

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 September 1, 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 August 26, 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 website.”

**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: Dr. Michelle V. Gadaleta, Superintendent/Principal; Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and 48 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-

We are looking forward to the reopening of Essex Fells School to students next Thursday. Dr. Gadaleta had a meeting of the Safe Reopening Committee last Monday, and they have put together a reasonable and responsible plan which she will be sharing with everyone tonight. As I am sure you know, the Essex Fells School District will be following mask mandates and guidelines from the State of NJ when school begins next week. We know children are engaging in activities outside of school without masks so not everyone may agree with the mandate. Wearing masks in school will make everyone safer from the spread while in the buildings, and fewer all-class or all-school quarantines will be needed. As of now, no one will be required to wear masks outdoors while at school. Our responsibility as a board is to provide the safest and healthiest environment possible for our students and staff, and we anticipate you will all feel that this plan does exactly that. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation in following the health-related rules and regulations that will be in place for now.

Thank you for joining us tonight. I will now turn it over to Dr. Gadaleta for the Superintendent’s Report.

**VI. Superintendent’s Report**

- Dr. Gadaleta provided an update on the Safe Return Plan and Committee Update. Minor changes to the plan will be reflected on the district’s website.

- Mrs. Haber asked who be testing unvaccinated staff. Dr. Gadaleta noted she has been in touch with Dr. Nitti, who possibly would each Monday.
- Mr. Mehta inquired as to if the BOE is required to cover the cost of the testing. Mr. Mehta did not feel this should be covered by BOE funds and the Board discussed. CARES Act Funding could be available. Dr. Gadaleta will research further and hopes to provide information at the 9/15 BOE meeting.
- Dr. LoCascio asked how many staff were currently unvaccinated. 11 to date.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted the EO #253 and the vaccine mandate, effective October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- Dr. Gadaleta informed the Board that she had provided 3 sets of school tours to families on August 31<sup>st</sup>, and they were well received.
- Dr. Gadaleta congratulated newly tenured teachers Mrs. Lauren Brzostowski, Mrs. Laurie Fischer, Ms. Kristen Kowalski and Ms. Patricia Pakonis. The Board congratulated the staff members.

**VII. Superintendents Resolutions**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education approves Superintendent Resolutions #01 –2

- 1. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the School Counselor Job Description:

NOTE: Job Description Attached

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio                      Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

- 2. RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the submission of the ESEA application for Fiscal Year 2021-22 to the County Office of Education and accepts the grant award in the amount of \$24,600.

Title I-A	\$10,797
Title II-A	\$3,803
Title IV-A	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total	<u>\$24,600</u>

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio                      Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5    Nays: 0

**VIII. Buildings & Grounds**

- Mr. Lella noted that the classroom sinks and touchless water fountain stations projects will be completed by the start of school. All other projects were complete.

**IX. Curriculum & Instruction**

- Dr. Gadaleta noted that Ms. Santin and Ms. Lipper would be available to meet with children on 8/31, thanks to a grant from the Foundation for the SEL program.
- Dr. Gadaleta mentioned the Preschool pilot of Creative Curriculum.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the upcoming Anti-Defamation League PD workshop, training, and assembly.
- Dr. Gadaleta noted the return of the cyber-security assemblies.

- Dr. Gadaleta discussed the staff participation in the National Writing Project.
- Dr. Gadaleta discussed the RIGAMAJIG training that the staff took part in earlier today.
- Dr. Gadaleta explained the upcoming Stories with STEAM Residency program with Queen Nur. Dr. Gadaleta thanked the Foundation for sharing this cost.

**X. Finance**

- None

**XI. Policy**

- The Board reviewed and discussed policy.

Policy Discussion:

P 1648	Restart and Recovery Plan (Abolished)
P 1648.11	The Road Forward COVID-19 – Health and Safety (New)
P 1648.02	Remote Learning Options for Families (Abolished)
P 1648.03	Restart And Recovery Plan – Full-Time Remote Instruction (Abolished)
P 0131	Bylaws, Policies, and Regulations (Revised)
P 1521	Educational Improvement Plans (M) (Abolished)
P 1649	Federal Families First Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Act (M) (Abolished)
P 2421	Career and Technical Education (Revised)
R 2421	Vocational – Technical Education (Abolished)
P 3134	Assignment of Extra Duties (Revised)
P & R 3142	Nonrenewal of Nontenured Teaching Staff Member (Revised)
P & R 3221	Evaluation of Teachers (M) (Revised)
P & R 3222	Evaluation of Teaching Staff Members, Excluding Teachers and Administrators (M) (Revised)
P & R 3223	Evaluation of Administrators, Excluding Principals, Vice Principals, and Assistant Principals (M) (Revised)
P & R 3224	Evaluation of Principals, Vice Principals, and Assistant Principals (M) (Revised)
P & R 4146	Nonrenewal of Nontenured Support Staff Member (Revised)
P & R 5460.02	Bridge Year Pilot Program (M) (New)
P & R 6471	School District Travel (M) (Revised)
P 8561	Procurement Procedures for School Nutrition Programs (M) (Revised)

**XII. Old Business / Board Discussion**

- None

**XIII. New Business / Board Discussion**

- Dr. Gadaleta shared information from the West Essex Vaccination Clinic for school districts with students aged 12 and older, running on 9/10 and 10/10 from 3 pm – 6pm.
- Dr. Gadaleta mentioned the Young Adult Education Volunteers, which addresses a gap year before college.
- Mrs. Haber thanked the EFFEE and PTA for their hard work and programs provided. Mrs. Haber noted that she was so proud and excited for the school year to begin, and again thanked everyone for their efforts.

- Mr. Mehta noted that the President’s report is the President’s opinion and not necessarily that of the entire BOE. Mr. Mehta also noted that if the Governor gives the districts the ability to make their own decisions regarding masking, he would allow parents to vote. Mr. Mehta will also ask to review curriculum and discuss further.
- Mrs. Haber noted that she would base her opinions based on what is best for the students.
- Dr. LoCascio, addressing the Governor and district masking, would ask for community feedback, as the Board acts as an arm of the community, but that it would be a BOE decision.
- Mr. Skopak agreed on community input and the Board acting as an arm of the community.

**XIIV. Meeting Open for Public Comment**

- Dr. Orsini stated that he could possibly have covid testing kits donated to the district.
- Mrs. Skopak spoke on behalf of the PTA. They are happy to be back and assisting in any way they can in the school. Mrs. Skopak asked for the BOE assistance when asking volunteers for vaccination status.
- Mrs. Dioguardi agreed with Mrs. Skopak’s concern with asking volunteers for vaccination status. Mrs. Dioguardi asked what science and data is the BOE using in their decision making process, and she would like for parent input. Mrs. Dioguardi also asked what is EFS doing to fight the mandates of the Governor.
- Dr. Orsini noted that masking in schools is following the Governor’s mandate. He agrees to discussion if the mandate is uplifted.
  - Dr. LoCascio noted he believes in the feedback of the community if we do get to that point.
- Mrs. Steiner asked about the number of unvaccinated staff, and if there are any concerns about children’s safety.
- Mr. Toth noted that companies to come out and test staff are not cheap. Mr. Toth also asked about the teachers’ contract.
- Mr. Lella noted that all public comments are appreciated and have been heard by the Board of Education and Dr. Gadaleta, and will be made part of meeting minutes. Mr. Lella thanked the public for their participation.

**XIV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session**

At 8:41 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss 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

**XV. Adjournment**

At 9:39 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next meeting will held on **Wednesday, September 15, 2021** at 7:30 P.M. in the gymnasium.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary