

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 April 16, 2025. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. 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 8th, 2025. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, and the Star Ledger.

I. Call to Order – 7:31 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
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present
Mr. Christopher Pisacane-Absent
Mr. Raj Mehta-Absent

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

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

V. President's Report

- Mrs. Haber acknowledged the success of TREP\$ and the support from the community.
- Happy Spring Break to everyone.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta recognized the TREP\$ program, which is funded by the BOE. This program has become very involved and worth the effort. It is becoming a nice EFS tradition and thank you to everyone's support.
- We received notification from Fogarty & Hara that Rodney T. Hara and Stephen R. Fogarty would be retiring from the firm September 1st, 2025. They have been so professional and provided excellent support, we are extremely sorry they are moving on.
- There was a report of minor vandalism during TREP\$. The basketball backboard was unintentionally broken and was addressed with the parent. Dr. Gadaleta wanted to provide this as a learning lesson, that it was an accident and it would be ok to report to the district. The parents appreciated the manner in which it was handled.
- We have only 1 senior signed up for Senior Service from West Essex.
- Dr. Gadaleta thanked the PTA for the Egg Hunt, and did want to share that she did receive some complaints about the event, ranging from why do we this to the quality of the contents of the eggs. It was not received as positively as in the past and she will share with the PTA. The Board feels the event is a nice part of EFS.
- Next week is spring break, which is late this year, but something everyone is looking forward to. As mentioned in the past, we anticipate seeing families start their vacations a day early, which has become an issue. We hope everyone has a relaxing break.
- The 5th & 6th grade dance will be May 1st.
- NJSLA testing is coming up. We would like to try and limit the amount of makeup testing.

- Teacher Appreciation week falls during state testing this year. The PTA and Foundation have some nice events planned for the staff. Friday, May 9th will be a 12:45 dismissal for the staff PTA luncheon.
- The Board recognized the resignation of Ms. Sink's resignation, and how sad they were to see her go. Dr. Gadaleta noted that she was leaving to focus on time with family and wishes her all the best. She will be missed.

VII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–04.

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): Judi Reynolds

Event: Meeting the Needs of Your Gifted Students and Advanced Learners-High Yield Strategies

Grades 1-8

Location: Virtual

Date: 4/29/25

Cost: \$275.00

Staff Member(s): Erica Santalla

Event: Making the Best of AI Tools in the ELA Classroom

Location: Virtual

Date: 5/15/25

Cost: \$285.00

Staff Member(s): Judi Reynolds

Event: Improving Focus and Behavior in the Classroom-Implementing Sensory Strategies That Works for All Students

Location: Virtual

Date: 5/28/25 & 5/29/25

Cost: \$125.00

Staff Member(s): John Thomas

Event: Indoor Air Quality

Location: Roseland, NJ

Date: 6/13/25

Cost: \$0.00

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Essex Fells Public School Performance Report for 2023-2024.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the resignation of Lori Sink, Paraprofessional, with June 19, 2025, as the last day of employment.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, Joe Ryan for West Essex Senior Service, beginning May 19, 2025, through June 17th, 2025.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

VIII. Business Administrator Report

- Mr. Lella provided a draft the budget slides for the presentation on May 7th, and asked if the Board had any comments, questions or concerns. The Board feels ready for the meeting and appreciates and understands the work and challenges faced preparing the 2025-26 budget.
- We received a grant award in the amount of \$43,000 for the Local Recreation Improvement Grant, which are to be used to help cover the costs associated with updating playgrounds, fields, walking or bicycle paths, multi-sport/purpose courts, recreational facilities and costs related to improvements for the community. Mr. Lella noted this was the first time he had come across this grant, and these funds will be used to offset the costs for the ADA walkway and steps along the JPV Field, the lift in building #1, the gymnasium floor and other improvements to the school facility. The Board and Dr. Gadaleta were very appreciative of the work done to receive the grant award, and we will continue to look for this each year.
- As a follow up to the grant award, Mr. Lella noted a property restoration vendor who came to visit the district and noted how well kept and nice the buildings and grounds were kept. The school has a very nice and special feel to it.

IX. Business Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-05.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes	March 19, 2025
Executive Meeting Minutes	March 19, 2025
Regular Workshop Minutes	April 2, 2025
Executive Workshop Minutes	April 2, 2025

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for April in the amount of \$199,979.16; as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for March as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$399,070.26, including \$371,733.88 for the gross payroll, \$7,507.88 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$19,828.50 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

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 March;

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. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Essex Fells Board of Education hereby approves the submission of a grant application for the Safety Grant Program through the New Jersey Schools Insurance Group's ERIC NORTH Subfund for the purposes described in the application, in the amount of \$2,000.00 for the period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

X. Old Business / Board Discussion

- The NJSBA BOE Training has been rescheduled for the May 21st BOE Meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted that we have incurred about 6k in costs related to computer device breakage. We will look to cover the cost in next year's budget with an upfront fee.

XI. New Business / Board Discussion

- For BOE discussion, the elimination for parent class visits as random requests. The Board agrees with Dr. Gadaleta that these random parent requests can be distracting and are not aligned to the curriculum.

XII. Public Comment

- Mrs. Axentiou, from a teachers perspective, thought the egg hunt was a beautiful and special event, noting she first experienced it last year when she started at EFS. She feels it's a lovely reflection of the school and feels it's too bad that some people don't agree.

XIII. Adjournment

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

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary