

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Regular Meeting on March 18, 2020, in the Gymnasium of the Essex Fells School. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 1:03 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 on March 16, 2020. Agendas were mailed to the Clerk of the Borough of Essex Fells, the Progress, the Star Ledger, and posted on the district web-site.

**I. Call to Order –1:03 P.M.**

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

**II. Roll Call**

Mrs. Kris Huegel – President, present  
Mrs. Debra Tedesco – Vice President, present (phone)  
Mrs. Bethany Buccino, – present (phone)  
Dr. Steven LoCascio –present (phone)  
Mr. Theodore Skopak – present

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; Mayor Davis- Essex Fells; and 5 members of the public.

**III. Flag Salute**

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

**IV. President’s Report**

- During these difficult times I would like to take a moment to thank Mrs. Gadaleta and her entire staff for all of their efforts. They have spent the last weeks educating the children on the safest health habits, keeping the school environment as clean as possible and preparing themselves and the children for remote learning. Rather than having a school closure last week, Mrs. Gadaleta and the staff prepared for the possibility of remote learning during the normal school day, by having substitutes assist them. That made it possible for us not to disrupt the school week and cause parents to have make adjustments for childcare. We appreciate all of them going above and beyond the call of duty for our kids and community. Thank you to Mayor Davis for sharing his perspective during this time so we can do what is best for our school and community as a whole. Thank you also to the parents for their patience and understanding during this difficult time. We are going to be discussing the remote learning situation later in this meeting. Feel free to stay and listen and make comments at the end of this meeting during the “public comments” portion. The Board is not able to have a back and forth conversation because of ethical rules and constraints. That being said, we would like to hear what you have to say in order to have feedback from our community that will help us in our decision making process. This is a stressful time with many unanswerable questions. Now we have a chance to come together as a community and we look forward to all of us working together to take care of our children, and one another. Thank you.

**V. Public Comment on Agenda**

- None

**VI. Superintendent's Report**

- Mrs. Gadaleta reported the district's response to COVID-19. Mrs. Gadaleta noted she has been in contact the consortium districts and the Mayor. The staff has been very proactive in preparing for remote learning. Mrs. Gadaleta has also been in touch with the health department. Currently there are zero cases in Essex Fells. The staff are required to provide 4 hours per day of instruction to count to the required 180 days. Mrs. Gadaleta is so thankful for how hard the staff is working. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that communication will be the key for everyone and she thanked everyone for their patience during these difficult times.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that parent / teacher conferences will take place via phone calls and we will utilize Sign up Genius to schedule the times.
- Mrs. Gadaleta that all March and April field trips are postponed and we will revisit May and June trips at a later time.
- School Performance reports will be uploaded to the EFS website.

**VII. Superintendent's 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): John Viggiano  
Event: NJAHPERD 2020 Convention  
Location: Ocean Place Resort, Long Branch, NJ  
Date: 2/24-25/20  
Cost: \$164.90 Total (Fee = \$125.00; Mileage = \$39.90)

Staff Member(s): Marco Pannullo  
Event: Drone Certification Training  
Location: Drone Academy, Ringoes, NJ  
Date: 3/17-18/20  
Cost: \$205.00 Mileage

Staff Member(s): Jaclyn Franzi  
Event: What's New in Children's Literature and Strategies for Using it in Your Program Workshop  
Location: Wilshire Grand Hotel, West Orange, NJ  
Date: 3/27/20  
Cost: \$279.00

Staff Member(s): Molly Livio  
Event: Enterprises Annual Conference  
Location: Bergen County Educational Enterprises, Paramus, NJ  
Date: TBD (Cancelled for 3/27/20)  
Cost: \$0

Staff Member(s): Catherine Codella, Jeanine Whitman  
Event: Practical Strategies for Improving Attention-Seeking, Manipulative and Challenging Behaviors Workshop  
Location: Wilshire Grand Hotel, West Orange, NJ



**\*Please note due to current conditions start date TBD**

- 4. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, the generous donation of an EFS Bench from the Fiss/Stern/Mitchell Families.

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

**VII. Business Administrator’s Report**

- Mr. Lella informed the Board that the Buildings & Grounds projects that were scheduled for Spring Break, rolling pick up / drop off paying & field maintenance, may be moved up.
- Mr. Lella noted the Resolution approving the preliminary submission of the 2020-21 School Budget to the Executive County Superintendent.

**IX. 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 meetings:

Workshop Meeting Minutes	2/5/20
Regular Meeting Minutes	2/19/20
Executive Session Minutes	2/19/20

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

- 2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for March in the amount of \$131,538.19 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 \$359,853.33 including \$335,300.85 for the gross payroll, \$5,001.6 for the Board’s share of FICA/Medicare and \$19,550.88 for the State’s share of FICA/Medicare.

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

- 3. 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. Tedesco
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0

**4. BE IT RESOLVED** that the Essex Fells Board of Education in the County of Essex, New Jersey, approves the 2020-21 preliminary school district budget for submission to the Executive County Superintendent as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Fund:	\$5,804,009.00	\$5,331,304.00
Special Revenue:	60,234.00	0.00
Debt Service:	0.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<u>\$5,864,243.00</u>	<u>\$5,331,304.00</u>

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that included in the budget is the use of Banked Cap in the amount of \$152,000.00 to address Special Education Costs.

**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 2020-21 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 2020-2021 school year on May 6th, 2020 at 7:30 P.M. in the Media Center of the Essex Fells School.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Tedesco

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**X. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Mrs. Gadaleta provided an update regarding the rolling drop off / pick up procedures and her discussion with the EFPD.
- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board of the possible extension of the NJSLA Testing dates. We will await further guidance.

**XI. New Business / Board Discussion**

- None

**XII. Meeting Open for Public Comment**

- Mrs. Moran noted that the remote learning has gone very well. She thought Ms. Wieczorek’s online session was great.
- Mr. Davis noted that how EFS has handled the current situation has been phenomenal. He had been in email contact with a teacher and agreed with Mrs. Moran that being able to see the staff would be beneficial for the children. Mr. Davis also noted that he attended last week’s speaker regarding COVID-19. He wanted to note for the record that he did not agree that closing the school would be caving and how EFS has handled the situation was appropriate. He thanked the district for their efforts.

- Mrs. Autret thanked the district for their handling of the current situation. She also noted that it was nice to see the staff in videos. Mrs. Autret asked if it were possible to be a point person to assist families in need with watching their children during the day. The Board deferred to Mayor Davis. Mayor Davis first thanked Mrs. Gadaleta and the Board of Education as whole for all of their efforts the last 10 days. He not only thanked them as Mayor but also as a parent. Mayor Davis noted that he loved Mrs. Autret's idea, however the idea would fall under a day car scenario which would ultimately be shut down. Mayor Davis noted we do not want to promote groups of children/parents gathering together.
- Mrs. Huegel thanked the public and Mayor Davis for their participation.

### **XIII. Adjournment**

At 1:30 P.M the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Workshop Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, April 8, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.** in the Superintendent's Office. The next **Regular Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.** in the Media Center.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Tedesco

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary