

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 October 4, 2023. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Amanda Haber, at 7:31 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 – 7:31 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-Absent  
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present  
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke-Present

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; 5 Members of the Public and 2 Staff Members.

**III. Flag Salute**

- The Board President led the flag salute.

**IV. President's Report**

- None

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

- None

**VI. Superintendent's Report**

- Items will be addressed throughout the meeting.

**VII. Buildings & Grounds**

- Dr. Gadaleta reported that the Kelly's Corner Memorial was almost complete. Next Monday at 3 pm we will have an unveiling ceremony and the public is invited to attend. The area is an outdoor classroom area that was created by her husband, Jay DaCosta. Dr. Gadaleta explained the set up and thanked the EFTA, PTA and Foundation for their donations.
- Dr. Gadaleta discussed the punch list roof meeting had with EI Associates. We did have a leak from the last rainstorm and Laumar was on-site today to repair. The hanging wires on building #2 were also repaired. Three leaders still need to be re-installed to the back of building #1, as they originally were. The missing leaders were causing an overflow.

**VIII. Curriculum & Instruction**

- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the staff will begin using Neptune Navigate.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported on October Awareness Weeks, which includes Respect, Fire Prevention (the EFFD will train the staff on fire extinguisher usage), School Violence and Red Ribbon Week (drug free).
- NJSLA scores will be reported at our next meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that Ms. Pilato and Mr. Finnegan met with the students to discuss making positive decisions during recess, such as proper sportsmanship and game rules, and that recess is supposed to be a fun time. The BOE discussed.

**IX. Finance**

- Mr. Lella noted that the 2022-23 Audit would begin soon, and noted the due date being pushed back in recent years due to waiting for information from the US Treasury Department.
- Mr. Lella noted that the 2024-25 budget process would begin in November.
- Mr. Lella noted that an outstanding Afterschool Supervision Invoice had been paid.
- Mr. Lella reported that the ASSA snapshot date is October 13<sup>th</sup>, and he certifies this information in December.
- Mr. Lella also noted that the DRTRS report is due November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Dr. Gadaleta spoke about the Governor's Bill for Consolidation Funding, but noted this is something EFS is not interested in.

**X. Personnel**

- Dr. Gadaleta noted that she had a final interview for the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math/Science vacancy upcoming. She will re-assign Mrs. Carroll and noted the new candidate cannot begin until January. Dr. Gadaleta thanked Mrs. Carroll for switching to the inclusion role during this time to cover.

**XI. Policy**

- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the new policy she had just received will be discussed at the October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**XII. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta would like to have a full Board before discussing the 2024-25 school calendar.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the Threat Assessment Team was approved at a prior meeting, however it was noted that we need a CST member, so we are re-approving. There will be a state training to take. Dr. Gadaleta also noted that EFS has a "tip line" button on the EFS app. The Board discussed.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that she and Mr. Toth had attended the W. Essex Consortium meeting for preliminary discussion on a later start time and the impact on transportation.

**XIII. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Mr. Lella reminded the BOE members that if you have not yet completed your annual training, you will receive an updated link for the training.

- Dr. Gadaleta discussed concern she had received over a PTA email that went out that included wishing a Happy Jewish New Year. Dr. Gadaleta addressed the email with the Board Attorney and the PTA. Going forward, Dr. Gadaleta will see all PTA and Foundation correspondence before they go out. Dr. Gadaleta opened the discussion to the Board. The BOE noted that they appreciate the efforts of the PTA and Foundation.

**XIV. Public Comment**

- Mr. Lella made a statement regarding the procedure for the Public Comment Session of the meeting.
- Mrs. D’Avella thanked Dr. Gadaleta for the update on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade position. Mrs. D’Avella mentioned how she was disappointed that Mr. Manlapid has not been in district much as he finishes out his time and the atmosphere it has created in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. She had hoped it would have ended better for the children and appreciates the efforts that have been made.
  - At 8:26 pm Mrs. D’Avella left the meeting.
- Mrs. O’Donnell, who is President of the PTA, spoke as a representative of the PTA, and the dates of holidays. Mrs. O’Donnell noted the PTA believes in inclusiveness and wants to be able to celebrate all holidays with the community. She apologized to Dr. Gadaleta because someone had felt the need to complain about the email content and grammatical errors and that it was sent with warmth and good intent.
- Mrs. Steiner, VP of the PTA, wanted to make a correction to the comment about Easter being left out in recent years. She addressed the two largest Jewish holidays and did not feel the email was an issue of church and state, and that it was unfortunate that only a few people have had an issue.
- Mrs. Haber thanked the members of the community for their comments.

**XV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

At 8:30 P.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. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

**XVI. Adjournment**

At 9 :00 P.M. the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next regular workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, **October 18, 2023, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary