

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 17, 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 8, 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- Present
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Absent
Mr. Christopher Pisacane-Present
Mr. Raj Mehta-Present

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal, Mr. Steven J. Lella, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, one staff member and twelve members of the public (8 left at 7:36pm, 2 shortly after).

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President's Report

Good evening,

Thank you for joining us this evening.

To begin, the Board is proud to recognize and commend the students of Essex Fells School who achieved outstanding results on the Spring 2025 NJSLA assessments. These accomplishments reflect not only the diligence and perseverance of our students, but also the expertise of our faculty and the continued partnership of our families. Together, these achievements exemplify the excellence that defines our school community.

We are equally pleased to note that the 2025–2026 school year is off to a strong and seamless start. The energy in the building has been palpable—Back to School Night was a resounding success, and Picture Day brought with it the joyful spirit of a community coming together in celebration of a new year.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our deepest gratitude to the administration, faculty, and staff for their tireless commitment to our students. It is through your professionalism, dedication, and care that Essex Fells School continues to flourish.

As we move forward, the Board remains confident that this year will be marked by continued growth, achievement, and the enduring spirit of collaboration that makes Essex Fells such an exceptional district. Thank you.

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta recognized Jackson Mehta, Maeve Dykema and Zachary Lyne for their NJSLA Test Scores.
- Back to School Night had about 170 families. Thank you to the PTA for organizing the book fair.
- We had successful school picture day at EFS.

- School will be closed on September 23rd and October 2nd in recognition of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- Dr. Gadaleta will be taking her full day Stronge Interrater Reliability of Teacher Evaluation re-certification training.
- Thank you to the curriculum team for the required updates they made to the curriculum.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained some of the Superintendent Resolutions. Mr. Lella's NJASBO PD will be removed and approved at next month's meeting with corrected dates. Thank you to the Bobroff Family for their basketball hoop donation to the school.
- Mrs. Haber was pleased to note that the EFFEE made changes to the Color Run to meet district guidelines.

VII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–16.

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): Stefania Focarino
 Event: Conquer Math
 Location: Pompton Plains, NJ
 Date: 9/15/25, 10/15/25, 11/17/25, 12/16/25, 1/16/26, 2/25/26
 Cost: \$1,200.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski
 Event: Foundations of Teaching the Holocaust
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 10/29/25
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Kristin Kowalski
 Event: Conquer Math
 Location: Pompton Plains, NJ
 Date: 10/8/25, 11/14/25, 1/21/26
 Cost: \$650.00

Staff Member(s): Jessica Ennis
 Event: Conquer Math
 Location: Pompton Plains, NJ
 Date: 11/18/25, 12/17/25
 Cost: \$400.00

Staff Member(s): Erika Pilato
 Event: HIB Training
 Location: Toms River, NJ
 Date: 12/8/25
 Cost: \$234.93

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
 Event: CAI Third Annual Conference
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 1/29/26, 1/30/26
 Cost: \$296.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith
 Event: Essex County Director Roundtable
 Location: West Orange, NJ
 Date: 9/16/25, 10/21/25, 11/18/25, 12/16/25, 1/20/26, 2/17/26, 3/17/26, 4/21/26, 5/19/26, 6/16/26
 Cost: \$47.00

Staff Member(s): Steven Lella
 Event: Association of School Business Officials
 Location: Belleville, NJ
 Date: 9/24/25, 10/29/25, 11/19/25, 12/12/25, 1/21/26, 2/25/26, 3/25/26, 4/22/26, 5/13/26
 Cost: \$300.00

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo
 Event: NJECC Mileage
 Location: Montclair, NJ
 Date: 9/19/25, 10/17/25, 11/14/25, 12/5/25, 1/16/26, 2/6/26, 3/10/26, 3/11/26, 4/10/26, 5/15/26, 6/6/26
 Cost: \$55.46

Staff Member(s): Kimberly Trafford
 Event: NJECC Mileage
 Location: Montclair, NJ
 Date: 9/19/25, 10/17/25, 11/14/25, 12/5/25, 1/16/26, 2/6/26, 3/10/26, 3/11/26, 4/10/26, 5/15/26, 6/6/26
 Cost: \$55.46

Staff Member(s): Mary Renz
 Event: Annual School Health Conference
 Location: Somerset, NJ
 Date: 10/22/25
 Cost: \$295.00

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

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

EFRD – West Essex Little League
 September 19, 2025-Octotber 31, 2025 – Fields
 Monday – Sunday 4:30pm – 7:00pm

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

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

EFFEE – Fall 2025 Enrichment
 October 7, 2025-December 18, 2026 – Gymnasium/Classrooms
 Monday – Wednesday 3:25pm – 4:25pm

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

Nays: 0

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

EFFEE – Color Run
10/19/25 – Fields
8:00am – 2:00pm

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

EFRD – Youth Basketball
November 10, 2025 – March 23, 2026– Gymnasium/Restrooms
Monday – Friday 5:00pm-8:00pm/Saturday 8:00am-1:00pm

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Ashleigh Greci, Substitute Teacher for the school year 2025-2026, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Rawan Anabtawi, Substitute Teacher for the school year 2025-2026, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent the appointment of, Elizabeth DeStefano, Substitute Teacher for the school year 2025-2026, pending the usual criminal history, background check and county approval.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

* Mr. Pisacane- Abstain

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education, as recommended by the Superintendent, extends thanks to the Bobroff Family for their basketball hoop donation to the school.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

10. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025 Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculum:

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

11. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the classroom observation of a first grade teacher by Isabell Hilario, of Essex County College on September 25, 2025.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

12. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 School Improvement Panel (SciP)/District Evaluation Advisory Committee/Professional Development:

Michelle Gadaleta
Jamie Wallace
Michelle Barshay
Candice Fitzgerald
Judi Reynolds
Amanda Haber
Lauren Mastria
Lindsay Farkas

Superintendent/Principal
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
BOE Representative
PTA Representative
EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

13. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 Safety Team/Culture Climate Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta
Erika Pilato
Gabriella Day
Laura Quinn
Katie MacKenzie
Sue Hacker
Pamela Banta
Dorotea Banek
Mary Renz
Sandra Oubina
Lindsay Farkas

Superintendent/Principal
HIB Representative
School Counselor Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Teacher Representative
Nurse/Teacher Representative
PTA Representative
EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

14. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-

2026 District Testing Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta	Superintendent/Principal
LeeAnn Smith	Teacher Representative
Kimberly Trafford	Teacher Representative
Judi Reynolds	Teacher Representative
Marco Pannullo	IT Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

15. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 Threat Assessment Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta	Superintendent/Principal
Steven Lella	School Business Administrator
Anthony Tedesco	SLEOIII
Judi Reynolds	Teacher Representative
Erika Pilato	School Counselor
LeeAnn Smith	Child Study Team Coordinator

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

P 0173	Duties of Public-School Accountant (Revised)
P 0174	Legal Services (M) (Revised)
P 0177	Professional Services (M) (Revised)
P & R 1570	Internal Controls (M) (Revised)
P 1620	Administrative Employment Contracts (M) (Revised)
P & R 6111	Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program (M) (Revised)
P 6220	Budget Preparation (M) (Revised)
R 6220	Budget Preparation (Revised)
P 0141.3	Board Member Number & Term - Regional School District (New)
P 0141.4	Board Member Number & Term - County Vocational School District (New)
P 0143	Board Member Election and Appointment (Revised)
P 1636.01	Notification of Promotion, New Job, and Transfer Opportunities (New)
P 1648.15	Recordkeeping for healthcare setting in school building- Covid-19 (M) (Abolished)
P 2422	Statutory Curricular Requirements (M) (Revised)
P & R 5117	Interdistrict Public School Choice (Revised)
P 5339.01	Student Sun Protection (M) (New)

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

VIII. Business Administrator's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella updated the Board on some upcoming B & G projects. Some of the lighting in the Media Center needs to be renovated, it can no longer be repaired. Quotes will be obtained. The water fountain in the Administration hallway was not broken, it turns out the building water pressure is too high and is causing issues on the system filters, causing them to break. We will have the pressure addressed. Mr. Lella will proceed with the scoreboard order.

IX. Business Administrator's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-03.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes	August 13 th , 2025
Executive Meeting Minutes	August 13 th , 2025
Regular Workshop Minutes	September 3 rd , 2025
Executive Workshop Minutes	September 3 rd , 2025
Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Burke
Ayes: 4	Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves additional bills and claims for September in the amount of \$458,355.51, as certified by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for August as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$85,197.76 including \$79,325.14 for the gross payroll, \$3,631.84 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$2,240.78 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

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

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds for the month of July and additional for June as certified by the School Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

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

X. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta is so proud of the new full day pre-school program. She is very pleased so far and feels it was a great decision to extend the program.
- A few parents were not aware of the changes to the birthday celebrations. The teachers will be sending a friendly reminder to the parents of their classes.
- Dr. Gadaleta wanted to remind the public that the district is utilizing Gaggle/Neptune Navigate to keep the students safe while on-line.
- Mr. Mehta asked about the computer technology fees. They were all received, and we thank the PTA for their help.

XI. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta explained the survey results for the 6th grade Privilege Participation, which will

consist of being the school mascot (12 requests), the morning announcements (about 85%), being a kindergarten buddy (100%) and Liaison to the BOE (8).

- The Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Outreach and Support was part of the summer mailing and included photo permissions and survey information. Dr. Gadaleta explained other components for surveys.
- Regarding visitors and volunteers, Dr. Gadaleta wants to be clear that we are very serious about the safety and security of our school. Volunteers must be on the daily list and sign in upon arrival. We need to be sure that we are following our protocol. Parents will be invited as visitors to visit their child's classroom. Parents are not permitted to contact staff and tell them that they are coming in to visit the classroom and present or teach. We appreciate the parent's passion, but they can trust that our educators are covering all of the state requirements. The Board is in agreement.
- The staff/ parent communication policy regarding emails will be in the WAAG tomorrow.

XII. Public Comment

- Mrs. Kate Stefanczyk spoke on behalf of the Foundation. There will be 1 member of the Foundation present at each BOE meeting to report back to the group. The EFFEE thanks the Board for approving the Color Run. They feel it will be a huge success. She asked about using the Glen for After School Enrichment. The Glen is not school property they can contact the town for that.

XIII. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:21 P.M the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, **October15, 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
School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary