

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 ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2024; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; AT THE TULPEHAKING NATURE CENTER, 157 WESTCOTT AVENUE, HAMILTON, NEW JERSEY 08610.

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

MEETING MINUTES

➤ ROLL CALL

- **The following Commissioners answered the Roll Call of the Secretary:**
 - Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz*, Sturgeon*
(*Commissioners Schulz and Sturgeon participated via phone)
- **The following Commissioners were absent:**
 - Masih

➤ CALL TO ORDER

- At 5:42 p.m., Commissioner Forrester called the July 31, 2024 Public Meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order. The meeting was held at the Tulpehaking Nature Center, 157 Westcott Avenue, Hamilton, New Jersey 08610.

➤ FLAG SALUTE

➤ 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.

➤ **JUNE 26, 2024, MEETING MINUTES**

- On Motion by Commissioner Mooij and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by voice vote, the June 26, 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Masih.

➤ **JUNE 1-30, 2024, BILLS**

- On Motion by Commissioner Forrester and seconded by Commissioner Schulz, by voice vote, the June 1-30 Mercer County Park Commission Bills were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Mooij, Schulz, Sturgeon. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Masih.

➤ **JUNE 2024, REVENUE REPORT**

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

Executive Director Joseph Pizza provided a synopsis of the report, indicating that revenue is up approximately \$250,000 over this point last year. A large portion of that is in Golf, which continues to do very well and is benefitting from the rate increase adopted last year. Howell Farm had spike in revenue and the Hopewell Valley Pool is also having great season.

➤ **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

- Alannah Gray, Seasonal Employee at the Marina and Rink, was nominated by Billy Howell, Marina Manager.

➤ **JULY 2024, COMMUNICATIONS**

- 4-H Fair - Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County - Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County
- 2024 US Open - Net Generation On Court Experience
- Boathouse Happy Hour Schedule

➤ **OLD BUSINESS**

- Superintendent of Golf, Jay Long, gave an update on golf operations, including numbers for rounds, range balls, and merchandise sold. Overall, the courses are in great shape, receiving many positive customer comments. He gave a big thanks to the maintenance, operations, and catering staff working daily to keep the courses maintained and the customers happy. He also mentioned several of the notable events at each of the courses.

- Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty, gave an update on park maintenance, commending the maintenance staff for their work during excessive heat. They kept the athletic fields playable for events, tournaments, and the triathlon, as well as the tennis courts for the Cryan Tournament. Over 127,000 patrons visited the park!

- Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, spoke about the status of Capital Projects including the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail upgrade along Stony Brook, Dam Site 21, Viteritto Property on Hughes Drive, Trenton Wharf park improvements, quarry, and turf field at Mercer County Park. With the County's final adoption of the budget, we now have the ability to move forward and focus on these projects.

Commissioner Mooij asked if we are continuing the modified work schedule for maintenance staff based on weather.

Executive Director Pizza confirmed that the schedule will be in place for the duration of the heat wave and that he has received positive feedback from employees.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

- RESOLUTIONS:

R-1: MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE APPOINTMENT OF JOSEPH PIZZA AS THE PERMANENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION EFFECTIVE JULY 31, 2024

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

The commissioners congratulated Mr. Pizza on his appointment.

He thanked them sincerely and expressed his gratitude to the County Executive and County Commissioners for their trust and confidence.

R-2: MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF ROBBINSVILLE AND THE COUNTY OF MERCER FOR CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS TO DAM SITE 21

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

Commissioner Forrester asked for more information.

Superintendent of Parks, Anthony Cucchi, explained that there is a sewer easement within the property that is held by the Township of Robbinsville. The Township requested the Park Commission memorialize its commitment to maintain any improvements that it constructs within easements held by the municipality.

R-3: MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN THE COUNTY OF MERCER, ACTING BY AND THROUGH THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION, WITH THE FOLLOWING TENANTS: PRINCETON NATIONAL ROWING ASSOCIATION, PEDDIE SCHOOL, LAWRENCVILLE SCHOOL, HUN SCHOOL, AND THE UNITED STATES ROWING ASSOCIATION; TO LEASE THE BOATHOUSE FACILITY LOCATED ON THE NORTHERN SHORE OF LAKE MERCER, MERCER COUNTY PARK, SOUTH POST ROAD, WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY; FOR AN INITIAL TERM OF TWENTY-FOUR (24) YEARS COMMENCING ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE LEASE WITH ONE, TWENTY-FOUR (24) YEAR RENEWAL PERIOD; AMOUNT: ONE DOLLAR (\$1.00) PER YEAR AND OTHER GOOD AND VALUABLE CONSIDERATION

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

Commissioner Koontz asked for clarification that the maintenance and upkeep of the building, including docks, is the responsibility of the tenants and that the Park Commission holds the ground lease and the \$1.00 per year is reimbursement for that.

Executive Director Pizza confirmed.

Commissioner Koontz requested the exhibits that show facility and planned addition to the facility.

Executive Director Pizza indicated they would be provided upon receipt.

Commissioner Mooij commented that the upgrades are much needed, as this is a highly-used facility and is particularly happy to see mention of the safety component relative to traffic flow and parking.

Executive Director Pizza agreed that correcting safety issues in the parking lot would be the start.

Commissioner Davis was happy with partnership, and addressed the importance of keeping inclusivity in mind with programming.

Executive Director Pizza had a previous discussion with Kris Grudt from PNRA regarding ways to be more diverse.

➤ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Golf:

- Golf revenue is up overall by seven (7) percent from this period last year. The recently approved Veteran's discount has been well received by the golfers.

Tennis:

- The 58th Annual James E. Cryan Memorial Tennis Tournament began on Saturday, July 27 and will run through Saturday, August 3. Four-hundred fifteen (415) players have entered across 15 divisions. The Cryan tournament is the third largest adult tennis tournament in the United States. Weeknight matches begin at 6:00 pm each night; Men's Open Singles Finals are on Saturday at 11:00 am. A clinic for players of all ages and levels will be held at 9:00 am before the finals.

Stewardship:

- Trail maintenance continues at County parks.
- Contracting for the construction of a 50-acre deer exclusion fence at Baldpate this fall is being finalized.
- Stewardship is working with contractors to design a 37-acre meadow at Dam Site 21. Installation could occur later this summer.

Environmental Education / Tulpehaking Nature Center:

- The Tulpehaking Nature Center has been hosting visits from the NJDEP Youth Inclusion Initiative this month. In this program, students from the Trenton, Newark and Camden areas learn about the Park Commission's accomplishments on its wetlands restoration efforts in Roebing Park and are introduced to the wide-range of careers in the environmental field.
- Summer Nature Camp enters its final two weeks of activities, concluding August 9. Camps are offered in Mercer County Park and Baldpate Mountain, with our final two weeks of camp located here at the Tulpehaking Nature Center.
- At the same time, Summer Field Trips are going strong with visits from Urban Promise Trenton, Foundation Academy, and CYO Mercer and other community

groups. The Center is nearing its 10-year anniversary and a celebration is being planned.

Kelly Rypkema, Director of the Tulpehaking Nature Center spoke about the Center's 10-year anniversary

The Tulpehaking Nature Center was dedicated on October 7, 2014. This October will celebrate 10 years! Leading up to this point, neighbors were surveyed to find out how the neighborhood has changed since the Center opened. A broad theme was a sense of safety and cleanliness. Overall, the neighborhood is better because of the investment made by the Park Commission in this building and at Roebling park. Their ideas for activities will be considered for the 10-year anniversary celebration on the October 12.

Howell Farm:

- Thanks to the efforts of Superintendent Anthony Cucchi and Farm Director Pete Watson the Park Commission's proposal to dismantle and store the trusses and deck frame from the Hunter Road bridge has been accepted by the NJ Office of Preservation and the NJ Historic Trust. This expedited protective measure is the first step in restoring this historic bridge.

Capital City Farm:

- Our new Farm Manager, Justin Allen, started this Monday. Justin comes to us from ISLES. We are very pleased to have him onboard and welcome him to the Park Commission.

Community Outreach / Produce Donation:

- You may recall earlier this year I mentioned I wanted to expand the outreach and distribution of the produce harvested at Capital City farm. I'm very pleased to share with you, through the efforts of Kevin Watson, Pete Watson, and Anthony Cucchi we have connected with social support groups and community services across the county such as NJ Rise, Jewish Family & Children's Service of Mercer County, and John O Wilson Neighborhood Center in Hamilton. Through Kevin's work, we've identified a direct distribution route by partnering with Ricardo Kairios, an assistant professor at Rutgers Cooperative Extension Services. Ricardo, has offered to coordinate weekly direct education events aimed at "Staying Healthy", "Raising Healthy Kids", "Eating Right", and "Living Well". This helps boost the Farm's visibility, educates the public, and aides in sustainability. Job Well Done! Thank you, Kevin, Pete, and Anthony.

Stables:

- At the Stables, summer camps, field trips, and programs continue throughout the summer. Participants include, The Learning Center, CYO, Center for Child & Family Achievement, and Christina Seix Academy, to name a few.
- Free Equine Educational Seminar with our County veterinarian - Foundation Equine Wellness and Performance on Leg Injuries and Dissection was very well

attended; the room was packed. We have received several emails thanking us for hosting this informative seminar.

Recreation & Events:

- Over in our Recreation & Events area, we have hosted several well attended events. NJ State Triathlon (1,950 participants), EDP Soccer, and two All Star Baseball Showcases were held.
- In the festival grounds our Summer Concert Series is off to a great start. The \$5.00 cover charge and free parking has resulted in larger crowds. Almost 4,000 people attended the first three concerts. With four more concerts left, we hope to build on those numbers.

Marina & Spray Park:

- With the hot temperatures, the Marina and Spray Park have seen increased activity. Bike Rentals are also up over the last few years.

Wildlife Center:

- Volunteer College interns are completing classes and workshops. Wildlife Center Staff hosted an Intern Luncheon today in the Outdoor Education Pavilion earlier today.
- Staff worked in cooperation with National Park Service, NJ Endangered and Nongame Species to treat an endangered timber rattlesnake and return it to the park.

Hopewell Pool:

- The Hopewell Pool is having the best season ever! Again, the hot weather has kept the pool consistently busy.
- The month of July was fully booked with birthday parties on the weekends and there are a few spots left open for the month of August.
- Camp groups are wrapping up next week after attending for the entire month of July.
- The second session of swim lessons started this week with full capacity. Lessons for the rest of the season are almost full.
- Aquacise program (*water exercise*) will start in August.

➤ PUBLIC SESSION

- None

➤ AUGUST 28, 2024, PARK COMMISSION MEETING:

- Princeton Country Club
1 Wheeler Way
Princeton, NJ 08540
5:30 pm

➤ **ADJOURNMENT**

- On motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by affirmative voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 pm.

*Michelle De Los Santos
Assistant Administrative Secretary
Mercer County Park Commission*