

NOTICE

MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT, CHAPTER 231, P.L. 1975

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION WILL HOLD THEIR JULY PUBLIC MEETING (ANNUAL MEETING) ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM AT THE HUNT BARN, 197 BLACKWELL ROAD, PENNINGTON, NEW JERSEY 08534

THE COMMISSION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION REGARDING THE DISCLOSURE OF MATERIALS, REPORTS, AND RECORDS OF PERSONNEL, IN PARTICULAR, DISCLOSURE AND DISSEMINATION OF MATERIALS OF PUBLIC CONCERN, INVESTIGATIONS, AND MATTERS INVOLVING CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF LAW

AGENDA

➤ **INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

Counsel formally introduced and welcomed newly appointed Mercer County Park Commission Board Members, Mr. Andrew Koontz and Ms. Eleanor Horne.

➤ **ROLL CALL:**

The following Commissioners answered the Roll Call of the Secretary:

- Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz.

The following Commissioners were absent:

- Smith.

➤ **CALL TO ORDER:**

- Commissioner Forrester called the July 26, 2023 meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order at 5:44 pm at the Hunt Barn Conference Room, 2nd Floor, Pennington, New Jersey 08534.

➤ **FLAG SALUTE:**

- Commissioner Forrester led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Salute to the Flag.

➤ **NOTICE OF MEETING:**

In accordance with the Sunshine Law (Open Public Meetings Act Chapter 231, P.L. 1975), adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in that notification was given as follows: emailed to the Times, Trentonian, and posted to the Mercer County Website and Mercer County Park Commission Website; and sent via email blast through the County of Mercer and Mercer County Park Commission notification system.

➤ **APPROVAL OF REGULAR MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 28, 2023 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION ANNUAL MEETING:**

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Davis, by voice vote, the June 28, 2023 Regular Mercer County Park Commission Annual Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** Gardner. **Absent:** Smith.

➤ **APPROVAL OF JULY 2023 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION BILLS:**

Commissioner Davis requested thanked the Executive Director for providing a reference key for account code detail.

Commissioner Davis requested clarification regarding an account listed in the July Bills Report.

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Davis, by voice vote, the July 2023 bills were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** none. **Absent:** Smith.

➤ **JUNE 2023 REVENUE REPORT (Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson, provided a synopsis of the June 2023 Park Commission Revenue Report)**

Executive Director Watson stated that the Park Commission's overall revenue is up 12% in comparison of the previous year.

Commissioner Davis thanked staff for a successful LEAD Festival Event .

Commissioner Koontz asked if the Hopewell Valley Pool Revenue is broken out separately.

Executive Director Watson requested Chief of Finance and Accounts, Nanci Lambert to provide clarification.

Chief of Finance and Accounts, Nanci Lambert, provided Commissioner Koontz the location of the separate revenue item listed on the Monthly Revenue Reports.

- On Motion by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Schulz, by voice vote, the June 2023 Park Commission Revenue Reports were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** none. **Absent:** Smith.

- **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH** *(Presented by Executive Director Aaron T. Watson; nominated by Director of Environmental Education, Kelly Rypkema)*

This month's Employee of the Month is Park Naturalist, Brianna Tiggett. Ms. Tiggett began her employment with the Park Commission in May of 2022.

Director Rypkema provided remarks regarding Ms. Tiggett's accomplishments during her time with the Park Commission, including: Implementation of a new program series, leading Seniors' Day, the Youth Art League and Field Trips.

- **COMMUNICATIONS** *(Presented by Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson):*
 - **C-1 – ON-LINE NEWS ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTING CAPITAL CITY FARM, AND FARMER, WALTER ROBERTS**
 - **C-2 – JULY SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE:**
 - This month we heavily posted for our National Act Country Concert and the kick off of our 2023 Concert Series.
 - Weekly Happy Hour Events at the Boathouse, Mountainview and Princeton Country Club have also been posting.
 - We had another successful on-line Photo Contest for Summer – All of the winning photos will be in the Park Commission's Annual Report.
 - In the upcoming month, we will be working with our facilities to engage followers with a weekly interactive post about each facility location.
 - **C-3 – ON-LINE ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW HIGHLIGHTING THE NATIONAL ACT CONCERT HOSTED BY THE PARK COMMISSION AT THE MERCER COUNTY PARK FESTIVAL GROUNDS**
- **OLD BUSINESS:** *(Presented by Deputy Director, Joe Pizza)*
 - **In-House Maintenance Operations:**
 - In-house Masons updated the concrete patios at Strawberry Hill Mansion at Baldpate Mountain.
 - In-House Park Maintenance Staff re-stripped parking lots in the West Picnic Area of the Mercer County Park.
In-House Plumbing Staff has been performing potable well maintenance, as needed throughout the Parks.
 - **Golf Operations:**
 - Courses have been experiencing some extreme weather events this month.
 - Summer Youth Golf camp has concluded; with sixty-five (65) youth participants that attended this year's program.
 - **Capital Projects:**
 - Hopewell Valley Golf Course Pool has seen great attendance from patrons recorded across all municipalities and beyond.
 - Stabilization of the Canal House property has commenced, and is on-schedule.
 - Rosedale Restroom Upgrades are anticipated to complete late-September.

Commissioner Davis asked if there was a direct transit access to the Hopewell Valley Pool.

Executive Director Watson replied that NJ transit is a separate government entity, and changes to routes and access requires a specific process, as determined by their Agency.

Commissioner Schulz asked if the Hopewell Valley Pool accommodates booking of parties within its menu of services.

Executive Director Watson replied, yes, parties are offered within the service menu for the Pool.

Commissioner Koontz introduced a discussion regarding a poignant article, entitled, "Why America Stopped Building Public Pools", regarding the evolution of public pools and the communities they serve. Commissioner Koontz provided a link to the article to the Board and Executive Staff.

Commissioner Schulz added the YMCA Organization is also a valuable resource for current pool access and swim responsibility standards.

Commissioner Davis discussed a documentary related to the above-named article regarding equity and public pools, entitled, Drowning in Silence. Commissioner Davis provided a link to the article to the Board and Executive Staff.

Commissioner Davis stated that discussions for establishing policy postings regarding, "safety at the Moores Station Quarry" would be beneficial as the quarry is developed in the coming year(s).

Commissioner Gardner asked if we have Certified staff to promote and teach pool safety.

Deputy Director Pizza replied that our Pool Manager is a Certified Pool Operator as a State requirement of Public Pool Operations, and all safety protocols and lifeguard staff are trained and certified by the American Red Cross.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

– RESOLUTIONS

- R-1 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AID/SHELTER AGREEMENT WITH EWING PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO UTILIZE CERTAIN FACILITIES OF THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING AID/SHELTER IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, RESULTING IN THE MANDATORY EVACUATION OF A SCHOOL WITHIN THE DISTRICT. PERIOD: 2023/2024 ACADEMIC SCHOOL YEAR. PARK COMMISSION COST: \$0.00

Commissioner Schulz asked which facility in the Park Commission would be utilized under the terms of the Agreement with Ewing Township Public Schools.

Executive Director Watson replied that the facility would be the Mountain View Country Club.

Commissioner Davis asked if the Ewing Schools would be responsible for transportation under the terms of the Agreement.

Executive Director Watson replied that the Ewing Schools would be responsible for transportation under the terms of the Agreement.

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz, seconded by Commissioner Forrester.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** none. **Absent:** Smith.

R-2 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH STANTEC CONSULTING SERVICES, (AWARDED THROUGH A NON-FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS) FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING DESIGN, PERMITTING AND CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES FOR TRENTON WHARF PARK IMPROVEMENTS, CITY OF TRENTON. PERIOD: AUGUST 1, 2023 THROUGH COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT. AMOUNT: \$50,150.00

- On Motion by Commissioner Davis, seconded by Commissioner Martinez.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** none. **Absent:** Smith.

Commissioner Mooij requested a synopsis regarding which component of the project is being advanced to the Board.

Executive Director Watson provided a synopsis to date of the project partnership with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), City of Trenton and County/Park Commission. Executive Director Watson stated that Consultant, Stantec, as the park improvements designer, under this Contract, would provide construction administration services with NJDOT Contractor for the County's park improvement component of the Project.

Commissioner's Gardner and Koontz asked if Stantec will be managing the project during construction.

Executive Director Watson responded that Stantec will be managing project construction.

Commissioner Davis asked to be sent the project's design plan.

Commissioner Martinez asked the approximate size of the park area.

Superintendent Cucchi responded that the approximate size is twenty-nine (29) Acres.

Commissioner Schulz commented that bringing back access to this park area within our Park System is great and will be endearing to many local residents who have a millennia of history using this area for fishing and recreation in the City of Trenton.

R-3 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING FOR CONCESSIONAIRE GOLF HANDICAP AND INFORMATION NETWORK SERVICES FOR MERCER COUNTY GOLF COURSE FACILITIES

Commissioner Forrester requested some further detail regarding the service

Assistant Golf Manager, Brian Zarzecki stated that golf handicap services in the current industry are deemed a premium industry standard service. Providing a certified handicap service enhances a golfer's experience and provides benefits when playing in tournaments and more.

Commissioner Davis asked if this service is currently included in the membership fees.

Assistant Golf Manager Zarzecki replied that handicap services are currently separate from golf memberships, with fees ranging from \$30-\$40 per season.

Deputy Director, Joe Pizza stated that this service is a revenue-generating service for the Park Commission.

Commissioner Davis asked if the cost for services is annual or seasonal.

Assistant Golf Manager Zarzecki replied that services are purchased by Patrons seasonally.

Commissioner Forrester asked the current cost to Park Commission to provide the service.

Commissioner Schulz stated that the Park Commission has been providing GHIN Handicap Services to our patrons, but has exceeded Procurement thresholds that require a Competitive Contract to be advertised competitively.

- On Motion by Commissioner Gardner, seconded by Commissioner Schulz.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** none. **Absent:** Smith.

➤ **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT** (*Presented by Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson*)

- **GOLF OPERATIONS:**

- This month, Mercer County Golf hosted and sponsored our annual, *Future Champions Tour* event. Youth golf competitions were held at all four courses, children, ages 8 through 18 participated. This annual, low-cost event is designed to support and grow interest in golf. Brian Zarzecki, general manager of Princeton Country Club coordinated this year's event.
- On July 7-9, Mercer Oaks hosted the *Senior Better Ball* event with over sixty (60) Senior golfers in participation.

- **TENNIS OPERATIONS:**

- **Ed Krass Rockin' Roll College Tennis Exposure Camp** - On July 22-23, Ed Krass, former Assistant Tennis Coach for Harvard University and Clemson University, hosted his camp at our Tennis Facility as one (1) of several locations he travels to each summer to provide professional tennis instruction.

- **RECREATION AND EVENTS:**

- **Revenue** – Recreation revenue is up 23% from this month compared with last year. This is largely attributed to baseball and soccer field rentals.

- **Recent Events:**

- LEAD Festival - On July 2-9 the LEAD Carnival was held at the Festival Grounds. The nine (9) Day event saw approximately 20k ppl in attendance.
 - 8,000 cars parked for the event
 - 2,000 cars parked on July 4 alone

- NJ State Triathlon - On July 15-16: The New Jersey State Triathlon was held on Lake Mercer, over 2,000 athletes participated. The event drew over 4,000 spectators.

- Concert @ MCP Festival Grounds - On July 21, we hosted, *Frontiers, the Ultimate Journey Tribute Band*; with 1,115 attendees.

- Concert @ Millyard Park – On July 22, we hosted, *Coast 2 Coast*. Attendance was free to the public.

- **Movie Nights** - Our 2023 Movie Nights are scheduled to begin on August 5, with the movie, *Vivo*, at South Riverwalk Park. All movie nights are free to attend.

- **Campsites and Picnic Rentals** continue to be popular amenities through the season with:
 - 263 Rentals and \$7,321 in revenue
 - 422 Picnic Grounds Rentals and \$105,930 in revenue

- **Happy Hour is currently being offered at:**

- Princeton Country Club every Tuesday and Friday
- Boathouse at Mercer County Park every Thursday
- Mt. View Golf Course every Friday

- **MARKETING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

- **Park Commission Presentations:**

- On July 31, at the request of the Lawrence Branch of the Mercer County Library system, our Community Outreach Director is scheduled to give a presentation about Park Commission events and facilities.
- On August 9th, we are tentatively scheduled to provide a presentation to Trenton Seniors at the, *Sam Naples Center*.

- **Girl Scout Gold Award Project** – A Princeton-area high school student has been working with Stewardship on her Girl Scout, *Gold Award Project*. She constructed forty (40) feet of boardwalk that was installed to span wet areas behind Willow Pond at Mercer Meadows.

- **STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT:**
 - o **Girl Scout Gold Award Project** – A Princeton-area high school student has been working with Stewardship on her Girl Scout, *Gold Award Project*. She constructed forty (40) feet of boardwalk that was installed to span wet areas behind Willow Pond at Mercer Meadows.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:**
 - o **Summer Field Trips:**
 - This year’s Summer Field Trips Programs are aimed at helping kids gain confidence and experiences in the outdoors. Currently, we are at capacity for our summer field trip bookings.
 - The following organizations are attending programs with the help of funding provided by the *Kiwanis Club Camp Fund*: CYO, Foundation Academy, and Homefront.

- **HOWELL FARM:**
 - o **Event Partnerships** - Preparations continue for the farm’s collaboration with Capital City Farm in the Puerto Rican Festival event on August 6; and the annual 4-H Fair at Howell Farm this weekend. In September, Howell Farm will provide activities at an event hosted by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) at the Watson House.

- **CAPITAL CITY URBAN FARM:**
 - o **Current Harvest** - In the last several weeks, more than 140 pounds of CCF vegetables and herbs were harvested and distributed during weekday and Saturday farm markets open to the public.

- **MERCER COUNTY STABLES:**
 - o **HAY Summer Camp Field Trips** – This month, the Stables hosted the first of two (2) HAY Camp Field Trips. Morning and afternoon camps sessions provided an educational presentation, followed by hands-on grooming and tacking, and horse riding. Weather permitting, a guided nature hike around the Stables is also offered to participants.

- **WILDLIFE CENTER:**
 - o **Eagle nest updates:**
 - **Mercer Meadows (Pennington)** – Both eaglets have successfully fledged the nest but are still being fed and cared for by the parents. It will be a few months before the fledglings venture on their own.
 - **Mercer Oaks Golf Course** – After ten weeks since hatching, the single nestling bald eagle at the Mercer Oaks nest is now fully grown and has begun to fledge.

- **PUBLIC SESSION:**
 - The Mercer County Park Commission welcomes the public’s participation and comments. If you wish to participate in the public comment section of our meeting you may do so via the Zoom messaging/chat feature or by the, “hand-raising” feature, where you will be prompted to speak to provide your public comment.

 - The rules and guidelines for public comment may be found on the Commission’s website. Please be aware that individuals are limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes during their comment. However, the Commission may, at its option, extend time for certain individuals during the public comment period.

- Each member of the public who wishes to speak during the public comment period shall give the speaker's full name, organization name (if applicable) and Municipality of Residence.
- Individuals may provide comments, or materials, by regular mail to the Mercer County Park Commission headquarters or via email to Hmauro@mercercounty.org.
- **Public Comment:**
 - o Elyssa Malakoff, Borough of Pennington.
 - o Kris Grudt, Executive Director, Princeton National Rowing Association, Borough of Hightstown.

Commissioner Schulz asked if our website has a link to provide public comment and inquiry.

Executive Director Watson replied that there is a main, "Park Commission email inquiry" for the public to access, along with contact information for submission of public inquiry to the Executive Secretary.

➤ **AUGUST 30, 2023 PARK COMMISSION MEETING:**

- Hunt Barn Conference Room, 197 Blackwell Road, Pennington, New Jersey 08534, or to be determined at a revised location, publicly advertised by the Park Commission.

➤ **ADJOURNMENT:**

- On motion by Commissioner Forrester and seconded by Commissioner Gardner, by affirmative voice vote, Adjournment took place at 6:40 pm.

Heather B. Mauro

Heather B. Mauro

Executive Secretary

Secretary to the Board

Mercer County Park Commission

