

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 October 16, 2024. 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 3rd, 2024. 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-Present
 Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Absent
 Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke-Present

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary and one staff member, 3 members of the public and the Progress.

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

- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update on Lunch/Recess. On Monday some staff attended PD regarding lunch and recess articulation to review the changes and discuss how it can be improved. Staff discussed how to address the behavioral issues of the children and what changes can be made in the future.
- We are still collecting NJSLA reports and will report back once complete.
- Dr. Gadaleta has completed her Stronge Inter-rater Reliability Recertification.
- Last week was the Week of Respect.
- Dr. Gadaleta thanked the Essex Fells Fire Department for their involvement in Fire Prevention Week.
- School Violence and Awareness Week is 10/18 – 10/22 and is designed to make parents aware.
- Red Ribbon Week is 10/23 – 10/31.
- Parent / Teacher conferences will take place 10/23 – 10/25. This is the first time we are doing them over a 3-day period.
- The Halloween festivities will take place on October 31st.

VII. 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): Susan Hacker
Event: Conquer Math 6th Grade Workshops
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ
Date: 11/14/24, 12/11/24, 2/6/25
Cost: \$570.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
Event: Writing Defensible IEP's
Location: West Orange, NJ
Date: 10/15/24
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Stefania Focarino
Event: Accelerate Progress for Student's with IEP's By Making the Best Use of Differentiation, Accommodations, and Modifications
Location: Virtual
Date: 11/12/24
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Ennis
Event: Grades K-12 Increase Your Success as a Special Education Resource Teacher
Location: Virtual
Date: 10/18/24
Cost: \$169.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Ennis
Event: Grades K-12 Strengthening Executive Functioning Skills of Students with Special Needs
Location: Virtual
Date: 11/21/24
Cost: \$169.00

Staff Member(s): Stefania Focarino
Event: Strengthening the Executive Function Skills of Your Students with Special Needs
Location: Virtual
Date: 12/13/24
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Nicole Axentiou
Event: Creative Curriculum: Gold Assessment System Training
Location: Virtual
Date: 10/29/24
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Katie MacKenzie
Event: Best Strategies for the Unique Needs of Third Grade Students
Location: Virtual
Date: 11/14/24
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Erika Pilato
Event: School Counselors: Better Support Students Mental Health Needs

Location: Virtual
Date: 11/7/24
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
Event: CAI 2025 Conference – State of the Art of SLD Identification, Linking Assessment Results and Research to Case Conceptualizations and Interventions
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/22/25, 1/23/25, 1/24/25
Cost: \$420.00

Staff Member(s): Deana Hromoko
Event: Using AI Tools to Improve Special Education
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/6/25
Cost: \$275.00

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request extension for the following:

EFRD – Youth Basketball Program
11/11/24 – 3/21/25 - 5:00pm – 8:00pm
Gymnasium

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request extension for the following:

EFFEE – Variety Show
11/15/24 - 6:00pm – 8:30pm
Gymnasium/Media Center

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2024-2025 School Improvement Panel (ScIP)/District Evaluation Advisory Committee/Professional Development:

Michelle Gadaleta
Jamie Wallace
Michelle Barshay
Candice Fitzgerald
Judi Reynolds
Amanda Haber
Ilyse Negrin
Paige Daniels

Superintendent/Principal
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
BOE Representative
PTA Representative
EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2024-2025 Safety Team/Culture Climate Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta
Erika Pilato
Laura Quinn
Katie MacKenzie
Sue Hacker
Lisa Massaro
Dorotea Banek
Mary Renz
Ilyse Negrin
Paige Daniels

Superintendent/Principal
HIB Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Nurse/Teacher Representative
PTA Representative
EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2043-2025 District Testing Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta
LeeAnn Smith
Kimberly Trafford
Judi Reynolds
Marco Pannullo

Superintendent/Principal
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
IT Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2024-2025 Threat Assessment Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta
Steven Lella
Anthony Tedesco
Judi Reynolds
Erika Pilato
LeeAnn Smith

Superintendent/Principal
School Business Administrator
SLEOIII
Teacher Representative
School Counselor
Child Study Team Coordinator

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Maternity/Disability Leave of Absence for Jessica Ennis from January 2, 2025, through June 20, 2025, using the following days:
January 2, 2025 - January 24, 2025 = 16 sick days
January 27, 2025 - January 29, 2025 = 3 personal days

