

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 March 17, 2021. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 7:33 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 8, 2021. 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 – 7:33 P.M.**

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

**II. Roll Call**

Mrs. Kris Huegel, President-present  
Dr. Steven LoCascio, Vice-President-present  
Mrs. Amanda Haber-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 37 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-

Thank you for joining us tonight. We hope you are enjoying your St. Patrick's Day.

Last week marked the 1-year anniversary of the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic. None of us could have imagined the year that has followed. The Board and Administration have been committed to giving the children of Essex Fells the opportunity to attend school in-person, as long as it is safe to do so, and we are proud of the success we have had so far. Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to see the kids during their recess. Aside from the masks everyone was wearing, you would not have known they were attending school during a global pandemic. The children were laughing and playing outside on a beautiful day with their friends. As a parent, a community member, and a Board member, I was grateful to have the opportunity to witness this. What is occurring at Essex Fells School is truly remarkable. The fact that our children have had the option to safely attend school in-person every day, since September, is the exception, not the rule. The Board as always wants to thank the Administration and entire school staff for all of their exceptional work.

With the vaccines becoming more widely available things will get better soon. However, now is not the time to become complacent. For the remainder of the school year, we ask that you keep up the safety precautions that have made the last 6 months of school successful. Please follow the mandates: wash your hands, wear masks, social distance, avoid large gatherings, stay home when you are sick, and quarantine according to the NJ Travel Guidelines. We are all tired of the pandemic, and with the warmer weather, sports, Spring Break and Easter coming up, it will be tempting to let our guards down. This afternoon Mayor Davis shared the latest COVID data for Essex Fells with me.

It is as follows: December had the highest amount of cases, numbering in the 40s. January saw a 50% reduction, and February saw another 50% reduction with a total of 11 cases. March has already given us 9 confirmed positive cases. That means that we are not out of the woods yet, and this is not a good time to resume attending social functions. Please remember that each of our behavior affects our school's safety, and a rise in cases could cause a closure.

Check your Week at a Glance and the EFS Reopening Plan on the school Website for the most up-to-date health and safety information. Mrs. Gadaleta and Mrs. Renz are also available to help you with any pandemic-related questions.

We are grateful to our teaching staff for all of the accommodations they have made for the students and their families during this year. We also appreciate the community's continued cooperation and support to keep EFS healthy and safe. It would not be possible without everyone's commitment to our wonderful school.

## VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta provided a 1-year update to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Mrs. Gadaleta was extremely thankful to Dr. Nitti and Mountainside Hospital for setting up vaccine appointments for the EFS staff in the upcoming weeks.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that Social, Cultural and Religious Sensitivity was now being taught to children at EFS.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that Parent / teacher conferences were next week, and if you have not done so yet to please sign up.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that at the moment EFS is planning for a September 2021 opening similar to the current operation and will await further guidance from the NJDOE.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that for the 26 families that are traveling over spring break, during their quarantine assignments will be posted each day on google classroom.
- Mrs. Huegel thanked Dr. Nitti for setting up the staff vaccine availability.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted resolution #3 regarding the addition of Mrs. Sullivan as a para for the remainder of the year. She thanked her for her help.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted resolution #4 and policies for the 1<sup>st</sup> reading that will be discussed at the next workshop.

## VII. Superintendents Resolutions

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01 – 04

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): Molly Livio  
 Event: Distance Learning in Kindergarten: Successful, Practical Strategies  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/4/21  
 Cost: \$279.00  
 Staff Member(s): Laura Quinn  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/9/21  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Sara Christopher  
 Event: NJECC  
 Location: Virtual  
 Date: 3/10/21  
 Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Nicole Criscione  
Event: NJECC  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 3/10/21  
Cost: \$0.00

Staff Member(s): Kristen Kowalski  
Event: Cutting Edge Tools & Strategies for Teaching Science  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 3/15/21  
Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Katherine Vetere  
Event: Co-Teaching Conference A3, A4, B3, B4  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 3/22/21  
Cost: \$289.00

Staff Member(s): Jaclyn Franzi  
Event: Strategies / Significantly Increase Students Writing Skills  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 3/22/21  
Cost: \$149.00

Staff Member(s): Lauren Brzostowski  
Event: Practical Cutting-Edge Interventions for Improving Executive  
Function Skills in Students  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 4/20/21  
Cost: \$165

Staff Member(s): Shannon Maloney  
Event: Best Practices in Co-Teaching Effective Strategies and Realistic  
Solutions for Inclusive Classrooms (Grades 1-12)  
Location: Virtual  
Date: 4/22/21  
Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Danielle Butler  
Event: Teacher Wellbeing Summit – Nurturing Body, Mind and Soul  
Location: Virtual  
Date: N/A (own time)  
Cost: \$85.00

Staff Member(s): Dorotea Banek  
Event: Teacher Wellbeing Summit – Nurturing Body, Mind and Soul  
Location: Virtual  
Date: N/A (own time)  
Cost: \$85.00

Staff Member(s): Sue Hacker  
Event: Teacher Wellbeing Summit – Nurturing Body, Mind and Soul  
Location: Virtual  
Date: N/A (own time)  
Cost: \$85.00



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

- P0145 Board Member Resignation and Removal (M) Revised
- P0164.6 Remote Public Board Meetings During A Declared Emergency (M) (New)
- P1642 Earned Sick Leave Law (M) (Revised)
- P1643 Family Leave (M) (New)
- P3431.1 Family Leave (M) Abolished
- P4431.1 Family Leave (M) (Abolished)
- P3431.3 New Jersey Family Leave Insurance Program (Abolished)
- P4431.3 New Jersey Family Leave Insurance Program (Abolished)
- P5330.01 Administration of Medical Cannabis (M) (Revised)
- R5330.01 Administration of Medical Cannabis (M) (Revised)
- P7425 Lead Testing of Water in Schools (M) (Revised)
- P7425 Lead Testing of Water in Schools (M) (New)
- P7430 School Safety (M) (Abolished)
- R7430 School Safety (M) (Abolished)
- P2415 Every Student Succeeds Act (M) (Revised)
- P2415.01 Academic Standards, Academic Assessments, and Accountability (M) (Abolished)
- P2415.02 Title I – Fiscal Responsibilities (M) (Revised)
- P2415.03 Highly Qualified Teachers (M) (Abolished)
- P2415.05 Student Survey, Analysis, and/or Evaluations (M) (Revised)
- P2415.20 Every Student Succeeds Act Complaints (M) (Revised)\
- R2415.20 Every Student Succeeds Act Complaints (M) (Revised)\
- P4125 Employment of Support Staff Members (M) (Revised)
- P6360 Political Contributions (M) (Revised)
- P8330 Student Records (M) (Revised)
- P9713 Recruitment by Special Interest Groups (M) (Revised)

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

#### VIII. **Business Administrator's Report**

- Mr. Lella provided an update on the 2021-22 budget, and noted the resolution for the preliminary submission.
- Mrs. Huegel commented on the Board's involvement in the 2021-22 budget and the proposed tax levy.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted items related to the 2021-22 budget, as well as items funded by the Foundation and the PTA.

#### X. **Business Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Business Resolutions #01-04.

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

Regular Meeting Minutes

1/20/21

Executive Session Minutes	1/20/21
Regular Meeting Minutes	2/3/21
Executive Session Minutes	2/3/21
Regular Meeting Minutes	2/17/21
Executive Session Minutes	2/17/21

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio	Seconded by: Mrs. Haber
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for March in the amounts of **\$196,325.50** as certified by the Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for February as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$372,301.70, including \$346,871.48 for the gross payroll, \$5,518.78 for the Board’s share of FICA/Medicare and \$19,911.44 for the State’s share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio	Seconded by: Mrs. Haber
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

3. **WHEREAS**, the Board of Education has received the Reports of the Board Secretary (Secretary) and the Custodian of School Monies (Treasurer) for the Month of January;

**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: Mrs. Haber
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Essex Fells Board of Education in the County of Essex, New Jersey, approves the 2021-22 preliminary school district budget for submission to the Executive County Superintendent as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Fund:	\$5,978,492.99	\$5,490,708.99
Special Revenue:	\$217,553.00	0.00
Debt Service:	0.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<u>\$6,196,045.99</u>	<u>\$5,490,708.99</u>

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that included in the budget is the use of an enrollment adjustment in the amount of \$53,000.00

**RESOLVED** that the Essex Fells Board of Education approve the total travel expenditures for the District at a maximum of \$20,000.00 for the 2021-22 school year; and

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

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board authorizes the Superintendent and Business Administrator/Board Secretary to submit the preliminary budget to the Essex County Executive Superintendent of Schools for review and approval, to advertise the preliminary budget in the district’s official newspaper, and establish a public presentation and adoption of the final budget for the 2021-2022 school year virtually on May 5th, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**XI. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted there are still 7 families in the EFS remote program and 5 in the Educere program.

**XII. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that in her monthly meetings with the EFPD a Borough Traffic Study in town is being discussed, as well as rolling pick up.

**XIII. Public Comment**

- None

**XIII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

The Board convened in Executive Session at 7:58 P.M. to discuss personnel, legal matters and negotiations. 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. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**XIV. Adjournment**

At 8:30 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.** virtually.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary