

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 March 3, 2021. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 7:35 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 -7:35 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-absent
 Mr. Theodore Skopak-present

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 46 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

Thank you all for joining us tonight. It is hard to believe but it is almost the end of the second trimester. The Board wants to thank everyone for all of their hard work and dedication to keeping the school as healthy and safe as possible for the staff and students. Essex Fells School is such a special place because of the people who work there every day, and because of the students and their families. This year could not have been possible without everyone putting their best foot forward. I would like to thank Mrs. Gadaleta, Mr. Lella, Mr. Adi and the buildings and grounds staff, Mrs. Evangelista and Mrs. Rivera for making the school run every day. Thank you to our amazing teachers and support staff for everything you do for the children of Essex Fells, both in-person and remote. Thank you to Mrs. Renz, Dr. Nitti and the West Orange Health Department for keeping our school healthy and safe. Thank you to our community partners, Mayor Davis, the EFPD, the EPDPW and the EFFD for all of your hard work and support. Last of all, thank you to our students and families for trusting us with your children. We are doing everything we can to give them the best education possible amidst a pandemic, while keeping them and the staff as safe as possible. We appreciate everyone’s transparency and cooperation with all of the health and safety protocols. We know it is not easy, but are grateful the protocols have worked and we have only had to be fully remote for 2 weeks due to illness. Our children are lucky to have the option of in-person learning during these difficult times, and it wouldn’t be possible without our community working together for this common goal.

The news this week that teachers have priority to be vaccinated starting March 15th, is a huge step forward in keeping our staff healthy and safe, and we are very excited for them. Even though numbers have been going down, we need everyone to continue with mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing, as we are not out of the woods yet.

If you are going to travel, please reach out to Mrs. Renz and share your travel plans with her, so she can give you quarantine information. Please contact your child's teachers to organize getting your student's work once you have the dates from her.

Thank you all again for joining us tonight, I will now turn it over to Mrs. Gadaleta for the Superintendent's Report.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that there were only 5 outstanding responses to the Spring Break Survey. 25 families will or might travel, while 130 will not. Mrs. Gadaleta also noted that the EFS will remain in person for instruction upon return from Spring Break.
- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board that 3/12/21 would be the end of marking period 2.
- Mrs. Gadaleta provided an update on the travel quarantine changes. Effective immediately, there will be a 10-day quarantine for out of state travel, not including NY, PA, CT or Delaware. The DOH continues to discourage travel. If you do travel and receive a negative test on days 5-7, you can return. If you've had C-19 within the last 90 days, there is no quarantine after travel. At this time vaccines have no bearing and you still must quarantine.

VII. Buildings & Grounds

- Mr. Lella informed the Board that he would be scheduling the first of four field maintenance dates.

VIII. Curriculum & Instruction

- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board that there would be theme days for Read Across America Week. Mrs. Trafford had set up visitors to read to the different grades.
- Mrs. Gadaleta provided an update to the remote learning program.

IX. Personnel

- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board that she would be advertising for a Facilities Supervisor and 6th grade math and science teacher.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that negotiations with the EFTA had begun.

X. Finance

- Mr. Lella provided an update to the 2021-22 budget as well as the updated State Aid figures.

**Mrs. Huegel out at 7:56 P.M.

**Mrs. Huegel returned at 7:57 P.M.

**Mrs. Huegel out at 8:04 P.M.

XI. Policy

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted the New Policy Alerts for the 3/17/21 meeting.

XII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

XIII. New Business / Board Discussion

- None

XIV. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mayor Davis spoke about the upcoming EFS Budget and the challenges that come with short and long term planning. Mayor Davis asked the Board to keep in mind the taxpayer when preparing the upcoming budget. Mayor Davis noted that historically EFS is the lowest rate of the WE Regional budget.
- Mayor Davis addressed public health. He appreciates all the efforts being made and notes the trends are positive at the moment. Mayor Davis noted that 23% of the town had been vaccinated and asked to quarantine if you do feel the need to travel. Mayor Davis thanked everyone involved at EFS for their efforts.
- Mr. Dionisio thanked the school for their efforts. He noted Genesis issues with grades. Mrs. Gadaleta will address with the staff, and the 6th grade specifically.
- Mrs. Haber referenced an article in the New York Times about Essex Fells and how the area is very desirable. Mrs. Haber noted that EFS is student program driven and that the budget focuses on the children. Mrs. Haber believes the school system is incredible and she is very proud to serve on the EFS BOE.

XV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

The Board convened in Executive Session at 8:06 P.M. to discuss negotiations legal matters and personnel. 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
Ayes: 3

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber
Nays: 0

XVI. Adjournment

At 9:04 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Workshop Meeting** of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 7:30 P.M.** virtually.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio
Ayes: 4

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber
Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary