

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 25, 2024; TO BEGIN AT 5:30 PM; AT THE MERCER COUNTY STABLES, 431-B FEDERAL CITY RD, PENNINGTON, NJ 08534.

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

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

➤ ROLL CALL

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

**Commissioners Forrester, Masih, and Schulz participated via telephone.*

➤ CALL TO ORDER

- At 5:36 p.m., Commissioner Davis called the September 25, 2024 Public Meeting of the Mercer County Park Commission to order. The meeting was held at the Mercer County Stables, 431-B Federal City Rd, Pennington, NJ 08534.

➤ FLAG SALUTE

➤ 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.

➤ **AUGUST 28, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

- On Motion by Commissioner Martinez and Seconded by Commissioner Koontz, by voice vote, the August 28, 2024 Mercer County Park Commission Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Masih, Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij, Sturgeon.

➤ **AUGUST 2024 BILLS**

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

➤ **AUGUST 2024 REVENUE REPORT**

- *Executive Director Joseph Pizza provided a synopsis of the report: Overall revenue is down approximately \$52,000 from this point last year. I am not overly concerned by this dip; revenue ebbs and flows over the course of the year. For example, the Stewardship line is a \$0 this month because the deer hunt has been delayed by a few weeks, but that revenue will show up next month. Golf continues to do well, as well as the other areas that show revenue. I am confident that by the end of the year we will be right where we were last year, or beyond.*

➤ **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

- Gretchen Buxton, Program Coordinator for Environmental Education at the Tulpehaking Nature Center, was recognized as Employee of the Month.

➤ **SEPTEMBER 2024 COMMUNICATIONS**

- C1: USTA Commercials
- C2: Save the Date - Tulpehaking Nature Center 10 Year Anniversary Celebration
- C3: Full Moon Bike

➤ **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Superintendent of Golf, Jay Long**
 - Rounds and range ball sales are up from July; merchandise is about the same.
 - Revenue/rounds over the course of the year is up 5%, even with less playable days (147 through August 2024 versus 164 through August 2023 and 155 in August 2022).
 - The amount of rainfall in August was 9.8 inches versus zero in September. Golf courses have been irrigating heavily.
 - Fall aeration completed at all five courses.
 - Fall Golf outing season is in full swing, with weekly outings at the courses.

- **Superintendent of Operations, Robert Doherty**
 - Park is busy going into the fall, with tournaments and festivals still going on.
 - Athletic fields are being aerated and seeded.
 - Marina and Splash Pad are closed for the season.
 - Skating Rink is preparing to open and the new lighting which was approved last month will be a big asset.
 - Trades are busy with various jobs including expanding the disc golf course.

- **Director of Environmental Education, Kelly Rypkema**
 - River Days took place at South Riverwalk Park on September 21, 2024.
 - Event celebrates Delaware River in partnership with The Watershed Institute.
 - Activities included pontoon boat rides, canoeing on the pond, fly fishing, and wagon rides.
 - Twenty-one (21) exhibitors, not counting Tulpehaking Nature Center or Watershed led-activities.
 - Approximately 420 people in attendance.

➤ **NEW BUSINESS:**

- RESOLUTIONS:

R-1: 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: \$375.00 PER DEER, NOT TO EXCEED \$37,500.00. PERIOD: JANUARY 1, 2025 THROUGH JUNE 1, 2025

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

Commissioner Koontz asked if we generally do this on a year-to-year basis or would we consider doing a multi-year contract for this service?

Executive Director Pizza explained we do a year-to-year contract because the parameters of the hunt change each year.

R-2 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXERCISE THE OPTION TO EXTEND THE COMPETITIVE CONTRACT WITH THE NEW JERSEY STATE GOLF ASSOCIATION TO FURNISH AND DELIVER UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION-RECOGNIZED GOLF HANDICAP AND INFORMATION NETWORK SERVICES FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION. PERIOD: NOVEMBER 1, 2024 THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2025; WITH AN OPTION TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT FOR ONE (1) ADDITIONAL ONE-YEAR PERIOD. AMOUNT: \$33.00 PER GOLFER. ALL OTHER TERMS REMAIN THE SAME. (CC2023-16B)

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

R-3 AWARD OF BID RECEIVED AUGUST 28, 2024 TO SHORELANDS CONSTRUCTION, FOR LOCKER ROOM AND CLUBHOUSE RENOVATIONS FOR THE TRENTON THUNDER BALLPARK IMPROVEMENTS. PERIOD: ONE-HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO (162) CALENDAR DAYS FROM NOTICE TO PROCEED. TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED: \$3,944,312.60 (AB2024-16)

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

Commissioner Koontz asked how far along the project is to bringing the ballpark up to specifications for a major league franchise.

Executive Director Pizza explained there are two grants to do the necessary upgrades to bring the ballpark up to Major League Baseball standards and attract a Major League team. This is the smaller, first phase for interior renovations – things like clubhouse, weight room, separate locker room for women and umpires. There also needs to be renovations to the playing field, amenities like score board and video board, etc. will be happening after this project. So, this is approximately one-quarter of everything that has to happen.

Commissioner Koontz asked when we are projected to be reach that point.

Executive Director Pizza responded that April 2025 will be the last year of the draft league, and the interior renovations will be done by opening day. The larger project will come the following fall/early spring. We are two playing seasons away from being complete to attract a major team.

- R-4 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH MULTIPLE VENDORS CONTRACTED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF NEW JERSEY COOPERATIVE PRICING SYSTEM, FOR THE PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF VARIOUS GROUNDS EQUIPMENT PARTS FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION. AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED: \$128,010.40. (ESCNJ#22/23-12)
- On Motion by Commissioner Davis, Seconded by Commissioner Koontz.
 - **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Masih, Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij, Sturgeon.
- R-5 AWARD OF BID RECEIVED AUGUST 26, 2024 TO OMEGA TURF SOLUTIONS, LLC FOR VARIOUS LAWN EQUIPMENT FOR THE MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION THROUGH THE MERCER COUNTY COOPERATIVE CONTRACT PURCHASING SYSTEM FOR THE PERIOD OF ONE (1) YEAR IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED: \$526,214.00 (CK09MERCER2024-14)
- On Motion by Commissioner Schulz, Seconded by Commissioner Martinez.
 - **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Masih, Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij, Sturgeon.
- R-6 MERCER COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AUTHORIZES COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING FOR CONCESSIONAIRE CATERING SERVICES FOR THE MOUNTAIN VIEW GOLF COURSE AND PRINCETON COUNTRY CLUB FACILITIES
- On Motion by Commissioner Forrester, Seconded by Commissioner Schulz.
 - **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Masih, Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij, Sturgeon.
- R-7 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, 2025
- On Motion by Commissioner Davis, Seconded by Commissioner Martinez.
 - **Ayes:** Davis, Forrester, Koontz, Martinez, Masih, Schulz. **Nays:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Mooij, Sturgeon.

➤ **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- **GOLF**

- Golf is having another very successful season, revenue is on pace to match (and probably exceed) last year's revenue totals. Across all courses we hosted about 150 outings, and with few months to go we still have another 10-15 still to be played.
- Our annual Employee Outing will be held at Mt. View Golf Course on October 25. This is an annual event that is enjoyed by many of our county employees. The entrance fee is \$75.00, which includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, t-shirt, and prizes. Thank you to our golf staff and our caterer for putting together this generous package.

- **TENNIS**

- National Jr. Tennis League, an organization that serves underprivileged junior players in the county, held a gala fundraiser and exhibition at the Tennis Center with tennis professional Kim Clijsters, who is the former #1 player in the world. She lives in NJ and came to the tennis center for the first time. NJTL raised \$350,000 which will fund their program for the entire year!

- **CAPITAL CITY FARM**

- New farm manager, Justin Allen, is working with TCNJ's Center for Community Engagement to establish a partnership to provide volunteer efforts and expand programming.

- **HOWELL FARM**

- Kevin Watson, Assistant Director of Howell Farm was interviewed by USA Today about the corn maze, this year's theme, and the tie-in to the farm's educational programming. The interview touched on the role that our maze themes have played in furthering the educational mission of the farm.
- The annual corn maze is now open and will operate weekends through November 3. School and community groups can book weekday team building programs and night mazes are offered on Fridays and Saturdays. The maze is built and operated by the Friends of Howell Farm volunteers and staff as a fundraiser; the proceeds are used by the Friends to support the farm's restoration projects, educational programs, and internships in sustainable agriculture.
- Howell Farm's "Share the Harvest Program" continues to deliver tons of healthy food to the community through programs that give families, school groups and volunteers opportunities to actually help with production. This kind of programming has been part of the farm from the beginning, and is a great example of the kinds of outreach and service seen throughout our Park Commission.

- **STEWARDSHIP**

- Collaboration with Sourland Conservancy to plant dozens of native trees at two restoration sites in Mercer County.
- Our Stewardship staff hosted 30 volunteers to help in planting 1,200 native pollinator wildflowers at Willow Pond in Mercer Meadows on September 24.

- **STABLES**

- Director Christine Cardinal has contracted with EGALA, Equine Assisted Growth & Learning to hold accrediting and certifying trainings April 23 through 27, 2025 at the Stables. In addition to bringing in revenue, our staff will gain from this valuable training.
- Movie Night has been rescheduled for Friday, October 4. Free games and movie, showing will be "Migration" the movie is being sponsored by Heads-Up Friends of Mercer County Stables.
- Special Olympics NJ 2024 Equestrian Competition, Mercer Stables has 14 rider athletes competing this year. Best of Luck to our riders!

- **RECREATION & EVENTS**

- On September 7 and 8 we hosted Cultural & Heritage, Latin Fest in our Festival Grounds. Over 4,000 came to the park to enjoy Latino food and music. Thank you to our friends and partners in County Cultural & Heritage department for their hard work in planning and putting on this event.
- This past Friday, we again partnered with County Nutrition to put on the Senior Picnic. Over 700 Mercer County Seniors came to the Skating Rink to enjoy food, games, prizes. This is an annual event, which we are happy to host each year.

- **WILDLIFE CENTER**

- During this time of year our Wildlife Staff are releasing rehabilitated animals back into the wild. I had the pleasure to participate in a fox release a few weeks ago. I encourage you to join Diane and her staff should your schedule permit to participate in one of these releases.

➤ **PUBLIC SESSION:**

- Deborah Thomas, East Windsor
 - Thanked everyone for their outstanding work in Mercer County Parks.
 - Requested that rules be clarified regarding utilization of dog parks by dogs in heat, including signage to indicate age and breeding status.

➤ **OCTOBER 30, 2024 PARK COMMISSION MEETING**

Mercer Oaks Golf Course
725 Village Road West
West Windsor, NJ 08550
5:30pm

➤ **ADJOURNMENT**

- On motion by Commissioner Koontz and seconded by Commissioner Martinez, by affirmative voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.