

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 January 21, 2026. 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 7, 2026. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, and the Star Ledger.

I. Call to Order – 7:30 P.M.

- The meeting was called to order by the Board President at 7:30 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President- Present
Mr. Raj Mehta, Vice-President- Present
Mrs. Jenna Maffuci-Present
Mr. Christopher Pisacane-Present
Mr. Shaun Kessler-Present

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

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President's Report

- None

V. Student Liaison to the BOE Report

- William Slominski provided an update as to what the children of Essex Fells School are learning.

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VII. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta recognized New Jersey School Board Appreciation month, and extended her gratitude to the members of the Essex Fells Board of Education.
- Preschool has 10 rollovers and 6 open spots, with 17 attempting to register. We will have a lottery.
- Kindergarten has 17 registered. The Board discussed, at what point do we consider going with 1 class and possibly a second preschool. Just something for the Board to keep in mind possibly for the future.
- Dr. Gadaleta attended a Strauss Esmay symposium which was extremely beneficial and addressed the sexual harassment policy. Dr. Gadaleta explained the changes.

VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–05.

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

2 of 6

EFRD – Baseball/Softball Recreation and Travel League
3/1/26 – 8/15/26
Fields

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Out-of-District Program Costs at The Deron School (Student 370784) for the 2025-2026 school year, at the following daily/yearly rates:

January 5, 2026 through June 30, 2026:

- 107 days at \$444.06/day: \$47,514.42
- Aide 107 days at \$240/ day: \$25,680.00

Total school year cost not to exceed: \$73,194.42

- Approved at December 17, 2025 meeting without Aide and estimated rate.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

IX. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella noted the 2024-25 Audit resolution and the 2026-27 SEMI waiver request resolution. He also noted the revised out of district placement resolution.
- Trees that are a safety issue are going to be trimmed and removed along the gymnasium walkway and staff parking lot.
- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella provided an update on the 2026-27 Budget preparation. Cuts will still need to be made as we await the State Aid figures. We are currently proposing a tax levy Increase of 3.99%, or 242k, utilizing the enrollment and healthcare adjustments, and banked cap if needed. Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella will continue to meet and discuss options to develop a balanced budget.

X. Business Administrator's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-06.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes December 17th, 2025

Reorganizational Meeting Minutes January 7th, 2026

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for January in the amount of \$204,562.05 as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for December as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$441,628.07 including \$412,548.28 for the gross payroll, \$8,100.39 for the Board's share of FICA//Medicare and \$20,979.40 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
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 November;
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 hat 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. Mehta	Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

5. RESOLVED that the Board of Education acknowledge receipt of and accepts the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the Essex Fells School District and the Auditors' Management Report, prepared by the auditing firm of Samuel Klein and Company for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

6. RESOLVED that the Essex Fells Board of Education approves the submission of the following Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program Waiver to the Essex County Office of Education:

WHEREAS, NJAC 6A:23A-5.3 provides that a school district may request a waiver of compliance with respect to the district's participation in the Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) program for the 2026-2027 school year, and

WHEREAS, the Essex Fells Board of Education desires to apply for this waiver due to the fact that it projects having fewer than 40 Medicaid eligible classified students,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Essex Fells Board of Education hereby authorizes the Chief School Administrator to submit to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools in the County of Essex an appropriate waiver of the requirements of NJAC 6A23A-5.3 for the 2026-2027 school year.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XI. Old Business / Board Discussion

- NJQSAC has been scheduled for February 18th.

XII. New Business / Board Discussion

- None

XIII. Public Comment

- Mrs. Slomienski asked about enrollment.

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: **Personnel**. 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: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Kessler

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XV. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:37 P.M. The Reorganizational/workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, **February 11, 2026, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

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