

Mercer County Park Commission
Remote Public Meeting Protocol for Local Public Bodies N.J.A.C. 5:39-1

A. Remote Public Meeting Protocol for Local Public Bodies N.J.A.C. 5:39-1

1. In-person public meetings remain the default during a declared emergency and may be utilized as applicable in the best interest of the public to provide access to public meetings of the Governing Body. Room capacity restrictions pursuant to Federal and/or State guidelines shall be followed for in-person meetings. A hybrid public meeting model shall be employed as applicable.
2. In addition to physical access to public meetings, various virtual platforms like Zoom, WebEx, Teams, YouTube and Facebook Live can be the two (2) electronic communication platforms used for the public's remote access options for public meetings.
3. The virtual-meeting model, utilizing online communication platforms, shall be made available during a declared emergency and as applicable for any Mercer County Park Commission public meeting; to provide many opportunities for the public's participation in the Mercer County Park Commission's local government business without physical attendance.

B. Notice of Meetings

1. Public meetings of the Mercer County Park Commission shall be conducted in-person or remotely, as applicable, in the best interest of the public for participation in the Mercer County Park Commission's local government business. Virtual meetings, in addition to the Meeting Notices published in the Trenton Times and Trentonian Newspapers, shall have supplemental meeting notices, which include clear and concise instructions for accessing the meetings remotely; means for making public comment, and where relevant documents, if any, may be found advertised. Said information may be found by accessing the following:
 - a. The Mercer County Park Commission's website:
<https://www.mercercountyparks.org/#!/about/meeting-schedule>;
 - b. The Mercer County Website:
<http://www.mercercounty.org/departments/public-information/public-notices>;
 - c. Sent to all who request copies; which are subject to change at: 609-303-0703 or via Hmauro@mercercounty.org

C. Technology & Procedural Matters

1. **Remote Meeting Platform**
 - a. Various electronic communication platforms like Zoom, shall be available for every public meeting. The access phone number and computer link for the specified meeting shall be available, at a minimum of three (3) Business Days prior to the public meeting.

- b. Members of the public attending the meeting remotely may make public comment virtually during the meeting. Comments made or sent via the virtual platform, or by email will be accepted and will be made part of the official meeting record/minutes.

2. Public Comments Submitted Prior to Meeting

- a. The public may submit questions or comments via e-mail to: Hmauro@mercercounty.org, or via , Regular Mail or Certified Mail to the attention of: Heather Mauro, Executive Secretary, 197 Blackwell Road, Pennington, NJ 08534; no later than 4:00 pm on the day of the scheduled Park Commission meeting.
- b. Previously submitted public comment shall be read aloud and addressed during the public meeting that will be heard by all remote participants and the public.
- c. A three (3) minute time limit will be placed on the reading of each written comment. Each comment will be read from the beginning until the time limit is reached. The Park Commission may pass over duplicate written comments; however, each duplicate comment will be noted for the meeting record.

3. Public Comments & Conduct from Remote Participants

- a. Members of the Public are encouraged to address the Public Body with any questions or statements pertinent to Meeting Agenda Items. Members of the public shall be permitted to address the Public Body regarding Meeting Agenda items once during the public comment period of the Public Meeting.
- b. All public comment shall be a maximum of three (3) minutes in length to provide for adequate time allowance for all members of the public to address the Public Body; and to maintain overall order for the duration of the meeting.
- c. Procedures and requirements for making public comment, along with an explanation of the audio muting function of the virtual platform being used, will be announced by the Commission Chair at the beginning of the remote public meeting. The Commission's Chair will facilitate a dialogue with all commenters to the extent permitted by virtual technology.
- d. The Commission Chair shall engage the virtual meeting mute function until such time for public comments. All remote participants shall remain muted until the public comment period indicated on the meeting agenda.
- e. The Commission Chair shall manage the remote participants' comments order that they are received. Remote participants shall be unmuted and asked to state his/her first and last name, organization (if applicable) and Municipality of origin before making comment; which shall be entered into the formal meeting record.

- f. If a member of the public becomes disruptive during a remote public meeting, including during any period for public comment, the Commission Chair shall mute or continue muting the disruptive member of the public.
- g. The Commission Chair shall provide a verbal warning to the disruptive member of the public that continued disruptive conduct may result in their being prevented from speaking during the remote public meeting or removed from the remote public meeting.
- h. Disruptive conduct shall include: Sustained inappropriate behaviors such as, but not necessarily limited to, shouting, interruption, and use of profanity.
- i. Time permitting, the disruptive individual shall be allowed to speak after all other members of the public have been given the opportunity to speak. Should the individual remain disruptive, the individual may be muted or kept on mute for the remainder of the remote public meeting; or removed from the remote public meeting, as applicable.

4. Presentations or Documents

- a. All documents; including the Meeting Agenda, Draft Meeting Minutes and Remote Meeting Instructions, shall made available to the public three (3) business days prior to the scheduled meeting date at the following:
 - I. On the Mercer County Park Commission's website:
<https://www.mercercountyparks.org/#!/about/meeting-schedule;>
 - II. On the Mercer County Website:
<http://www.mercercounty.org/departments/public-information/public-notices;>
 - III. Sent to all who request copies; which are subject to change at 609-303-0703 or via Hmauro@mercercounty.org.