

**MINUTES OF KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP
WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
Public Session Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2020**

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 called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Mayor Starrs.

Mayor Starrs led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Starrs read the following statement “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.”

Roll Call

Present: Committeewoman Cuntala, Committeeman McNinch, Deputy Mayor Shipps (arrived at 7:10), Committeeman Van Horn, and Mayor Starrs

Also present was Township Engineer Ted Rodman, OEM Frank Makowski and Township Attorney Leslie Parikh.

PRESENTATION

Sarah Parramant, Epidemiologist, Warren County Health Dept.—Coronavirus

Ms. Parramant provided a brief background of COVID-19. The illness started in China in December of last year. Strict measures were put in place in China along with travel restrictions, however things have managed to spread around the world. There is a small number of cases in NJ, not yet in Warren County.

Warren County Health Department is fielding a lot of questions from schools, hospitals, municipalities, police officers, etc. Ms. Parramant explained that if there is a case in Warren County the Health Dept. will reach out to everyone that person has been in contact and provide direction. The State Health Department has a Coronavirus hotline to answer any questions 1-800-222-1222. There is also a twitter account which is @wchealth which will provide updates on Coronavirus.

The Warren County Health Department is suggesting that schools and municipalities update their emergency operation manuals and continuity operations plans. Ms. Parramant said that there is a possibility that people will be asked to stay at home and school will be closed. The CDC has on their website if you are older with underlying conditions you should be limiting your time in public. Testing currently is only being done for people who have known to be in contact with coronavirus, are sick enough to require hospitalization, or have traveled or are sick enough for hospitalization and have ruled out everything else.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Frank Makowski, Emergency Management Officer

Mr. Makowski has started an emergency contact list. Mr. Makowski will be having a meeting with Knowlton Fire & Rescue along with St. Luke's to prepare for coronavirus. Mr. Makowski provided an update regarding Clover Rest home, which is closed to the public and family members. Knowlton Elementary School is having their custodians clean the school constantly.

Discussion took place regarding the Municipal Building and Township Meetings. Mr. Makowski has the authority to shut down the municipal building if safety becomes a concern for the employees and residents. Committee agreed to have Attorney Parikh prepare a resolution that will allow the township to pay bills if meetings were to be canceled. Discussion also took place regarding the courts that are held twice a month in the conference room. Attorney Leslie Parikh needs to look into who has control on closing the court.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Pam Rusweiler heard that the New York jails are making hand sanitizers.

Resident Hamway talked to the committee regarding trucks that are tearing up asphalt in front their house. Mayor Starrs asked Attorney Parikh what the committee can do to have the NJ State Troopers enforce the no trucks on Decatur Street. Committee discussed putting barriers up near the bridge but they would need Warren County's permission, since the road is County owned. Mayor Starrs will prepare a resolution for a future meeting to pass and forward it to Warren County. Attorney Parikh will also send a letter to the NJ State troopers regarding enforcing no trucks on Decatur Street.

Ted Rodman, Township Engineer

Mr. Rodman received an email from NJDOT that the owner would need to get permission for the small lot on the Bruglar.

Final Paperwork for Stark Road and Kill Station Road paving has been submitted.

Water System for the Recreation Field-- paperwork is still in the works with the Warren County Health Dept.

RESOLUTIONS

2020-44- Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund Administrated by The New Jersey Historic Trust.

The Governing body of Knowlton Township Historic Commission desires to further historic preservation through a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust, State of New Jersey in the amount of \$365,725 for the following project Ramsaysburg Homestead.

Therefore, the governing body authorizes M. Adele Starrs, Mayor to execute a grant agreement with the State in an amount up to that awarded for the proposed project, and the seal the grant

agreement.

Motion made by Committeeman McNinch, second Mayor Starrs and carried to approve Resolution 2020-44.

2020-48 Resolution Requesting Environmental Impact Statement for Route 80 Rockfall Mitigation Project in Knowlton & Hardwick Township

WHEREAS, as the recipient of federal transportation funds for the Route 80 Rockfall Mitigation Project, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is required to comply with the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) implementation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) regulations; and

WHEREAS, NEPA requires the full disclosure of both positive and negative impacts for a project; and

WHEREAS, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a rigorous level of study that can be applied to large, complex NJDOT projects and is required by NEPA (under 23 CFR 771.123-127) for actions "significantly affecting the quality of the human environment;" and

WHEREAS, an EIS is intended to ensure regulatory compliance for federally funded projects and prevent legal actions against the Federal agency; and

WHEREAS, the NJDOT is not currently calling for an EIS on this project and is instead opting for a less substantial review called an Environmental Assessment or EA; and

WHEREAS, this project may cause social, economic, and environmental impacts that are long-term and/or permanent such as:

- Restriction of ability to fight forest fires in an area that is heavily frequented by campers and visitors. As the forest fire within the project area that occurred in February 2020 and burned 80 acres shows, firefighting is essential to prevent fires from spreading to nearby communities
- Permanent damage to a culturally and historically significant area
- Permanent loss of the viewshed of a unique geologic landmark, the Delaware Water Gap, on the East Coast of the United States
- Permanent impact to recreational climbing use of Mount Tammany, one of the best climbing areas in the state of New Jersey
- Loss of visitors and income to the Delaware National Water Gap Recreation Area, one of the most visited National Park properties in the United States and entrance to the Appalachian Trail
- Loss of livelihood for area families-- According to the Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau, 25% of all jobs in the region are due to travel and tourism, which creates \$3.3 *billion* in economic activity for the region. Four to five years of construction on the main thoroughfare may have serious and long-term consequences for the families involved in this industry.

WHEREAS, in letters dated July 12, 2018 and September 4, 2019, the NJDOT denied the request for a study of economic impacts asserting that four lanes of traffic will be maintained throughout the four-to five year construction period and there will be “unimpeded traffic flow...without direct impact to the local economy;”

WHEREAS, “unimpeded traffic flow...without direct impact to the local economy” may not be an accurate depiction and thus fulfill the requirement for full disclosure of negative impacts required by NEPA; and

WHEREAS, AUTOCAD design software has subsequently shown that tractor trailers cannot pass through the proposed construction zone’s narrowed and curving lanes without contact and that it is therefore extremely unlikely that “unimpeded traffic flow” will occur; and

WHEREAS, alert residents have subsequently shown that a substantial crater exists under Route 80, believed to be caused by erosion, in the area where traffic would be routed and this crater has necessitated immediate NJDOT repair; and

WHEREAS, these issues were brought to the NJDOT’s attention by the public, local officials, and the media, and there may be other issues the NJDOT is currently unaware of; and

WHEREAS, the NJDOT asserts that detours will not be necessary, yet high traffic volume, duration of construction, and requisite blasting with explosives make it likely that congestion will occur; and

WHEREAS, navigation systems reroute drivers to Route 611 when congestion occurs, which is a road prone to rockfall and that the PA Department of Transportation prohibits standard tractor trailers from traveling on in parts; and

WHEREAS, federal and state elected officials from New Jersey and Pennsylvania including Representative Josh Gottheimer, Senator Steven Oroho, Assemblyman Parker Space, Assemblyman Hal Wirths, Senator Mario Scavello, Representative Rosemary Brown, Representative Joe Emrick have all documented their concerns with this project; and

WHEREAS, there has been substantial outcry from the public as documented by more than two dozen municipalities, the NJ League of Municipalities, a coalition of organized residents, and thousands of citizens who follow the issue on web page devoted to the project; and

WHEREAS, groups voicing opposition and concern include the NJ Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association, the New Jersey Highlands Association, Access Fund, Pocono Mountain

Visitors Bureau, several Native American tribes and others; and

WHEREAS, more than 50 newspaper articles in 5 different newspaper and several dozen television and radio have been published on the proposed project illustrating a substantial public interest;

WHEREAS, all the above illustrate the critical need for an EIS, which will provide a deeper level of study regarding the impacts of the proposed project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Township of Knowlton hereby requests an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Route 80 Rockfall Mitigation Project in Knowlton and Hardwick Townships.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the following agencies, representatives, and consulting parties:

John Miller, Federal Highway Administration, NJ Division
Lauren Baker, Office of the Administrator, USDOT, Federal Highway Administration
Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti, NJ Department of Transportation
NJ Governor Phil Murphy
US Senator Cory Booker
Congressman Josh Gottheimer
Senator Steven Oroho
Assemblyman Hal Wirths
Assemblyman Parker Space
Representative Rosemary Brown
Senator Mario Scavello
Representative Joe Emrick
Dr. Ruth Foster, NJDEP
Kathryn Marcopul, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, NJDEP
Andrea Lowery, Executive Director, PA State Historic Preservation Office
Deborah Dotson, President, Delaware Nation
Bonney Hartley, Stockbridge Munsee Community, WI
Sula Jacobs, National Park Service
Chris Jacobs, President, Pocono Mountain Visitors' Bureau
Freeholders of Warren County
Mr. David Behrend, NJ Transportation Planning Authority
Mayor Lance Prator, Portland Borough
Mayor Larry Freshcorn, Delaware Water Gap Borough

Forks Township Board of Supervisors

Sandra Newman, Supervisor, Lower Mount Bethel Township

John Birmingham, Supervisor, Upper Mount Bethel Township

Corey Tierney, Administrator Warren County Dept. of Land Preservation

Susan Bachor, Delaware Tribe Preservation Representative

Brice Obermeyer, Delaware Tribe Representative, OK

Edwina Butler-Wolfe, Absentee-Shawnee Tribe, OK

Ron Sparkman, Chief, Shawnee Tribe, OK

Wally Miller, Chairman, Stockbridge-Munsee, WI

Barbara Bluejay Michalsky, Lenape Nation of PA

Suzanne Dixon, President Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Wendy Janssen, Superintendent, Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Kevin Duffy, Mayor, Hardwick Township

Hardwick Township Historical Society

Hal Bromm, President, Knowlton Township Historic Commission

Elliott Ruga, NJ Highlands Coalition

Sergio Moncada, National Parks Conservation Association

Greg Gorman, NJ Sierra Club

Tara Mezzanotte, I80DWGCoalition

Brittney Kohler, Legislative Director, Transportation and Infrastructure, National League of Cities

Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeeman McNinch and carried to approve Resolution 2020-48.

2020-49- 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 Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Mayor Starrs and approved by Roll Call vote: Cuntala—yes, McNinch—yes, Shipp—yes, Van Horn—yes, Starrs—yes Resolution 2020-49 with the exception of Blairstown Agway bill.

OLD BUSINESS

NJ Farm Borough

Committeeman McNinch provided information regarding the NJ Farm Borough. 10 other municipalities are part of the group. They are lobbying group. Majority on Committee agreed not to proceed with membership.

Trucks on Decatur --Discussed during Public Comment

10-Year Capital Expenditure Forecast-- Knowlton Fire & Rescue

Deputy Mayor Shipps met with Knowlton Fire & Rescue and they provided a list of equipment they are going to need in the next 10 years. Deputy Mayor Shipps spoke with a grant writer and they should start 18 months in advance for the big ticket items.

Discussion took place about making a new line item in the budget for Fire & Rescue.

NEW BUSINESS

Spring Clean Up June 1st – June 6th

Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried for Spring Clean up to occur on June 1 to June 6, 2020.

CORRESPONDENCE

MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2020 Executive Session Meeting Minutes – Motion made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Committeeman McNinch and carried to approve February 27, 2020 Executive Session Meeting Minutes.

February 27, 2020 Public Session Meeting Minutes – Motion made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Committeeman McNinch and carried to approve February 27, 2020 Public Session Meeting Minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Resident Sharon Valentine asked if the committee knew about the road expansion on Route 80 in Pennsylvania. Mayor Starrs said that they are aware of it and it is being done at the exact same time as the Rockwall Mitigation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to go into Executive Session at 8:52 p.m.

2020-50- Authorizing an 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
- B. Contract Negotiations

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 was made by Mayor Starrs, Second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to go back into public session at 9:15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Mayor Starrs and carried to adjourn tonight's Township meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Shipps
Municipal Clerk