

The Board of Education of the Borough of Essex Fells, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in a Special Meeting held remotely on July 13, 2020. 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 as of July 9, 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 – 1:03 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; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 71 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 Afternoon-

Thank you for joining us for this Special Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Gadaleta is going to be announcing her new hires for the 2020-2021 school year, and will be presenting her preliminary reopening plans, and protocols for the remote learning back-up plan. Although Mrs. Gadaleta is first and foremost our educational leader, she is also becoming well acquainted with health and safety as related to this pandemic. The Board would like to give our warmest thanks to Mrs. Gadaleta, the members of the Reopening Committee, and the members of the school staff for all of their time and assistance in navigating our school towards reopening the buildings.

The Board recognizes that everyone is anxious about the coming school year. We are all working from a place where we are nervous and wondering which is better, sending the kids back to school in person, or trying to continue distance learning from home, as difficult as that is. However, the decision to open schools is up to the Governor and the Health Department. As of now, Governor Murphy wants every school district in New Jersey to plan for in-person learning in September, with a backup plan for remote learning. We hope that you all feel that the plan that is coming together, is the best plan we can have for our school under the current conditions. Although we don't know what will

happen with public health over the course of the next few weeks, months or year, we must have both plans in place for September 1st and the entire community will need to work together to ensure a healthy environment for the students and staff. Mrs. Gadaleta wanted to share these preliminary plans as early as possible so everyone in the community has an idea of what is going on, has a chance to give their input, and can plan their summer vacations accordingly. Please note that the situation is fluid, and as indicated by Mrs. Gadaleta, is subject to any additional guidance and/or regulation that is provided.

## **VI. Superintendent's Report**

- We will utilize staggered arrival and departure times and temperature checks each day
- We are attempting to control the school environment and keep all staff and students safe
- Mrs. Gadaleta asked to please mind your travel & quarantining over the summer
- Back 2 School Night will be remote
- No field trips until further notice
- EFS is utilizing classroom square footage guidelines provided by the state
- Nurse Renz is preparing and working with Dr. Nitti regarding handwashing schedules, no usage of water fountains, directional arrows for the hallways and limited hallway activity, and increased custodial cleaning during the day
- Face masks worn at all times in the buildings
- Face shields have been purchased for staff and children
- Desk shields will be purchased
- No visitors without a pre-appointment
- Limited after school hours building access
- Limit outside vendors
- Bagged lunch inside the classroom or outside if weather permits
- Specials will go classroom to classroom
- Common areas will be utilized as classrooms to expand space
- Each child will have individual supplies
- September will be a transition time as we evaluate student needs upon return
- Utilizing the PTA & Foundation for as much as possible
- Emergency drills will be different, will work with the EFPD
- Staff children will have the opportunity for remote leaning in our building
- Contract tracing form for families prior to return, as well as staff
- A 28 person Reopening Committee has been formed
- The reopen will plan will be available 4 weeks prior to the start of school
- Mrs. Gadaleta opened up for family questions
- Mrs. Skopak asked about the EFS temperature limit, lunch and masks. EFS will utilize 99.5, lunch will be inside and outside if good weather and masks will be worn even with desks 6 feet apart
- Mrs. Coye asked about tents. We will utilize temporary tents provided by the PTA if possible
- Ms. Albu asked about the first day of Kindergarten. Mrs. Gadaleta explained the drop off procedure
- Mayor Davis asked if the EFS budget is able to be revised, and perhaps reallocating funds or perhaps putting off certain projects. The Budget is not able to be revised at this time and funds will be reallocated as needed and projects revisited
- Mrs. DiGiovanni asked about bathroom monitoring, what happens if a staff member gets sick, and is there a remote learning option. We will utilize hall monitors and if child or teacher tests positive the classroom will go remote for 14 days and we will utilize the health department for approval to return. There is no remote option yet as we are planning on a full return
- Mr. O'Neill asked about aftercare. Tiny Treasures will have restrictions as well in addition to what we require
- Mrs. Autret thanked Mrs. Gadaleta for all her hard work. She asked about face coverings as well as extra help for the children. Mrs. Gadaleta noted there will always be some type of face covering as mask or shield and we are waiting for further guidance regarding extra help
- Mrs. DiGiovanni asked about the PTA donated masks. They will be cloth

- Mrs. Vega asked if there was any change to the number of allowed absences. There is no change or update as of yet
- Ms. Albu asked about the tracing form
- Ms. Ramos asked what if a child is out with just a normal illness. A doctor's note could be required to return as we have to be strict with keeping everyone safe. A class will be quarantined if there is a confirmed test
- Mrs. Haber asked about built in time before school begins to familiarize K students, is there any chance of a remote option or a hybrid plan. She also noted ESY has been phenomenal for her child. Art Therapy will be utilized before school begins, there is no remote option at this time per "The Road Back" and no hybrid plan for EFS at this time. Mrs. Haber thanked Mrs. Gadaleta for her efforts
- Mrs. DeStefano asked about recess. Recess will be the same as lunch and we will keep the children separated
- Ms. Albu asked if the Art Therapist will be available. They will for all children as needed
- Mr. Dionisio asked about rolling pick up and if children can still walk, and what about the music lessons. Children are still permitted to walk as we want to avoid parent gatherings if possible. Mr. Trogani will look into teaching music history as well.
- Mrs. Steiner thanked all of the EFS staff for their hard work. She asked how we should address other illnesses with our children besides fever. EFS will monitor each case with Nurse Renz
- Mrs. Autret asked if there is required covid testing. At this time no there is not and will are also awaiting further guidance
- A parent asked about additional help for Nurse Renz. We are concerned about outside sources so there will be no additional nurses for now
- Mrs. DiGiovanni asked about care for staff children. We will provide depending upon the child's remote schedule
- Mrs. Toth asked about outdoor lunch and recess and with tents how will they sit. We still have to plan for this, we will have to preach patience
- Mrs. Mehta asked about thoughts on padded mats to sit on. This comes down to sanitizing and we will consider
- Mrs. Cesar asked about PTA assisting with lunch and possible testing. There will be no PTA assisted lunch at this time. We will look into possible testing options for the staff
- "Farrah's phone" asked about desks outside. We will be reviewing options
- Mr. Gough asked about lunch being outside all year, he thinks it may be too cold. We will utilize outside lunch only in good weather and will make a decision day to day
- Mrs. Daniels noted that her child is new coming into the school and has spent prior years in outside school programs. Cold was never an issue and is ok with her children being outside
- Mr. Gough asked if children could go home for lunch. They can be signed out any day
- Mrs. Ramos asked about live stream classrooms. Not yet per NJEA
- Mrs. Autret asked about a shortened day. It is being discussed further
- Christian Connor as a new K child concerned with their child if not having interaction
- Mrs. Bezmen thanked for hosting the meeting. She understands this is a difficult topic and appreciates everyone's work. Noted parents seem to be fearful. Since the proposed reopen plan hasn't been able to sleep, wants to address from the other side. Doesn't agree with no touching, masks, walking in 1 direction and gun like temperature screening. Feels this in not a suitable environment for children. Respects everyone's choices but doesn't feel like her kids can return to this. Statistics show no children have passed away and when is this overkill. Thank you for listening
- Ms. Albu noted her mother is teacher at 70 years old and is scared for her well-being. Hopes all schools will be taking the same precautions
- Mrs. DiGiovanni asked about wearing a mask or shield
- Mrs. Skopak asked if masks have to be worn at all times. Yes, with some possible breaks at recess and PE.
- Mrs. Piccolli asked about masks for PE and lunch and supports outside lunch
- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked everyone for their comments and will be sharing this information with the community. She also noted that information that she receives is in real time and changes daily.
- Mrs. Gadaleta pointed out changes to the 2020-21 school calendar. September 16<sup>th</sup> Back to School Night will be remote. October and March parent/teacher conferences will be remote. Days of Service will not take place

this year, yet we are hoping for a virtual event. Halloween will be a 12:45 dismissal however there will be no costume parade.

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted Supt. Resolution #6 adding Mrs. Criscione to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade team and that there will be no sleepover but a remote team building event instead.

**VII. Superintendent’s Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01-06.

1. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of LeeAnn Smith, LDT-C/CST Coordinator, MA +30, Step 13, at a salary of \$82,386 for the 2020-2021 school year, pending the criminal history/background check.

Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Shannon Maloney, Fifth Grade Inclusion Teacher, MA, Step 2, at a salary of \$61,909 for the 2020-2021 school year, pending the criminal history/background check.

Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

3. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the appointment of Danielle Butler, Fourth Grade Inclusion Teacher, BA, Step 2, at a salary of \$56,668 for the 2018-2019 school year, pending the criminal history/background check.

Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the submission of the Non-Title 1 Cares Act application for Fiscal Year 2020-21, and accepts the grant award of the funds upon subsequent approval of the FY 2020-21 Non-Title 1 Cares Act application in the following amount:

Total	\$12,085
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Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

5. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the first reading of the following Bylaws/Policies/Regulations:

P 1649 Federal Families First Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
Response Act (M) (New)

Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

6. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the following stipend position for the 2020-2021 school year at the contractual rate:

Nicole Criscione

Sixth Grade Sleepover - \$250

Moved by: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

**VIII. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted Supt. Resolution #4 regarding the CARES Act Funding and the Non-Title 1 State Set Aside Funding that the district will be accepting in the amount of \$12,085.

**IX. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted the offering of Staff Childcare in order to able to have our staff in district.
- Mr. Mehta asked if there were any additional costs to have this. We will utilize perhaps a paraprofessional or two.
- Mrs. Huegel asked to confirm that these wouldn't be new hires. Mrs. Gadaleta noted they would not be as 2 current paras' are not IEP driven so there are no new costs for this program.
- Mr. Mehta asked if we were covered for any liability. We are.

**IX. Meeting Open for Public Comment**

- None

\*\*Dr. LoCascio left the Public Session at 2:03 Pm and returned for the Executive Session.

\*\*Mr. Skopak left the Public Session at 2:30 P.M. and returned for the Eexecutive Session.

**X. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

The Board convened in Executive Session at 2:41 P.M. to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation 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: Mrs. Buccino

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 3

Nays: 0

**XI. Adjournment**

At 3:49 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** will be held **remotely** on **Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.**

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Mehta

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary