

TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON
COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 11, 2022

The meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee was held on this date at the Knowlton Municipal Building, 628 Route 94, Columbia, New Jersey and was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Starrs. Mayor Starrs led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Starrs read the following statements “This meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: P: 1975, Chapter 231, noting that notice of all regularly scheduled meetings has been published in the *New Jersey Herald* and/or Express Times as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk’s office.”

Roll Call: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn- yes, Starrs—yes.

Resolution

2022-42- Resolution Regarding Emergency Meeting

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, *et seq.*, was enacted by the New Jersey State Legislature to provide the public with advanced notice of, and the right to attend, meetings of public bodies such as a board of education; and

WHEREAS, OPMA (N.J.S.A. 10:4-9) permits public bodies to hold emergency meetings without adequate advanced written notice in circumstances of such urgency and importance that a delay for the purpose of providing adequate notice would likely result in substantial harm to the public interest; and

WHEREAS, OPMA permits public bodies to hold emergency meetings subject to certain procedural safeguards, including that three-fourths of its members present vote in favor of conducting the emergency meeting and that prompt notice of the meeting is given to the public by posting and delivery to two newspapers, including the official designated newspaper of the Board; and

WHEREAS, the May and Committee of the Township of Knowlton (the “Committee”) provided adequate notice under OPMA for its regular meeting on April 11, 2022 to be held at the Township Municipal Building; and

WHEREAS, it has become necessary to conduct such meeting via Zoom video conferencing due to the inability of several members of the Committee to attend in person; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee is unable to provide notice of this change in location 48 hours in advance of the meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has determined that its April 11, 2022 regular meeting must be conducted via Zoom on an emergent basis to discuss personnel matters and approve the payment of certain bills; and

WHEREAS, all other matters on the April 11, 2022 agenda will be carried to the next regular in-person meeting of the Township Committee; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton will conduct its regular meeting on April 11, 2022 at 7:00 pm via Zoom video conferencing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Township Clerk is directed to publish this resolution in two newspapers, including the official designated newspaper of the Township Committee.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Shippo and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shippo—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs resolution 2022-42.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to go into executive session at 7:33 pm.

2022-37 Resolution Authorizing Executive Session

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act; N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., declares it to be the public policy of the State to insure the right of citizens to have adequate advance notice of and the right to attend meetings of public bodies at which business affecting the public is discussed or acted upon; and

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act also recognized exceptions to the right of the public to attend portions of such meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee find it necessary to conduct an executive session closed to the public as permitted by the N.J.S.A. 40:4-12; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee will reconvene in public session at the conclusion of the executive session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Knowlton Township, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that they will conduct an executive session to discuss the following topic (s) as permitted by N.J.S.A. 40:4-12:

A. Personnel

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee hereby declare that their discussion of the subject (s) identified above may be made public at a time when the Township Attorney advises them that the disclosure of the discussion will not detrimentally affect any right, interest or duty of the Township or any other entity with respect to said discussion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee, for the reasons set forth above, hereby declare that the public is excluded from the portion of the meeting during which the above discussion shall take place.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to come out of executive session at 8:13 p.m.

Motion made by Starrs, second Cuntala and carried to have the DPW due a one-month trial of summer hours from June 15, 2022 – July 15, 2022.

To authorize summer hours for the DPW working an extra an hour Monday-Thursday in order to take a half day on Friday during the summertime for a trial period.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve to add the following in the personnel manual.

“Overtime is defined as any work performed in excess of the number of hours in an employee's normal single workday, or the total hours in any workweek for the said employee. An employee must have worked more than a normal 40-hour work week to be eligible for overtime pay.”

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tara Mezzanotte—Mrs. Mezzanotte spoke to the commissioners about the 911 Memorial trail located in Knowlton. Commissioner Kern asked if the countywide 911 memorial could be held at the trail. Committee would like to hear more details. Committee agreed to have Tara Mezzanotte as liaison between the township and county for the 911 memorial trail.

Motion made by Van Horn, second by Starrs to have Tara Mezzanotte to be the liaison for the 911 trail in Knowlton Township.

Mrs. Mezzanotte reported the Route 46 Rockwall fence was not able to hold a mudslide and broke in a section. Traffic is impacted while the fence is being fixed.

Motion was made by Van Horn and second by Cuntala and carried to have Tara Mezzanotte report to the OIG regarding the mudslide on Route 46.

DEPT REPORTS

Township Engineer Denis Keenan

Mr. Keenan- suggested how to prevent the heaving along the walking trail at Tunnel Field without removing the trees, which are causing the heaving. Suggestions were to move the trail away from the trees and bring it closer to the field, or put in a weed barrier, which would go along the walking path. There was concern that putting a weed barrier involves cutting roots and the trees could die. Discussion took place regarding moving the track. Committee agreed to get the input of KAA before making any final decisions.

DPW

DPW Supervisor Brian Peck

Mr. Peck received a quote for the removal of 42 ash trees at tunnel field totaling \$16,800. Mr. Peck explained that co-op pricing is figured by diameter. Mr. Peck will get more quotes. Some trees will be dropped in the woods with the debris left there. Wood that is located along the fields will be chipped and blow the chips into the wood. Mayor Starrs stated that a hold harmless agreement will be needed if any residents would like the wood.

Discussion took place regarding replacing a 7-year mower used by recreation, which broke down. Committee Van Horn found a brand-new mower for approximately \$11,000, a 72-inch John Deere mower.

Motion made by Starrs to amend a motion that was made by Van Horn, second by Cuntala and approve by roll call – Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes Starrs—yes to have CFO Christine Rolef write a letter of intent to purchase a 72- deck John Deere mower. Recreation Director Dennis Lembeck previously provided the Committee with other quotes.

Mayor Starrs stated that DPW has offered to take over the mowing at tunnel field. Committee decided to have recreation continue to mow.

Mayor Starrs explained to the committee that there are two DPW dump trucks that are 20 years old. In order to replace one of them the township will need to go out for bond. Mr. Peck received a cost for a new single axle dump truck through Sourcewell costing \$235,000 equipped with everything that is needed. Committee discussed ways to get a truck that is cheaper and even possibly waiting until prices go down. Mr. Peck was asked to find out if an order was placed in June how long it would be to get a truck , since the bond ordinance would not be adopted until June.

Fire & Rescue

Chief Alex Weber gave an incident report year to date, which they are trying to post on social media. Chief Weber stated that it has been several years since the Fire & Rescue has received an increase from the township. Chief Weber explained that Fire & Rescue food service are not needed this year for the truck drawing that Knowlton Lions club has yearly, which is one of their biggest fundraisers. Chief Weber explained that Fire & Rescue expenses are close to \$100,000 and with the township providing \$52,000 of that, and Fire & Rescue needs to fundraise for 50% of the expenses. Mayor Starrs explained that the township might be able to give a one-time donation from the American Rescue Plan funds, however, the township will not know how much that will be until the Reverse Osmosis Systems bid is completed.

OLD BUSINESS

Delaware Water Gap National Park designation update Mayor Starrs explained to the residents that the committee passed a resolution of support for the Delaware Water Gap National Park designation there was no special interest groups involved. Mayor Starrs explained the reasoning for the township to support this designation was to bring tourist to Knowlton which then would support all of the local business, restaurants and campgrounds. Committee also felt that the designation could help the fight against the Route 80 Rockwall. Mayor Starrs stated Warren County is withdrawing its support to the Delaware Water Gap National Park designation and rescinding their resolution; part of the reason is hunters are concerned about losing hunting ground, although, Mayor Starrs said, 90% of the park will remain open to hunters. Since the county has withdrawn its support, this designation will likely not go forward, so Mayor Starrs feels there is nothing that the township needs to do.

Public Comment:

Bill Davis asked if Knowlton should withdraw their support like the county did. Mayor Starrs urged the committee to wait to see what the county's resolutions says first before adopting their own resolution.

Sandy Hall from Lake, NJ—Ms. Hall, who said she started a social media site against the designation, stated the proposal is just to get people interested in what is going to happen it list all the benefits and none of the liabilities like the impact on the township infrastructure.

RESOLUTIONS

2022-38 Resolution of Commendation for Eagle Scout Jacob L. Erickson

WHEREAS, Jacob Erickson of Troop 140, Township of Knowlton, Boy Scouts of America has earned the rank of Eagle Scout; and

WHEREAS, Jacob is currently a senior at North Warren Regional High School and is in the process of deferring his college enrollment until completion of his medic training in the New Jersey Air National Guard, whereupon he plans to attend The College of New Jersey college and pursue his goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon; and

WHEREAS, Jacob has exemplified the ideals of scouting and held several key leadership positions including Patrol Leader and Troop Guide and is member of the Order of the Arrow, the national honor society of the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, Jacob completed his Eagle Scout community service project to construct an “Outdoor Deck Learning Center” at Knowlton Township Elementary School, a project that involved donations and fundraising in excess of \$3,000 and the coordination and management of over 350 volunteer hours; and

WHEREAS, the rank of Eagle Scout is the highest award a boy can attain in scouting and in earning his Eagle rank, Jacob will now forever be known as a person of distinction.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that on this day, April 11, 2022, the Knowlton Township Committee commends Jacob L. Erickson for both his service to his community and for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout and does hereby award him with this Certificate of Merit.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve resolution 2022-38.

2022-39 Resolution Regarding Knowlton Beach Badges for Year 2022

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2021, the Knowlton Township Committee adopted Ordinance 2021-03, authorizing the issuance of watercraft launch badges for use on Knowlton's Columbia Beach; and

WHEREAS, Knowlton's municipal office subsequently ordered 250 badges for the use of residents and area campgrounds at a cost of \$689; and

WHEREAS, only 13 badges were used in 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton wishes to wisely steward the funds of taxpayers and reduce expenditures when possible; and

WHEREAS, the Knowlton Township Committee discussed the surplus of badges at the March 14, 2022, meeting of the governing body and decided to continue using the 2021 badges, starting at number 14, in the year 2022.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The Township Committee of Knowlton hereby authorizes Knowlton Township's municipal staff to continue distributing the existing badges as needed and authorizes the staff to mark them with the year 2022.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve resolution 2022-39 changing then number from 250 to 500.

2022-40 Resolution Approving Payment of Vouchers

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton, Warren County, New Jersey, that all claims attached are hereby approved as reasonable and proper claims against the Township of Knowlton.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that approval for payment is hereby given to the Chief Financial Officer to pay said claims, subject to the availability of funds.

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Van Horn and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs—yes resolution 2022-40.

2022-43- Resolution of the Township of Knowlton Extending the Budget Deadline

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton must introduce the 2022 budget by March 30, 2022 (or at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the governing body) and adopt the 2022 budget by April 29, 2022 pursuant to Local Finance Notice 2021-24 and N.J.S.A. 52:27BB-18;

WHEREAS, the Township was scheduled to introduce its budget at its April 11, 2011 general meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Township's regular meeting on April 11, 2022, could not proceed in person as advertised given certain members of the Committee were unable to attend due to reasons beyond their control; and

WHEREAS, a decision was made on the morning of April 11, 2022 to proceed with a the meeting electronically; and

WHEREAS, the Township was unable to provide the requisite forty-eight (48) hours' notice necessary to change the location of the meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Township opted to hold an emergency meeting on April 11, 2022 electronically in order to address certain pressing Township matters; and

WHEREAS, in an abundance of caution, the Township elected not to introduce the budget at its April 11, 2022 emergency meeting in order to avoid any concerns by the public regarding adequate notice.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton requests an extension of the March 30, 2022 deadline to April 30, 2022 to introduce the 2022 budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton requests an extension of the April 29, 2022 deadline to May 31, 2022 to adopt the 2022 budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton will introduce the 2022 municipal budget at the April 28, 2022 regularly scheduled Township meeting and hold a public hearing on the 2022 budget at its May ____, 2022 regularly scheduled meeting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton authorizes the Township Clerk to forward a certified copy of this resolution to the Office of the Director of Local Government Services and furnish said Director with any further information required to act upon this matter.

Motion made Starrs, second by Cuntala and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs—yes resolution 2022-43.

NEW BUSINESS

Gas station ordinance from Planning Board tabled

Hold Harmless for Tree Removal —Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve to remove two diseased ash tree that sits on township property that is adjacent to the Zetterberg providing a hold harmless is signed by the resident.

Knowlton Logo— Xavier Starrs designed four logos for the township. Mayor Starrs asked the committee if the committee would like to vote on a logo. Committee Van Horn stated that the township did have a picture that they used as a logo years ago of the Delaware. Committeeman Van Horn will reach out to Xavier to get a similar picture they had years ago.

State Fire Official —The townships Fire Official put notice in that he will be resigning at the end of 2022. Discussion took place on have a state fire official which is what surrounding towns use. Mayor Starrs agreed to provide more information at the next township meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Clerk Shipp advised the committee that Statewide Insurance has provided the township with a check for the accident at Tunnel Field. Contractor assigned to the job requires 50% before starting and 50% upon completion. Committee agreed to move forward.

MEETING MINUTES

January 24, 2022 Township Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Starrs, Second by Cuntala and carried to approve January 24, 2022 Township Committee Meeting Minutes.

February 14, 2022 Executive Session Meeting Minutes

Motion made Cuntala, second by Shipp and carried to approve February 14, 2022 Executive Session Meeting Minutes.

February 14, 2022 Township Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Shipp and carried to approve February 14, 2022 Public Session Meeting Minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Hugo Morin- inquired about a piece of property owned by the township next to his. The property was put up for auction and it did not sell and he is interested in purchasing that piece. Mayor Starrs explained that the township could consider putting the property up for auction again and that will provide him an opportunity to buy it. Mr. Morin mentioned a tree that is on that property that is leaning on to his. Mayor Starrs asked for Mr. Morin to email her the address so DPW can look at it.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to go in to Executive Session at 10:12 pm

2022-41 Resolution Authorizing Executive Session

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act; N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., declares it to be the public policy of the State to insure the right of citizens to have adequate advance notice of and the right to attend meetings of public bodies at which business affecting the public is discussed or acted upon; and

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act also recognized exceptions to the right of the public to attend portions of such meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee find it necessary to conduct an executive session closed to the public as permitted by the N.J.S.A. 40:4-12; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee will reconvene in public session at the conclusion of the executive session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Knowlton Township, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that they will conduct an executive session to discuss the following topic (s) as permitted by N.J.S.A. 40:4-12:

A. Attorney Advice

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee hereby declare that their discussion of the subject (s) identified above may be made public at a time when the Township Attorney advises them that the disclosure of the discussion will not detrimentally affect any right, interest or duty of the Township or any other entity with respect to said discussion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee, for the reasons set forth above, hereby declare that the public is excluded from the portion of the meeting during which the above discussion shall take place.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to come out of Executive Session at 10:16 pm

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to adjourn tonight's meeting at 10:16 pm.