

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Workshop Meeting held remotely on November 4, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 7:31 P.M. Mrs. Huegel 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, 2020. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress and the Star Ledger, and posted on the district's web-site".

I. Call to Order -7:31 P.M

- The meeting was called to order by the Board President.

II. Roll Call

Mrs. Kris Huegel, President- Present
Mrs. Bethany Buccino, Vice-President-Present
Dr. Steven LoCascio-Present
Mr. Raj Mehta-Present-Present
Mr. Theodore Skopak-Present

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 29 members of the public.

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

IV. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

V. President's Report

Good Evening Everyone-

This marks week 9 of school, and we could not be happier with the progress the kids are making in both the in-person and remote learning environments. It is wonderful that we made it to parent-teacher conferences without having a school closure. The Board recognizes how fortunate our Essex Fells School Community is to have this amazing group of educators working so hard for our kids and our school, especially during these challenging times. If there is a silver lining to be found, it is in the way our teachers, administrators, staff and kids have found ways to adapt to this new environment through their commitment, creativity and resilience. The benefits to our children are tremendous and we thank everyone at EFS for finding such innovative ways to give them this opportunity.

We know that numbers are going up in New Jersey, and that we need to keep working hard to keep the virus out of our buildings and community as much as possible. We are also aware that after 8 months, it is hard to keep our guards up. Many things are out of our control at this time. The one thing that we can control is our own behavior. We ask that you remain vigilant with wearing masks, handwashing, avoiding gatherings and social distancing. We understand that everyone has different levels of comfort with this virus, and we respect that. As sporting activities and gatherings move inside, we ask that you make sure that your families continue taking strict precautions against the virus.

We are grateful to everyone who quarantines in order to help safeguard the rest of us. Quarantining is not easy and we really appreciate everyone for being open and honest with Mrs. Gadaleta and Mrs. Renz regarding their health. We also appreciate everyone's cooperation with the health department in their contact tracing efforts. More than ever, compassion for others and for ourselves is essential. There is no room for public shaming or making fun of people who either have COVID-19 or are quarantining as a precautionary measure while they wait for a negative test after possible exposure. These people are following the CDC guidelines and understand the importance of separating themselves for the safety of our community and we must support them. COVID-19 is a sneaky virus and just like other illnesses is not something one would seek out. Please be mindful of the things that you can do to support your health and be compassionate with all members of our community, as this virus could attack any one of us.

We know that this virus is affecting members of our community, and for those of you suffering, or who have lost loved ones, we are very sorry and are thinking of you.

The Board would like to thank Mayor Ed Davis, the West Orange Health Dept. the EFPD, our first responders, healthcare workers and our school physician, Dr. Michelle Nitti, for all of their support during this time. Dr. Nitti has been kind enough to join us tonight to speak to us about Covid 19, and answer any questions you may have. And with that, I would like to turn it over to Mrs. Gadaleta for her Superintendent's report.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the County Health Official and Dr. Nitti for their assistance during these times. Mrs. Gadaleta also welcomed Dr. Nitti to the call for a Q&A (questions attached). Mrs. Gadaleta explained the Health Departments protocol and noted that they are now looking at situations on a case by case basis rather than a blanket approach and treating all cases the same. Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the Health Department for their guidance. Dr. Nitti addressed the Q&A.
- Dr. Nitti left the meeting at 7:54pm.

VII. Buildings & Grounds

- 6 additional outdoor lunch table are being purchased and reimbursed by the Foundation. Mr. Lella thanked the Foundation.
- Mr. Lella will obtain quotes for fencing to be placed around the pre-school playground area. This will address safety issues.

VIII. Curriculum & Instruction

- Due to Election Day, November 3rd was a remote instruction day. Mrs. Gadaleta reported the day went well.
- There has been discussion within the state as to whether snow days should be remote learning days.

IX. Personnel

- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that Mrs. Rivera has begun her training with Mrs. Leggett. The PTA welcomed Mrs. Rivera to the district.

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella reported that the 2019-20 audit has been underway for 2 weeks and is moving along.
- Mr. Lella informed the Board that he would be issuing ACA Medical and COVID Dental rebates to those staff members who were eligible. The ACA Medical rebate is due to the district having a favorable medical loss ratio.
- Mr. Lella updated the Board as to the NJEHP which will become effective January 1, 2021 for new hires after July 1, 2020 and any current members who would like to change to the new plan.

- Mr. Lella informed the Board he would begin the process for the 2021-22 Budget.
- Mr. Lella noted he would be waiting for the results of the BOE election. Mr. Mehta ran unopposed for the 3-year term position, while Mrs. Casey and Mrs. Haber ran for the 1-year term.

XI. Policy

- Mrs. Gadaleta discussed policy with the Board members.

P 1620	Administrative Employment Contracts (M) (Revised)
P 1648	Restart and Recovery Plan (M) (Revised)
P 1648.03	Restart and Recovery Plan – Full-Time Remote Instruction (M) (New)
P 2431	Athletic Competition (M) (Revised)
R 2341.1	Emergency Procedures for Sports and Other Athletic Activity (M) (Revised)
P 2451	Adult High School (M) (Revised)
P 2464	Gifted and Talented Students (M) (Revised)
P&R 5330.05	Seizure Action Plan (M) (New)
P 6440	Cooperative Purchasing (M) (New)
P&R 6470.01	Electronic Funds Transfer and Claimant Certification (M) (New)
P&R 7440	School District Security (M) (Revised)
P 7450	Property Inventory (M) (Revised)
P&R 7510	Use of School Facilities (M) (Revised)
P 8420	Emergency and Crisis Situations (M) (Revised)
P 8561	Procurement Procedures for School Nutrition Programs (M) (Revised)

XII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that she would first be discussing the curriculum with the staff prior to beginning the Cultural/Social Awareness and Equity Team.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that the district would not be taking part in COVID surveillance testing at this time.
- The Board will be moving forward with the new Communication and Virtual Learning Policies.

XIII. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted the update to the Administrative Assistant job descriptions.

XIV. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mayor Davis stated how very pleased he was with how the Essex Fells School has managed the current situation and been able to stay open for in person learning. Mayor Davis noted his concern is outside of the school and the risks in the community. He noted we should be responsible and focused on gatherings and house parties. Mayor Davis noted we need to stay responsible as a community for the next 3 to 4 months to keep everyone safe and keep our children in school.
- Mayor Davis noted the BOE policy 7510 regarding Use of Facilities School Training, that the training be sensible for volunteers. Mrs. Gadaleta noted the policy is in place due to state mandate however we will make sure the training is manageable.
- Mrs. Freudenberger-Nelson asked if there would be a shutdown over Thanksgiving Break. Mrs. Gadaleta noted we will stay the course of our current calendar.
- Mrs. Skolnick agreed with the BOE protocols regarding travel and agreed with Mayor Davis that we should all make smart decisions regarding any travel at this time.
- Mrs. Hochkeppel asked if the Q&A could be circulated to the community. Mrs. Gadaleta will send the information out to the community.

- Ms. Burger thanked the BOE for addressing the preschool playground safety concern with the installation of fencing.

XV. Adjournment

At 8:28 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** is scheduled remotely for **Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.**

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary