

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 May 20, 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, – present
Dr. Steven LoCascio –present
Mr. Theodore Skopak – present
OPEN

Also present: Mrs. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; 2 Staff Members and 16 members of the public.

III. Flag Salute

- The Board President led the salute to the flag.

IV. President’s Report

- Good Evening-

Thank you for joining us tonight. I want to publicly thank Mrs. Gadaleta, Mr. Lella and each and every one of the Essex Fells School staff for all of their continued efforts to educate our children during this difficult time. We, as a Board, are so grateful for everything you are doing for the kids. We also want to thank all of the children and their parents for all of their hard work and flexibility during this unprecedented time. We are well aware that this situation is not what any of us expected, and that we hope you are all healthy and safe, and are sorry for anyone who has been sick or dealt with any loss during this time. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you.

As the weeks have evolved, we are certainly aware of the challenges that are inherent with trying to work with your children, while simultaneously working on your own professional commitments. Many of the Essex Fells staff also have those same challenges. That being said, though emotions may be running high, it is important to remember to remain respectful of the faculty, staff, and administration of the Essex Fells School. As a community, it is important to demonstrate to the children of our community to treat others with dignity and respect, and that is best accomplished through modeling.

- Dr. LoCascio acknowledged how difficult of times we are facing and that we are all frayed and on edge. During these unprecedented times we are all facing challenges and Dr. LoCascio feels our situation as a school district is better off than many others. Dr. LoCascio reiterated that at this time no school leaders have been provided any guidance from the state on how to possibly reopen. We must be patient and realize that we are doing the best that we can. Mrs. Huegel agreed and noted we truly are doing the best we can.

- I would like to thank the candidates for coming tonight. We are so grateful that all of you are interested in joining the Board. We are only sorry that we don't have positions for each of you. The position we are filling tonight is to finish this year's term that was recently vacated. There will be 2 open Board positions on the November ballot, one for 1 year, and one for 3 years. We encourage all of you to run in the election, regardless of what happens tonight. We look forward to speaking with all of you, and thank you again for your willingness to help out. We really appreciate it.
- The Board conducted interviews for the open BOE position.
- The Board discussed and reviewed BOE goals from 2019-2020 as well as ideas for 2020-2021 goals.
- Mrs. Gadaleta will formulate District and Superintendent goals from the BOE.

V. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta discussed the Remote Learning Survey feedback.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reminded everyone of the calendar revision for Memorial Day weekend.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that classroom pack up will take place June 1st -5th on a very limited schedule.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that Project ACEs on June 5th will be held remotely.
- Mrs. Gadaleta stated that Move-up Day will be done virtually. The 6th grade will not be attending West Essex.
- Olympics will be held virtually as well with family based activities.
- Mrs. Gadaleta informed the Board that the 6th Grade clap out ceremony and Promotion ceremony are both shaping up and she hopes will be memorable for all.
- The last day of school is June 19th, a 6th grade ceremony will take place at 10 am.
- Mrs. Gadaleta reported that there will be a lot of work to do to prepare to open in September and that to date there has been zero guidance provided by the state. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that we have been ordering PPE materials and looking into plexi glass for student desks. Mrs. Gadaleta will be forming a re-opening committee to make the school as safe as possible for re-opening.

VII. Business Administrator's Report

- Mr. Lella informed the Board that he had attended his monthly Essex County BA Meeting via Zoom earlier in the day. Among the topics discussed was 2020-21 State Aid Funding. At this time there is no guidance being provided by the state and we will be awaiting the Treasurer's report on May 22nd. It is projected that the state will be 10 billion dollars short in projected revenues. This will most likely result in cuts to State Aid Funding and we wait for further notification and guidance.
- Mr. Lella reported to the Board that the CARES Act provides federal funding and established the Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF). District's that did not receive funding per the Title 1 Allocation are eligible to receive "State Set Aside Money". The state has applied to the Federal Government to redistribute these funds to the non-title 1 schools. The response will be a few weeks away.
- Mr. Lella noted that the district's bank, Valley, cut interest being paid to the district in April. This was a result of the federal interest rate cuts. This could cause a reduction in miscellaneous revenue to the district in the amount of 4-5k in 2020-21.
- Mr. Lella referenced the May 14th emails received from a transportation vendor requesting for full payment through June. Mr. Lella noted that the district utilizes the Essex Regional Educational Service Commission

(ERESC) for transportation and that the vendors should not be contacting us directly. The vendors were requesting payment to the ERESA however we could not justify paying vendors for services that were not being rendered. We have also been informed to not make agreements to pay for non-rendered transportation services until guidance is given by the DOE. The Essex County BA's were in agreement to pay ERESA their administrative fees through the end of the school year with the understanding that the ERESA would bring their staff back in, as they have let most if not all staff go. Mr. Lella informed the Board the cost to EFS would be about \$1,500.

VIII. 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 meetings:

April 22, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves bills and claims for May in the amount of \$130,622.97 as certified by the Business Administrator/ Board Secretary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Education approves the payroll for April as certified by the Business Administrator and approved by the Superintendent and Board President in the total amount of \$352,447.72 including \$328,515.14 for the gross payroll, \$4,486.76 for the Board's share of FICA/Medicare and \$19,445.82 for the State's share of FICA/Medicare.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

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

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

4. **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, February & March;

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. Buccino

Ayes: 4 Nays: 0

- 5. **RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education approves the appointment of Mrs. Bethany Buccino as Vice President of the Essex Fells Board of Education.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 3 Nays: 0

****Mrs. Buccino Abstained**

VIII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

IX. New Business / Board Discussion

- None

XI. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mrs. Haber commended the staff for being incredible each day with their lessons and also noted how incredible the recent school assembly was.

XII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

The Board convened in Executive Session at 9:12 P.M. to discuss the Open BOE Position and the Business Administrator’s contract. 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: 4

Nays: 0

XIII. Adjournment

At 10:28 P.M the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn.. The next **Regular Meeting** will be held **remotely** on **Wednesday, June 17, 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