

**TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON
COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
February 26, 2015**

A regular meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee was held at the Knowlton Municipal Building. Present were Mayor Starrs, Deputy Mayor Cuntala and Township Committee Member Mathez. The minutes were recorded by Lisa Patton, Municipal Clerk.

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by publishing notice of all regularly scheduled meetings in the Star Gazette, Star Ledger or Express Times as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk's office.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Starrs at 7:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve the January 12, 2015 meeting minutes. Roll Call: Mathez – abstain, Cuntala – yes, Farber - absent, Shippis – absent, Starrs – yes.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Christine Rolef, CFO

Mrs. Rolef reviewed a draft 2015 municipal budget. A 1.8 cent increase to the budget translates into a \$31.26 increase on an average home assessed at \$175,000. She noted the DPW salary and wage line does not include a possible part time position. Salary increases were figured at 2%. Surplus is approximately \$800,000.00

Committeeman Mathez asked how the procurement process for the NJDEP grant was going. Mrs. Rolef reported no problems with the procedure. Committeeman Mathez stated that Ken Metcalf will contact Mrs. Rolef regarding \$1200.00 from the NJDEP grant fund for a planning study. Committeeman Mathez also requested that the auditor attend a Township Committee meeting after the audit is complete.

Mayor Starrs noted additional funds are needed in emergency management for the 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mrs. Rolef stated the fire company donation remained the same as in 2014. She reported that she has not received the financial information she requested from the fire company.

A separate budget meeting will be scheduled on Monday, March 16, 2015 at 7:00 pm.

Rosanne McPartland, Court Administrator

Mrs. McPartland reviewed the status of the shared municipal court. She requested additional compensation and noted that the schedule does not allow her time to take comp time. A comparison with Mansfield Township revealed the Mansfield Township Shared Court Administrator's salary is approximately \$75,000. She reported that the Deputy Court Administrator received certification in April but did not receive additional compensation.

Mrs. McPartland stated 700 Route 80 weigh station tickets were issued in 2014. Committeeman Mathez asked if additional revenue can be anticipated from the weigh station. Mrs. Rolef explained the municipality can only anticipate what was realized last year. She will follow up with the auditor.

Mayor Starrs stated it may be feasible to reassign work tasks for court employees.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bob McNinch, Vail Road, stated that in 2014 the tax rate had no increase. In 2013, there was a .009 cent increase and in 2012, there was a .05 cent increase. He asked for the reason for a 1.8 cent increase in 2015. Christine Rolef, CFO explained the budget needs to increase periodically to cover for inflation.

Mr. McNinch asked if Township Committee salaries are planned to increase. Mrs. Rolef explained they were calculated to receive a 2% increase. Mr. McNinch asked what the 2% increase is based on. Committeeman Mathez stated it is primarily based on inflation rates. Mrs. Rolef reported it is also based on the 2% budget cap.

Krissy Kise, KAA President, requested a separate line item under recreation for the annual KAA donation. Discussion took place regarding KAA insurance policies. Sharon Cooper, Risk Manager, stated the Township cannot assume the cost for KAA insurance due to the structure of the non-profit. To be included in the township policy, KAA would have to be a department, municipal body or not for profit owned and controlled by the municipality. Mrs. Cooper explained the Township does provide a supplemental medical policy for KAA members and volunteers. Mrs. Cooper said general liability and directors and officers' liability insurance policies must be obtained by KAA.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, reported that roads throughout the township are in need of desperate repair. Mr. Clifford also requested that the Township Committee look into reducing legal fees. He noted that Belvidere and Harmony Townships engage an attorney for \$125 per hour with no travel fee and unlimited phone calls from the mayor and clerk. He asked why the township is paying \$165 per hour with extra charges added for service.

Mr. McNinch stated that reasonable people consider competitive bids. He asked when was the last time the township looked into soliciting bids for legal services. Committeeman Mathez stated he believed it has been twenty years. Mayor Starrs reported that Mr. Cushing is working on a proposal. She stated the Township will consider soliciting other bids after the Gebhardt & Kiefer proposal is received.

Stan Prater, JCP&L

Mr. Prater reviewed a resident request to turn off a streetlight at Washington and Wards Streets in Columbia. Mr. Prater explained the Township is the customer and will make the decision on whether to turn the light off.

Township Committee members present were in agreement to turn off the street light at Washington and Ward Streets. Further consideration will be given if complaints are received regarding the light being off. The municipal clerk will contact NJDOT to determine if they will assume payment for the light. Committeeman Mathez reported that the light at the intersection of Washington and Ward Streets is pole number NJ375KT.

Paula Super, Delaware, stated there are also too many streetlights in Delaware.

ORDINANCE:

Ordinance 15-04
An Ordinance Amending And Supplementing Chapter 127
Entitled "Nuisances" Of The Code Of The Township Of Knowlton
(copy attached)

Mayor Starrs explained the amendment to the nuisance ordinance will make creditors responsible for repairs and maintenance to unfit buildings. Mayor Starrs reported that Jim Miller, Construction Official, ranked 23 Decatur Street as the highest priority of unfit buildings. 150 Vail Road is also ranked as an unfit structure.

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to introduce Ordinance 15-04. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – absent, Shippis – absent, Starrs – yes.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 15-26 Resolution Approving Payment of Vouchers (copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-26. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – absent, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

Warren County Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund Conservancy

Committeeman Mathez will consider serving as the Knowlton Township Representative to the Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund Conservancy. The municipal clerk will forward the request from the Conservancy for a representative to Committeemen Mathez.

Municipal Clerk Office

The municipal clerk explained it is sometimes necessary to close the municipal clerk's office due to illness or other township priorities.

The municipal clerk also noted the need to replace three office computers in 2015. Further discussion will take place at the March 16, 2015 budget meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Route 80 Toll Crossings

Committeeman Mathez reported he has received complaints regarding residents who have paid the toll and received a bill for non-payment. Bob McNinch, Vail Road, stated another issue that the problem creates is a double tax on residents. He suggested that the Township Committee may be able to assist the residents by appealing to the DRJTBC to help residents.

George Trongone, Polkville Road, stated that the E-Z Pass system was introduced at a lower rate than today's cost.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, stated some DRJTBC bridges offer senior discounts. He suggested that this could be implemented at the Portland and Delaware Water Gap bridges.

Citizen Of The Year

Mayor Starrs suggested that the Township Committee may want to resume a citizen of the year award. Committeeman Mathez stated he feels the government should not be involved in the award process. He suggested that a civic group may want to make an award for citizen of the year.

Board of Adjustment

Mayor Starrs accepted the resignation of Paul Sullivan from the Board of Adjustment and appointed Saray Devincenzi to fill the unexpired term.

Environmental Commission

Township Committee members present reviewed a request by Jaime Murray, Environmental Commission Chair, for 2015 appointments. Mayor Starrs was in agreement to reappoint the suggested members.

Committeeman Mathez stated the Environmental Commission is looking for GIS (geographic information systems) specialists. He reported that East Stroudsburg University has a large geography department and would provide an internship. A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to approve the Mayor to sign the internship agreement contingent upon approval by the municipal attorney. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – absent, Shippis – absent, Starrs – yes.

Statewide Risk Control Grant Program

Mayor Starrs reviewed the 2015 Statewide Risk Control Grant Program. Deputy Mayor Cuntala will follow up with Recreation and the DPW to determine if the program offers benefits to the municipality.

Polling Place Accessibility Grant

Mayor Starrs explained the 50% matching funds grant improves accessibility at polling places. Mayor Starrs will follow up with the construction official to determine handicap requirements for the municipal building.

PILT Funds

Mayor Starrs reported she met with county freeholders regarding payment in lieu of taxes for national park lands in Knowlton Township. She explained the freeholders will award 50% of future PILT revenues to Knowlton Township. It is expected to be approximately \$1800.00 per year.

Portland Generating Station

Discussion took place regarding Portland Generating Station operations. Mayor Starrs noted the plant is operating more than three days per year. She also stated the NJDEP does not have opportunity to comment on the application before the EPA.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, reported a call before you dig seminar is scheduled at the Holiday Inn in Clinton. Township Committee members present reported that the DPW supervisor has attended the seminar.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk