

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

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
February 9, 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 Shipps. Also present was Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer. Attorney Cushing attended via cell phone. 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 7:05 pm with a salute to the flag and roll call.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Resolution 15-22 (copy attached)

A motion was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to enter executive session for the purpose of discussion of personnel and potential litigation. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

The Township Committee returned to public session at 7:30 pm.

PRESENTATION: Mayor Perry, Hardwick Township

Mayor Perry presented the Township with a \$30,000.00 check to Knowlton Fire Co. to be used for repairs to the fire truck. Mayor Starrs explained that in the event the contract is broken or the fire company is disbanded, a prorated refund will be given to Hardwick Township. Committeeman Mathez stated the refund should come from the fire company. Fire Chief Bates stated the vehicle is owned by the Township. A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve the revised shared service contract. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes. Fire Chief Bates thanked Mayor Perry for the contribution. The Hardwick Township Clerk will forward the executed contract to Knowlton Township.

Bob Peterson, Fire Company President, asked where Hardwick obtained the funds. Mayor Perry explained that Hardwick Township receives payment in lieu of taxes from Warren County. The federal funds are distributed to counties which house national parks. Mayor Perry suggested that Knowlton may be eligible to receive some PILT funding. He will schedule a meeting with Mayor Starrs and the Warren County Freeholders.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Steve Agin, Delaware, stated he has been a resident of Knowlton Township for 25 years. He stated his objection to the Route 46 fence project. Beyond the astronomical cost, he is very concerned that the aesthetics of the township are being destroyed. He introduced Dr. Mark Ringenary, a park service water specialist at Gateway National Park in New York. Dr. Ringenary explained that the state should have had local approval before beginning the project. The Delaware River Basin Commission established the Route 46 corridor as scenic and recreation requiring special protection of the area. Dr. Ringenary also stated the Township should be aware of any herbicides used in the project.

Committeeman Farber stated there was no record of accidents in that stretch of Route 46. He stated the project has created numerous accidents.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, stated he travelled to Newark to try to dissuade the State from continuing the project. Mr. Clifford stated he tried to recommend that the rock should be scaled back and left natural. Ice formations in the winter months will surely damage the fence the DOT intends to install. He also stated there is no sign as required by law posting the cost of the project. He said he has tried to no avail to find out why there is no sign notifying taxpayers of the cost of the so called improvement project. As far as he could find out, the project will be in excess of 20 million dollars. Mr. Clifford also stated his concern that dead animals will lay rotting behind the fence.

Mayor Starrs asked Attorney Cushing for his recommendation. He suggested that Dr. Ringenary could write a letter to the State of New Jersey describing the concerns of the Township.

Committeeman Mathez inquired if there is a time period to object to a project planned by the NJDOT. Attorney Cushing stated he is not sure what can be done to halt the project at this time. Committeeman Mathez stated the project is a disgrace to the Township and the State.

Dr. Ringenary will provide an outline of concerns. Mayor Starrs will draft a letter to Debbie Hirt, Community Relations, NJDOT.

Mr. Agin also reported that the Gulf Gas Station sign on Route 46 is too bright and may cause an accident to travelers who are blinded along the dark stretch of the highway. Mayor Starrs explained the business received a variance in 2006 to replace a damaged sign. The zoning officer will be asked to provide a conformance report.

Mr. Clifford explained the sign lumens are adjustable. The business owner could simply be asked to turn the brightness down.

George Trongone, Polkville Road, stated that the Board of Adjustment, will be looking into the sign ordinance. He questioned why the board was not included in the review of the tabled sign ordinance.

Discussion took place regarding the size of the Gulf Station sign. Mayor Starrs will follow up.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Finance

Mayor Starrs stated the CFO was not present due to the weather. Mayor Starrs explained the Township failed to enter two employees in the PERS pension system. She stated the employees will have back payments which they can pay in a lump sum or spread over a 5 year payment plan.

Attorney Cushing will look into the feasibility and legality of providing the employees with a no interest loan. He explained the employees did receive the funds in their salary. He also recommended that the Township Committee confer with the auditor on this issue.

Committeewoman Shipps asked if the employees could take recourse against the Township for the failure to enroll them in the pension. Attorney Cushing explained there would be no damages.

Mayor Starrs stated insurance will not cover the penalty costs. The personnel subcommittee will meet with the affected employees. The municipal clerk will provide a timeline to the personnel subcommittee detailing start dates, vested dates and the name of the CFO in office at the time the employees were hired.

Emergency Management

Frank Makowski, Emergency Management Coordinator provided a review of the on-going Hazard Mitigation Project. He explained the mandatory project is conducted by Warren County with participation by all municipalities. A meeting was held at 6:00 pm on February 9, 2015 with Deputy Mayor Cuntala, Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, Frank VanHorn, Ted Rodman, Floodplain Engineer and Lisa Patton, Municipal Clerk.

The purpose of the project is to identify potential hazards to the Township and secure FEMA funding should the need arise. Mr. Makowski requested additional funding in the 2015 budget to complete the yearlong project.

Mr. Makowski also informed the Township Committee there is a vacancy in the shelter manager position. The shelter manager is usually a volunteer position. The Red Cross will train the shelter manager. Mayor Starrs will post the position on the Township web site.

Recreation

Dennis Lembeck, Recreation Director, reviewed the NJDEP SEP wish list. He stated he was not in receipt of a previous e-mail from Committeeman Mathez. He stated the procurement process drafted by the CFO is complicated and redundant. Deputy Mayor Cuntala suggested the process could be re-vamped. Deputy Mayor Cuntala and Committeeman Mathez will discuss the issue with the CFO.

George Trongone, Polkville Road, stated the Methodist Church does not want the liability of having a tennis court. It was agreed to remove the tennis court from the list.

Mr. Lembeck questioned the need for a trail at Ramsaysburg. Committeeman Farber stated he is reviewing the lease agreement with the State. He noted the lease expires in nine years and it is possible that the State could take over the property in the future.

Ken Metcalf, Environmental Commission, stated the trail is planned to be completed through an eagle scout project.

Committeeman Farber stated projects for kids and recreation should be a priority. Eagle scouts projects require the scout to raise funds for the project. He said proper procedures must be followed; it may be necessary to have NJDEP Fish and Wildlife approval.

Committeewoman Shipps stated the \$350,000 grant was intended for Township recreation and should be used on Township property only.

A motion was made by Mayor Starrs to approve the wish list with the church tennis courts removed. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – no, Starrs – yes.

Committeeman Farber stated the list may need further modification if an eagle scout can complete the Ramsaysburg Trail. He also stated he does not want to see the taxpayers burdened with costs at Ramsaysburg.

Mayor Starrs stated any substantial changes to the wish list must be approved by the entire Township Committee.

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to approve quotes for recreation machinery conditioned on approval from the CFO. The motion was seconded by Mayor Starrs. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

ORDINANCES:

Ordinance 15-02

Ordinance Appointing Personnel Committee Chair As Record Custodian of Personnel Evaluations
(copy attached)

A motion was made to introduce Ordinance 15-02 by Mayor Starrs. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Mathez. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Ordinance 15-01

**An Ordinance to Exceed The Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits
And To Establish A Cap Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-4.5.14)**
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to open the public hearing for Ordinance 15-01. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Farber. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Bob McNinch, Vail Road, asked Mayor Starrs for an explanation of this ordinance. Attorney Cushing explained the content of the ordinance.

There being no other comments, a motion to close the public hearing was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 15-01 was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Committeeman Farber. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 15-22a

Resolution Approving Payment of Vouchers
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-22a. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Mathez. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-23

Resolution Approving Professional Services Contract – Floodplain Engineer
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-23 which appoints Ted Rodman as Floodplain Engineer at an hourly rate of \$124.00. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-24

Resolution Approving Professional Services Contract – Special Counsel
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-24 which appoints John Lanza, Esq. as special counsel at an hourly rate of \$165.00 plus miscellaneous fees. Committeeman Farber asked if the entire Township Committee has seen the contract. He stated he was waiting for this contract since 2014. Attorney Cushing stated he was resolving an insurance situation. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Fred Kessler, Vail Road, inquired about the relationship of the Knowlton Athletic Association to the Township. Attorney Cushing explained the KAA is an independent not for profit organization which receives a contribution from the Township.

Mr. Kessler asked if there was a dispute, would the Township Committee distance itself from the KAA? Attorney Cushing stated the Township would be interested in supporting the organization.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, stated it is ridiculous to conduct a Township meeting with the attorney on a cell phone. He suggested the public needs to be able to hear the meeting. Township Committee members present were in agreement to purchase a conference phone.

Committeeman Farber asked about the status of the nuisance ordinance. Attorney Cushing said he reviewed two ordinances and a draft amendment to the nuisance ordinance will be available at the next meeting.

Discussion took place regarding an appointment to the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund Conservancy. Committeeman Farber declined to serve in this capacity due to his schedule.

At this time, due to inclement weather, the Township Committee was in agreement to carry additional agenda items to the next regular meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, a motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Committeeman Farber to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk