

Mercer County Park Commission Public Comment Policy Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, [N.J.S.A. 10:4-12]

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Pursuant to provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act [N.J.S.A.10:4-12], for all Board Meetings, the Mercer County Park Commission is entitled to permit, regulate or prohibit public participation in its public meetings.

THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION provides a public comment period during the public comment portion of its monthly meeting Agenda. The Mercer County Park Commission provides said public comment period to allow members of the public to express themselves regarding matters pertaining to the Governing Body. Public participation and public comment shall be governed by the following policies in the direct interest of:

1. Providing members of the public an equal interval of time to express themselves regarding matters pertaining to the Governing Body.
2. Maintaining overall order during the duration of the meeting.

A. Mercer County Park Commission Public Comment Policy:

1. Each member of the public who wishes to speak during the public comment period shall give the speaker's full name, organization (if applicable) and Municipality of residence. Speakers may provide related documents, printed comments, or materials in-person as applicable during the public comment period, or via email to: Hmauro@mercercounty.org.
2. Each speaker will be provided a maximum of three (3) minutes to speak and should limit comments to matters pertaining to the Governing Body and applicable meeting Agenda.
3. The Commission's Meeting Chair; and/or Counsel will direct the speaker to conclude their remarks once the speaker's time has expired.
4. A speaker may not request to speak more than once during the same public comment period.
5. No time may be yielded to a speaker by another speaker. Groups are asked to select a spokesperson to speak on their behalf.
6. Speakers will be acknowledged by the Chair to speak in the order in which they request to speak. In-person speakers are asked to address the Board from the podium provided. All speakers are asked to begin their remarks by stating their first and last name, organization (if applicable) and Municipality of residence; to be placed in the official meeting record.

7. Board Members are not obligated to answer impromptu questions or remarks from members of the public during the public comment period; or throughout the duration of the meeting. Speakers should expect the Board to refrain from engaging in a dialogue, except to the extent necessary to clarify the speaker's position.
8. The allotted Three (3) Minute time period for speaking from the podium, or during a remote platform, is the method to address the Board during the public comment period. The Board shall not address questions or comments called out from the audience.
9. Absent exceptional and or unforeseeable circumstances, as determined and directed by Counsel, the Board shall not take action on an item presented during the public comment period. When appropriate, the Board may refer inquiries and items brought up during the public comment period to applicable Administrative staff.
10. Speakers and members of the public shall at all times maintain proper decorum and shall make their comments in a civil manner. Personal attacks, obscenity, derogatory and/or slanderous remarks shall not be tolerated.
11. Speakers shall not discuss matters regarding the candidacy of any person seeking public office, including the candidacy of the person addressing the Board.
12. Members of the press are asked to inform the Governing Body in advance of their attendance at meetings via email to Hmauro@mercercounty.org, when possible; and will be asked to provide their first and last name, organization and Municipality of residence.
13. If applicable, a designated area will be reserved for cameras and/or equipment, given space limitations, if the area is already occupied and the room is full, no further cameras and/or equipment shall be permitted.
14. If there is a special concern regarding a Resolution on the Agenda, or if a group anticipates a number of speakers to comment on different aspects of a Resolution, and there is an overriding need to be heard prior to the Commission's consideration of a matter, kindly notify the MCPC and an accommodation may be made to the Comment scheduling.
15. For in-person meetings, the board room shall open to the public approximately fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the meeting. For virtual meetings, the board room shall open to the public at approximately 5:30 pm; or the meeting time advertised; which is subject to change.

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. In addition to the Meeting Notices published in the Trenton Times and Trentonian Newspapers, 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:
 - a. On the Mercer County Park Commission's website:
<https://www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/explore-mcpc/governance>
 - b. Sent to all who requested copies; which are subject to change; at 609-303-0703 or via Hmauro@mercercounty.org.