

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 November 12, 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 at 7:30 P.M.

#### **II. Roll Call**

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President- Present  
Mrs. Jacquelyn Burke, Vice-President- Present  
Mrs. Caragh Lavoie-Present  
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 seven members of the public (four left at 7:37 P.M).

#### **III. Flag Salute**

- The Board President led the flag salute.

#### **IV. President's Report**

- Good evening, everyone.  
I'd like to begin by welcoming our student representative, Addison Hochkeppel, and thanking her for joining us this evening. It is so wonderful to have you here to share your insights and student perspective with the community. It is surely a bright spot in our meeting. We appreciate all of the time and work that you put in to prepare for tonight.  
I also want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate our Staff Years of Service Pinning that is on the agenda. It's always inspiring to acknowledge the dedication of our staff members who give so much of themselves to our students, our school, and our community. Their commitment and passion are what make Essex Fells such a special place.  
Congratulations as well to our newly elected Board of Education members. We look forward to welcoming you officially in January and to the continued collaboration that keeps our district strong. At the same time, I'd like to express sincere gratitude to Mrs. Lavoie and Mrs. Burke, who have just two meetings left in their terms. Your service, leadership, and steady commitment to the students and families of Essex Fells have been deeply valued. On behalf of the entire Board and community, thank you for your time, your perspective, and your dedication.  
Finally, as Thanksgiving approaches, I want to wish everyone — our students, families, staff, and community — a very happy and restful holiday. I hope it brings you time with loved ones and an opportunity to reflect on all that we have to be grateful for.

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

- Addison Hochkeppel 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**

- Dr. Gadaleta noted what an important tradition celebrating Veteran's Day has become at EFS, explaining the interaction between the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the Veterans of EFS.
- The first day of NJSLA testing was completed today and will continue tomorrow, with makeups on Friday if needed.
- 1 HIB case will be discussed further in Executive Session.
- There was a report submitted by a staff member regarding a gaggle alert, which resulted in the HIB case investigation.
- The NJQSAC Facility walkthrough results were discussed and what items need to be addressed. DPR's will be submitted to the state.
- American Education Week is November 17-21. Parents will be visiting on 11/20 and 11/21, and we will be recognizing the staff and Years of Service with a pinning ceremony on 11/17.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade vs. Faculty Volleyball game will be 11/26 at 11 am. All are welcome to attend.

**VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–09.

- 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): LeeAnn Smith  
Event: X-Bass 3.0 Institute 2025  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/14/25  
Cost: \$179.00

Staff Member(s): Veronica Matullo  
Event: Foundations Level K  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 11/18/25  
Cost: \$350.00

Staff Member(s): Laurie Fischer  
Event: Childhood Apraxia of Speech  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/2/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Kimberly Trafford  
Event: Strengthen the Executive Function Skills of your Students with Special Needs  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/3/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Veronica Matullo  
Event: Reducing Disruptive Behaviors While Increasing Self-Regulation  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 12/5/25  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Deana Hromoko  
Event: Differentiated Instruction-Increasing Student Success While Decreasing Teacher Prep Time  
Location: Virtual

Date: 1/8/26  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnn Smith  
Event: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Comprehensive Assessment for Intervention  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 1/28/26-1/30/26  
Cost: \$295.00

Staff Member(s): Katie MacKenzie  
Event: Special Educators Accelerate Progress for Students with IEP's by Making Best Use of the Differentiation Accommodations and Modifications  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 2/26/26  
Cost: \$69.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro  
Event: Wilson Dyslexia Conference  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 2/26/26  
Cost: \$69.00

Staff Member(s): Michelle Barshay  
Event: Wilson Dyslexia Conference  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 2/26/26  
Cost: \$69.00

Staff Member(s): Kimberly Trafford  
Event: NJLA/NJASL Joint Conference  
Location: Atlantic City, NJ  
Date: 2/18/26 – 2/19/26  
Cost: \$351.26

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

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:

EFFEE – Variety Show  
November 14, 2025  
6:00pm – 8:00pm  
Media Center/6<sup>th</sup> Grade Hallway

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 Memorandum of Agreement.

Note: Copy available in Superintendent's Office

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 Preschool Tuition of \$9,000.00.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

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:

EFFEE  
December 16, 2025  
Media Center – 7:30pm-9:00pm

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

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

Michelle Gadaleta  
Steven Lella

LeeAnn Smith  
Erika Pilato  
Judi Reynolds  
Marco Pannullo  
Anthony Tedesco

Superintendent  
School Business Administrator/  
School Safety Specialist  
LDTC/CST Coordinator  
Counselor/HIB Specialist  
Lead Teacher/504 Coordinator  
Technology Coordinator  
Class III Officer

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

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

Michelle Gadaleta

Superintendent

Steven Lella

School Business Administrator/  
School Safety Specialist  
LDTC/CST Coordinator  
Counselor/HIB Specialist  
Lead Teacher/504 Coordinator  
Technology Coordinator  
Class III Officer

LeeAnn Smith  
Erika Pilato  
Judi Reynolds  
Marco Pannullo  
Anthony Tedesco

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**8. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the following team members for NJQSAC District Monitoring:

|                   |                                            |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Michelle Gadaleta | Chief School Administrator                 |
| Tina Rivera       | District Administrative Staff              |
| Kimberly Trafford | Teacher                                    |
| Steven Lella      | School Business Administrator              |
| Judi Reynolds     | Curriculum and Instruction Representative  |
| Lauren Quinn      | Local Collective Bargaining Representative |
| Amanda Haber      | District Board of Education Member         |
| LeeAnn Smith      | Coordinator of Special Programs            |

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**9. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the submission of the 2025-2026 QSAC – DPRs to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Notes: Completed DPR's attached

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

#### **IX. Business Administrator's Report**

- The 2024-25 audit is wrapping up. The auditor's noted a clean audit report.
- The 2026-27 budget process is underway. The staff are working on their requests that are due January 5<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella have begun their budget discussion. The budget calendar was provided to the BOE members.
- The unofficial BOE Election results are in, with Mrs. Maffucci and Mr. Kessler both winning their respective seats for January 1, 2026. Results will be official next week.
- The facilities checklist used for the NJQSAC walkthrough was provided to the Board.

#### **X. Business Administrator's Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-04.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for November in the amount of \$180,767.32, as certified by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for October as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$406,535.61 including \$379,011.89 for the gross payroll, \$5,708.15 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$21,815.57 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

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 September.

**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: 5

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mrs. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

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

- The 2026-27 School Calendar options were discussed, noting the late Labor Day date. We will continue to return unused days at the end of the year and Memorial Day Weekend. Option 3 was preferred.
- Preschool tuition will be increased by \$1,000 to \$9,000 for the 2026-27 school year.

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

- The Board was made aware of a possible bathroom installation project downstairs outside of the music room. The architect came out and will provide a proposal.
- As a result of the facility walkthrough and storage, Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella met with the Foundation and discussed moving some of the musical scenery into a storage pod, or a possible purge of the items. It was discussed at last night's Foundation meeting, and they will help with the cleanup and decide if a storage pod is needed.

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

- None

**XIV. 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/Student Privacy (HIB)**. 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: Mrs. Burke

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**XV. Adjournment**

At 9:00 P.M the Board made a motion to adjourn. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, December 03, 2025, at 7:30 P.M. in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Burke

Seconded by: Mrs. Lavoie

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

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