

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 February 05, 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-Absent
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, three members of the public & one staff member.

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

- The Mid-Year Attendance Reports will be going out shortly to those children on the path to be considered chronic absentees. Plans will be made with the families as necessary.
- There has been an increase in Student Code of Conduct Reports lately, at various grade levels. They are being addressed with the School Counselor.
- Kindergarten enrollment for 2025-26 is currently at 34. Pre-School enrollment is only at 15, down from 18. This will impact our revenue for the 2025-26 budget.
- Dr. Gadaleta referenced Superintendent resolution #1 and the approval of Ms. Gabriella Day. Ms. Day had overwhelming references and Dr. Gadaleta is very pleased to welcome her to EFS. Ms. Day currently has a 60-day clause but will try to come earlier if she can.

VII. Superintendent's Resolutions

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

RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Gabriella Day, School Counselor, starting April 7, 2025, MA Step 3, at the prorated salary of \$18,620.51 for the school year 2024-2025, pending the usual criminal history and background check:

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

VIII. Buildings & Grounds

- Dr. Gadaleta reported that we continue to make repairs to the boiler systems as needed. One of the lower building boilers had turned off over the weekend and with the extreme cold took some time to warm up. We will need new circulator pumps to repair this issue

IX. Curriculum & Instruction

- We will be attempting to pull back on Technology usage screen time, and remind staff that it should be used to enhance teaching.

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella provided to the Board an overview of the 2023-24 school year audit. He noted the district is healthy and consistent from year to year and received a clean audit. The auditing firm of Samuel Klein thanked the district for their time working with them and noted the district continues to maintain impeccable records.
- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella provided an update on the preparation of the 2025-26 budget. We are proposing a tax levy increase of 3.49%, which is 204k vs. 117k at 1.99%. We have also taken in to account the low pre-school enrollment. Dr. Gadaleta is researching other means of revenue and the PTA will donate 40k to our technology budget for new computers. An annual technology fee charge will also be reviewed. Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella are still working on arriving at a balanced budget.

XI. Personnel

- Dr. Gadaleta reported on the hiring of Ms. Gabriella Day.

XII. Policy

- Due to 2 members of the Board being absent, the decision was made to table policy discussion until the next meeting.

XIII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta and the Board discussed the pre-school program hours due to a low turnout for 2025-26 and the possibility of additional PM programs and a full day program.
- Mr. Lella reminded the Board members to submit their 2025 BOE Financial Disclosure statements. Mr. Lella will resend as needed.

XIV. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mr. Lella reminded the Board that NJSBA BOE Member training will take place at our February 19th meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta reported that 59 students signed up for the TREP\$ Marketplace program while we can only do 30. It was suggested the children pair up in teams and some parents were not pleased with that decision. The staff members running the program wanted to be sure all children had a chance to participate.

XV. Public Comment

- A parent noted that a full day pre-school program would be a nice idea.
- A second parent noted that perhaps the PTA and Foundation could also spread word to the families about the pre-school program. She also noted that charging a technology fee would be a good idea.

- Mrs. Daniels shared some of the parent feedback she had heard regarding the TREP\$ program. In regard to the budget shortages, perhaps a full day pre-school would be a good idea.

XVI. 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 and Personnel.**

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: 3

Nays: 0

XVII. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:46P.M. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 7:30 P.M. in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary