

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 September 16, 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

- 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 - Absent
 Mr. Christopher Pisacane - Present
 Mr. Shaun Kessler - Present
 Mrs. Jenna Maffucci - Present

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

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the flag salute.

IV. President’s Report

It’s wonderful to be back together as we begin another school year. I’m happy to say that the 2026–2027 school year is off to a great start.

Back to School Night was a wonderful success, and it was great to see so many families, connecting with teachers and getting a glimpse into what their children will be learning this year. That strong partnership between our families and staff is such an important part of what makes Essex Fells School such a special community.

I’d like to recognize our PTA and EFFEE for their continued commitment to our students and school community. The time, energy, and support they provide help create so many wonderful opportunities and experiences for our children, and we are incredibly grateful for all that they do.

I also want to thank Dr. Gadaleta, our teachers, staff, and everyone behind the scenes who worked so hard to make the opening of school and the first few weeks feel so smooth and welcoming. There is already a great energy in the building, and we’re excited for all that is ahead.

On behalf of the Board, we wish our students, staff, and families a happy, successful, and memorable school year. Thank you, and I’ll turn it over to Dr. Gadaleta for her report.

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent’s Report

- 2026 NJSLA scores have been delayed. We will present to the BOE in December after sharing with parents in November. Reminder, this is the first year of a new system.
- Back to School Night and the PTA Book Fair went very smooth and were well attended. Thank you to the PTA for hosting the Book Fair.
- School Picture Day will be this Friday. We currently have an enrollment of 265, the largest in Dr. Gadaleta’s time at EFS. Class sizes continue to grow, something to keep in mind.
- School will be closed on September 21st for Yom Kippur.

- We received notification of Special Education Monitoring, Cohort 4, where the state comes in and reviews IEP's for compliance.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the following resolutions:
 - #2, implementing the Afterschool supervision staff.
 - #3, accepting funds from the 6th grade for the outdoor scoreboard.
 - #4, the School Psychologist, formerly Dr. Gross of the ERESC.
 - #5, welcoming the new student teacher.
 - #6, introducing the new West Essex work study program.
 - #11, the reapproval of our Assessment Schedule.

VII.**Superintendent's Resolutions**

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01–15.

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): Marco Pannullo
 Event: Build with Gemini
 Location: Manhattan, New York
 Date: 8/26/26
 Cost: \$23.00

Staff Member(s): Steven Lella
 Event: NJASBO – Monthly Workshop Meetings
 Location: Whippany, NJ
 Date: 9/22/26, 10/6/26, 11/12/26, 12/15/26, 1/12/27, 2/16/27, 3/11/27, 4/13/27
 Cost: \$1,686.48

Staff Member(s): Erika Pilato
 Event: NJ School Counselor Association Conference
 Location: East Brunswick, NJ
 Date: 10/5/26 & 10/6/26
 Cost: \$333.78

Staff Member(s): Rory Duarte
 Event: Meeting All Learners, Every Day A Differentiation Deep Dive
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 10/14/26
 Cost: \$85.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro
 Event: Building Strong Foundations
 Location: Virtual
 Date: 10/21/26
 Cost: \$85.00

Staff Member(s): Kristen Kowalsi
 Event: IXL Live
 Location: Morristown, NJ
 Date: 10/28/26
 Cost: \$139.00

Staff Member(s): Nicole Axentiou
 Event: Play Project's Level 1 – Foundation of Play for Students w/ASD

Location: Virtual
Date: 10/22/26 & 10/23/26
Cost: \$367.87

Staff Member(s): Christina Andrade
Event: NJASBO – Administrative Assistant Program
Location: Whippany, NJ
Date: 11/12/26
Cost: \$209.81

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of the following stipend positions for the 2026-2027 school year at the contractual rate:

Patricia Pakonis	Afterschool Supervision
Susan Hacker	Afterschool Supervision
LeeAnn Smith	Afterschool Supervision
Susan FitzGibbon	Afterschool Supervision
George Alexandris	Afterschool Supervision

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the \$2,300.00 donation from the 2026 6th Graduating Class to be used towards the purchase of the outdoor scoreboard.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of MPSYCH Evaluations, LLC, School Psychologist, for the 2026-2027 school year, at the following hours and rates:

Psychological Evaluations	\$450.00 each
Planning and IEP Meetings	\$125.00 per meeting

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, Kaitlyn Chase, attending Caldwell University, to observe three instructional hours at Essex Fells School.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, Sonny Marsh, to fulfill his West Essex Work Study Program at Essex Fells School beginning Thursday, September 17, 2026, within the custodial department, 3 hours daily for the 2026-2027 school year.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

7. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 School Improvement Panel (SciP)/District Evaluation Advisory Committee/Professional Development:

Michelle Gadaleta	Superintendent/Principal
Jamie Wallace	Teacher Representative
Michelle Barshay	Teacher Representative
Candice Fitzgerald	Teacher Representative
Judi Reynolds	Teacher Representative
Kimberly Trafford	Teacher Representative
Amanda Haber	BOE Representative
Brittany Maurillo	PTA Representative
Sarah Kessler	PTA Representative
Lindsay Farkas	EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

* Mr. Kessler abstained from voting

8. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 Safety Team/Culture Climate Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta	Superintendent/Principal
Erika Pilato	HIB Representative
Gabriella Day	School Counselor Representative
Sue Hacker	Teacher Representative
Pamela Banta	Teacher Representative
Rebecca Fogarty	Teacher Representative
Lisa Massaro	Teacher Representative
Nicole Axentiou	Teacher Representative
John Trogani	Teacher Representative
Brittany Maurillo	PTA Representative
Sarah Kessler	PTA Representative
Lindsay Farkas	EFFEE Representative

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

* Mr. Kessler abstained from voting

9. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 District Testing Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta	Superintendent/Principal
LeeAnn Smith	Teacher Representative
Kimberly Trafford	Teacher Representative
Judi Reynolds	Teacher Representative
Marco Pannullo	IT Representative
Moved by: Mr. Mehta	Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

10. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 Behavioral and Bomb Threat Assessment Committee:

Michelle Gadaleta
Steven Lella
Anthony Tedesco
Judi Reynolds
Erika Pilato
LeeAnn Smith
Marco Pannullo

Superintendent/Principal
School Business Administrator
SLEOIII
Teacher Representative
School Counselor
Child Study Team Coordinator
IT Coordinator

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

11. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the 2026-2027 Assessment Schedule:

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

12. 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
5/22/27 9:30am – 1:00pm
Rain date 5/23/27 9:30am – 1:00pm

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

13. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request for the following:

EFPD – Movie Night
10/9/26 5:00pm – 10:00pm
Fields/Blacktop

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

14. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the Use of Facilities Request for the following:

EFFEE – Fall 2026 Enrichment Programs
10/6/26 – 12/10/26
Gymnasium, Classrooms and Fields

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

15. RESOLVED that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the second reading and adoption of the following bylaws/policies/regulations:

P 1230	Superintendent's Duties (M) (Revised)
P 2200	Curriculum (M) (Revised)
P 0162	Notice of Board Meetings (Revised)
P 0162.01	Legal Notices (M) (New)
P 1643	Family Leave (M) (Revised)
P 2260	Equity in School and Classroom Practices (M) (Revised)
P & R 5111.13	Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students – Choice School District (M) (New)
P 5561	Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion Techniques for Students with Disabilities (M) (Revised)
P 6112	Reimbursement of Federal and Other Grant Expenditures (M) (Revised)
R 6115.01	Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Allowability of Costs (M) (Revised)
P 6115.02	Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Mandatory Disclosures (M) (Revised)
P 6311	Contracts for Goods or Services Funded by Federal Grants (M) (Revised)

* The Board tabled policy #1643

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mrs. Maffucci

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

VIII. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella reminded everyone of the November 3rd BOE election for the 1 open seat.
- The 2025-26 Audit has begun. Audit's are typically due the first week of December.

IX. Business Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-03.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes	June 17 th , 2026
Executive Meeting Minutes	June 17 th , 2026

Regular Meeting Minutes	August 12 th , 2026
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Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Kessler

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves an additional bills and claims for June in the amount of \$57,964.50 and September in the amount of **\$352,980.74** as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for August as certified by the

Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$93,564.44 including \$87,103.94 for the gross payroll, \$4,149.46 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$2,311.04 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Kessler

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds for the months of May (2 additional), & June, as certified by the Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

Moved by: Mr. Mehta

Seconded by: Mr. Kessler

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

X. **Old Business / Board Discussion**

- We will take a BOE Photo at the next meeting.
- Dr. Gadaleta will be starting Grade Level meetings with parents starting in October.

XI. **New Business / Board Discussion**

- We had a leak again in the upper storage area. We will contact vendors to address.
- New Wave Environmental came out to address a smell in the lower building.

XII. **Public Comment**

- None

XIII. **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**. 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. Kessler

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XIV. **Adjournment**

RESOLVED that this public meeting of the Board of Education be adjourned at 8:22 P.M. The next workshop meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, October 7, 2026, at 7:30 P.M.** in the Superintendent's Office.

Moved by: Mr. Piscane

Seconded by: Mr. Kessler

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

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