

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 SEPTEMBER PUBLIC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; AT TRENTON THUNDER STADIUM, SUITE LEVEL: CAPITAL CITY CLUB; 1 THUNDER ROAD, TRENTON, NJ 08611.

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

AGENDA

➤ **ROLL CALL:**

The following Commissioners answered the Roll Call of the Secretary:

- Davis, Forrester, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Smith.

The following Commissioners were absent:

- Gardner and Schulz.

➤ **CALL TO ORDER:**

- Commissioner Forrester called the September 27, 2023 meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order at 5:08 pm at the Trenton Thunder Stadium, Suite Level: Capital City Club: 1 Thunder Road, Trenton, NJ 08611.

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

- On Motion by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by voice vote, the August 30, 2023 Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Horne, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij and Smith. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Gardner and Schulz.

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

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

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

Commissioner Davis asked if revenue for tennis and pickleball is analyzed separately.

Executive Director Watson responded that separate analysis has not yet been performed, but due to the growing popularity and demand for pickleball, the Park Commission is performing analysis on pickleball to identify future opportunities.

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

➤ **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:** (*Nominated and Presented by Executive Director A. Watson*)

- This month's Employee of the Month is Mr. Shahid Ghaffoor, for work on the Park Commission Audit: Beginning his employment in 1999 as a seasonal employee, Mr. Ghaffoor went on to serve in a full-time capacity as a Sr. Park Manager in 2000; As a systems Analyst in 2002, and has served as a Manager of Information and Processing Systems/Financial Analysis since 2017.

➤ **COMMUNICATIONS** (*Presented by Executive Director, Aaron T. Watson*):

- C-1 – VARIOUS RIVER DAYS EVENT PRESS
- C-2 – SEPTEMBER SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

➤ **OLD BUSINESS:** (*Presented by Deputy Director, Joe Pizza*)

- **In-House Operations:**

- Park Maintenance staff is overseeing contracted services to perform Ash Tree Removal at Hopewell Golf Course and Mountain View Golf Course; along with joint efforts with the Stewardship Department for the re-planting of 200+ at various locations due to loss from both the Hurricane Ida and tornado natural disasters.
- In-House Carpenters are performing updates to the Wildlife Center Outdoor Environment cages and at various locations at the Howell Living History Farm.
- In-House Painters are performing updates at the Skating Rink in preparation for the upcoming season.
- In-house electricians are performing replacements and improvements to electrical systems at the Princeton Country Club that were damaged as a result of the tornado natural disaster.

– **Golf Operations:**

- The annual Employee Golf Outing is scheduled to take place on October 13 at Mercer Oaks. All County employees are eligible to participate.

– **Capital Projects:**

- Stabilization of the Canal House property is substantially complete, pending electrical service confirmation from JCP&L.
- Rosedale Restroom Upgrades remain on-schedule; with substantial completion anticipated within the coming month.

Commissioner Smith asked if the re-planting of trees will apply to the Princeton Country Club Golf Course.

Deputy Director, Joe Pizza confirmed that Princeton Country Club will be included in the re-planting.

Commissioner Koontz asked if there is a standard for tree selection.

Executive Director Watson confirmed that tree selection for all plantings in the Mercer County Park System are guided by the Stewardship Department, to provide Native selections. Additionally, the Park Commission has an established, “Do not plant” list to ensure plantings are native and in-line with the habitat.

Commissioner Davis asked if the Dog Park’s potable water has been affected with the recent volume of rain.

Executive Director Watson responded that the initial issue found at the Dog Park was mitigated and is tested quarterly by a Contracted service. The most recent test results indicated that no issues were detected.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

– RESOLUTIONS

- R-1 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY STUDENTS, THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE OF STEWARDSHIP-BASED COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS WITHIN VARIOUS MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION PROPERTIES. PERIOD: FROM FINAL SIGNATURE DATE ON THE AGREEMENT DOCUMENT THROUGH JUNE 1, 2024

Commissioner Davis asked if the initiative is through the Bonner Program.

Superintendent Cucchi responded that the initiative is offered through the Bonner Program and Capital City Farm.

- On Motion by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Davis.

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

R-2 AMEND RESOLUTION PC 2022-102, ADOPTED DECEMBER 14, 2022 AND AUTHORIZE THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT VAN NOTE HARVEY ASSOCIATES HAS MERGED WITH PENNONI ASSOCIATES, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 16, 2023, FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR PHASE I DESIGN AND PERMITTING FOR PARK IMPROVEMENTS AT MIRY RUN PONDS, TOWNSHIPS OF HAMILTON, ROBBINSVILLE AND WEST WINDSOR. AMOUNT: \$489,890.00. PERIOD REMAINS: JANUARY 1, 2023 THROUGH PROJECT COMPLETION (AMENDMENT NO. 1)

Commissioner Koontz asked if item R-2 is for a business name change-only.

Executive Director Watson confirmed that R-2 is for a business name change-only

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

R-3 AMEND RESOLUTION PC2022-103, ADOPTED DECEMBER 14, 2022 AND AUTHORIZE THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT VAN NOTE HARVEY ASSOCIATES HAS MERGED WITH PENNONI ASSOCIATES, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 16, 2023, FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR RIPARIAN ZONE MONITORING AT THE ROGERS HOUSE CONSTRUCTED RUIN, TOWNSHIP OF WEST WINDSOR AMOUNT: \$8,500.00. PERIOD REMAINS: JANUARY 1, 2023 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023 (AMENDMENT NO. 1)

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

R-4 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXERCISE THE OPTION TO EXTEND THE COMPETITIVE CONTRACT WITH MERCER SKATING SCHOOL, LLC, FOR SKATING DIRECTOR SERVICES FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK SKATING CENTER FACILITY. PERIOD: NOVEMBER 1, 2023 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2025. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME (CC2020-03)

Commissioner Davis asked to confirm the total length of the original Contract period.

Executive Director Watson confirmed that the original Contract period was authorized for three (3) years with a two (2) year Option.

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

- R-5 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A JOINT FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, FOR MONITORING OF THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ONE (1) GAUGING STATION ON THE ASSUNPINK CREEK ('CLARKSVILLE GAUGE'). PERIOD: OCTOBER 1, 2023 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024. TOTAL AMOUNT: \$17,945.00. PARK COMMISSION AMOUNT: \$12,470.00; UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY AMOUNT: \$5,475.00 (24LJJFA24)

Commissioner Koontz asked for confirmation that this Contract is for the purpose of monitoring how much water we are using for golf course irrigation in this area.

Executive Director Watson confirmed that this Contract is required by the Agency to monitor our consumption for irrigation at the site.

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

- R-6 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH SCORPION OUTDOORS, LLC (AWARDED THROUGH A NON-FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS) FOR NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE-PERMITTED, COMMUNITY BASED DEER MANAGEMENT SERVICES AT DESIGNATED AREAS OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY. AMOUNT: \$305.00 PER DEER, NOT TO EXCEED \$30,500.00. PERIOD: JANUARY 1, 2024 THROUGH JUNE 1, 2024

Commissioner Koontz stated that he can appreciate a local-based company and asked if the Park Commission has been satisfied with their past services.

Executive Director Watson confirmed that Scorpion has been performing satisfactorily under the terms of their Contract.

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

- R-7 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE PURCHASE OF ONE (1) MINI TRACK LOADER BOB-TACH INTERFACE WIDE TRACK 44" GENERAL PURPOSE BUCKET EQUIPMENT AND RELATED ATTACHMENTS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF NEW JERSEY COOPERATIVE PRICING SYSTEM VENDOR: EQUIPTECH, LLC/WOODS MACHINERY/ DBA BOBCAT OF CENTRAL JERSEY. AMOUNT: \$46,831.00 (ESCNJ#22/23-12)

Commissioner Davis asked for some elaboration on the equipment and need.

Executive Director Watson confirmed the equipment is classified as, "mini-bulldozer" and is needed to perform trail maintenance throughout Mercer Meadows.

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

R-8 AWARD OF BID RECEIVED SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 TO CAPELA CONSTRUCTION, INC. FOR DREDGING AT MIRY RUN FOR DAM SITE 21, TOWNSHIPS OF HAMILTON, ROBBINSVILLE AND WEST WINDSOR. PERIOD: TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY (240) CALENDAR DAYS FROM FORMAL NOTICE TO PROCEED. AMOUNT: \$1,223,000.00 (AB2023-33)

Commissioner Forrester asked for an updated timeline for the overall project.

Executive Director Watson responded that dredging is the next phase required for the project to proceed with additional phases.

Commissioner Koontz asked if the Park Commission has tested below the stream bed for contamination.

Superintendent Cucchi responded that selected core samples were sent to the NJDEP for testing, and that testing confirmed the samples were clean from contaminants.

Commissioner Davis asked if there are plans to expand the depth and length.

Deputy Director Pizza confirmed that by dredging alone, the lake will grow in depth.

Commissioner Davis asked how much depth will be gained by the dredging operations?

Superintendent Cucchi responded that dredging will remove approximately three (3) feet of sediment; additionally, dredging operations are required for lake health improvement for recreation uses.

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

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

MOORES STATION QUARRY TRANSFER

- Trap Rock Industries has completed their reclamation responsibilities at the site. A final inspection took place this week and Trap Rock has now been released of further obligations at the quarry. Responsibility for the site has now turned over to the Park Commission for management:
 - o Superintendent Cucchi provided an overview synopsis of next steps:
 - o Park Commission has taken ownership of all facility keys
 - o Maintenance and Park Ranger teams have met on-site to review operations under County
 - o A water discharge permit will be required of the transfer by the NJDEP
 - o County Risk Management is scheduled to tour the site with PC Staff to assess needs

- Pending the above steps, Phase II would include Professional Topography and the design and construction of a pump/filtration system to discharge water into the Mores Creek.
- At this stage, a small portion of the property is projected to be open to the public in approximately two (2) years.

Commissioner Forrester asked how large of an issue trespassing is currently at the site.

Superintendent Cucchi confirmed that there are legitimate concerns that we are addressing with the assessment of cameras, staff, fencing and signage; additionally, seventy percent (70%) of the funds budgeted for FY2024 and 2024 Capital are directly related to the above needs to address safety.

MERCER COUNTY PARK ROPES COURSE

- The first two dates of operation for the new ropes course and zipline were postponed due to unsafe weather conditions. Additional dates will be added to ensure that there will be a total of six (6) days of operation this fall. The next operating date is October 7.

GOLF OPERATIONS:

- Our Golf Outing schedule across all courses remains busy through the fall season.
- Golf revenue remains high, should good weather prevail, we could break last year's total of \$7M.

TENNIS OPERATIONS:

- **2023 National Junior Tennis and Learning of Trenton Fundraiser Gala** – On Saturday, September 23, our tennis center hosted the *National Junior Tennis and Learning of Trenton* Fundraiser Gala. World-famous doubles team, Mike and Bob Bryan, participated in the event to showcase their skills in a tennis exhibition. The Bryan brothers have won multiple Olympic medals, grand slams, and have finished No.1 in the world in doubles a record ten (10) times.

RECREATION AND EVENTS:

- **2023 Concert Season** – This year's Concert season has concluded, with approximately 8,000 patrons attending the various concerts scheduled throughout our Parks.
- **Culture and Heritage Concert** – On September 9, the Mercer County Culture and Heritage Commission's, *Fiesta Latino* Concert was held at the Mercer County Park; with Approximately 2,500 people in attendance.

MARKETING AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

- **9/16 River Days Event** – Our annual River Days Community Event celebrating the significance of the Delaware River Watershed, took place on September 16, at South Riverwalk Park, in the City of Trenton. Over twenty-five (25) organizations participated in the event this year, with over 500 people in attendance. River Days is funded by the Alliance for Watershed Education and Co-Sponsored and hosted by the Park Commission and the Watershed Institute.

STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT:

- **Deer Management Season** – Bow season for deer management opened September 9, at Mercer Meadows, Baldpate, and the Mercer County Park. Public notice was provided through signage indicating season dates and regulations at all parking areas and trails accessing the parks, along with a press announcement and Social Media posts.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

- **Roebing Landscape Architecture Project** – A class of Temple Landscape Architecture Students are studying aspects of Roebing Park and will present their final report at the end of the fall semester. Park Commission staff are supporting the effort by attending field trips and presentations throughout the semester.
- **New Exhibit – “On Lenape Land”** – Paintings and forest compositions by Susan Hoenig are on display through December 31st at the Tulpehaking Nature Center. The artist will lead two public programs coordinated with this exhibit about painting with watercolors and oil pastels for youth and adults.

HOWELL FARM:

- **2023 Corn Maze Opening Weekend** – This year’s Corn Maze opened the weekend of September 16, with a total of 250 visitors in attendance. Feedback on the maze design and trivia games were positive, and the farm has received multiple phone and email inquiries about group outings in October.

CAPITAL CITY URBAN FARM:

- **9/9 Super Saturday** – On Saturday, September 9, CCF staff gave out over 350 pounds of produce, while representatives from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, led a program about the importance of produce to good nutrition.
- **Mercer County Stakeholders Meeting** – Farm Manager, Corinne Gordon, took part in the latest meeting of the Mercer County Food Stakeholders and invited participants to take part in CCF’s October Fall Harvest Festival on October 28th.

MERCER COUNTY STABLES

- **9/19 Special Olympics Horse Show:**
 - The *Special Olympics of New Jersey’s Annual Equestrian Remote Competition*, took place on September 19, featuring ten (10) Special Olympics athletes, representing Mercer County Stables.
 - Video submissions of the competition will be judged on October 15 and Awards will take place in-person at the, *Special Olympics of New Jersey, Fall Games*, to be held in the Mercer County Park.
 - Stables’ director, Ms. Christine Cardinal, is again volunteering as the Special Olympics’ Equestrian Show Coordinator; with seven (7) programs from around the state, featuring ninety (90) athletes and 158 class entries.

WILDLIFE CENTER

- **White-tailed deer fawns** –This year, we have admitted sixty-five (65) fawns and so far, have released twenty (20). We have received over 1,000 telephone calls regarding deer fawns alone.

- **Bald eagle release** – A fledgling bald eagle rescued by Toms River Avian Care, was admitted to the Wildlife Center for flight conditioning, and was recently released at the Mercer Oaks Golf Course earlier this month. This is the second successful bald eagle release this season. A third bald eagle is currently undergoing care at the Wildlife Center and will hopefully be released in the near future.

- **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:**
 - Kris Grudt, Executive Director, Princeton National Rowing Association.

- **OCTOBER 25, 2023 PARK COMMISSION MEETING:**
 - Strawberry Hill Mansion at Baldpate Mountain, 28 Fiddlers Creek Road, Hopewell, New Jersey 08560.

- **ADJOURNMENT:**
 - On motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Davis, by affirmative voice vote, Adjournment took place at 6:20 pm.

Heather B. Mauro

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Executive Secretary

Secretary to the Board

Mercer County Park Commission