

Stacey Fox
Executive Director
Mercer County Defense League

ExDir@MCDLNJ.org

Co-founder, Green Garden State Alliance

GardenStateAlliance@gmail.com

Join the private Facebook group

Get the Most Out of Public Meetings - 1st Draw a Large Crowd

- Write your speech, or multiple (for team members). Fine tune them to make the most of allotted time. It will be limited. Avoid repetition between team speeches because of time limits. Every statement will be public record. Additional comments may be emailed to the board to become part of the public record. Make copies for board or council members and hand them each a copy.
- Make signs. They must be **BOLD** and legible from everywhere in the room. The councilors or board members must be able to read them easily. Make them 2-sided so the folks in the back can read them, along with cameras that may be recording from the back. Laminate for multiple uses and **MAKE EXTRA**. Examples are: EPIC FAIL, NO CONFIDENCE, PEOPLE OVER PROFITS, PLANET OVER PROFITS, NO TRUCKS, NO FARMS=NO FOOD, SAVE THE GARDEN STATE, STOP THE TRUCKS
- Take a lot pictures (for news and social media outlets). Get in this habit. The more new pics you collect, the more you can introduce content into your social media pages, and share with journalists.
- Show solidarity. Wear the same color. Custom shirts with a logo is even better. (QR codes everywhere)

Meeting With or Reaching Public Officials

- Make yourself known by giving your mission or new organization a solid name. Give yourself a title and back it up by doing the work.
- Print business cards with contact info - cheap. Name, contact, and brief mission statement so you are always ready to hand it to those you want to follow up with.
- Do the research to learn who has the power to make or influence change. Think Broadly. That means leaders from local, county and state government as well as neighboring community leaders and residents that will be negatively impacted by the development you are opposing. It can even be famous environmentalists.
- Get the attention of everyone in power. Inundate their offices and social media. Write letters to the editor of local and environmental publications, directed at these public officials. Tweet at them. Call them out on FB, tag them if you can. Post on Next Door and Instagram. Threads does not seem to have a big following yet.
- Create template tweets, social media posts, and emails and share them on your pages, website and in email blasts (assuming you have created an email subscriber list). It enhances participation because it is easy for supporters to contribute and it helps to maintain consistent messaging.

The squeaky wheel gets the oil!

- Get a meeting, with as many in power as you can. Get it with the DEP, get it with the Governor's people (think from numerous angles for this) and your County Commissioners and Executive. Meet with your local committee people too. You may have to join the local party's club to be invited to the events where legislators show up. It's worth it. Remind yourself that the more attempts you make to get a meeting, the better your chances of getting it.
- When requesting a meeting, you have to present yourself as a professional and convey that it is in their best interest to meet with you. You have a direct line to the opposition. You have information. They need you.
- If your local council and board are not on your side, don't try to meet with them. If they are, mazel tov... That's half the battle, but don't let them fight alone.
- If you join your local party-in-power's club, you should find yourself looking to replace the incumbents with some like-minded challengers. Replacing incumbents whose vision does not align with the residents will help avoid future battles.

Using the press to your advantage

- On your opposition group's website, share a list of local and environmental journalists. Share a list of twitter handles of politicians and DEP leadership. Share email addresses, snail-mail addresses and phone numbers of legislators. CC all of them on everything. This will make the press aware that you are targeting political leadership and that makes for a story when they respond. Notify press of when you plan to have a big turnout at a local planning board or town council meeting of note. Try to get some journalists as well as news correspondents. Tweet at them too... They may show up with TV cameras! After one good story, you will be on a first name, text-you-later basis.
- Write up and distribute press releases when things of note occur, a hearing is scheduled, a call-to-action is needed or when important decisions are made by those in leadership. Local journalists are in short supply; they depend on the public to share information with them.

Be a responsible voter

- Talk to friends and neighbors about how voting can make the difference, especially if incumbents must be replaced in order to stop the project you are battling.
- Offer to drive folks to the polls.
- Share voter registration information with new voters.
- Above all, be clear on what the candidates really believe in. Don't just read their websites because they can be misleading. Speak to them directly at a meet & greet or other event. You can also contact them directly through their website or Facebook page. Get answers on how they plan to address your particular project issue.
- Trust your gut. If you sense they are not truly aligned with your values, vote accordingly.