

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 Superintendent Office on February 11, 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 7th, 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

II. Roll Call

Mrs. Amanda Haber, President- Present
Mr. Raj Mehta, Vice-President- Absent
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. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta shared a broadcast from the new acting Commissioner.
- There will be new curriculum for cursive, and dates to be announced for NJSLA grade 3-6 testing.
- Mid-Year Attendance Report Notices will be send out for those children who have been out or late 10 for 10 days or more.
- We have 29 students registered for Kindergarten for the 2026-27 school year. We have a full pre-school of 16, with 32 applications. Dr. Gadaleta explained the pre-k lottery.
- We received a letter from West Essex requesting the Senior Service program at EFS. There have been no names received as of yet.

VII. Buildings & Grounds

- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella explained the boiler outage affecting the Administrative Offices and 3 classrooms due to the extremely cold temperatures. Emergency repairs were done and the heat was repaired in a day and a half. Full repairs to the back up boilers will be completed in the next week.
- The panel for the Gymnasium Air Conditioning was damaged beyond repair due to the accident that caused a power surge on December 18th. We are waiting for a quote and have notified our property insurance broker.
- The parking lot tree removal and trimming of trees that are a safety concern were completed on January 19th.

- The annual unannounced fire inspection took place on February 6th. 3 exit lights need to be replaced and decorations on the classroom doors are to be removed.

VIII. Curriculum & Instruction

- 6th Grade Articulation took place at West Essex with the consortium staff.
- Dr. Gadaleta will be meeting with the 7th grade West Essex Counselors to have transition meetings for our 6th grade students attending West Essex next year.
- Our counselors are working diligently to provide the parents of EFS with Parent Academies for training and support services.

IX. Finance

- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella explained the challenges with preparing the 2026-27 budget. We are proposing a tax levy increase of 4.99%, which is 301k vs. 121k at 2.00%. Dr. Gadaleta is researching other means of revenue, and the PTA and Foundation have agreed again to donate. Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella are still working on arriving at a balanced budget and more cuts will need to be made. We are also waiting on the release of State Aid Figures.

X. Personnel

- Dr. Gadaleta explained to the Board how she meets with all staff to discuss teaching assignments for the upcoming school year

XI. Policy

- Dr. Gadaleta and the Board discussed policy.

XII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- We are preparing for our QSAC review, which will take place February 18th.
- Student behavior is at an all time high, making it very difficult for the staff to teach properly. It has become such a distraction and disruption to those children who are trying to learn. This will need to be addressed further, and new discipline procedures will be put in place. These behavioral issues are not far the staff and the children who are trying to learn.
- We received our approval for the SEMI waiver for the 2026-27 school year.

XIII. New Business / Board Discussion

- We will be meeting with the town tomorrow to discuss the recent snowstorm and future snow removal procedures.
- The Nursing Services Plan has been updated for this school year and will be approved on the next BOE agenda.
- A staff member is taking Graduate certification courses with Columbia, and they require video taping of the teacher. The Board is ok with this and will be sure to have any students blurred out whose family does not consent. The taping is only to be used by Colombia.

XIV. Public Comment

- A member of the public noted that her family moved here for the school, and I feel most people in the community wouldn't mind about a tax increase to keep programming.
- Regarding behavior issues, what about having a student code, is that allowed? Just a thought.

XV. 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 and Legal Matters**. It is anticipated that the length of time of this executive session will be approximately 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. Kessler

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

XVI. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 9:23 P.M. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 7:30 P.M. in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Pisacane

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary