

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 December 2, 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
Mr. Theodore Skopak-Present

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; and Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary and 42 members of the public.

II. 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-

It has been 3 months since the start of the school year. Everyone deserves a huge round of applause for their individual contributions to keeping school open for in-person instruction during this second wave of the pandemic. We are so grateful for everyone's cooperation with the health and safety guidelines at EFS. We also appreciate everyone's understanding when asked to have their child see a doctor, or quarantine. The rules may seem cumbersome, but they are what is keeping our school safe and able to keep running, with minimal disturbances.

We are grateful to Mrs. Gadaleta, Mr. Lella, Mr. Adi and his team, Mrs. Renz, Dr. Nitti and the Health Department for all of their hard work. Because of the safety measures they have put in place and their input, Mrs. Gadaleta has been able to determine the best course of action in dealing with the current coronavirus cases. These measures make it possible to disrupt the learning environment as little as possible. To our community members who are sick we wish you a speedy recovery.

As always, we want to continue reminding everyone of best practices. Please keep up the mask wearing, social distancing and handwashing. Let the school know if you will be traveling or having company visit you during the holidays. Please continue working with Mrs. Gadaleta and Mrs. Renz if you have any health concerns that need to be discussed.

We are grateful to the administration, teachers and staff for their commitment to offering in-person instruction as long as it is safe to do so. As a Board we are committed to supporting that goal in every way possible. The way that we get through these difficult times is by working together.

Thank you all for joining us tonight.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta explained the NJDOH Risk Matrix. Essex County is currently marked as a high risk region; however, Essex Fells is not listed as part of that region. Essex Fells is currently listed in the yellow, or moderate risk zone. Mrs. Gadaleta also explained the cautious approach that EFS has been taking every day.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that new CDC guidelines came out today and she had spoken with Dr. Nitti on how to implement them. The new guideline calls for a 7-day quarantine/isolation from exposure with a negative test on day 7 versus the prior 10 days. EFS will continue with the 10-day guideline. A closed classroom can open a few days' sooner if no children are showing symptoms.
- Mrs. Bronstein asked why the current kindergarten class was closed. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that she was limited to her response, however the classroom had more than 1 case.
- Mrs. Skopak asked about the absentee policy if a class is remote. Mrs. Gadaleta noted it is still treated the same and explained the absentee/illness remote policy.

VII. Buildings & Grounds

- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the Foundation for absorbing the cost of the new outdoor lunch tables.

VIII. Curriculum & Instruction

- Mrs. Gadaleta mentioned the consortium meeting to address curriculum revisions.

IX. Personnel

- None

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella noted that the 2019-20 audit was wrapping up. The final due date of December has been delayed until January. The district is financially healthy and will be receiving a clean audit report.

XI. Policy

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted she will be reviewing policy with the EFTA.

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

XII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that the state has removed the state list travel restriction, and now all non-essential travel must quarantine.

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that she is planning the 2021-22 school calendar along with the upcoming budget. W. Essex could be revising their draft to extend the year during the month of June.

XIII. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that the travel survey will be done on a classroom level.
- Mr. Lella noted that we will need to appoint a President and Vice President for the 2021 calendar year at our January meeting.

XIV. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mrs. Piccoli thanked everyone for their efforts and was very happy that EFS is open for in person learning. Mrs. Piccoli suggested an idea for a survey, perhaps to the older grades on some feedback regarding what's working and what could be changed. Mrs. Gadaleta thought that was a good idea and can be looked into.
- Mr. Dionisio asked to remember the children learning at home remotely.

XV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 7:57 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss negotiations 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

XVI. Adjournment

At 9:06 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** will be held **remotely** on Wednesday, December 16, 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