

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 JUNE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2024; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; AT THE HOPEWELL VALLEY GOLF COURSE, 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

AGENDA

➤ ROLL CALL

- The following Commissioners answered the Roll Call of the Secretary:
 - Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon
- The following Commissioners were absent:
 - Davis, Masih

➤ CALL TO ORDER

- At 5:48 p.m., Commissioner Forrester called the June 26, 2024 Annual Public Meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order. The meeting was held at the Hopewell Valley Golf Course, 114 Pennington-Hopewell Road, Hopewell, NJ 08525.

➤ FLAG SALUTE

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

➤ NOTICE OF MEETING (ANNUAL 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.

➤ **2024 ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- Under the provisions of Article 7, Sections 1 and 8 of the Park Commission By-Laws and procedures outlined in Roberts Rules of Order; R. David Blake, Esq. Counsel, presided over the 2024-2025 elections for the Mercer County Park Commission. A motion was requested by Counsel to open the 2024-2025 Election of Officers.
 - On Motion by Commissioner Mooij, seconded by Commissioner Schulz, by voice vote, the floor was opened for the Election of Officers.
 - **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.

- Counsel R. D. Blake requested a nomination for President of the Mercer County Park Commission. Commissioner Schulz nominated Commissioner Forrester for President of the Mercer County Park Commission for the 2024-2025 year. Counsel R. D. Blake requested for any other nominations as per procedural provisions. No additional nominations were received.
 - By voice vote, Commissioner Forrester was nominated for President of the Mercer County Park Commission for the 2024-2025 year.
 - **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.

- Counsel R. D. Blake requested a nomination for Vice President of the Mercer County Park Commission. Commissioner Martinez nominated Commissioner Schulz, for Vice President of the Mercer County Park Commission for the 2024-2025 year. Counsel R. D. Blake requested for any other nominations as per procedural provisions. No additional nominations were received.
 - By voice vote, Commissioner Schulz was nominated for Vice President of the Mercer County Park Commission for the 2024-2025 year.
 - **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.

- Commissioner Forrester presided over the remainder of the meeting as President of the Mercer County Park Commission.

➤ **MAY 29, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

- On Motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Schultz, by voice vote, the May 29, 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.

➤ **MAY 1-31, 2024 BILLS**

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Forrester, by voice vote, the May 1-31, 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Bills were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.

➤ **MAY 1-31, 2024 REVENUE REPORT**

- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Forrester, by voice vote, the May 1-31 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Revenue Report was approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Davis, Masih.
 - Acting Executive Director Joseph Pizza provided a synopsis of the report, indicating that overall, revenue is up by about \$91,000 over this point last year. The majority of revenue is from golf, where the rate increases combined with robust course play has resulted in an increase of approximately \$41,000. The other big contributor has been the Hopewell Valley pool, where revenue has doubled over last year. Another plus with the pool has been the cross section of county residents patronizing the pool. It is no longer predominately attended by Hopewell residents.

➤ **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

- Salvador DaSilva, Irrigation Specialist at Hopewell Valley Golf Course, was nominated by Golf Course Superintendent, Jay Long.

➤ **JUNE 2024 COMMUNICATIONS**

- C1_2024 ALHFAM Annual Conference Program
- C2_2024 Tennis HOF Booklet
- C3_2024 Concert Series Schedule

➤ **OLD BUSINESS**

- Superintendent of Golf, Jay Long, gave an update on golf operations, including numbers for rounds, range balls, and merchandise sold, as well as camps and outings at all golf courses.
- Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty, gave an update on Park Maintenance, indicating this has been the busiest June in 30 years! The picnic areas, splash park and marina are patronized on a regular basis. The heat has been a struggle as the trade shops work on projects and maintenance crews prepare for the upcoming multi-day festival.

- Senior Project Manager, Jeremy McDermott, reported that the Dam Site 21 dredging is two-thirds complete and on schedule for completion next week, on time and within budget. Fallen tree cleanup is next, to clear the path for the kayak route.
- Director of Environmental Education, Kelly Rypkema, shared information about the Tulpehaking Nature Center’s summer camps. The Aquatic Camp is filled to capacity, Baldpate Nature Camp has only one spot remaining, and the Tulpehaking Camp is filling up quickly.

Commissioner Schulz asked about the general state of water quality at golf courses and parks.
Director of Stewardship, Mike Long responded that monitoring is performed at park waterbodies and Rosedale is currently the only lake or pond with a recognized water quality issue. It is at an “Advisory” level for the presence of harmful algal blooms (HAB). As the summer season brings higher temperatures, it is likely that other waterbodies will experience issues with HAB. Its presence will continue to be monitored with help from NJDEP. Additionally, we are working to address these water quality issues by improving riparian buffer areas and reducing nutrient loading to County lands and waterbodies.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

- RESOLUTIONS:

R-1 AMEND RESOLUTION PC2023-88, ADOPTED DECEMBER 20, 2023, AND THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES AN AMENDMENT (AMENDMENT NO. 1) TO THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION 2024 FACILITY RATES AND FEES. ‘AMEND RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH DISCOUNTED GOLF MERCHANDISE AND GREEN FEE RATES FOR ACTIVE DUTY AND VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED SERVICES AT ALL MERCER COUNTY GOLF COURSES’. EFFECTIVE DATE: JULY 1, 2024. ALL OTHER RATES AND FEES REMAIN THE SAME. DISCOUNTED FEES:

- 10% OFF ALL GOLF SHOP MERCHANDISE
- 30% OFF GREEN FEES

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

Commissioner Forrester asked if the discount would be advertised.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that there would be a press release, and that the discount would be posted on social media.

Commissioner Koontz asked if this was a new discount program.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that in the past, a discount was offered if requested, but this resolution will now formalize the discount policy.

R-2 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN OPTION TO EXTEND THE COMPETITIVE CONTRACT WITH MERCER OAKS MARINA CATERING FOR CONCESSIONAIRE CATERING SERVICES AT THE MERCER OAKS BANQUET FACILITY (CC2021-03B). OPTION YEAR PERIOD: JANUARY 1, 2025, THROUGH DECEMBER 30, 2026. OPTION YEAR RENTAL FEE PAID TO MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION:

- 2025: \$17,150.00 PER MONTH
- 2026: \$17,150.00 PER MONTH

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

Commissioner Koontz asked at what point the options for this contract would be exhausted.

Acting Executive Director, Joseph Pizza, responded that all catering contracts are awarded on a three-year basis with a one- or two-year option to extend, so every five years they go out to bid. This is the last option for this particular contract.

R-3 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH FULPER FARMS, LLC, FOR THE ON-CALL PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF PERISHABLE TIMOTHY HAY FOR THE MERCER COUNTY STABLES. PERIOD: JULY 1, 2024, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2024. COST PER BALE: \$9.00. TOTAL AMOUNT UP TO, BUT NOT TO EXCEED: \$22,205.00

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

R-4 AWARD OF BID RECEIVED JUNE 6, 2024, TO GIACORP CONTRACTING, INC., FOR DEER FENCING FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AT BALDPATE MOUNTAIN AND CADWALADER PARK. PERIOD: NINETY (90) CALENDAR DAYS FROM FORMAL NOTICE TO PROCEED. AMOUNT: \$269,567.76 (AB2024-10)

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

Commissioner Mooij asked about the financing for this project.

Director of Stewardship, Mike Long, responded by stating the award to address ash canopy loss from the U.S. Forest Service is a 1:1 matching grant. USFS is providing \$625,000 for the County to address ash canopy loss at Baldpate Mountain and Cadwalader Park by installing deer fences to help with forest regeneration. Most of

the match provided for this grant is from the cost of hazard tree removal paid for by the County.

Commissioner Mooij asked a follow up question about whether this was part of a comprehensive stewardship plan for other types of deer management.

Director of Stewardship, Mike Long, explained how it aligns with a greater plan. Baldpate Mountain currently has a plan that is coordinated by FoHVOS; one of the of the main recommendations is deer prevention on the mountain. That plan, along with our hunting program, form a comprehensive approach in addition to installing the fence.

➤ **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- With the excessive hot dry weather, we made change in our work day hours, both in golf and in the park, moving to an hour earlier start time. This is aimed at completing the regular work day before the hottest part of the day. We haven't done this in a number of years, I thought it a good idea and it has been well received by our workforce.

- **Golf:**
 - o Golf is in full swing at all our courses! Tee times are booked at all courses and driving ranges are busy. We are hosting outings every week. In June, Mercer Oaks alone hosted 12 outings, three of them used both courses.
 - o The Golf Academy at Princeton began their Youth Summer Camp on June 17. The camp runs through August. There are approximately 50 campers participating each week.

- **Tennis:**
 - o Director of Tennis Operations, Marc Vecchiolla, hosted a number of tournaments: the NJSIAA Team, Individual State High School Championships, USTA Middle States Open, and USTA Junior Team Section Championships.
 - o Currently, we are hosting the Tim Donovan College Showcase where 80 boys and girls from all over the world come to Mercer County to be recruited by over 100 colleges. This event was previously held at Yale; we are now hosting this event for the second year.

- **Stewardship:**
 - o Our Stewardship staff is working with ISLES, installing trail boardwalk in wet sections of Watson Woods in Roebling Park.
 - o Staff also converted over half an acre of lawn to meadow in Roebling Park. These conversions from lawn to meadow support habitat for native wildlife.

- **Environmental Education / Nature Center:**
 - o Staff are beginning the Summer Nature Camps, as Kelly Rypkema reported earlier. The Aquatic Camp began this week on Lake Mercer in Mercer County Park. This will be followed by Baldpate Nature camp and finally, Tulpehaking Camp at our Nature center.

- **Howell Farm:**
 - o The Farm’s educational programs continue to be well attended. Over 1,000 students attended educational programs at the farm this past month.
 - o Over 1,100 bales of hay were made, saving over \$6,000 in feed costs for livestock for the coming year.

- **Stables:**
 - o Mercer County Stables Summer Camps begin July 1. Due to record participation, Director of Mercer County Stables, Christine Cardinal is offering an Extended Camp. Normal camp hours are 9:00 am – 12:00pm, Extended Camp hours are 12:00 pm to 3:00pm.
 - o On August 7, the Stables will host “Stables Patrons Appreciation Night.” This is a first-time event sponsored by Heads Up, Friends of Mercer County Stables.

- **Recreation & Events:**
 - o In collaboration with our County Cultural & Heritage division, we held the annual Cultural & Heritage Festival on June 8. The estimated attendance was between 5,000-6,000 patrons.
 - o Thank you to Ida Margicin and her staff at Cultural & Heritage, and to our Park Commission staff on another successful event!
 - o The annual Juneteenth Festival was held on June 15. This was a co-sponsored event with the Trenton African American Cultural Collaborative. The day started with the Freedom Bike Ride, and was marked by music and food. A good time was had by all who attended.
 - o Friday, June 28, will mark the beginning of the 11-day LEAD Carnival. The event offers live music, food, rides, and fireworks. The carnival runs through July 7.

- **Wildlife Center:**
 - o The center hosted *the Conserve Wildlife Foundation Annual Species on the Edge Awards*. Students from across the state were asked to write an essay and create artwork depicting various species on the edge. Mercer County was home to the winner and runner-up. Each was presented with congratulatory letter and free pass to the carnival.

- **Marketing / Community Outreach**
 - o Our Director of Marketing and Community Outreach, Wanda Lacy McNeill, in cooperation with our marketing firm Fuerza Strategy Group, set a strategy for promoting our concerts and events using Facebook, Instagram, Google, WPST radio, TAP INTO, and our marquees at Cure Arena and Thunder ballpark.

- **Hopewell Pool**
 - o The pool is off to a terrific start! This past weekend, over 750 people patronized the pool. The family season pass has proven to be a success. We have also expanded our swim lesson program.

➤ **PUBLIC SESSION:**

- Jason and Michelle Hiesen, from Hamilton, commented that they recently moved to Mercer County and were interested in learning about the park amenities, specifically about public pools and basketball courts. They also commented on dog owners bringing their dogs in heat to the dog park in Mercer County Park, and asked if more effective signage could be posted.

➤ **JULY 31, 2024, PARK COMMISSION MEETING**

Tulpehaking Nature Center
157 Westcott Avenue
Hamilton, NJ 08610
5:30pm

➤ **ADJOURNMENT**

- By affirmative voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 pm.

Michelle De Los Santos
Assistant Administrative Secretary
Mercer County Park Commission