

**MINUTES OF KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP  
WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
Public Session Meeting Minutes  
March 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:**

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**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](mailto: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.**

### **BUDGET PRESENTATION**

CFO-Christine Rolef emailed the proposed budget to the committee prior to the meeting. CFO Rolef was happy to announce that there will be no municipal tax increase this year. Cuts were made due to the closing of the municipal courts which reduced salary and wages. Discussion took place on cutting senior contributions as well as celebration of events.

The budget does include DPW garage renovations, paving of Starlite Hill Rd. and Mt. Pleasant Rd. Funds from last year’s municipal assets sales will be used to refurbish a firetruck. CFO Rolef also explained that an additional \$15,000 was put in to building and grounds for cutting of ash trees on township property .

### **Public Comment**

Gail Trilla 82 lime Kiln Rd., advised the committee that her driveway is right on a blind curb and would like to have a blind driveway or blind curb sign on the road. Township Engineer Ryan Burroughs of French & Parrello will look into the regulations to see if extra signage can be added.

### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

#### **Township Engineer Ryan Burroughs-**

Committee discussed where they would like to see the American Federal Grant money go. Committee agreed that better internet is needed. It was also discussed about the salt issue in Columbia. Mayor Starrs did agree to talk to the Warren County Commissioners to see if they would be interested in helping the township with cost. Mr. Burroughs agreed to look into Reverse Osmosis.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

#### **2021-38- Resolution Opposing Weight Limits on Routes 519/ 521 in Warren County**

**WHEREAS**, the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has been approached with a request for a 13-ton weight limit for vehicles on the section of County Routes 519 and 521 that includes the village of

Hope; and

WHEREAS, the weight limit applies to the following sections of Routes 519 and 521: 519 northbound from US Route 46 in White Township to the intersection with County Routes 521 and 609 in the center of Hope village; Route 521 in both directions between the CR 519/CR609 intersection and the intersection of Millbrook Road (County Route 611) just north of the village; Route 521 southbound between I-80 Interchange 12 and Millbrook Road (CR 611); and

WHEREAS, the NJDOT requires approval from municipalities along the route and the alternate route that trucks will be required to use; and

WHEREAS, the designated alternate is Route 46 through Knowlton Township; and

WHEREAS, trucks traveling Route 46 routinely use nearby streets such as Decatur, where they destroy lawns, pull down telephone cables, break fences, and block driveways causing numerous and regular complaints from residents to the governing body; and

WHEREAS, increasing truck traffic will make Route 46 more dangerous than it already is where parents with children and school buses enter and exit the Knowlton Township Elementary School located on Route 46; and

WHEREAS, increasing truck traffic on Route 46 past Knowlton Township Elementary school, where children play outside daily, will increase children's exposure to airborne diesel contaminants; and

WHEREAS, forcing trucks to take the longer route of going through Knowlton to go east on Route 80 will result in more diesel fuel consumption, contributing to global warming, pollution, and cost to truck drivers; and

WHEREAS, the proposed warehouses in Portland, PA, and White Township, NJ, are additional factors anticipated to significantly increase traffic on Route 46 and at the Columbia interchange potentially overwhelming it and the village of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, more trucks on Route 46 will bring them within feet of Knowlton's historic Ramsaysburg Homestead on Route 46; and

WHEREAS, it is the professional opinion of the architect renovating the Ramsaysburg Historic Homestead that significant additional truck traffic on Route 46 may damage the stone foundation of the main building; and

WHEREAS, it is the professional opinion of the architect renovating the Ramsaysburg Historic Homestead that as soot from truck exhaust attaches to stucco, the carbon becomes chemically bonded to the stucco, requiring costly cleaning of the Ramsayburg buildings; and

WHEREAS, the proposed weight limit may harm several trucking businesses located in Knowlton by

prohibiting them from accessing local routes; and

WHEREAS, the truck ban will bring harm to Knowlton's historic buildings, elementary school, residents, and business community; and

WHEREAS, solutions that benefit one town at the expense of another are not solutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Knowlton Township Committee cannot support the request to install weight limits on Routes 519 and 521.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Knowlton Township Committee asks the NJDOT to assist Knowlton in finding mutually beneficial solutions to help area towns mitigate damage from increased truck traffic in the region.

**Motion Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve resolution 2021-38**

**2021-39-Resolution Granting Approval of the Purchased of a Development Easement on the Vass Farm, Block 46 Lot 2, Block 46.01 Lot 1, Block 47, Lot 4 In Knowlton Township Consisting of Approximately 97.05 Gross Acres.**

WHEREAS, the Warren County Agriculture Development Board has determined that the property known as the Vass Farm, owned by Wayne and Mary Vass, located on Block 46 Lot 2, Block 46.01 Lot 1, Block 47 Lot 4, Knowlton Township and consisting of approximately 93.55 net acres has available for purchase a development easement in accordance with the requirements of the farmland Preservation program; and

WHEREAS, the pressures from development have significantly heightened the degree of imminence of change of land use from productive agriculture to nonagricultural uses; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.9A(b) on October 7, 2019 it was determined by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) that the application for the sale of a development easement was complete and accurate and satisfied the criteria contained in N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A.9(a); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A.11, on May 14, 2020 in accordance with the SADC Resolution #FY2020R4 (14), Executive Director Payne and Secretary Fisher signed the Certification of Market Value and has certified a development easement value of \$4,700 per acre based on the zoning and environmental regulations in place as of the current valuation date of February 11, 2020 with an estimated total value of \$456,135.00; and

WHEREAS, the property is part of the approved Warren County Preservation Incentive Grant Application and is funded by the Warren County Open Space, Farmland, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, the tract would encourage the survivability of production agriculture in Knowlton Township, and said tract falls within a predetermined County Agricultural Development Area and is in the North Project Area and the Township's Project Area 2; and

WHEREAS, the WCADB had previously agreed to utilize the SADC's MUNI PIG Grant for Knowlton Township to preserve this farm and is also contributing the Knowlton Township's local cost-share of 21.24% to the County's own cost-share; and

WHEREAS, the County's cost share for the Vass Farm will be \$1,480 per acre (42.49%) since Knowlton Township has exhausted all of its local municipal funds for farmland preservation; and

WHEREAS, the purchase of the development easement on the property will encourage the survivability of the productive agriculture in Knowlton Township and Warren County; and

WHEREAS, preliminary approval for the purchase of development rights on this farm has been granted by the State Agricultural Development Committee; and

WHEREAS, the SADC is expected to grant final approval for funding amount on said application at its April 22, 2021 meeting; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.13 on February 18, 2021, the Warren County Agriculture Development Board approved the funding for the development easement with estimated cost share with no cost share contribution by Knowlton Township as follows based on 97.05 acres: SADC \$312,501.00 (\$3,220/acre), Warren County \$143,634.00 (\$1,480/acre); and

WHEREAS, the WCADB approval included the following conditions:

1. This approval includes the following conditions
  - a. One existing barn on premises
  - b. No existing agriculture labor housing on premises
  - c. Exceptions
    - a. An approximately 3.3 acre severable exception on Block 47 Lot 4 for future single family residence unit, restricted to one single family residential unit and future flexibility
    - b. An approximately 4.75 non-severable exception area on Block 46 Lot 2 for existing single family residential unit restricted to one single family residential unit.
  - d. No Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSO's)
  - e. No preexisting non-agricultural uses on premises
  - f. Access easements to be determined at title search
  - g. No proposed trails
  - h. SADC funding from Base grant, competitive round or both

WHEREAS, the Warren County Board of County Commissioners approved its cost share funding amount and the above conditions at its February 24, 2021 meeting; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of Knowlton as follows:

The Township Committee hereby grants permission for the purchase of the development easement by the County of Warren under the Farmland Preservation Act as set forth above and will not be participating in cost share.

**Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs and carried to approve resolution 2021-39**

**2021-40- Award Department of Public Work Uniform Contract**

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton wishes to enter into a contract for Department of Public Works Uniforms; and

WHEREAS, the township has obtained a Competitive Quote from Cintas; and

WHEREAS, the Township's CPWM states there are no other suitable vendors to fulfill the Township's needs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton, County of Warren, and State of New Jersey enter into a three-year contract with Cintas P.O. Box 630910 Cincinnati, Ohio 45263-0910 per the Standard Rental Service Agreement.

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs approve by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs—yes, Resolution 2021-40.

2021-41- Resolution Authorizing Knowlton's Participation in the Warren County Shared Service Agreement for Sharing Warren County Department of Public Works Road Division Equipment.

WHEREAS, the County, by virtue of a shared services agreement, can lend equipment to municipalities during emergencies, as backup in case of breakdowns, and as secondary support equipment for large projects and for efficiency and effectiveness of operations; and

WHEREAS, the term of the proposed shared services agreement extends from January 1 2021, to December 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Knowlton Township Committee may need access to backup equipment during this period and wishes to proactively prepare for emergencies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Knowlton Township Committee supports Knowlton's participation in the Warren County Shared Services Agreement for Sharing Warren County DPW Road Division Equipment and Personnel.

**Motion made by Cuntala, second by Shipps and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala—yes, Mazza—yes, Shipps—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs—yes, resolution 2021-41**

**2021-42 - 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, resolution 2021-42**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Letter to Residents re: Diseased Tree Removal-** tabled to later meeting

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Federal COVID Funds (\$287,000) for Knowlton-**discussed during department reports.

#### **Grant for area newspaper**

Mayor Starrs was approached by a member of the Blairstown Enhancement Committee (BEC) to have a central news source. BEC needs a letter of support from the township in order to apply for a grant. Majority of the committee was not in support due to lack of information.

#### **Appointment of Planning Board Member Jaime Murray term exp. December 31, 2024**

Mayor Starrs appointed Jamie Murray as planning board member.

#### **New Jersey Fireman's Association Application for Brandon Chmielewski**

Motion made by Starrs, second by Cuntala and carried to approve Brandon Chmielewski application for New Jersey Fireman's Association.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

#### **Construction Update from Deputy Clerk Apgar**

Deputy Clerk updated the committee regarding computers in the construction office which are utilized by DCA, needs a new battery pack and eventually a new PC will need to be purchased. Committee agreed that the township will not purchase a new PC since it is only utilized by the state.

Deputy Mayor Shipps provided an update regarding housing stray dogs over the weekend. ACO Alan Decarolis has agreed to have the dogs stay with him until Monday morning when Blairstown Animal Hospital opens.

### **MEETING MINUTES**

#### **January 11, 2021 Executive Session Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs, and carried to approve January 11, 2021 Executive Session Meeting Minutes

#### **January 11, 2021 Public Session Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs, and carried to approve January 11, 2021 Public Session Meeting Minutes

**February 8, 2021 Executive Session Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs, and carried to approve February 8, 2021 Executive Session Meeting Minutes

**February 8, 2021 Public Session Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs, and carried to approve February 8, 2021 Public Session Meeting Minutes

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Deputy Mayor Shipp wanted to thank the Fire Department for their response to a fire that she had at her house.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION-**

Executive Session did not take place.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Cuntala, second by Starrs and carried to adjourn tonight's meeting at 8:16 p.m.