Accounting (M) (Revised)
- P & R 8330 Student Records (M) (Revised)
- R 8420.2 Bomb Threats (M) (Revised)
- R 8420.7 Lockdown Procedures (M) (Revised)
- R 8420.10 Active Shooter (M) (Revised)

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**10. WHEREAS**, the Essex Fells Board of Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) and Dr. Michelle Gadaleta, entered into an Employment Agreement for the term commencing July 1, 2022 and expiring July 1, 2027 (hereinafter referred to as the “Present Employment Agreement”); and

**WHEREAS**, the Board and the Superintendent desire to rescind the Present Employment Agreement prior to its conclusion, and enter into a new Employment Agreement for a term commencing February 16, 2023 and expiring July 1, 2027 (hereinafter referred to as the “Succeeding Employment Agreement”); and

**WHEREAS**, this Employment Agreement has been submitted to and approved by the Interim Executive County Superintendent, according to standards adopted by the Commissioner of Education, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7-8(j).

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board hereby rescinds the Present Employment Agreement; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board hereby appoints Dr. Michelle Gadaleta as the Superintendent of Schools for the Essex Fells Public School District for the period beginning on February 16, 2023 and expiring on July 1, 2027, in accordance with the terms of the Succeeding Employment Agreement annexed hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board approves the attached Succeeding Employment Agreement with Dr. Michelle Gadaleta for the position of Superintendent of Schools for the foregoing period of appointment; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board hereby authorizes the Board President and School Business Administrator to execute the Succeeding Employment Agreement on behalf of the Board.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**IX. Business Administrator’s Report**

- Mr. Lella thanked Stephen Fogarty of Fogarty & Hara, Esq. for providing training to the BOE.
- Dr. Gadaleta recognized Mr. Davis’ for his efforts this past week working from open to close each day as Mr. Thomas and Mr. Galindo were both out sick last week. The Board appreciated Mr. Davis’ efforts for allowing the school to stay open.
- Mr. Lella noted that the auditors are finalizing the 21-22 audit for the March 17<sup>th</sup> date.
- Mr. Lella reported on the 2023-24 budget.
  - No changes from February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, waiting on State Aid figures after Governor’s speech on February 28<sup>th</sup>.
  - Preschool is at 24 of 28 for enrollment.
  - The tax levy is currently at the 2% CAP adding a full time counselor, the costs of the full time Class III Officer, potential health care benefits increase of over 10% and salary increases. Cuts have been made in such areas as technology, text and workbooks, paraprofessional staffing and B&G lines to remain at 2%, even though the district is receiving an enrollment adjustment of up to 47k and has banked cap of 69k.
  - Mr. Lella noted discussions with other districts in the county exceeding the 2% with adjustments for enrollment and health care, and utilizing banked cap.
  - The preliminary budget will be approved for submission at the March 15<sup>th</sup> BOE meeting. Budget Presentation will be May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**X. Business Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-04.

1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts the minutes of the following meeting(s):

Regular Meeting Minutes	January 4, 2023
Executive Meeting Minutes	January 4, 2023
Regular Meeting Minutes	January 18, 2023
Executive Meeting Minutes	January 18, 2023
Moved by: Mr. Toth	Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for February in the amount of \$274,479.36, as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for January as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$351,454.64 including \$327,485.28 for the gross payroll, \$5,775.80 for the Board’s share of FICA/Medicare and \$18,193.56 for the State’s share of FICA/Medicare.

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

**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: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**X. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- The Board discussed the change of Policy 8601 to utilize staff.
- The Board tabled the other policy discussion, to be reviewed at the next meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that we will update the Safety and Security Plan after meeting with Sgt. Gomes today. The EFPD will come to the April 3<sup>rd</sup> EFTA meeting to review.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the upcoming Cyber Safety Program which will take place for students and then parents on February 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the Neptune Navigate Online Digital Citizenship Courses and the link on the private side of the BOE website.

**XI. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella discussed dogs being on school property, which is not permitted, and some not cleaning up after which the children then step in on the fields.
- Dr. Gadaleta discussed the last 2 curriculum revisions for PK and SEL.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted the possibility of a graduate student opportunity with Caldwell University.

**XII. Public Comment**

- Dr. LoCascio agreed with the continued relationship with the EFPD.

**XIII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

At 9:41 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss legal matters and safety and security. 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. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**XIV. Adjournment**

At 9:50 P. M. the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
School Secretary