

## 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 AUGUST PUBLIC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2023; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; IN THE CLUBHOUSE FACILITY OF THE HOPEWELL VALLEY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, 114 PENNINGTON-HOPEWELL ROAD, HOPEWELL, NEW JERSEY 08525

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, MATTERS INVOLVING CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF LAW

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### AGENDA

➤ **ROLL CALL:**

**The following Commissioners answered the Roll Call of the Secretary:**

- Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez Schulz and Smith.
- Commissioner Davis joined the meeting at 5:35pm

**The following Commissioners were absent:**

- Mooij.

➤ **CALL TO ORDER:**

- Commissioner Forrester called the August 30, 2023 meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order at 5:00 pm at the Hopewell Valley Golf and Country Club, 114 Pennington-Hopewell Road 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 JULY 26, 2023 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION MEETING:**

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by voice vote, the July 26, 2023 Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Gardner, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Schulz and Smith. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij.

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

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

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

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

*Commissioner Schulz asked is there has been a variance in concert revenue*

*Executive Director Watson replied that the revision to \$5 entry for the concert series has been successful.*

*Commissioner Koontz asked if the significant increase in revenue for the Hopewell Valley Golf Club and Hopewell Valley Pool is in-line with original projections.*

*Executive Director Watson replied that the current numbers are ahead of original projections, specifically for the pool since we offered a family pass option this year.*

*Commissioner Koontz commented that overall, FY2023 has been a good year for Golf.*

➤ **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION: (Presented by Executive Director A. Watson; nominated by Director of Howell Farm, P. Watson)**

- This month's Employee recognition is for the retirement of Howell Farm Coordinator, Ms. Kim Daly. Beginning in 1985, Ms. Daly volunteered for the Howell Farm, first, as a toddler-co-op parent in our Hatchery program, then as a teacher in the same program. From 2000 through 2019, Ms. Daly served as a seasonal coordinator, and has served in a full-time capacity from 2019 to present.

*Chair Forrester and Commissioner Smith thanked Ms. Daly for her years of service.*

- **COMMUNICATIONS (Presented by Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson):**
  - C-1 – “CAPITAL CITY FARM BLOSSOMS UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP”.
  - C-2 – “MCPC TAKES NATURE BASED APPROACH TO NEW PARKING LOT”
  - C-3 – AUGUST SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE:
  
- **OLD BUSINESS: (Presented by Deputy Director, Joe Pizza)**
  - **In-House Operations:**
    - Park Maintenance staff has been busy with maintenance of Campgrounds, Concerts and events and Picnic Areas throughout the parks.
    - In-House Carpenters provided repair to the Trenton Thunder Stadium Press Box.
    - In-House Masons paved areas of Millyard Park.
    - In-House Painters updated the Mercer Oaks Bridal Suite.
    - The Pool and Marina will close for the season on Labor Day.
  
  - **Golf Operations:**
    - All courses will be Aerated over the next several weeks.
    - Approximately seventy (70) dead Ash Trees were removed at Princeton Country Club
    - Golf Outings remain busy through Mid-October.
  
  - **Capital Projects:**
    - Stabilization of the Canal House property is almost substantially complete and will be used with the operations at the Moores Station Quarry.
    - Rosedale Restroom Upgrades 60% Complete and are anticipated to complete late-September.
    - Remediation requirements, as part of the Reclamation Plan, have been satisfied by Trap Rock Industries at the Moores Station Quarry site. Pending a final inspection, the Park Commission is anticipated to take possession of the site in the coming months.
  
- **NEW BUSINESS:**
  - RESOLUTIONS
- R-1 AMEND RESOLUTION PC2022-94, ADOPTED DECEMBER 14, 2022 AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES AN AMENDMENT (AMENDMENT NO. 3) TO THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION 2023 FACILITY RATES AND FEES SCHEDULE. ‘AMEND RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH FACILITY RATES AND FEES FOR 2023 ROPES COURSE PROGRAMMING WITHIN THE MERCER COUNTY PARK’; EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2023. ALL OTHER RATES AND FEES REMAIN THE SAME

*Commissioner Gardner asked for a review of the breakdown of fees*

*Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott, provided a detailed review of the current fee structure for the upcoming 2023 offerings; with research gathered from ranges of fees offered for similar services in Essex County and other similar programs within New Jersey. Additionally, Mr. McDermott indicated that the current fee structure is subject to revision, once the Park Commission awards a Competitive Contract for 2024+ year offerings.*

*Commissioner Gardner asked for a synopsis of the reservation system in place for the 2023 Ropes Course offerings.*

*Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott, provided a detailed review of the on-line reservation system in place for the 2023 programming offerings.*

*Commissioner Gardner asked how many County Employees will be working at the Ropes Course during operations.*

*Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott replied that two (2) employees are currently scheduled for Ropes Course Operations.*

*Commissioner Gardner asked if the Contracted Vendor will provide a tutorial to Ropes Course participants.*

*Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott, replied that the Contracted Operator, Outward Bound will provide a hands-on tutorial to participants as part of the course programming.*

*Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi responded that Philadelphia Outward Bound is a 501 (c)3 Organization that has options available to explore for fundraising and cost subsidy for programming.*

*Commissioner Gardner asked if participants are required to execute safety waivers and retain documents as per DCA Requirements.*

*Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott, responded that all requirements are met in conditions provided by DCA for their annual inspection and approval of permit to Operate the Course.*

*Commissioner Smith stated that he is familiar with the Contracted Operator, Philadelphia Outward Bound from his previous service to the Juvenile Justice Commission. Additionally, Commissioner Smith indicated that revenue generation is most advantageous with partnerships for schools and private team-building programs.*

*Commissioner Horne asked if the Park Commission performs a Risk Assessment to obtain the cost of insurance in the overall cost of operations.*

*Executive Director Watson responded that all Risk assessment and costs are performed by the County's office of Risk Management/Insurance and Property. Additionally, some liabilities are carried by the Contracted provider.*

*Commissioner Schulz specified that his experience with Philadelphia Outward Bound has found them to be qualified, and that this new park amenity has the potential to expand and be profitable, and the current program is a great starting opportunity, with further economics to clarify with expansion.*

*Commissioner Forrester asked if we will offer a in/out of County Rate in the future.*

*Executive Director Watson responded that all elements will be re-assessed after the first six (6) days of programming are completed for 2023.*

*Commissioner Forrester stated that this is a new market for the Park Commission and a good business opportunity and requested feedback upon the first programming completes.*

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

R-2 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF PINE SHAVINGS FOR THE MERCER COUNTY STABLES FOR THE PERIOD OF THREE (3) MONTHS WITH THE OPTION TO EXTEND THREE (3) MONTHS (AB2023-29B)

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

R-3 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DIVISION OF WATER MONITORING AND STANDARDS, TO PERFORM THE ROLE OF HOST AGENCY FOR THE AMERICORPS NEW JERSEY WATERSHED AMBASSADORS PROGRAM AT THE TULPEHAKING NATURE CENTER FACILITY. PERIOD: SEPTEMBER 8, 2023 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2024. NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DIVISION OF WATER MONITORING AND STANDARDS AMOUNT PAID TO PARK COMMISSION: UP TO, BUT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,000.00

*Commissioner Gardner stated that the Americorps partnership with the NDJEP is a great partnership program.*

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

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

**GOLF OPERATIONS:**

- We continue to have a very busy outing season; golf outing revenue is up 15% over last year. Outing revenue is at \$399,246 through the first week of August.

**TENNIS OPERATIONS:**

- **James E. Cryan Memorial Tennis Tournament** – During the first week of August, the Tennis Center held the 57<sup>th</sup> James E. Cryan Memorial Tennis Tournament. Three-hundred ninety-three (393) players competed across fifteen (15) different divisions. This is among the largest tennis tournaments in the United States.
- **The Stone Age Open** – This year's Stone Age Open tournament was held August 12-17, with a great turnout. Players in the tournament are only permitted to use standard wood tennis racquets or standard pre-1976 metal tennis racquets. The tournament is held in honor of former Park Commission employees, Bill Hughes and Bill Stoner.
- **8/31 Junior Tennis Bus Trip: Net Generation US Open Experience:**
  - o An application submitted by the Mercer County Park Commission Junior Tennis program's application was selected by the USTA National Office to participate in a skills

demonstration using junior tennis equipment, on a show court at the US Open before a marquee match.

- Twenty-four (24) MCPC Junior players of an approved skill level between ages 8-12 years old will travel with their chaperones by bus, from the Mercer County Tennis Center to New York City, under the leadership of Associate Director of Tennis Operations, Devin Rubino. Our Junior players will also have the opportunity to stay and watch matches after their demonstration.
- This is an incredible opportunity for these junior players and a wonderful recognition for the Park Commission, as our facility will be recognized on the stadium's video screen.

### **RECREATION AND EVENTS:**

- **2023 Concert Season** – This year's Concert season has concluded, with approximately 8,000 patrons who attended concerts throughout our Parks.
- **August Events:**
  - **8/26 Polo Classic Wine Festival @ the Festival Grounds** – Hosted by Bent Wine; with 1,300 patrons in attendance and live music performed by Rotimi.
- **Upcoming Events:**
  - **September 3** – Indo-American Fair @ Festival Grounds
  - **September 3** – *Puss and Boots* Movie @ Rosedale Park
  - **September 9** – Fiesta Latina @ the Festival Grounds
  - **September 9** – *Strange World* Movie @ Rosedale Park
  - **September 16** – **Drive In**, *Ghostbusters* Movie @ *Grandparents Grove in MCP*
  - **September 23** – *Jumanji, the Next Level* Movie @ the Festival Grounds

### **MARKETING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

- **10/28 Capital City Farm (CCF) Fall Fest** – Staff are currently coordinating with the East Trenton Collaborative and Puerto Rican Community Center to help promote an upcoming fall festival event.

### **STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT:**

- **2023 Deer Management Program** – 2023 Deer Management Program registration closed August 7, with seventy-nine (79) permit applications received.
- **Prescribed Burning** – Planning for the 2024 prescribed burn season has begun. Stewardship staff are preparing a "Burn Plan" application to New Jersey Forest Fire Service. The plan requests the NJ Forest Fire Service's assistance this year at both Baldpate Mountain and Mercer Meadows.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:**

- **Abbott Marsh Council Meeting** – The Abbott Marsh Council meeting was held earlier this month at the Tulpehaking Nature Center. Kelly Rypkema, Director of Environmental Education, and Mike Long, Director of Stewardship, represented the Park Commission and discussed restoration of the marsh at Roebing. The Friends for Abbott Marshlands led the Council meeting and provided attendees a brief tour of the marsh.

- **NJDEP Commissioner visits Roebing Park** – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Commissioner, Shawn LaTourette, visited Roebing Park to welcome student interns from the NJDEP’s Youth Inclusion Program. He joined the Park Commission and representatives from Princeton Hydro, who introduced the youth to our wetlands restoration efforts in the park.

#### **HOWELL FARM:**

- **104th Annual Mercer County 4H Fair** – Despite extreme heat and evening downpours, this year’s fair drew approximately 5,100 visitors. Attendees experienced 4H animal shows and exhibits, homemade ice cream, hay rides, pony rides, music, magic shows, and a live wheat threshing demonstration by Howell Farm staff.
- **Potato Harvest**– This month, three-hundred five (305) visitors attended the farm’s annual *Potato Harvest*, helping farmers harvest over 1,000 pounds of potatoes for donation to local food pantries.

#### **CAPITAL CITY URBAN FARM:**

- **New Partnership** – Farm Manager, Corinne Gordon is working with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission on providing native plants for street planters on N. Clinton Street, with guidance from the Stewardship Department.
- **Upcoming 9/2 Event** – On Saturday, September 2, two (2) local volunteers, who grew up in Hungary will be preparing and giving out samples of lecsó, a Hungarian dish made with ingredients grown on the farm; including Hungarian peppers whose seeds were donated in the spring.

#### **MERCER COUNTY STABLES**

- **September and October Program Registration** – On-line registration for September and October programs opened on Monday, August 21. All lesson and most Tiny Rider program spots filled within minutes of opening.

#### **WILDLIFE CENTER**

- **Bald Eagle Fledgling** – Our rescued golf course eaglet was released back to her nest area on August 16 after recuperating from an injury at the Wildlife Center. The release went well and she was observed back at the nest the following week.
- **Internship Program** – Eight (8) volunteer college interns completed their twelve (12) week internship program at the Wildlife Center earlier this month. Three (3) of the eight (8) interns are applying to veterinary school this fall.

*Commissioner Forrester stated that this is a new market for the Park Commission and a good business opportunity and requested feedback upon the first programming completes.*

*Commissioner Schulz expressed gratitude for our Park Commission’s Portfolio to include the Abbot Farm, the first historical landmark in the State of New Jersey.*

*Commissioner Smith thanked the Park Commission for the work on the expansion of our Concert series, which has exposed many new people to the offerings of our Park Commission.*

***Commissioner Gardner asked if the Executive Director would provide the Commission with the cost analysis performed for the Ropes Course.***

➤ **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](mailto:Hmauro@mercercounty.org).
- **Public Comment:**
  - o Christine Cardinal, Mercer County Park Commission.

➤ **SEPTEMBER 27, 2023 PARK COMMISSION MEETING:**

- Hopewell Valley Golf and Country Club, Clubhouse Facility, 114 Pennington-Hopewell Road, Hopewell, New Jersey 08525.

➤ **ADJOURNMENT:**

- On motion by Commissioner Gardner and seconded by Commissioner Koontz, by affirmative voice vote, Adjournment took place at 6:35 pm.

Heather B. Mauro

*Heather B. Mauro*

Executive Secretary

Secretary to the Board

Mercer County Park Commission



