

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 November 20, 2024. 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. 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, 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**

- Mrs. Haber thanked the Foundation for supporting the variety show, and thanked the staff as well. The children put on a great performance.
- Thank you to the community for turning out to vote on the BOE Election, welcomed Mr. Pisacane and thanked Mr. Toth for his time serving on the EFS BOE and wished him luck being the Essex Fells Representative on the West Essex BOE.
- We will review the NJSLA scores, and congratulations to everyone for the excellent scores EFS received. Also congratulations for EFS being ranked as the #6 Elementary School in the state.

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

- None

**VI. Superintendent's Report**

- Dr. Gadaleta thanked the Foundation for their support of the variety show and congratulated the children. This was the first year of a dress rehearsal for the entire school.
- EFS staff attended the NJEA convention in Atlantic City and shared the information they received with Dr. Gadaleta.
- We are in the middle of American Education Week, and many parents have attended so far for lunch and recess. A full group lunch was moved to today to prepare for the poor weather expected tomorrow. Classroom visits will be Thursday and Friday.
- We also had EFS teacher recognition for years of service. The Foundation also provided a token of appreciation. Those staff members particularly recognized were Nurse Renz and Mrs. Sullivan for 5 years, Mrs. Quinn and Mr. Pannullo for 10 years, and Mrs. Reynolds for 25 years. The teachers appreciate the event and the recognition.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade vs. Faculty Volleyball game will be next Wednesday, outside in between the buildings. All are invited. Dr. Gadaleta wished all the families of EFS a healthy and happy holiday.
- Dr. Gadaleta shared correspondence she received from a graduate of the Class of 1940. The daughter was visiting from Virginia and Dr. Gadaleta provided a brief tour for the alumni and daughter.

- Dr. Gadaleta explained resolutions #2 & 3 filling 2 open vacancies. Both candidates come with extensive experience. Resolution #8, we will maintain the draft of the 2025-26 school calendar. There are changes to the allergy policy that were approved by the Board Attorney and Straus Esmay.
- Mr. Toth noted 2 more subs were added, which is always good.

## 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): Laurie Fischer  
Event: Word-Finding Disorder – What Is It and How to Treat It?  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/20/24  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro  
Event: Synergy Meeting  
Location: Fairfield, NJ  
Date: 11/14/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Danielle Jaworski  
Event: Into Math  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/18/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Lodato  
Event: Into Math  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/18/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Lodato  
Event: Using Writing to Strengthen Your Students Understanding of Math Skills  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/3/24  
Cost: \$169.00

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay  
Event: Geometry  
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ  
Date: 12/11/24  
Cost: \$190.00

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay  
Event: Statistics and Probability  
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ  
Date: 2/6/25

Cost: \$190.00

Staff Member(s): Rory Duarte  
Event: Co-Teaching That Works  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/25/24  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Mary Anderson  
Event: Co-Teaching That Works  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/25/24  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Judi Reynolds  
Event: Into Math Group Study/Exploration  
Location: EFS  
Date: 12/3/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro  
Event: Into Math Group Study/Exploration  
Location: EFS  
Date: 12/3/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay  
Event: Into Math Group Study/Exploration  
Location: EFS  
Date: 12/3/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Kristin Gann  
Event: Into Math  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/3/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski  
Event: Expedition Mars Teacher Training  
Location: Buehler Science Center  
Date: 12/4/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Danielle Jaworski  
Event: Expedition Mars Teacher Training  
Location: Buehler Science Center  
Date: 12/4/24  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Rebecca Fogarty  
Event: Beyond Disney – How Fairy Tales Can Foster Creativity  
Location: Ewing, NJ  
Date: 12/13/24  
Cost: \$319.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro

Event: Strengthening Executive Function Skills Strategies to Increase Organization, Maintain Focus and Develop Working Memory

Location: Virtual

Date: 12/17/24

Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro

Event: Just In Time – Math Interventions K-2

Location: Virtual

Date: 1/13/25

Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith

Event: CoP - Strategies for Inclusive Practices

Location: Virtual

Date: 12/4/24, 2/11/25, 4/18/25

Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo

Event: TECHSPO 25

Location: Atlantic City, NJ

Date: 1/29/25-1/31/25

Cost: \$1,091.26

Staff Member(s): Rosalie Takkel

Event: Using AI Tools to Improve Student Learning Special Education

Location: Virtual

Date: 12/10/24

Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Rebecca Fogarty

Event: Differentiated Instruction – Increasing Student Success While Increasing Teacher Prep Time Grades K-6

Location: Virtual

Date: 2/10/25

Cost: \$295.00

Moved by: Mr. Toth

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, Pamela Banta, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, BA+30 Step 18 beginning January 6, 2025, at the prorated salary of \$55,876.26, pending the usual criminal history background check.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Christine Albano, 4<sup>th</sup> grade maternity leave teacher, MA Step 18 beginning December 13, 2024, at the prorated salary of \$63,217.33, pending

the usual criminal history background check.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by:

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Schelli Wilson, Substitute Teacher for the school year 2024-2025, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Kristin Cassano, Substitute Teacher for the school year 2024-2025, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the submission of the 2023-2024 HIB Grades Self-Assessment, 77/78 scoring rubric:

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the updated Textbook List for the 2024-2025 school year.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 School Calendar.

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the first reading and discussion of the following bylaws/policies/regulations:

|        |                                                             |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| P 5331 | Management of Food and Life-Threatening Allergies in School |
| R 5331 | Management of Food and Life-Threatening Allergies in School |

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

10. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the following Nursing Agency to provide substitute nursing services to the 2024-2025 school year:

Health Source Group

\$68.00/hour

Moved by: Mr. Toth

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

### VIII. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella reminded the Board Members to complete their NJSBA annual training for 2024 if they had not done so already.
- The results of the BOE Election were shared with the public. Mr. Lella congratulated Mrs. Haber and Mr. Pisacane for being elected, as well as Mr. Toth for being the Essex Fells representative on the West Essex BOE.
- Mr. Lella noted and explained the resolution and schedule for the submission of the M1-CMP to the County Office.
- Mr. Lella explained the resolution for the Capital Reserve withdrawal resolution.

### IX. Business Resolutions

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-06.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Executive Meeting Minutes

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for November in the amount of \$279,005.20, and an additional bills and claims for October in the amount of \$32,345.51; as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for October as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$399,189.53 including \$372,293.50 for the gross payroll, \$9,716.43 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$17,179.60 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

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 July, August, and September;

**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: Mrs. Burke |
| Ayes: 5               | Nays: 0                 |

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

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie | Seconded by: Mrs. Burke |
| Ayes: 5               | Nays: 0                 |

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the withdrawals from Capital Reserve for the following purposes:

|                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Gymnasium Floor               | 17,432.00   |
| Stucco Repairs                | \$8,275.00  |
| Fire Sensors                  | \$13,421.45 |
| Strobe Lights                 | \$8,458.00  |
| ADA Walkway                   | \$3,275.00  |
| Steps along field             | \$4,800.00  |
| Rock wall along driveway      | \$2,650.00  |
| Elevator/lift handrail        | \$2,400.00  |
| Electric Sign installation    | \$4,775.00  |
| 3D Printer Exhaust Fan        | \$4,450.00  |
| *Recorded as of July 31, 2024 |             |

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie | Seconded by: Mrs. Burke |
| Ayes: 5               | Nays: 0                 |

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the M1 & Comprehensive Maintenance Plan for the period FY '24 through FY '26 and authorizes the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to submit the Plan to the Essex County Executive Superintendent of Schools.

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie | Seconded by: Mrs. Burke |
| Ayes: 5               | Nays: 0                 |

## X. Buildings & Grounds

- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella explained that the main gate had finally been repaired. The cost was \$1,900, and after the \$1,000 deductible, the district received an insurance check for \$900.
- Today the new electric sign was turned on, and Dr. Gadaleta thanked the BOE and Class of 2024 for their donation.

#### **XI. Curriculum & Instruction**

- Dr. Gadaleta couldn't be more proud of the town for the way they honor the Veterans of Essex Fells with the Veteran's Day festivity. The 6<sup>th</sup> Graders attend, then the Veterans come back to EFS and meet with the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders for Q&A.
- Dr. Gadaleta presented the NJSLA reports and the BOE discussed. Mr. Mehta noted that we should all note that we are seeing the results of EFS pushing through the obstacles of being open during covid.

#### **XII. Finance**

- Mr. Lella provided an update to the 23-24 Audit
- Mr. Lella provided an update to the 25-26 budget, and challenges regarding federal funding and expenses exceeding the 2% CAP. Electricity is proposed at 27%.

#### **XIII. Personnel**

- The 2 Special Education vacancies had been filled.

#### **XIV. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- The Board did not have any further questions regarding Policy/Regulation 5331.
- The Board discussed how to collect for technology device damages, which is becoming more and more common. Perhaps utilizing a platform such as Mobile Arq is possible to collect device insurance funds.
- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update to the lunch/recess period.

#### **XV. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta provided the field trip list for 2024-25, noting that there is a 2 per grade level minimum.
- At PTA & Foundation meetings, it was discussed how the dates are picked for events that parents are permitted to attend. Dr. Gadaleta may consider changing to Monday and Fridays. Dr. Gadaleta also received a few questions about the Halloween day schedule, and she noted that she is just following the history.

#### **XVI. Public Comment**

- None

#### **XVII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act ("Act"), the Essex Fells Board of Education shall conduct a closed executive session pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 for the purpose of discussing: Legal Matters

It is anticipated that the length of time of this executive session will be 30 minutes and that action will not be taken in public after the executive session.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the minutes of the executive session will be released when the need for confidentiality in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 no longer applies.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**XVIII. Adjournment**

**RESOLVED** that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:57 P.M. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary