The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Workshop Meeting held in the Media Center on September 3, 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 August 27, 2025. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, and the Star Ledger.

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by the Board President.

II. Roll Call

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

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

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President's Report

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our first Board of Education meeting of the new school year. Tomorrow marks the first day of school, and as always, this is such an exciting time of year. There is a certain energy and sense of possibility that comes with a fresh start, and I know our students, teachers, staff, and families are ready to begin another successful year together. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank our administration, faculty, and staff for all of the hard work that went into preparing for the opening of school. From updating curriculum to setting classrooms, from technology readiness to building maintenance, it truly takes a team effort to make sure everything is in place. We deeply appreciate your dedication and attention to detail, ensuring that Essex Fells continues to offer an outstanding student experience. This year, as a Board, we are also focused on working toward a new set of goals that will guide our work

- Policy – Receive updates of our policy manual and make revisions as needed in accordance with new alerts to ensure proper enforcement and adherence to all policies.
- Personnel – Provide all staff members with high-quality professional development opportunities and resources tied directly to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, while supporting our mission that "Studies Pass Into Character" through high expectations for educational excellence.
- Curriculum & Instruction – Review and revise district curriculum to align with the most current NJSLS and NJQSAC requirements.
- Buildings and Grounds – Audit district facilities for potential upgrades through future capital projects.
- Finance – Maintain comprehensive district programming, staffing, and facility needs within the 2% budget cap, utilizing state-approved adjustments for enrollment, health care increases, and/or banked cap allowances as needed.

These goals reflect our continued commitment to ensuring Essex Fells School remains not only one of the top-performing districts in the state, but also a place where students are challenged, supported, and inspired each day. I am looking forward to the year ahead, the work we will accomplish together, and most importantly, the success of our students. Thank you.

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update on the Back to School Theme for the 2025-26 school year.
- We are excitedly looking forward to the first day of school tomorrow.
- There will be an assembly on Friday, thank you to the EFFEE for setting this up.
- Back to School Night will be on September 10th, and the Book Fair will be set up for that night as well.
- The State will be changing their reporting data base from NJSMART to NJSLEDS.
- The EFS raw NJSLA test score reviews look good.
- The State is no longer utilizing Pearson for testing. It will be interesting comparing the results for the first year.
- We had wonderful Staff Orientation and Professional Development Days this week. The Essex Fells Police Department provided a very thorough safety presentation to the staff.
- We received notification that the US DOE Office of Safe & Supportive School's Readiness & Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) will be closing.
- Mrs. Lavoie asked about the EFPD Movie Night request. Dr. Gadaleta noted that they were asking to use our fields for this year.

VII. Superintendent's Resulutions

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, contracting with Spectrum Support Services for the 2025-2026 school year.

   Note: Billing rates attached

   Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

   Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of the following stipend positions for the 2025-2026 school year at the contractual rate:

Patricia Pakonis	Afterschool Supervision
LeeAnn Smith	Afterschool Supervision
Susan FitzGibbon	Afterschool Supervision

   Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

   Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

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

   EFPD – Movie Night
   September 26, 2025 – Field
   5:00pm – 10:00pm

   Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

   Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Maternity/Disability Leave of Absence for Danielle Jaworski from December 8, 2025, through May 3, 2026, using the following days:

   December 8th, 2025 – January 4th, 2026 = 12 Sick Days
   January 5th, 2026 – January 25th, 2026 = 14 Sick Days
   January 26th, 2026 – April 19th, 2026 = FMLA
   April 20th, 2026 – May 3rd, 2026 = Leave of Absence

   Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

   Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

VIII. Buildings & Grounds

- Mr. Lella updated the Board as to the summer projects that had been completed. Only boiler work repair remained.
- Mrs. Lavoie asked about the school's grass cutting. Dr. Gadaleta had spoken to the new head of the EF DPW and it was to be discussed further, as he was not aware. The district does not have the equipment to cut all the grass.

IX. Curriculum & Instruction

- Dr. Gadaleta provided a PDF of the new curriculum and recognized the staff that updated the curriculum for the hard work that they put in.

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella noted that he provided some information to the auditors for the 2024-25 school year audit.

XI. Personnel

- Dr. Gadaleta noted the new contracted OT provider for the 2025-26 school year.

XII. Policy

- The Board was ok with the policy updates.

XIII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

XIV. New Business / Board Discussion

- The Board discussed the EFFEE Color Run request, noting this event will be more in depth than our typical use of facility requests and will also require involvement and coordination with the EFPD. They feel the idea sounds great, but the Board came up with additional questions to be asked regarding the logistics: will the school be open for restroom use and if so who would be monitoring; the use of EFS walkie talkie radios; will residents of other towns be permitted to attend; who is responsible for the cleanup; does Officer Tedesco need to be involved.

XV. Public Comment

- Mrs. Farkas and Mrs. Stefanczyk thanked the Board for considering the Color Run. They noted there could be limited radio use to 1 or 2 members to be in touch with the EFS custodial staff. They understand the concern about the use of restrooms, and they are planning on just Essex Fells

residents.

XVI. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 8:14 P.M the Board made a motion to enter executive session.

BE IT RESOLVED that in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting 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: 4 Nays: 0

XVII. Adjournment

At 8:35 P.M the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, **September 17, 2025, at 7:30 P.M**. in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Lavoie Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5 4 Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary