

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 9, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Board President, Mrs. Kris Huegel, at 7:32 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 31 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 – 7:32 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; and Mr. Steven J. Lella, Business Administrator/Board Secretary and 42 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-

Thank you for joining us tonight. The last six months have been very different from what we are used to, but we are excited that the new school year is finally here. Essex Fells School is ready to teach our children with the integrity our community rightfully expects, both at school and at home.

I am going to start with a brief summary of the 2 plans our Administration has put together for learning this year.

Our children have the option to engage in instruction in-person in their EFS classrooms, or remotely at home.

The in-person option offers students a 5 day a week plan, with a staggered schedule. In the event, we need to pivot to virtual instruction at any time throughout the school year, our staff is working throughout the month of September to fine tune an EFS Remote plan that will be used if necessary. Our remote plan will have the same thought, detail and quality our reopening plan offers.

The Administration created this plan by utilizing guidance from the Governor's Road to Restart and Recovery Plan, and collecting input from the Reopening Committee, the Board of Education, teacher and parent survey responses, and public feedback at Board meetings.

The EFS Remote plan is based on the Administration's determination of best practice from the spring, survey responses and guidance from the Department of Education. The teachers are currently receiving professional development and will be working with the kids to get them ready, as well as providing instructions for parents in the form of a Back to Remote Learning

Video. At the current time, it is the anticipation that after 4 weeks the school day will go to a full day session. That being said, there is also the possibility that it goes fully remote in the event the situation warrants it.

For our EFS families that have elected an exclusively remote learning option, our school has selected Educere, an online learning platform, for program delivery. This program is currently under review and any changes will be announced as soon as possible. Please note we always welcome feedback and input. After tonight's board meeting, any changes and or modifications to the program will be shared with the remote learning community.

As always, we thank everyone for their continued support. As we continue to embark on this new and evolving journey, we ask that you remain respectful and know that we are all on the same team.

Now it is time to recognize everyone that has been part of the reopening process. Reopening the buildings safely and providing an additional remote plan would not be possible without an incredible amount of hard work by many people.

First and foremost, we would like to thank Mrs. Gadaleta. She assisted the teachers, parents and students in pivoting to an unexpected virtual learning environment, implemented virtual summer school and collaborated with the Reopening Committee, Health Department, Board of Education, surrounding districts, teachers and parents to put together the best plan possible for our district. She has been inclusive, transparent and flexible. The challenges faced appeared insurmountable, yet she worked to find solutions, adapt to the situation at hand, and create a plan for both in-person and remote learning. We cannot thank her enough for her dedication, perseverance and leadership.

Thank you to Mr. Lella, Mrs. Gadaleta and the PTA for getting the PPE and sanitizing equipment necessary for reopening.

Mr. Adi, Ms. Lucy and Mr. Santiago have been working tirelessly since the day the children left to keep the buildings running, adapt the classrooms, install safety equipment and implement additional sanitation protocols. We are extremely grateful for Mr. Adi and his team.

Thank you to Mrs. Evangelista, Mrs. Leggett, the Reopening Committee, school staff and teachers, parents, the Foundation, the PTA, Mayor Ed Davis, the Essex Fells Police Department, our school physician Dr. Michelle Nitti and our attorney Stephen Fogarty for all of their input, guidance and hard work.

Thank you to the PTA and Foundation for your willingness to bridge any budget gap caused by the pandemic.

Last, but not least, thank you to my fellow Board members for taking calls, answering emails and attending special meetings this spring and summer. I am honored to be able to work closely on the Board with Mrs. Gadaleta, Mr. Lella and each of you.

The Board is grateful to the entire Essex Fells School community for coming together for the children during these challenging times. The dedication and commitment we have witnessed from all of you is a testament to the principle that if we work together to find solutions, we can overcome anything. We look forward to another successful year here at Essex Fells School.

VI. Superintendent's Report

- Mrs. Gadaleta stated what a great pleasure it is that Essex Fells School has re-opened for the 2020-21 School Year. All of the planning to open has paid off. The staggered drop off and pick up has worked well and Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the PTA, volunteers and parents. Mrs. Gadaleta noted the kids seem so happy to be back in school and are adapting to the safety protocols in place. Student assessments are beginning as well. Mrs. Gadaleta applauded the teachers for being adaptable and patient. Mrs. Gadaleta noted the big changes with the 5th and 6th grade classroom setups, utilizing the media center and gymnasium. Mrs. Gadaleta reiterated how pleased she was with the re-opening, thanked the PTA for the Welcome Back balloon arch and what a pleasure it was to be back.
- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that Back to School Night would be virtual.
- Mrs. Gadaleta provided an update on the remote learning program. She is working with 13 families who have expressed displeasure in the Educere program and is working to address deficiencies so everyone receives an appropriate education.

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 following substitutes for the 2020-2021 school year, at \$95/day-teachers and \$200/day-nurses, pending the usual criminal history and background check for new hires*:

Rebecca Santin	Teacher
Joann Barker	Nurse
Kristie Heimerle *	Nurse
Barbara Wertz *	Nurse

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

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

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

PI648.02 Remote Learning Options for Families (New)

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

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

3. **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): Tracie Wieczorek
 Event: Wilson Reading System Level 1 Certification
 Location: Virtually – The Banyon School
 Date: Ongoing 2020-2021 School Year
 Cost: \$2,299.00

Staff Member(s): Lee Ann Smith
 Event: SpEd Round Table
 Location: West Orange BOE and Virtual
 Date: 9/22/20, 10/20/20, 11/24/20 12/15/20, 1/26/21, 2/23/21,
 3/23/21, 4/27/21, 5/25/21, 6/15/21
 Cost: \$0

Staff Member(s): Jackie Castellano
 Event: NJECC Monthly Meeting Dates
 Location: MSU In-Person/Virtual
 Date: 9/18/20, 10/16/20, 11/20/20 12/11/20, 1/22/21, 2/26/21,
 3/9-11/21 (Annual Tech Conference), 4/16/21, 5/21/21,

6/10/21 (District EdTech Showcase)
Cost: \$0

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

4. **RESOLVED** that the Board of Education accepts and approves, as recommended by the Superintendent, the thank you the Marsh Family for providing the gridding of the fields.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Buccino

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

VIII. Buildings & Grounds

- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked Adi and the custodial staff for the setting up the buildings to open.
- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the Marsh family for gridding the field to allow for outside social distancing.
- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the PTA for 6 additional tents from the PTA which will be used for outdoor instruction.
- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the EFPD Chief and Captain for increasing patrols throughout the day while the children are utilizing the outside spaces.
- Mrs. Gadaleta again thanked everyone involved with the Essex Fells School reopening.

IX. Curriculum & Instruction

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that the teachers were utilizing the PM sessions to prepare for remote learning in the event it is needed.
- Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the Foundation for setting up the All School Assembly Zoom on September 21st.

X. Finance

- None

XI. Policy

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that Policy would be on the next BOE agenda for approval.

XII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

XIII. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta provided an update on the Tiny Treasure's program. The plan was due to low enrollment TT would decide at the end of the month if they will continue the program. At this time with no families enrolled they will re-visit in October.

XIV. Meeting Open for Public Comment

- Mrs. Lucy DeStefano thanked everyone for their efforts regarding reopening. Her son has been coming home each day very happy. She appreciates all the effort involved.
- Mrs. D'Avella thanked everyone for the efforts and noted how nice it was to see the kids happy. She also noted that in 1994 the Foundation assisted with funding due to district budget cuts due to reductions in aid and that they would be available to assist again if needed.

XV. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 7:53 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss the remote learning program. 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: 5

Nays: 0

XVI. Adjournment

At 9:25 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** will Held remotely on **September 23, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.**

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

