

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 October 15, 2025. The meeting was called to order by the Board Vice President, Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke at 7:30 P.M. Mrs. Burke 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 Vice President at 7:30 P.M.

**II. Roll Call**

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

Also present: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal, Mr. Steven J. Lella, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, one staff member and four members of the public (Mrs. Lembo left at 7:37 P.M).

**III. Flag Salute**

- The Board Vice President led the flag salute.

**IV. President's Report**

- Mrs. Burke thanked Student Liaison Nick Lembo for his report.

**V. Student Liaison to the BOE Report**

- Nick Lembo provided an update as to what the students were learning in each grade

**VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only**

- None

**VII. Superintendent's Report**

- The October Awareness events for the month will include fire prevention, the Week of Respect, and Red Ribbon Week. There was also staff professional development on Monday. Dr. Gadaleta explained the sessions and noted it was a very productive and excellent day for the staff.
- Parent Teacher conferences are coming up. At this time, we are only able to accommodate 1 time slot per child.
- Halloween is being celebrated on October 31st, and the West Essex Regional band will be here to perform.
- The district is preparing for upcoming QSAC.
- Dr. Gadaleta presented the NJSLA Spring 2025 results.

**VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent 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): Steven Lella  
Event: NJASBO PD Programs  
Location: Whippany, NJ  
Date: 12/2/25, 1/13/26, 2/12/26, 3/24/26, 5/12/26  
Cost: \$779.05

Staff Member(s): Judi Reynolds  
Event: Essex County Gifted & Talented Consortium Meeting  
Location: Roseland, NJ  
Date: 9/19/25  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Kristen Kowalski  
Event: IXL Live Immersive Assessment & Analytics  
Location: Morristown, NJ  
Date: 10/9/25  
Cost: \$190.00

Staff Member(s): George Alexandris  
Event: Innovative New Activities for Strengthening Your PE Program K-8  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 10/22/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith  
Event: Stepping Stones Open House  
Location: Fairfield, NJ  
Date: 10/29/25  
Cost: \$4.04

Staff Member(s): Katie MacKenzie  
Event: Helping Students with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders K-12  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 10/30/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Mary Renz  
Event: OctoberFARE  
Location: Washington, DC  
Date: 11/1/25  
Cost: \$704.30

Staff Member(s): Candice Fitzgerald  
Event: Decrease Attention Getting and Tantrum Behaviors, PK-2  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/19/25  
Cost: \$169.00  
Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro

Event: Elevating Reading Workshop K-2  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/20/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Susan FitzGibbon  
Event: Brains, Behaviors, and Beyond  
Location: North Caldwell, NJ  
Date: 11/20/25  
Cost: \$150.00

Staff Member(s): Jennifer Sullivan  
Event: Brains, Behaviors, and Beyond  
Location: North Caldwell, NJ  
Date: 11/20/25  
Cost: \$150.00

Staff Member(s): Maria Sazan  
Event: Brains, Behaviors, and Beyond  
Location: North Caldwell, NJ  
Date: 11/20/25  
Cost: \$150.00

Staff Member(s): Belinda O'Donnell  
Event: Brains, Behaviors, and Beyond  
Location: North Caldwell, NJ  
Date: 11/20/25  
Cost: \$150.00

Staff Member(s): Patricia Pakonis  
Event: Strengthening The Executive Function Skills of Your Students with Special Needs  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/3/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Susan Hacker  
Event: Conquer Math  
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ  
Date: 2/2/26, 3/10/26  
Cost: \$400.00

Staff Member(s): Pamela Banta  
Event: Conquer Math  
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ  
Date: 2/2/26, 3/10/26  
Cost: \$400.00  
Staff Member(s): Rory Duarte  
Event: Literature in Math  
Location: Pompton Plains, NJ  
Date: 5/4/26  
Cost: \$260.81

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 3

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:

Tiny Treasures Extended School Day, Inc.  
September 3, 2025-June 22, 2026  
Monday – Friday 3:00pm – 6:00pm  
Media Center/Gymnasium/Playground

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 3

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:

Essex Fells Police Department  
November 12, 2025  
November 19, 2025  
5:00pm – 8:00pm  
Gymnasium

Moved by: Mrs. Lavoie

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

#### IX. Business Administrator's Report

- The 2024-25 Audit began the first week of September and is moving along.
- Mr. Lella and Dr. Gadaleta will begin the 2026-27 budget process in the upcoming weeks.
- The Application for School State Aid (ASSA) snapshot date is October 15th, and the data will be certified in December.
- The District Report of Transported Resident Students (DRTRS) is due November 14th.
- There is a resolution approving this year's Comprehensive Maintenance Plan & M1. This schedule shows the district has spent, has budgeted for and will continue to budget for buildings and grounds maintenance.
- The School Board Election is November 4th and there are 2 open BOE positions for 3-year terms beginning in January 2026. We encourage the public to get out and vote and good luck to the candidates who are on the ballot.
- NJSBA annual training needs to be completed by December 31st.
- For NJQSAC, the County Business Administrator will come out in the upcoming weeks for the facility walk through of the school grounds.
- Resolution #7 is being approved to reflect the increase in the Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA) bid threshold amount from 44k to 53k. And we are also approving utilizing Amazon Business for Education Purchasing.

#### X. Business Administrator's Resolutions

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-07.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes

September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for October in the amount of \$145,979.51, as certified by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for September as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$397,968.86 including \$370,792.88 for the gross payroll, \$5,822.96 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$21,353.02 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

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 Months of July, August, and June Revised.

**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: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education authorizes the School Business Administrator / Board Secretary to utilize an account with Amazon Business for Education Purchasing.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the M1 & Comprehensive Maintenance Plan for the period FY '25 through FY '27 and authorizes the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to submit the Plan to the Essex County Executive Superintendent of Schools.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED**, that the Board appoints Steven J. Lella as the purchasing agent for the Essex Fells School District for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with

N.J.S.A.18:18A-2b as revised, and assigned the authority, responsibility, accountability for purchasing on behalf of the Board, and having the power to prepare advertisements, advertise for and receive bids, and to award contracts pursuant to N.J.S.A.18A:18A-3a (Bid Threshold) at a bid threshold up to \$53,000, 18A:18A-37a-c (quotations), and 18A:18A-7 (Emergency Purchases) and prepare and issue all purchase orders in accordance with N.J.S.A.18A:18A et. seq. and applicable Board policies and regulations.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

#### **XI. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta just wanted to make the Board aware of damage to a light fixture when the porta potties were removed from the recent Police Foundation Movie Night that took place at EFS. Mr. Thomas was able to repair the fixture. Feedback was that the event went very well.

#### **XII. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta provided different versions of the 2026-27 EFS School Calendar. West Essex has already approved theirs with the staff returning August 27th and the students August 31st, and asked the Board if they would like to continue to align with West Essex. Labor Day is late next year, September 7th. The Board will discuss further.
- We will need to advertise for 2026-27 Preschool Tuition. Rates from neighboring districts was provided.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted that the staff has been working very hard this year and spending time addressing student behavior and development of soft skills. We also had to hire a substitute to monitor the bathroom usage, as we are having daily issues with some children urinating on the bathroom floors. This is a waste of time and resources, and we ask the parents to speak with your children about this behavior.

#### **XIII. Public Comment**

- Mrs. Mafucci noted that the bathroom issue has been happening in the school district where she works as well and the school is taking measures to address it.

#### **XIV. Adjournment**

At 8:51 P.M the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, **November 12th, 2025, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

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