

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

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
May 11, 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 Members Mathez, Farber and Shippis. Also present was Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer and Richard Cushing, Municipal Attorney. 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 at 7:30 pm with a salute to the flag and roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeewoman Shippis to approve the April 13, 2015 meeting minutes. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shippis – yes, Starrs – yes.

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve the April 23, 2015 meeting minutes. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – abstain, Shippis – yes, Starrs – yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Pam Russweiler, Columbia

Mrs. Russweiler and residents of Columbia were present to address the over salting of roads in Columbia which they believe is contaminating area wells. Mrs. Russweiler reviewed past attempts to reduce salting in Columbia. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the area is serviced by four jurisdictions which apply salt to area roads. The Delaware River Bridge Commission, The NJDOT, Warren County Road Department and Knowlton Township DPW all maintain roads in the town of Columbia.

Mrs. Russweiler reviewed health and quality of life issues regarding salt contamination of area wells. The water cannot be ingested, is linked to health problems and corrodes cookware, pipes and equipment. Attempts to acquire water filtration systems have proven not cost effective. Acceptable sodium levels in water is 50 units per liter. Area wells have tested as high as 1,400 units per liter with levels dropping in the summer months.

Mrs. Russweiler also presented a picture taken this day of salt remaining on roads in May. She stated she is attempting to have a NJDEP representative conduct well testings. Committeeman Farber explained that in the past, the DEP would not consider sodium a main contaminant. Mrs. Russweiler agreed it is considered a secondary contaminant but stated feelings are beginning to change due to overwhelming environmental concerns. She also requested that the Township help fund residential water testing to track sodium levels throughout the town of Columbia.

Mr. Russweiler stated that roads were supposed to be marked with signage indicating road maintenance jurisdiction. He requested that the township stop salting Columbia roads completely. He also reported that the storm drain is raised at 5 Decatur Street which results in flooding of the road.

Mayor Starrs stated the Township Committee is 100% on board with resident concerns due to environmental and cost issues. She stated the township paid \$41,000 for salt in 2014 and \$97,000 in 2015. She also reviewed discussions regarding the use of cranberry or beet juice which lowers the temperature at which salt is effective.

Committeeman Mathez explained previous Township Committee members did conduct meetings on this issue with the jurisdictions involved. He stated a follow up meeting is necessary.

Sharon Valentine, Decatur Street reviewed her documentation of excess salting in Columbia. She also stated drains not being cleared aggravates the problem. Other Columbia residents voiced personal accounts of the effects of salt in their wells.

Township Committeeman Farber suggested that residents contact legislators to leverage the NJDEP to recognize health and environmental concerns.

Mr. Mooney, 16 Decatur Street, provided a water sample with 1,400 parts per liter. He stated the salting problems go back to the 1990's.

John Grande, Meadow Ridge Road, asked if the Township keeps a log of salting. Mayor Starrs replied no.

Committeewoman Shipps stated her water was tested and she was told the source of contamination was farming chemicals not sodium.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, noted the relation of shallow wells to contamination levels. He stated that the new code calls for casing down to the bedrock.

Mayor Starrs outlined two issues: Knowlton Township road salting and other entities responsible for maintenance of roads in the township.

Committeeman Mathez stated the NJDEP may be able to help with well remediation. He will invite a DEP representative to a Township Committee meeting. Mayor Starrs offered to contact The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission and NJDOT for a meeting. Committeeman Mathez offered to attend the meeting. Mrs. Russweiler suggested that the Warren County Health Department be copied on correspondence.

John Grande, Meadow Ridge Road

Mr. Grande reviewed his concerns with maintenance of Meadow Ridge Road. He stated he previously requested that weeds along the curb be weed wacked or sprayed. Recent bad winters and roots growing in the road have resulted in more road damage. Mr. Grande stated he feels he is not getting any services for his tax dollars.

Mayor Starrs stated the Township plans to hire a part time DPW maintenance worker. Committeeman Farber suggested that removal of the curbs could alleviate the problem. Engineer Rodman stated the curbs were installed to help with road drainage.

Deputy Mayor Cuntala will follow up with recommendations from the DPW supervisor for maintenance of Meadow Ridge Road.

FEMA

Mayor Starrs reviewed discussions from the last meeting regarding FEMA's FMA grant program for acquisition of severe repetitive loss properties. Mayor Starrs stated the Township would be obligated to maintain the properties as open space. There is no specific obligation for mowing. The process may take one to one and a half years. Residents may opt out of the program anytime up to the date of closing.

Committeeman Mathez stated he will attend the Warren County Public Safety meeting in Harmony Township on May 13th.

Mayor Farber voiced concerns regarding required maintenance including inspections, mowing, landscape maintenance, capital maintenance schedules, etc. listed in the County's letter outlining the program. He also stated he doesn't think it is a good idea for the municipality to acquire properties. Some residents may be interested in raising their residences.

Neil Cafiero, Route 46, stated that taxes and flood insurance costs are rising too quickly.

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to approve the letter of intent to participate in the grant program. The motion was seconded by Committeewoman Shipps. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes. Committeeman Farber suggested that the Township continue to pursue other entities that could acquire the land such as neighbors acquiring lots that are not buildable.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Ken Metcalf, Historic Commission

Mr. Metcalf provided an update of the NJDEP grant awarded to the Historic Commission for a trail at Ramsaysburg. Mr. Metcalf presented a map outlining the Ramsaysburg property and trail. Mayor Starrs will follow up with the CFO regarding funding for the project.

ORDINANCES:

ORDINANCE 15-05
Bond Ordinance For Acquisition Of Dump Truck
(copy attached)

A motion was made to introduce Ordinance 15-05 by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Farber. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes. A public hearing on Ordinance 15-05 will be held on June 8, 2015.

ORDINANCE 15-06
Bond Ordinance For Acquisition of Fire Truck
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeewoman Shipps and seconded by Committeeman Farber to introduce Ordinance 15-06. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes. A public hearing on Ordinance 15-06 will be held on June 8, 2015.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 15-50
Resolution Approving Payment Of Vouchers
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Committeeman Farber to approve Resolution 15-50. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-45
Resolution Approving Introduction of 2015 Municipal Budget
(copy attached)

Committeeman Mathez stated the municipal tax rate is slightly down in 2015 and made a motion to approve Resolution 15-45. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes. A public hearing on the 2015 budget will be held on June 8, 2015.

Resolution 15-46
Resolution Petitioning The Director Of The Division Of Local Government Services That The 2015 Local Municipal Budget Include A Special Item Of Revenue Under The Heading Of “Special Items Of General Revenue Anticipated With Prior Written Consent Of Director Of Local Government Services – Other Special Items: Cell Tower, Hotel Tax and Capital Fund Balance
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-46. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Farber. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes

Resolution 15-51

Resolution Approving Professional Services Contract – Maser Consulting Engineers (copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-51. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-52

Resolution Approving Warren County Municipal And Charitable Trust Fund Conservancy Grant Application For Restoration of Ramsaysburg Historic Homestead (copy attached)

Township Committee members questioned a matching requirement for the grant and were in agreement to table Resolution 15-52.

OLD BUSINESS:

Escrow Accounts

Engineer Rodman reported he has been working with the CFO to address open escrow account status which have been the subject of OPRA requests. Funds from Courtland Estates and Meadow Ridge escrows were identified through the OPRA request. Engineer Rodman will work with the CFO to resolve the outstanding accounts.

Hackettstown Ambulance Corp.

Committeeman Mathez reported that Hackettstown Ambulance Service has indicated they may have to add surrounding townships to continue to be able to provide 24 hour coverage in Knowlton. Committeeman Mathez will follow up with Mayor Stettler from Belvidere.

Mike Bates, Fire Chief, suggested that Hackettstown Ambulance could pay rent to offset the cost of housing the ambulance and staff in Knowlton. Mr. Bates cited instances of long wait times for a Hackettstown ambulance and reported the need for ALS (advanced life support) services for residents.

Committeeman Farber stated there is a need for regionalization of services with area independence. He suggested that letters be sent to area towns to gauge interest in consolidation.

622 Route 94

Committeeman Farber reported a meeting was held with NJDCA construction officials to determine what would be needed to convert the residence at 622 Route 94 into office space. DCA construction representatives noted the first floor may need additional support to house file cabinets and equipment. Estimates will be obtained for electric upgrades, a security system and any other items necessary to convert the residence into ADA complaint offices.

Discussion took place regarding renovation to the existing municipal building. Mayor Starrs reported there are no additional renovation planned for the municipal building at this time.

Committeeman Farber will follow up with Engineer Rodman to determine costs of renovations to 622 Route 94. Committeeman Farber stated the best use of the property may be as a rental unit. The municipal clerk will request a list of requirements from the COAH administrator for rental of the property as an affordable housing unit.

Abandoned / Vacant Buildings

Mayor Starrs will follow up with the zoning officer regarding 23 Decatur Street.

Municipal Court

Mayor Starrs reported that the municipal court revenue has increased 48% to date in 2015.

NEW BUSINESS:

Intern Agreement With East Stroudsburg University

Township Committee members reviewed a memo from the township attorney regarding a contract for East Stroudsburg University students to intern with the Township. Township Committee members were in agreement to table discussion of the agreement.

Recreation Site Signage

Deputy Mayor Cuntala reported Dennis Lembeck, Recreation Supervisor, has requested the addition of signage at the recreation site to deter recreation participants from jumping the Route 94 fence to access fields. Township Committee members were in agreement to purchase the signs.

Deputy Mayor Cuntala also confirmed the Township contribution to KAA's liability insurance is for one year.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

John Sikora, Community Service Supervisor, reported receiving complaints about graffiti at the Station Road viaduct. He estimated the work to be completed in June. He stated the work is weather dependent. Completion of projects is also dependent of the number of workers assigned each week.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, asked for the status of air conditioning in the meeting room. Mayor Starrs stated the topic will be addressed at the next meeting.

Bob McNinch, Vail Road, commented concerning the Committee's earlier discussion on the FEMA grant program to buyout of frequently flooded homes. Mr. McNinch requested the Committee confirm that the only Township involvement was (a) to sign a FMEA grant application (signed earlier in the meeting by Mayor Starrs), (b) to accept from FEMA ownership with certain deed restrictions of vacant lots that had been cleared and graded by FEMA; and that there would be no maintenance or other costs whatsoever (notwithstanding pros and cons associated with ratable loss) associated with the Township's involvement in this program and the Township's acceptance of vacant lots from FEMA. Mayor Starrs confirmed this was correct.

Mr. McNinch also requested the dollar amount approved earlier in the professional services contract for Maser Consulting. Mayor Starrs advised \$6,000.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk