

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 January 22, 2025. 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 8th, 2025. 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
 Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke, Vice-President-Present
 Mr. Raj Mehta-Present
 Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Absent
 Mr. Christopher Pisacane-Present

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, one member of the public (one left at 7:36PM).

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President's Report

- None

V. Student Liaison Report

- 6th Grade student Patrick Criqui gave an update on what each grade is currently learning.

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VII. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta read a statement recognizing the Essex Fells Board of Education and her gratitude to their efforts.
 - Pre-school registration is currently at 13 of 28 available spots. Kindergarten is at 24. The BOE discussed the thought of a full day program.
 - We will be having a student teacher along with Mrs. Quinn in the second grade. This is the first time since pre-pandemic.
 - The interviews for the Art Therapist are well underway. Interviews have been completed except for 1 more that will take place next week. Then demo lessons will be scheduled.
 - Dr. Gadaleta referenced resolution #5 and policy, which the Board discussed.
- At 8:03 pm student Liam Haber came into the meeting.

VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–08.

- 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: Visualizing and Verbalizing
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 2/4/25, 2/11/25, 2/18/25, 2/25/25
 Cost: \$1,281.97

Staff Member(s): Candice Fitzgerald
 Event: NJECC
 Location: Montclair State University
 Date: 3/11/25
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Laura Quinn
 Event: NJECC
 Location: Montclair State University
 Date: 3/12/25
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski
 Event: NJECC
 Location: Montclair State University
 Date: 3/12/25
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
 Event: PCAST-An Intro to Person Centered Planning
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 3/12/25 & 3/13/25
 Cost: \$0.00

Moved by: Mrs. Burke Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
 Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the services of Belair Transport Company for the 2024-2025 school year:

Moved by: Mrs. Burke Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
 Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Valeria Rachioffi, Second Grade Student Teacher, starting January 22, 2025, for the school year 2024-2025, pending the usual criminal history and background check:

Moved by: Mrs. Burke Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
 Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

P 5512	Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying (M) (Revised)
P 5533	Student Smoking (M) (Revised)
R 5533	Student Smoking (Revised)
P & R 7441	Electronic Surveillance In School Buildings and On School Grounds (M) (Revised)
P & R 9320	Cooperation with Law Enforcement Agencies (M) (Revised)
P 2365	Acceptable Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) (New)
P 5111	Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students (M) (Revised)
P 5460	High School Graduation (M) (Revised)
P 5516	Use of Electronic Communication Devices (Revised)
R 5516	Use of Electronic Communication Devices (New)
P 5701	Academic Integrity (Revised)
P 5710	Student Grievance (Revised)
P 8500	Food Services (M) (Revised)
P 9163	Spectator Code of Conduct for Interscholastic Events (M) (New)

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

EFRD – Baseball/Softball Recreation and Travel League
3/1/25 – 8/1/25
Fields

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

EFPD – Tactical Training
1/20/25 – 2:00pm-7:00pm
Gymnasium

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Out of District Program costs for Academy 360 Lower School (Student 370641 & Student 340600) for 1-1 Aide's, beginning on January 2nd, 2025, in the following amount:

110 days total at \$210/day

110 days total at \$210/day

<u>Total Program Not to Exceed</u>	<u>\$46,200.00</u>
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Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

IX. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella provided the Board Members with hard copies of the 2023-24 audit. He had the exit interview and shared the information with Dr. Gadaleta and explained to the Board the audit results. The district received a clean audit and continues to be healthy and consistent. The auditors thanked us for our efforts in providing documentation and noted the district's impeccable records, recognizing the efforts of the Business Office staff.
- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella provided a detailed report about their preparations of the 2025-26 budget. Keeping within the 2% tax levy cap is becoming less and less attainable, as the increase in salaries and health benefits along exceed the 117k, 2% tax levy cap by 80k. Increases in the proposed budget, not subject to a 2% CAP, are out of district placements, a potential increase in paraprofessionals, CST evaluations (which were reduced), energy (which we are being told to budget a 27% increase due the state not being able to meet the demand and having to go out of state), increases to technology for new computers required by the district's technology plan, and increases in property insurance and workers compensation by 10 to 12%. Dr. Gadaleta noted she will search for other sources of revenue to cover the costs of the technology increase. Mr. Lella noted that we will use the enrollment adjustment and banked cap to balance the proposed budget, which is currently at an increase of 3.49%, or 204k. Also, for the first time, the district will be budgeting for Extraordinary Special Education Aid, which is not guaranteed, and the funding formula changes annually. Title IV funding has been cut from the district's grants, which was 10k a year for staff professional development. Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella will meet again and continue to provide updates to the Board.

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	December 11 th , 2024
Executive Meeting Minutes	December 11 th , 2024
Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves an additional bills and claims for December in the amount of \$30,328.46, and for January in the amount of \$259,671.98; as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for December as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$412,365.17 including \$385,295.00 for the gross payroll, \$8,307.77 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$18,762.40 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	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 November.

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. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	Nays: 0

XI. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

XII. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update to the Board about ongoing repairs that have been needed to keep the boilers operating properly.

XIII. Public Comment

- None

XIV. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:39P.M. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, February 05, 2025 at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary