

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Regular Meeting held remotely on December 16, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 7:34 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 -7:34 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
 Mr. Theodore Skopak-Present

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 41 members of the public.

II. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

IV. Public Comment on Agenda Items

- None

V. President’s Report

Good Evening Everyone-

Thank you for joining us for our last Board of Ed meeting of 2020.

We are grateful that we have made it through 3 months of in-person education during a pandemic. Our children have been fortunate to have been provided the best education possible in spite of the current circumstances. We thank each member of our school community for all of the hard work, dedication and understanding necessary to deal with the ever-changing school environment these past 9 months.

This week the in-person students transitioned to remote learning until after the holiday break. We cannot thank the teachers and administration enough for their efforts to create a remote learning environment that mirrors in-person learning as much as possible, and is differentiated age-appropriately for each grade. The remote learning summaries, schedules and instruction videos that were sent out last week are extremely helpful for parents and students alike. We hope your children are using them as well as the utilizing skills they have been taught the last 3 months in school to ensure their success.

The way we keep the kids attending school in-person, is to do everything we can to reduce the spread of this virus. The health and safety measures that are in place keep the children and staff safe while in the buildings, but it is necessary for all of us to be careful when not at school.

Please remember to continue wearing masks, washing your hands, practicing social distancing and avoiding large gatherings. Following guidelines like wearing masks and quarantining protect not only ourselves, but others as well. We appreciate everyone’s cooperation with these necessary measures.

Over the holidays, it is important to keep Mrs. Gadaleta and Mrs. Renz updated in the following situations:

If you have any positive Covid cases in your household
 Are informed of any “close contact” with a positive case
 Are traveling out of NJ or the country
 Have anyone visiting from outside of NJ (if they have not observed the quarantine guidelines in advance)

Right now the travel restrictions do not require a quarantine from NY, Pennsylvania, Delaware or Connecticut. These guidelines are subject to change, so that may not be the case on January 4th.

If we all work together and have honest communication between school and home, we can reopen January 4th, and stay open, safely for in-person school. Disregarding the guidelines mentioned above, could cause an avoidable shutdown of the buildings.

Thank you to Mrs. Gadaleta, Mr. Lella, Mrs. Renz, Mr. Adi and his team and all of the members of our faculty and staff for their efforts. Thank you to my fellow Board members, the PTA and Foundation for your constant support. Thank you to Mayor Davis, the EFPD, Dr. Nitti, the West Orange Health Dept. and Stephen Fogarty for your collaboration. To all of the first responders, health care workers and delivery people, we appreciate all of you.

This year has been full of challenges, but we have gotten through them together, and know we can continue to do so. As far as the children go, they haven’t skipped a beat at adapting to the changes made to keep them healthy and safe. We can’t wait to see them after the holidays.

Have a wonderful break. Stay healthy and safe. We look forward to seeing all of you in 2021.

VI. Superintendent’s Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the parents for their patience during transition to remote learning prior to the break. Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the staff for all of their preparation. Mrs. Gadaleta also noted that remote families can opt back in if they choose to during this transition to remote learning. There will be a return to regular programming on January 4th.
- Mr. Dionisio added his thanks on behalf of the remote families.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reported on the Holiday Travel Survey, which was put in place in order to allow the staff to prepare for remote learning for those families who would need to quarantine. Currently there are 5 families traveling and 15 families had not responded yet. Mrs. Gadaleta addressed a travel question submitted by Mrs. Vega.
- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board that Mr. Pannullo is taking a drone training class. Mrs. Gadaleta also explained the 2 policies being approved to the public.

VII. Superintendent’s Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions # 01 – 3.

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: Drone Training
 Location: Lincoln Park Airport
 Date: 12/2/20
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): LeeAnne Smith
Event: LDA Science to Practice
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/21 & 1/22/21
Cost: \$355.00

Staff Member(s): Tracie Wiczorek
Event: Wilson Implementation Meeting 2
Location: Virtual
Date: 1/7/21
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Lisa Massaro
Event: Dyslexia Conference
Location: Virtual
Date: 3/4/21
Cost: \$289.00

2. **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 1648.05 Remote Learning Policy
P 9205 Communication between Parents and Staff Members

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the service agreement between the Board of Education and eForensix, LLC.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

VIII. Business Administrator’s Report

- Mr. Lella provided the Board with a draft version of the 2021-22 Budget Calendar.
- Mr. Lella explained Business Resolution #5 regarding reclassifications per the 2019-20 audit.
- Mr. Lella noted that the pre-school fence had been put up.

IX. Business Resolutions

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01–05 .

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

Special Meeting Minutes	9/14/20
Special Executive Session Minutes	9/14/20
Regular Meeting Minutes	9/23/20

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio	Seconded by: Mr. Skopak
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

- RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves an additional bills and claims for December in the amounts of \$149,220.31 as certified by the Business Administrator/ Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for November as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$380,063.46, including \$355,163.16 for the gross payroll, \$5,916.30 for the Board’s share of FICA/Medicare and \$18,984.00 for the State’s share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio	Seconded by: Mr. Skopak
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

- WHEREAS**, the Board of Education has received the Reports of the Board Secretary (Secretary) and the Custodian of School Monies (Treasurer) for the months of October and November;

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 knowledge, no major account or fund has been over expended in violation of 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: Dr. LoCascio	Seconded by: Mr. Skopak
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. RESOLVED that the Board of Education per the 2019-20 FY Audit approves the following account reclassification for June 30th, 2020, as certified by the Business Administrator and authorized by the Superintendent of Schools:

- \$2,040.00 from account 20-005-100-420-050 to 20-005-200-500-050
- \$4,750.00 from account 20-001-400-732-050 to 20-220-400-450-050
- \$44,400.00 from account 20-001-400-732-050 to 20-000-400-731-050
- \$42,297.00 from account 11-190-100-610-050-04 to 12-120-100-731
- \$4,897.00 from account 11-000-261-420 to 12-000-400-450-050

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

X. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta reported to the Board the updated NJ DOH Matrix. Currently the state is in orange, which is considered high risk. Mrs. Gadaleta has been working closely with the state and county on behalf of EFS, which is currently in the green zone of the matrix.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that she is waiting for W. Essex to approve their calendar for the 2021-22 school year. It had been approved but was retracted for a possible revision. We will prepare a draft C for our next meeting.

XI. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that negotiations between the BOE and EFTA will begin in January.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that she had met with the EFS Safety Team and had a very productive meeting, along with the Climate & Culture committee.
- Mrs. Gadaleta announced that tomorrow would be a snow day, everyone enjoy the day off and stay safe.

XII. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mrs. Skopak asked about the policy and reaching out to staff if they required assistance. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that would be ok.
- Mrs. Haber asked about the policy and emailing staff in the evening. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that would be acceptable but reminded parents to be aware of the time of day and to allow for a reasonable response time. Mrs. Haber noted that she liked the policies in place. She also thanked the teachers for the amazing job they are doing. They are so well prepared and the lessons have been thought out and executed so well. She is very proud and thankful.
- 5 parents posted Thank you to the staff in the chat room
- Mrs. Farkas asked about the 21-22 calendar and the W. Essex first day of school.
- Mayor Davis first wanted to thank EFS for all the work they have done. He second wanted to point out the risk matrix. He has been in contact with the state and wanted to point out that the information is not always presented properly through the media. He noted that the BOE is utilizing the information properly and addressing circumstances within the district along with local guidance. Mayor Davis noted the importance of in person instruction.
- Mayor Davis also wanted to address vaccinations in NJ. He noted sites are beginning to open up in Essex County for residents to be vaccinated. He explained the procedure to receive the vaccinations, which will be dictated by the state. The general public will not receive vaccinations until the spring. Mayor Davis noted we

all need to stay disciplined and follow all the rules and guidelines that are in place to keep everyone safe and allow for in person schooling. He thanked everyone for their efforts and hears good reports as a result.

XIII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

The Board convened into Executive Session at 8:14 P.M. to discuss and legal matters.

The items discussed in Executive Session will be disclosed to the public when the need to maintain their confidentiality no longer exists.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XIV. Adjournment

At 8:54 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The **Reorganizational Meeting** will be held remotely on **Wednesday, January 6, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.**

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary