

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 May 6, 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- 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 and one member of the public.

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President's Report

Good evening and thank you all for being here tonight.

As we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week, the Board of Education would like to recognize the incredible educators of Essex Fells School. Each day, our teachers bring dedication, enthusiasm, and care into their classrooms, creating learning experiences that challenge, inspire, and support our students. Beyond academics, they help foster confidence, curiosity, and connection, leaving a lasting impact on the children of our community. We are deeply grateful for all they do.

We would also like to recognize National Principal Appreciation Day and extend our sincere appreciation to Dr. Gadaleta. Serving in the dual role of superintendent and principal requires extraordinary commitment, leadership, and heart. Dr. Gadaleta consistently prioritizes the needs of students while guiding our district with professionalism, thoughtfulness, and care. We thank her for the many ways she works each day to ensure Essex Fells School continues to provide an exceptional educational experience for all students.

In addition, today we celebrated School Nurse Appreciation Day, and we want to thank Ms. Renz for the compassion, support, and attention she provides to our students and staff each day. Her work plays an essential role in maintaining a safe and healthy school environment, and we are truly appreciative of all that she does for our school community. Of course, our gratitude extends to every member of our faculty and staff. The strength of Essex Fells School comes from the collective efforts of so many individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes and in front of students each day. On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for helping make our school such a special place for children to learn, grow, and thrive.

Before tonight's budget presentation, I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella for their continued hard work and thoughtful planning throughout the budget development process. This year required careful consideration, collaboration, and fiscal responsibility as we worked to balance the needs of our students with our responsibility to taxpayers. As a Board, we remain committed to maintaining the high-quality educational experience our community values while continuing to be thoughtful of district resources. We appreciate the tremendous amount of work that goes into this process and look forward to tonight's presentation.

Finally, I would like to briefly mention that the Board will soon be engaging with the annual board self-evaluation and Chief School Administrator evaluation. As part of this process, each board member individually completes portions of the evaluations to reflect on governance practices, district goals, communication, and leadership. The process then

allows the Board to collaboratively review areas of strength and opportunities for continued growth as a governance team. These evaluations are an important part of maintaining accountability, supporting continuous improvement, and ensuring strong collaboration between the Board and administration as we continue working in the best interest of our students and community.

- Mrs. Haber explained the BOE self-evaluation & CSA evaluation

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- Mrs. Stefanczyk had a question about the 2026-27 Budget Presentation and looked forward to hearing it.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Dr. Gadaleta recognized the EFS Staff for Teacher's Appreciation Week. The treats from the PTA have been amazing, and thanked the PTA.
- Special Education Week, The Magic of Education, will be next week.
- Dr. Gadaleta and Mr. Lella presented the 2026-27 School Budget.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted resolution number two and that we are looking forward to having Mrs. Andrade start at EFS. Dr. Gadaleta also explained the student teacher resolution.

VII. 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): Patricia Pakonis
Event: Strengthening the Executive Function Skills of Students
Location: Virtual
Date: TBD
Cost: \$169.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski
Event: Catching Up Students Who Have Fallen Behind
Location: Virtual
Date: 5/14/26
Cost: \$169.00

Staff Member(s): Katie MacKenzie
Event: Summer All In Conference 2026
Location: Union, NJ
Date: 5/28/26
Cost: \$225.00

Staff Member(s): Erica Santalla
Event: Strengthening Students Writing Skills While Significantly Decreasing Grading Time
Location: Virtual
Date: 5/27/26
Cost: \$295.00

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 appointment of, Christina Andrade, Administrative Assistant to the Business Administrator beginning on June 8th, for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year at the prorated salary of \$4,141.03, pending the usual criminal history and background check.

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 appointment of, Sophie Kearny, Kindergarten Student Teacher, beginning September 3, 2026 for the school year 2026-2027, pending the usual criminal history and background check:

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

VIII. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella asked if all BOE members would be at the June 10th meeting for a group photo.
- Mr. Lella explained the new law regarding BOE Public notices, which will be available on the district's website.

IX. Business Resolutions

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

1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education, after conducting a public presentation, adopts a school district budget for the FY 2026-2027 School Year as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Fund:	\$7,142,506.00	\$6,390,937.00
Special Revenue:	\$101,371.60	0.00
Debt Service:	\$96,156.95	\$63,462.95
TOTAL:	<u>\$7,340,034.55</u>	<u>\$6,454,399.95</u>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that there should be raised for the General Fund \$6,390,937.00 and \$63,462.95 for Debt Service Funds for the ensuing school year (2026-2027).

RESOLVED that the Essex Fells Board of Education approves the total travel expenditures for the District at a maximum of \$20,000.00 for the 2026-27 school year; and

RESOLVED that the Business Administrator keep an accounting of all expenditures to ensure compliance with the approved amount; and

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the preliminary budget is the use of the adjustment for increased costs of health benefits in the amount of \$85,302. The funds will be utilized to address the additional increase in health benefit premiums.

BE IT RESOLVED that included in the preliminary budget is the use of the adjustment for enrollment in the amount of \$126,256. The funds will be utilized for supplies and materials necessary for the additional students.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Essex Fells Board of Education accepts a donation from the Essex Fells PTA and the Essex Fells Foundation for Educational Excellence in the amount of \$45,000 and \$20,000 (for a total of \$65,000) to be used for

the purchase of school devices on the district's 5-year technology replacement plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following budget line be increased and that the Business Administrator be authorized to administer it:

20-190-100-610 Essex Fells PTA & Foundation Technology Grant \$65,000

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

X. Old Business / Board Discussion

- On Friday, May 8th, Extel will replace the PA Amplifier, Air Group will fix the gymnasium AC unit, and the trees will be trimmed where the scoreboard will be placed.

XI. New Business / Board Discussion

- Dr. Gadaleta thanked the PTA, the parents and the EFS Staff for their efforts during the Emergency Early Dismissal last week due to a downed tree and power outage. The Essex Fells Police Department encouraged the early dismissal. We discovered issues to address regarding the phones and internet during a power outage. We will be looking into battery backups. We also will need to ensure that emergency contacts are correct. Dr. Gadaleta wanted to remind the public that as a school we are responsible for children door to parent and door to door, and that there are laws that do not permit a child to walk home if there is no prior approval. Mr. Kessler asked if we had any cell phone issues, and there were some.

XII. Public Comment

- Mrs. Stefanczyk enjoyed the budget presentation and thanked everyone for their hard work. The Foundation will be doing the color run again in October. A portion of the sidewalk along Roseland avenue needs to be repaired.

XIII. Adjournment

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:51P.M. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, May 20th 2026 at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Pisacane

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary