

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Reorganizational Meeting held in the Media Center on January 8, 2025. The meeting was called to order by the Board Secretary, Mr. Steven J. Lella, at 7:30 P.M. Mr. Lella 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 – 7:30 P.M. – Board Secretary; Mr. Steven J. Lella

II. Roll Call

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President-Present
Mr. John Toth, Vice-President-Absent
Mr. Raj Mehta-Present
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke-Absent

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 3 Members of the Public.

III. Flag Salute

- The Board Secretary led the flag salute.

IV. Election Report

The annual School Election was conducted on Tuesday, November 5th, 2024, between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M.

The results of the election, as reported and certified by the Essex County Clerk, are as follows:

Members of the Board of Education:	Mrs. Amanda Haber	684 Votes
	Mr. Christopher Pisacane.	612 Votes

V. Reorganization of the Board of Education

- Mr. Lella administered the Oath of Office to elected members Mrs. Haber and Mr. Pisacane
- Mr. Lella conducted roll call.

Mrs. Amanda Haber-Present
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke-Absent
Mr. Raj Mehta-Present
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present
Mr. Christopher Pisacane-Present

- Election of President: Mr. Mehta nominated Mrs. Haber.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

- Election of VP: Mr. Mehta nominated Mrs. Burke

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

- Mrs. Haber took over the meeting.

VI. Board Comments/President's Report

Good evening, everyone.

- I'd first like to take a moment to express my gratitude to my fellow board members for your continued confidence in me as president. It is both humbling and inspiring to serve in this role, and I am truly honored to have your trust. This board has always been a remarkable group of individuals—dedicated, thoughtful, and driven to do what's right for our schools.

To the Essex Fells community, thank you for the continued opportunity to serve as president of the board. It brings me so much joy to contribute to the success of our schools and to help shape a bright future for our children—it's truly an honor and a privilege.

It is my pleasure to welcome Mr. Pisacane to the Essex Fells School Board. On behalf of the board and our school community, we are thrilled to have you join us. Your dedication to education and our students' success will surely make a meaningful impact. The work we do here is more than just governance; it's a commitment to fostering an environment where every student can thrive, every teacher feels supported, and our families trust in the excellence of our schools.

As you step into this role, know that you are part of a team that shares a common vision: making decisions with the best interest of our children at heart. We look forward to your ideas, your energy, and your passion as we work together to keep Essex Fells a community where education is a source of tremendous pride.

Additionally, I want to extend my thanks to Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella. Your tireless efforts behind the scenes, your expertise, and your unwavering commitment to our schools are nothing short of extraordinary. Working with you has been a pleasure. Your professionalism, kindness, and collaborative spirit set the tone for everything we achieve together, and we are so grateful for your partnership.

This past year has been filled with accomplishments, challenges, and growth. Together, we've navigated each step with a shared commitment to excellence and a focus on what truly matters: our students and their futures. As we look ahead, I am excited to continue this work alongside each of you, and I promise to lead with the same passion and dedication that have defined our efforts as a board.

To our newest member, Mr. Pisacane, I encourage you to bring your unique perspective and voice to our discussions. Together, we will continue to shape the future of education in Essex Fells.

Let's get to work!

VII. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VIII. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta noted that January is School Board Recognition month. Dr. Gadaleta appreciates the Board and all of their efforts and values the input of all the BOE Members. She will have a more formal statement at the January 22nd meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted the resolution for the resignation of Mrs. Rebecca Alpert, Art Therapist. Dr. Gadaleta appreciates and understands Mrs. Alpert's decision as she now has a family and wishes her all the best. We will begin interviewing as soon as possible and will do our best to fill the position to fulfill the needs of the children.

IX. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent's Resolutions # 01 - 03.

- 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): Kristin Gann
Event: Catching Up First Grade Students Who Have Fallen Behind
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/9/25
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Rory Duarte
Event: What's New In Children's Books and Creative Powerful Strategies
To Use Them in Your Program
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/12/25
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Maria Sazan
Event: Strengthening Executive Functioning
Location: Virtual
Date: 12/10/24
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
Event: NJCIE CST Training Sessions
Location: Virtual
Date: 12/19/24, 2/3/25, 2/24/25, 3/24/25
Cost: \$0.00

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

- 2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the resignation of, Rebecca Alpert, Art Therapist, with February 28, 2025, as the last day of employment.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

- 3. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Marissa Foti, Substitute Teacher for the

school year 2024-2025, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

X. Old Business / Board Discussion

- We will streamline the visitor sign in procedure with everyone going directly to Officer Tedesco in an effort to have more accurate records (1 book vs. 2) and protect the confidentiality of the Main Office. Mrs. Haber liked the streamlining idea.
- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update on the allergy policy.

XI. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta noted the 2025 BOE Meeting Dates and that some months will have only 1 meeting due to schedule conflicts.
- Mr. Lella let the Board know to be on the lookout for the Annual BOE Financial Disclosure Statement email.

XI. Reorganization Action Items

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Reorganization Action Items #01 - 02.

1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education adopts the New Jersey School Board Member Code of Ethics.

NOTES: Code of Ethics/Bylaws

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the following dates for its meetings in the ensuing year (*dates subject to change):

Wednesday	January 22, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	February 5, 2025	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	February 19, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	March 19, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	April 2, 2025	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	April 16, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	May 7, 2025	Workshop Meeting – Budget Presentation
Wednesday	May 21, 2025	Regular Meeting
Wednesday	June 11, 2025	Reappointment Meeting
Wednesday	August 13, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	September 3, 2025	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	September 17, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	October 15, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	November 12, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	December 3, 2025	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	December 17, 2025	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	January 7, 2026 (TBD)	Reorganizational/Workshop Meeting

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

XII. Public Comment

- None

XIII. 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: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

XIV. Adjournment

At 8:07 PM the board made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, January 22, 2025, at 7:30 P.M.** in the media center.

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary