

**MINUTES OF KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP
WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
Public Session Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2021**

The meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee was held on this date at the Knowlton Municipal Building, 628 Route 94, Columbia, New Jersey. This meeting was held by electronic means via ZOOM as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and various executive orders in connection with same and was called to order at 7:00 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 the *Star Gazette* as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk's office."

Open Public Meetings Act:

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 *Star Gazette* as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk's office.

ELECTRONIC MEETING STATEMENT:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on in-person public gatherings by executive orders of the Governor of New Jersey, meetings of the Knowlton Township Committee will be held remotely via Zoom. The Zoom platform allows for members of the public to participate via computer, mobile device, or telephone. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.5(g): Both adequate and electronic notice of this meeting has been provided by publishing a revised annual notice in the two official newspapers designated by the Township, posting such notice on the door of the municipal building, and posting such notice on the municipal website. Such notice specified the time of this meeting and provided instructions on how to access the meeting remotely. The following is an explanation of the procedures and requirements for making public comment as required by N.J.A.C. 5:391.4(h).

Please keep yourself muted until the meeting moderator requests that you unmute yourself. The Township reserves the right to mute or remove disruptive meeting participants after an initial warning. Disruptive conduct includes sustained inappropriate behaviors such as, but not necessarily limited to, shouting, interruption, and use of profanity.

Comments will be accepted in writing. Written comments must be no more than 450 words and must include your name and address. This equates to about 3 minutes of speaking, which is the amount of time allowed for each public comment. Such comments will be read into the record at the appropriate time. However, please be advised that the Township reserves the right to summarize duplicative comments consistent with N.J.A.C. 5:391.4(f). Comments can be emailed by 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting to: Knowltonpubliccomments@knowlton-nj.com. Written comments may also be submitted via mail or dropped off at the municipal building by such day and time.

Comments will also be accepted during the appropriate times of the meeting via Zoom. If you wish to make a comment during the meeting please use the "raise hand" button on your screen if you are signed in via Zoom. If you are accessing the meeting via telephone, please hit *9 and the meeting moderator will call on you and

identify you by the last few digits of your phone number. You can press *6 to unmute yourself. Please state your name and address before beginning your comment. As always, comments are limited to three minutes per person and there will be two comment sessions during the meeting. Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded.

Roll Call

Cuntala--yes, Mazza--yes, Shipps--yes, Van Horn--yes, Starrs—yes.

Also present was Township Attorney Leslie Parikh who left the meeting at 7:45 pm

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Clifford- 30 Koeck Rd. - Mr. Clifford asked for the status of the Internet on Koeck Road. Mayor Starrs stated that Internet service to Koeck Road was part of the agreement between Optimum and the BPU, and it includes extending services to homes from #5 to #36, but she does not have a date on when that will take effect. Mayor Starrs said the town requested in writing that service be extended to the rest of the street.

Ralph Campbell- Delaware Camp Ground - Attorney Parikh asked how many vans are you used to bring campers to the boat launch and how many people do the vans hold. Mr. Campbell did explain that that there are 3 vans that hold up to 13 people and depending on the season they could bring a van load every hour with the with the 3 vans totally approximately 21 times a day during the busy season. Attorney Parikh explained that it would be best to permit the campground vans. Mayor Starrs stated that the township is working on putting a gate up as well.

Mike and Tara Zetterberg- Susquehanna lane. Mr. & Mrs. Zetterberg have been maintaining the private lane and explained issues that they are having with a neighbor. Mayor Starrs did forward the Zetterberg’s email to Attorney Parikh for review. Attorney Parikh explained because Susquehanna Lane is a private lane she is advising the committee to not get involved and that they should consult with an attorney. The Zetterbergs requested to have a street sign on their lane.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to have DPW place a street sign on Susquehanna Lane.

OLD BUSINESS

Knowlton Flag Policy

Discussion took place regarding Blairstown approving flying the flag of special groups at Footbridge Park. Committee members discussed that flying one protected group’s flag and not another protected group’s flag puts the Township at risk of being sued and that residents can fly whatever flags they like at their homes. Committee discussed putting a policy in place that Knowlton Township would fly only the American flag on Municipal property and possibly having a resolution passed stating the township’s position. Majority of the committee agreed to pass a resolution at a future meeting.

Easter Egg Hunt 2021

Due to COVID restrictions and guidelines still on going, a discussion took place regarding not having the Easter egg hunt this year. Committeeman Van Horn will speak with the Lions club before making a final decision.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Knowlton OEM --

OEM Mike Bates explained that there has not been a big turnout regarding distribution of N95 masks to residents the last few weekends. Mr. Bates proposed sending information to schools and churches to let residents know that they are available. Mayor Starrs proposed having residents who already have them come back for more. Committeewoman Cuntala asked about having a stock pile for future. It was agreed to double up on the distribution of masks for the last weekend to 10 instead of 5 N95 masks to residents. Committee also agreed to store two cases of N95 masks for future needs.

Mayor Starrs spoke to the committee regarding a resident who was unable to get AmeriGas to deliver propane and asked the committee how they felt about purchasing an electric space heater that could be loaned to residents if they are having delivery issues. Majority of the committee felt would be a liability issue.

Committeewoman Cuntala provided an update for recreation. Recreation Director Dennis Lembeck notified Committeewoman Cuntala that in order to provide the state with a meter reading required by the NJDEP at Tunnel Field each month, a flow meter will need to be installed.

ORDINANCES

Public Hearing/ Adoption

2021-02 Municipal Stormwater Control Ordinance-attached

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to open public hearing.

There were no public comments.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to close public hearing.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and approved by roll call vote:

Cuntala--yes, Mazza--yes, Shipps--yes, Van Horn--yes, Starrs--yes to adopt Ordinance 2021-02.

RESOLUTIONS

2021-2c Resolution Approving Compensated Appointments.

WHEREAS, it is necessary to appoint various persons to fill the numerous positions of authority in the Township of Knowlton for the year 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton, Warren County, New Jersey, that the following appointments be made with terms being until December 31, 2021:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Municipal Clerk | Kristin Shipps |
| Shared Services/Grant Administrator | |
| Assessment Search Officer | |
| Deputy Clerk | Doreen Apgar |
| Registrar of Vital Statistics | Doreen Apgar |
| Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics | Kristin Shipps |
| Office Assistant | MaryAnn Gingerelli |
| Finance Assistant | Doreen Apgar |
| Recycling Coordinator | JoAnn Fascenelli |
| Chief Financial Officer | Christine Rolef |
| Tax Collector | Evan Howell |

Tax Search Officer	Evan Howell
Assistant Tax Collector	Doreen Apgar
Tax Assessor	Richard Motyka
Tax Assessment Assistant	Kenna Pearson
Code Enforcement /Zoning Officer	Eric Snyder
Driveway Inspector	Eric Snyder
Fire Official	Glenn Wilson, Jim McAleer
Planning Board Secretary	Alfia Schemm
Board of Adjustment Secretary	Alfia Schemm
Animal Control Officer	Alan DeCarolis
Public Works Manager	Brian Peck
Public Works Assistant Supervisor	Thomas Steckel
Public Works Driver/Laborer I	
Public Works Driver/Laborer II	David Quick
Public Works Driver/Laborer III	Michael Carpenter
Public Works Driver/Laborer-Part Time	
Seasonal Plow Driver	Dale Lifer
Recreation Director	Dennis Lembeck
Recreation Laborer	Ryan Lembeck
Alternate Recreation Laborer	George Trongone
Community Service/Clean Comm. Supervisor	Dennis Lembeck
Emergency Management Coordinator	
911 Coordinator	
***Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator	Michael Bates
Emergency Management Assistant	Kristin Shipps
Municipal Housing Liaison	Kristin Shipps
Municipal Court Bookkeeper	Donna Surdich

*term expires 12/31/2021
 ***term expires 12/31/2023

**Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and approved by roll call vote:
 Cuntala --yes, Mazza--yes, Shipps--yes, Van Horn--yes, Starrs--yes Resolution 2021-2c.**

2021-30 -Resolution Authorizing Authorizing Salary Adjustment

WHEREAS, Michael Carpenter is employed by the Township of Knowlton as a DPW Laborer as of December 19, 2019; and

WHEREAS, a review of DPW laborer salaries paid by surrounding municipalities for similar work, duration of employment and experience has demonstrated that a salary adjustment is supported; and

WHEREAS, based on the foregoing, the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton have authorized a salary adjustment thereby increasing Michael Carpenter’s hourly rate by \$1.50 per hour retroactive to January 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Michael Carpenter will also be paid an additional increase of \$1.50 per hour once he obtains his Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and provides the Township with proof of same.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton

authorize this salary adjustment effective January 1, 2021.

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 2021-30.

2021-31 Resolution on the Proposed Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission Toll Increases

WHEREAS, at 50.7 cents per gallon, New Jersey has the fourth highest gas tax in the United States, making it a very expensive state to drive in¹; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey has the highest property taxes in the nation, making it a very expensive state to live in²; and

WHEREAS, the median household income in Warren County is almost \$16,000 lower than the New Jersey state median, giving local residents 18.4 % less income than their neighbors to spend³; and

WHEREAS, many Knowlton Township residents commute daily across a DRJTBC bridge for work and to reach the closest hospital and major shopping centers; and

WHEREAS, the toll proposal would reduce discounts currently provided to drivers who made more than 16 tolled trips each month from 40% to 20% thereby increasing costs to locals; and

WHEREAS, the trucking industry plays an essential role in the American economy, moving 70% of all freight in the United States, and faces narrow profit margins; and

WHEREAS, several trucking businesses are based in Knowlton Township and daily cross a DRJTBC bridge; and

WHEREAS, the reason cited for the rate increase is "to offset continuing COVID-19-induced toll revenue decline" that was 23.6% less than the previous year⁴; and

WHEREAS, in the year prior to the pandemic, DRJTBC's operating revenues topped \$144.9 million, an increase of more than 10.2% from the previous year⁴; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is not permanent and traffic volume and revenue will rebound; and

WHEREAS, other bridge agencies, including the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA), have announced they will *not* increase tolls on their bridges, despite similar decreases in revenue due to the pandemic⁴; and

WHEREAS, the Scudder Falls Bridge, which began collecting tolls in the second half of 2019, represents a new, additional revenue stream for the Delaware Bridge Joint Toll Bridge Commission; and

WHEREAS, the proposed toll increase is a tax; and

WHEREAS, government agencies best serve the public when they cut expenses, such as downsizing renovation plans and negotiating personnel concessions, rather than increasing taxes; and

WHEREAS, government agencies best serve the public when they do not increase taxes permanently in response to temporary decreases in revenue.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Township of Knowlton, as a community adjacent to the I80 Delaware Water Gap Toll bridge, requests an exemption in tolls on that bridge for Knowlton residents and businesses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Township of Knowlton requests that if a blanket exemption for Knowlton residents and businesses is not feasible, then a schedule of several days per month that local residents and businesses may cross the bridge without toll is hereby requested to ease the impact on local communities.

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve resolution 2021-31

2021-32 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 Starrs and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs –yes to Resolution 2021-32.

NEW BUSINESS

Award of Open Space Grant

Mayor Starrs told the committee that the township was awarded the open space grant that the Land Conservancy applied for on the township’s behalf.

COVID-19 After-Action-Review

Discussion took place regarding if the committee would like to have in person meetings if the indoor capacity should go up. Majority of the committee felt that they should not rush into it and air on the side of caution. Discussion also took place regarding tunnel field playground Committeewoman Cuntala will speak to Recreation director Lembeck on the cleaning of the playground.

Resolution for Establishing Weight Limit of 13 tons on Route 519 in Hope Township

Mayor Starrs explained that Warren County will be passing a resolution to support Hope Township’s resolution, which is in the committee’s packet, requesting to have a weight limit on 519. This is a concern for Knowlton township because then there would be more trucks traveling on Route 46. The county’s resolution states that they will need the support of all the surrounding townships. Committee agreed that they will not proceed in passing a resolution of support at a future meeting because the weight limits are not in the interest of Knowlton residents, bringing more truck traffic onto Route 46, on Decatur Street, and at the Elementary School.

CORRESPONDENCE- No correspondence

MEETING MINUTES

January 4’ Reorganization Meeting

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve January 4- Reorganization meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Deputy Mayor Shipps updated the committee regarding kennels for stray dogs.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Shipps and carried to adjourn tonight’s meeting at 8:27 p.m.