

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 April 22, 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 Maffucci-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 two members of the public. One additional member of the public arrived at 7:32 P.M and two left at 7:41 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 recognizing the many moments that continue to make this time of year so special in our school community. From the upcoming All School Concert to celebrations like today's Earth Day event and Take Your Child to Work Day, it's clear that our students are not only learning, but actively engaging in experiences that help them grow as thoughtful, well-rounded individuals. I know personally that I have very much enjoyed hearing my daughter belting out Billy Joel's greatest hits.
 I'd also like to extend a big welcome and thank you to our student representative, Kaileigh Milano, for joining us this evening and for sharing updates about the school. We truly value having a student perspective and it helps to remind us of what matters most.
 As we move into the spring season, we also enter an important academic period with the start of NJSLA testing. I want to thank our staff in advance for their preparation and care in ensuring that our students feel supported and confident. We know these assessments are just one measure, and we remain committed to educating the whole child. This evening, the Board will review a calendar revision that reflects unused emergency days, allowing us to close on June 19th. I am sure everyone will be happy to end the year at the end of a clean week!
 We continue to balance our priorities—supporting high-quality programming while maintaining fiscal responsibility, especially as we look ahead to the 2026–2027 budget discussions. We remain committed to thoughtful decision-making that preserves the excellence of Essex Fells while being mindful of our community's resources.

Thank you!

V. Student Liaison to the BOE Report

- Kaileigh Milano provided an update as to what the students of EFS are currently learning.

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VII. Superintendent's Report

- Today we had the Earth Day event with the Garden Club. The Glen looks great. Thank you to the volunteers for a very well-run event.
- Tomorrow will be Take Your Child to Work Day. The NJ Department of Education recognizes the day as an allowable absence.
- The children have been preparing for the Billy Joel All School Concert next week. We are very excited and hope it will be able to be held outside.
- There is a resolution returning one of the unused Emergency Days to the school calendar. School will now end Friday, June 19th rather than Monday, June 22nd.
- The NJSLA testing for Grades 3-6 will be the first two weeks of May. AI will be grading 70% of the writing.

VIII. Superintendent's Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions # 01–11.

- 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): Judi Reynolds
Event: 2026 NJAGC Conference
Location: Somerset, NJ
Date: 4/17/26
Cost: \$339.65

Staff Member(s): Gabriella Day
Event: Break Through Self-Regulation Intervention for children and Adolescents with Autism, ADHD, Sensory or Emotional Challenges
Location: Virtual
Date: 4/30/26
Cost: \$249.99

Staff Member(s): George Alexandris
Event: NJAHPERD 107th Annual Convention
Location: Princeton, NJ
Date: 5/4/26-5/5/26
Cost: \$886.58

Staff Member(s): Nicole Axentiou
Event: Getting Started with Gold By Teaching Strategies
Location: Virtual
Date: 5/7/26
Cost: \$0.00

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

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:

6th Grade Car Wash
5/16/26 (rain date 5/17/26)
8:00am-2:00pm
Blacktop between the buildings

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

Kindergarten Girl Scouts
 4/24/26, 5/15/26, 6/12/26
 3:05am-4:15pm
 Gym/Outside

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

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2025-2026 calendar revision for the end of year to include school closed on June 22nd for unused snow days making June 19th the last day of school.

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 NJQSAC Curriculum Review Team:

Dorotea Banek	Teacher
Michelle Barshay	Teacher
Rory Duarte	Teacher
Deana Hromoko	Teacher
Veronica Matullo	Teacher
Patricia Pakonis	Teacher
Erica Santalla	Teacher
LeeAnn Smith	LDTC

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

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Out-of-District Program Costs at Newmark School, Inc., (Student 350651) for the 2025-2026 school year, at the following daily/yearly rates:

Estimated 50 days at \$367.41	
April 14, 2026 through June 30, 2026	
<u>Total school year cost not to exceed:</u>	<u>\$18,370.50</u>

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

7. **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Essex Fells Board of Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) that the terms, stipulations and conditions as established in the Agreement between the Board and the Parent of a student whose name is

on file in the Superintendent’s office, and which Agreement is located in the student’s file, are hereby adopted and approved by the Board. The Board President and Board Secretary are hereby authorized and directed to execute the Agreement, and any other documents necessary to effectuate the settlement.

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

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the resignation of Lubna Muneer, Assistant to the Business Administrator, effective June 13, 2026.

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

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the resignation of Jessica Ennis, Special Education Teacher effective June 30, 2026.

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

10. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2024-2025 District and School Grade Report for the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

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

11. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Donna Phillips, Substitute Teacher, for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year beginning May 4th, 2026.

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

IX. Business Administrator’s Report

- Mr. Lella provided the Board with a draft of the 2026-2027 Budget Presentation, which will be on May 6th. The PTA grant will increase from 35k to 45k. We are thankful for the PTA and EFFEE grants.
- Buildings & Grounds update:
 - The outdoor scoreboard location was marked. We will trim the trees in the area. Install is tentatively set for May 8th.
 - The AC panel in the gymnasium was replaced. One unit will need service.
 - PSE&G removed the tree at the entrance to the parking lot as part of the powerline project.
 - The dumpster gate was replaced.
 - The Media Center entrance intercom casing was replaced.
 - The stucco outside of the Media Center entrance was repaired. It looks great.
 - There was some classroom plumbing issues over break, drains needed to be snaked.
 - Recently, the PA system started to cut out during morning announcements. We are exploring microphone repairs.

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	March 18 th , 2026
Executive Meeting Minutes	March 18 th , 2026

Moved by: Mr. Kessler

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for April in the amount of \$263,256.16 as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for March as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$401,932.46 including \$374,402.67 for the gross payroll, \$6,415.01 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$21,114.78 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mr. Kessler

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

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 March.

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. Kessler

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Mr. Kessler

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XI. Old Business / Board Discussion

- We have approved the NJQSAC Curriculum Revision team.

XII. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta and the Board discussed the changes to staffing within the Board Attorney's office.

XIII. Public Comment

- Ms. Vivian Decker noted that some parents had been discussing how much screen time the children were having during the day, so they could decide how much they should have at home after school.
- Mrs. Hacker noted that the staff tries to vary screen time throughout the day.

XIV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 8:12 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into 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 Issues, Personnel, HIB Report and the School Business Administrator's Contract**. 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. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XV. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:37 P.M. The next meeting of the Board of Education Budget Presentation will be held on Wednesday, **May 06, 2026, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mrs. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

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