

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 APRIL PUBLIC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; AT THE MOUNTAIN VIEW GOLF COURSE, 850 BEAR TAVERN ROAD, EWING, NJ 08628

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, Koontz, Martinez and Sturgeon.

The following Commissioners were absent:

- Masih, Mooij, and Schulz.

➤ **CALL TO ORDER:**

- At 5:38 p.m., Commissioner Forrester called April 24, 2024, Public Meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to Order; at the Mountain View Golf Course, 850 Bear Tavern Road, Ewing, NJ 08628.

➤ **FLAG SALUTE:**

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

➤ **NOTICE OF MEETING: *Board Secretary, H. Mauro***

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 THE MEETING MINUTES OF THE MARCH 27, 2024, MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION MEETING:**

- On Motion by Commissioner Martinez and seconded by Commissioner Koontz, by voice vote, the March 27, 2024, Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez and Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Masih, Mooij, and Schulz.

➤ **APPROVAL OF 2024 MARCH/APRIL MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION BILLS:**

- On Motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by voice vote, the 2024 March/April Mercer County Park Commission Bills were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez and Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Masih, Mooij, and Schulz.

➤ **MARCH 2024 PC REVENUE REPORT - Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza provided a synopsis of the March 2024 Park Commission Revenue Report:**

“Our revenue is consistent with 2023 numbers, with the exception of catering. We are having some issues with two of our caterers, I have been in contact with our attorney. We have sent notification to them via memo they have until May 1 to become current on all payment due to the Park Commission. I am through our attorney sending a letter to one of the two caterers requesting a meeting ASAP to address these issues. I will keep you informed as we move forward.”

- On Motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Davis, by voice vote, the March 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Revenue Report was approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez and Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Masih, Mooij, and Schulz.

➤ **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH - Nominated by Director of Golf Operations, John Kostin, presented by Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza.**

- **Justus Nicholson, Seasonal Golf Employee**

➤ **COMMUNICATIONS – Presented by Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza**

- C-1: ROPES COURSE PROPOSAL
- C-2: BOAT ARRIVAL OF AJ MIRWALD
- C-3: 2024 ISLES PLOWING DAY

➤ **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Golf Operations, Superintendent of Golf, Jay Long:**
 - March showed an increase of 3,621 in golf rounds played over March 2023.
 - Pro Shops are stocked for the upcoming busy season.
 - Outing season is beginning, with some openings left at Hopewell Valley.
 - Golf is currently on-boarding seasonal employees and interns.
 - Irrigation systems are complete.

- Aeration of all courses is on-going.
- An Agronomic plan has been established.

Commissioner Davis thanked Justus for his hard work and dedication.

– Park Maintenance, Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty:

- All Dog Parks are now open to the Public.
- This past weekend's Regatta saw 2,500 participants and 5,000 spectators.
- Softball and Baseball season is underway.
- Picnic Areas and Campground rental season is underway; with both heavily booked.
- Electricians are working on lighting at Waterfront Park at the Sky Boxes and restaurants to correct violations from recent inspection.
- Carpenters are working on completion of a porta-john enclosure at Spring Lake Park; along with various upgrades at Howell Farm and the Mercer County Stables.
- Plumbers are working on opening various water systems and irrigation systems.
- Masons are working on various upgrades and maintenance to walkways and concrete areas throughout the parks.
- Mulch and flowers are ordered and will be planted and spread throughout the parks.

Commissioner Davis asked when the opening of the Splash Park is anticipated.

Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty, confirmed that the Splash Park, Marina and Pool are scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend.

Commissioner Davis asked if we were able to mitigate the slippery material at the splash pad.

Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty, confirmed that the material has been updated and meets all safety standards.

Commissioner Davis asked if the water fountains at the Dog Parks have been opened.

Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty, confirmed that the fountains are open for use.

Commissioner Davis asked to further detail the violations at Waterfront Park.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that all facilities have an annual inspection, and the violations are presented, and we are given an allotted time to correct. Additionally, our fire and sprinkler systems go through the same inspections; and that no violations presented by the State unique to the standard, expected violations, as State standards change and facilities age from use.

– **Capital Project Updates, Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi:**

- A candidate has been identified for the vacancy at Capital City Farm. We look forward to welcoming our new Farm Manager next month.
- Director of Environmental Education, Ms. Kelly Rypkema, was honored with the prestigious Mary Leck Award by the Friends of the Abbot Marshlands.
- A meeting was held with the County Executive and Park Commission Executive Staff to discuss Long Range Capital Projects for the Park Commission. The Administration is in support of the Turf Field Project.
- The County's Audit of Open Space Trust Funding is on-going.
- The Contractor at the Dam Site 21 Lake Dredging site will re-mobilize. The project was delayed due to inclement weather in March and April.

Commissioner Koontz asked if permitting has been extended.

Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, confirmed that permitting is in place and has been extended.

- Volunteer tree plantings at Dam Site 21 were performed this month by REI.
- Spring Lake Parking Lot is substantially completed, with minor punchlist items and raingarden growth is visible and active; with mid-May anticipated for a press release and ribbon cutting.
- In-house Mercer Meadows maintenance personnel are working on flooding mitigation strategies at Willow Pond now that the flooding has receded. Mitigation strategies include syphoning to allow for access to the blockage to remove debris.

Commissioner Davis congratulated Director of Environmental Education, Kelly Rypkema, on her recent award.

Commissioner Davis asked if there will be community engagement to re-name Dam Site 21.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that once project funding and the scope for construction is confirmed, we may engage.

Commissioner Davis asked for the timeline for Turf Fields Construction.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that construction of the project is also contingent on confirmation of Open Space Trust Funds.

Commissioner Davis asked if there will be public access to a portion of the Quarry within this season.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that the timeline for access could be up to a year or more.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

- RESOLUTIONS:

R-1 AMEND RESOLUTION NO. PC2022-76 ADOPTED JUNE 28, 2023, AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ENGINEERING AND LAND PLANNING HAS BEEN ACQUIRED BY AKRF, INC.; EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2024; AND AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR ENGINEERING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES FOR ROSEDALE TRAIL AND PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS, TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME. (AMENDMENT NO. 1)

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

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

R-2 AMEND RESOLUTION NO. PC2023-56, ADOPTED JUNE 28, 2023 AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ENGINEERING AND LAND PLANNING HAS BEEN ACQUIRED BY AKRF, INC.; EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2024; AND AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR ENGINEERING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES FOR THE INSTALLATION OF DEER EXCLOSURE FENCING AT CADWALADER PARK, CITY OF TRENTON AND AT BALDPATE MOUNTAIN, TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME. (AMENDMENT NO. 1)

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

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

R-3 AMEND RESOLUTION NO. PC2021-112, ADOPTED OCTOBER 27, 2021, AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ENGINEERING AND LAND PLANNING HAS BEEN ACQUIRED BY AKRF, INC.; EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2024; AND AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PERMITTING SERVICES FOR PHASE 1 IRRIGATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AT THE HOPEWELL VALLEY GOLF COURSE, TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME (AMENDMENT NO. 2)

- On Motion by Commissioner Koontz, seconded by Commissioner Sturgeon.

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

R-4 AMEND RESOLUTION NO. PC2021-34, ADOPTED MARCH 31, 2021 AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ENGINEERING AND LAND PLANNING HAS BEEN ACQUIRED BY AKRF, INC.; EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2024; AND AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PERMITTING SERVICES FOR THE PARKING LOT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INSTALLATION PROJECT AT SPRING LAKE PARK, TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME (AMENDMENT NO. 2)

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

R-5 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT WITH THE FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE [501(C) 3 ORGANIZATION] TO DEFINE THE ROLES OF EACH PARTY TO PROVIDE EASTERN COPPERHEAD SNAKE MONITORING RESEARCH AT BALDPATE MOUNTAIN AND A PORTION OF THE MOORES STATION QUARRY, TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL. PERIOD: MAY 1, 2024 THROUGH APRIL 30, 2025; TO AUTOMATICALLY RENEW ANNUALLY

Commissioner Koontz asked if the Copperhead population will affect the future design of the Moores Station Quarry project site.

Acting Executive Director Pizza, confirmed that the population and location of the snakes was considered in the Master Plan.

Commissioner Koontz asked if the study will be impactful in the design.

Director of Stewardship, Mike Long, responded that tracking of Copperheads at the site has been on-going for several years; which allows for a big-picture view of where to direct trail access at Baldpate to keep both people and snakes safe.

Commissioner Koontz asked how many years have Copperheads been tracked.

Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, responded that the snakes have been tracked at Baldpate for eight (8) years. The study at the Quarry requires Board approval of an Agreement for the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space to access the Quarry site, which is not currently open for public access.

Commissioner Koontz asked why the Agreement period automatically renews instead of approvals required annually.

Acting Executive Director Pizza, confirmed that unless a condition of the Agreement changes, auto renewal will allow for continuous monitoring.

Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, further confirmed that the study is a program of the State through a State-issued permit.

Commissioner Koontz thanked the Administration for participating in the important research program.

Commissioner Martinez asked if the program had any associated cost to the County.

Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, confirmed that study was of no cost to the County and is utilized as shared research performed by the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space.

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

R-6 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXERCISE THE OPTION TO EXTEND THE COMPETITIVE CONTRACT WITH ULTRA ARTISTS, LLC, FOR CONCERT SERIES ENTERTAINMENT PROCUREMENT SERVICES FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION. PERIOD: MAY 3, 2024, THROUGH MAY 2, 2025. AMOUNT: \$109,500.00. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME (CC2021-01B)

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

R-7 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A NON-FAIR AND OPEN BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH MARTURANO RECREATION COMPANY, INC. FOR THE ON-CALL PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF PLAY CORE DBA GAMETIME PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PARTS. PERIOD: MAY 1, 2024, THROUGH APRIL 30, 2025. AMOUNT UP TO, BUT NOT TO EXCEED: \$35,000.00

- On Motion by Commissioner Forrester, seconded by Commissioner Koontz.

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

R-8 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A COMPETITIVE CONTRACT WITH FUERZA STRATEGY GROUP FOR FULL-SERVICE MARKETING AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS SERVICES FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION. PERIOD: MAY 1, 2024, THROUGH APRIL 30, 2025; WITH AN OPTION TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT FOR THREE (3) ADDITIONAL ONE-YEAR OPTION PERIODS. AMOUNT: \$25,000.00 (CC2024-08)

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

Commissioner Koontz asked if the Park Commission has previously worked with the Service Provider.

Acting Executive Director Joseph Pizza, responded that Fuerza Strategy Group is a new vendor we will be working with for Marketing services.

Commissioner Koontz asked if we were unhappy with the last round of proposal submissions, or if they were all over budget.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that all proposals from the previous solicitation were over budget, so we revised the scope of services.

Commissioner Koontz asked what the benefit will be for the analysis component of the scope.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that the analysis component will allow us to identify areas in Mercer County that we can reach with our offerings, as well as expand marketing strategies to all areas of Mercer County.

Commissioner Sturgeon confirmed that with the analysis component, we can recommend marketing strategies based on the data.

Commissioner Koontz asked if the analysis will also be used to direct marketing to programs that could use more exposure.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that the additional exposure is also a goal of the Contract.

➤ **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- *Presented by Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza*

BRING YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY

At the request of the administration, we are bringing back this event. With assistance from the County Personnel Department, the day will begin at our Stables at 9:30am and conclude at the County Administration building at 3:30.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Thank you to our Community Outreach Director, Wanda McNeill and the Mercer County Planning Department the 4th annual bike drive was held April 20th.
- Over 150 bikes were collected for the Bike Exchange, thanks also to Boys & Girls Club interns and BEX Volunteers. BEX director, Ira Saltiel estimates the bikes will generate over \$18,000 in sales, all proceeds go directly to the Boys & Girls Club.

STEWARDSHIP

- In celebration of EARTH DAY and ARBOR DAY Stewardship hosted 3 volunteer litter clean ups- 2 at Roebling Park and another in Mercer County Park.
- The Stewardship team will also host 2 tree plantings events (1) Dam Site 21 & Baldpate Mtn.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In honor of EARTH DAY our Environmental Education staff participated in a celebration at NJ State Museum the presentation included: birdwatching on the Delaware, a Turtle presentation, Enviro Educ Staff also provided educational table activities for participants

MERCER STABLES

On April 22nd registration opened for our May – June programs via Community Pass. All six (6) week lesson spots were filled.

HOWELL FARM

- 38th Annual Plow Day was held in Trenton at the ISLES Chestnut Avenue lots on Tuesday, April 16th. Information shared in the Communications portion of the Agenda.
- On May 16th 9:30a – 11:30am. The farm will host Witness Stones Ceremony. Middle Schoolers from Hopewell TWP Timberlane School will present their research project dedicating a memorial stone commemorating the life of Nanc, an African American woman enslaved in the 17th century by the Phillips family on what now is a portion of Howell Farm.

RECREATION & EVENTS

- With the warmer weather activities are starting up in the park, a Lacrosse Luau was held on April 20th drew approx. 1,000 participants.
- The Mercer Lake Sprints were held on April 20 & 21, area high school athletes participated in this event which drew over 4,000 patrons to the park.
- This Sunday the Mid-Atlantic Conference Championships will be held on the lake, 650 athletes from 10 different colleges will compete.

TENNIS

- From April 10 to 27th our tennis center hosted the following events.
 - Northeast Conference Championships
 - MAAC Conference College Championships
- Mercer County High School Tournament – 120 players from 18 schools participated.
- This month began Kick –Off of our Summer Tennis League – over 600 players.

GOLF

- Our first Outings of the season will begin on Monday, April 29th.
- Mercer County High School Championships will be hosted at Mercer Oaks and Hopewell Valley.
- The Mercer County Golf Academy sponsored Junior 9hole League began April 14th the league runs thru June rotating between all courses. They play every Sunday from 2:30p – 5:30p.

Commissioner Koontz asked how we see the Ropes Course operating this season.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that, at present, we cannot operate it without a qualified operator. In-house qualification and equipment purchase have cost has been identified at approximately \$35,000, which will be included in our 2025 budget. We also have the option to create a fee schedule to rent the course to a qualified operator on our menu of services.

Commissioner Davis asked if summer camp registrations are filled, or filling; and if we are seeing the same public interest as previous years.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, confirmed that most are filled, and the public interest remains strong in the offering.

Director of Environmental Education, Kelly Rypkema, confirmed that Baldpate, Kayak, fishing and nature camps (7-9 yrs.) are filled; with a lower interest in the nature camp offering for 10-12yrs.

Commissioner Davis asked if we could add the Bring Your Child to Work Day event to our Annual Report.

➤ **PUBLIC SESSION:**

- The Mercer County Park Commission welcomes the public’s participation and comments.
- 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:**
 - No Public Comment was received
- **MAY 29, 2024, PARK COMMISSION MEETING; TO TAKE PLACE AT 5:30PM AT:**
 - Howell Living History Farm Visitor Center
70 Woodens Lane
Hopewell, NJ
- **ADJOURNMENT:**
 - On motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by affirmative voice vote, Adjournment took place at 6:45 pm.

Heather B. Mauro

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Executive Secretary

Secretary to the Board

Mercer County Park Commission