January, 30 2025 - May 1, 2025 = 12 weeks FMLA
 May 2, 2025 - June 20, 2025= 36 days leave of absence
 September 2025 = First day of school return date

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Maternity/Disability Leave of Absence for Molly Fornini from September 27, 2024, through June 20, 2025, using the following days:

September 30th, 2024 – October 22nd, 2024 = 16 sick Days
 October 23rd, 2024 – October 25th, 2024 = 3 personal Days
 October 28th, 2024 – June 20th, 2025 = Unpaid leave

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

10. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the change in employment for Lori Sink from Grade 6 Special Education Maternity Leave Replacement Teacher to Preschool Paraprofessional at a salary of \$30,000, to be pro-rated, pending Grade 6 Special Education hire.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

VIII. Buildings & Grounds

- The digital sign donated by the class of 2024 has arrived. We are obtaining quotes for the installation and electrical.
- Boiler Room #2, located under the gymnasium, has been having some issues. The current boilers were replaced over 12 years ago. Dr. Gadaleta showed the BOE a pipe that had calcium build up. We will address the water treatment. Currently 4 of the units are working and we will upgrade as needed to keep them operating properly. This may be a summer project in the next few years.

IX. Curriculum & Instruction

- A parent posed a question to the 5th Grade Social Studies Curriculum changes. This was discussed with the staff and the only changes were to the books. The topics and curriculum stayed the same. This was clarified to the parent.
- 2 6th grade students, John Criqui and Patrick Mazzei, will serve as the Student Liaisons to the BOE.

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella noted that the 2023-2024 Audit had begun.
- The 2025-2026 Budget Process will begin shortly.
- The Application for School State Aid (ASSA) snap shot was October 15th.
- The District Report of Transported Students (DRTRS) is due November 15th.
- The District is compliant with S1221, Menstrual Product Reimbursement Program. Reimbursement request will be submitted.

XI. Personnel

- Dr. Gadaleta addressed Public Comment by Staff members at Board of Education Meetings, and the response from the attorney. Staff members are permitted to speak on agenda items and speak properly and respectfully.
- We are advertising for 2 open Special Education vacancies.

XII. Policy

- The Board revisited prior discussion regarding Policy 0141.1 and 0141.2 regarding Board Members and sending / receiving districts. It does not need to be addressed any further.
- 2 new policies regarding Management of Life-Threatening Allergies in School and Health Services will be discussed further at the next meeting. Food allergies are becoming an issue and we must be sure to follow protocol.

XIII. Business Administrator's Report

- Topics were covered in Finance.

XIV. Business Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-03.

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

Workshop Minutes	September 4 th , 2024
Executive Workshop Minutes	September 4 th , 2024
Regular Meeting Minutes	September 18 th , 2024
Executive Meeting Minutes	September 18 th , 2024

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for October in the amount of \$ 209,424.93; as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for September as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$396,873.49 including \$369,769.21 for the gross payroll, \$9,247.72 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$17,856.56 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds for the month of July, August and September, as certified by the Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

XV. Old Business / Board Discussion

- We will revisit the 2025-2026 School Calendar due to changes by West Essex.

XVI. New Business / Board Discussion

- 2025-2026 Preschool tuition will be kept the same, at \$3,800.
- There has been an increasing issue with student lap tops breaking. We will propose a possible parent pay up front insurance fee to cover damages to the devices, possibly through Mobile Arq.

XVII. Public Comment

- None
- A representative from the Progress asked about the boiler repairs, the sign installation and the food allergy policy.

XVIII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

WHEREAS the following subject is not appropriate to be discussed in a public meeting and is within the exemptions which may be discussed and acted upon and,

WHEREAS only the following subject(s) shall be discussed in private recess by the Board and the minutes made available to the public as soon as the reason for exemption no longer exists, it is therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED at the Public Meeting of the Essex Fells Board of Education on this day Wednesday, October 16, 2024, pursuant to Sections 7 & 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, the following subject(s) shall be discussed in a session of the Board closed to the public:

Please be advised that the Board will be going into executive session for approximately one hour for the purpose of discussing legal matters. Action will not be taken in public after the executive session.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

XIX. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:37 P.M. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Toth

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary