

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

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
August 10, 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 Shippis. Also present was Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer. Richard Cushing, Municipal Attorney arrived at 7:30 pm. 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 7:00 pm with a salute to the flag and roll call. There being no executive session, a break was taken until the meeting commenced at 7:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve the July 23, 2015 meeting minutes. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – abstain, Shippis – yes, Starrs – yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. and Mrs. Russweiler, Columbia

Mrs. Russweiler requested the status of Columbia water testing and DPW protocol for salt application in Columbia. Mayor Starrs reported that a water sampling and testing plan was approved by the Warren County Health Department. A survey is planned to be distributed September 1st. Mayor Starrs also reported that The NJDEP has given a positive response to a request for geological and research support. Freeholder Smith has indicated that the county will stop applying salt on county roads in Columbia. Negotiations are underway to transfer the maintenance of the County's portion of Decatur Street to Knowlton Township. The status of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission's plans for salt application is not known. The Township will establish a protocol for using a bare minimum of salt and identify the village of Columbia as a low salt area.

Mrs. Russweiler stated Mansfield Township is experiencing the same problem with salt contamination in wells. Mrs. Russweiler also stated Mansfield Township is reducing affected residents' taxes for five years to allow remediation of the contaminated wells.

Committeeman Farber suggested that it may be necessary to use media to get cooperation from the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission.

Mr. Russweiler stated a storm drain with a lip is preventing drainage in the area. He also stated Knowlton Township and other entities block the storm drains while plowing the snow. Mayor Starrs said the NJDEP will look at storm drains in the area. Mayor Starrs will provide a jurisdictional map to Mrs. Russweiler.

Knowlton Township Fire and Rescue

The Knowlton Township Deputy Fire Chief reported the NJDOT is planning to change the blinking yellow light at Roy Ace Street and Route 46 to a standard red, yellow and green light. The NJDOT will provide control of the light to the Fire Company when need for emergencies.

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, stated he was the fire chief when the light was installed. The fire company has not used the red light because vehicles run the red light as they are not used to it. He also stated concern with pollution in Delaware from stopped vehicles.

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Township Committee members agreed that concern with air and noise pollution, traffic being slowed down, and lack of evidence of accidents at the intersection contribute to a red/yellow/green light being detrimental to the area.

Mayor Starrs will draft a letter requesting the light remain blinking yellow. She suggested that the fire company should also send a letter opposing the light change.

Committeewoman Shipps asked if the fire company is aware of a Homeland Security grant for equipment. She stated Phillipsburg has received \$447,000 for equipment. The Deputy Fire Chief stated the grant is based on need. Phillipsburg had obsolete breathing equipment. Knowlton Township has maintained good breathing equipment. Committeewoman Shipps will follow up with the Fire Chief.

Engineer Rodman stated the bid opening for a refurbished fire truck will be held on August 12, 2015.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Joe Rossi, Zoning Officer

Mr. Rossi reported that Wells Fargo has sold 23 Decatur Street to another bank. Wells Fargo indicated application for a demolition permit was submitted to the Township. Mr. Rossi reported there is no evidence of application for a permit.

Attorney Cushing advised that a letter should be sent to both Wells Fargo and the new mortgage company. After a reasonable time period, summonses may be issued. Mr. Rossi will forward correspondence to Mr. Cushing.

Committeewoman Shipps inquired about the status of 150 Vail Road. Mr. Rossi explained a summons has been issued to the out of state owner. He doesn't expect a response from the owner. The issue is complicated due to the owner being an estate with many individuals involved.

Attorney Cushing explained a determination by the construction official could allow the Township to remediate a safety issue. Committeewoman Shipps asked if squatter rights apply. Attorney Cushing said he is not aware of any application of squatter rights in New Jersey. Committeewoman Shipps will follow up with the construction official.

Bob McNinch, Vail Road, stated the Township has owned the tax lien for nine months and has been talking about this topic for a long time. He suggested that the Township could assign the tax lien to an adjoining property owner and divorce itself from the problem. Committeewoman Shipps stated a neighbor may be interested due to a shared septic or well. Committeewoman Shipps will contact the neighbor to determine if he is interested in attending a Township Committee meeting.

Dennis Lembeck, Recreation

Mr. Lembeck reviewed his request to purchase a new playground using NJDEP grant funds. He stated the funds are dedicated for recreational use. Discussion took place regarding having volunteers install the playground.

Committeeman Mathez asked if insurance will cover the equipment if it is installed by volunteers. Deputy Mayor Cuntala asked if the warranty is effective if the equipment is installed by volunteers. Mr. Lembeck will research the questions. Mayor Starrs will contact the insurance representative.

Doreen Rutherford, Hunters' Lodge, stated she helped with Blairstown's playground project. She said it

took two years of manpower hours to organize the volunteers who installed the playground in Blairstown. Discussion took place regarding projects already approved by NJDEP for funding. Committeewoman Shipps asked for the total original grant amount. Mr. Lembeck said \$350,000. Committeeman Mathez asked about the status of the walking trail. Mr. Lembeck said the millings were delivered and will be covered by Saturday.

Committeeman Mathez stated some committee members are concerned about spending \$90,000 for a tot lot which will serve a reasonably small number of people. Mayor Starrs stated she has received concern from residents about the cost of the playground. Committeeman Mathez asked if the project can be completed at a lesser cost. He requested that Mr. Lembeck provide other options. Mr. Lembeck said he does not recommend downsizing the project. George Trongone, Recreation volunteer, stated the projects at Delaware Beach and Ramsaysburg also serve a small number of residents.

Deputy Mayor Cuntala said she supports the project as is. She stated the project is worthy and will be well used. Committeewoman Shipps stated she supports the project. Committeeman Farber stated the funding is coming from the state, he does not have any problem with the project and does not want to drag out the decision making process longer than it has been.

Mayor Starrs requested that Mr. Lembeck provide another option and walking path quotes at the next meeting.

ORDINANCES:

ORDINANCE 15-07

An Ordinance Amending Section 174-14 Of The Knowlton Township General Code And Adding Section 174-14.1 In Order To Restrict Parking On Station Road To Permit Holders (copy attached)

A motion was made to open the public hearing by Committeeman Mathez. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Mayor Starrs explained the new parking permit process. She reported the State Police have recently issued ten tickets. The fine is \$233.00, Knowlton Township retains \$108.00 for each ticket. Committeewoman Shipps stated she delivered notices of the pending ordinances to cars parked on Station Road over the past weekends.

Mayor Starrs will notify the State Police when the ordinance has been adopted. Attorney Cushing recommended that the Prosecutor also be advised.

There being no further discussion, 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 15-07 was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

ORDINANCE 15-08

Ordinance Amending The Salary Wage Ordinance Of The Township Of Knowlton, County Of Warren, State Of New Jersey For The Calendar Year 2015

A motion to open the public hearing for Ordinance 15-08 was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Discussion took place regarding Committee members who do not take a salary. Bob McNinch, Vail Road, asked for the percentage of salary increase given to employees and Township Committee members. Mayor

Starrs explained a .08% increase was given across the board with merit increases based on performance reviews and other municipalities' comparable salaries.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 15-08 was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Committeewoman Shipps. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 15-72
Resolution Approving Payment Of Vouchers
(copy attached)

Mayor Starrs stated she will pull a voucher for Dorrence Hillyerd Plumbing and follow up with the vendor. A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-72. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-74
Resolution Approving Knowlton Township Fire and Rescue Legalized Games of Chance Application
For A Tricky Tray To Be held On September 5, 2015 At Delaware River Campground
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-74. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

COAH

Committeeman Mathez explained he received a quote for \$10,000.00 from the planner to amend the COAH plan. He reported that there is no money left in the account for administration.

Attorney Cushing summarized the Supreme Court decision. The next step is modification of the plan. Attorney Cushing will draft a letter to the planner.

Bereavement Policy

Committeewoman Shipps introduced an amended bereavement policy. It will add an extra day for a parent and parent of a spouse and remove cousins, aunts and uncles. It was suggested by a resident that 60% of regular hours worked for part time employees is standard policy. Committeewoman Shipps will provide a revised policy to be distributed to employees. A motion was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve the aforementioned bereavement policy changes. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

Delaware Beach Policies

Mayor Starrs explained non-duplicating keys are being made for the new lock at Delaware Beach. She reviewed a notice to be given to residents who request keys. Nelson, Hunters' Lodge, asked if businesses can also receive keys. Mayor Starrs explained the Township is attempting to minimize vandalism and non-resident use of the area. Committeeman Mathez suggested an exception could be made for eco-tourism businesses. Mayor Starrs asked for two keys to be issued to Fire and Rescue.

Committeeman Farber asked for the status of the house next to the municipal building. Mayor Starrs said it will either be converted to office space or be used as affordable housing. Committeeman Mathez will follow up with the COAH administrator to determine requirements for affordable housing. The municipal clerk will contact Warren County Health Department to determine the status of the septic plan.

FEMA Flood Mitigation Grant

Committeeman Mathez reported that the application for flood mitigation has been submitted to FEMA by Warren County Public Safety.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gypsy Moth Survey

Discussion took place regarding a gypsy moth survey. Township Committee members were in agreement to approve the survey.

Mold Remediation

Mayor Starrs reviewed two quotes for remediation of mold in the municipal building basement. Seitz quote was \$1,920 for the room at the bottom of the steps and \$6,311.20 for sump pump installation. TriState quote was for \$2,568.00 for the room at the base of the steps. Mayor Starrs stated the quotes will be revisited when insurance reimbursement information is obtained.

Minutes

Committeewoman Shipps requested that February 9 and 26, 2015 minutes be re-posted on the website.

Bob McNinch, Vail Road, stated two meetings ago, he asked if executive session minutes will be released. He asked if, over the past two years, any executive session minutes were released because he is getting the sense that no executive session minutes are released.

Attorney Cushing explained the process to release executive session minutes. He stated that any pending or open litigation minutes are not released until the matter is closed. He also stated personnel matters are often not released to protect employee rights. Mayor Starrs said the decision to enter executive session for personnel matters is up to the employee.

Mr. McNinch stated the public demand is to follow the law. The municipal clerk will review executive session minutes for the past two years to determine if any minutes may be released.

Tax Collection

Committeewoman Shipps stated she met with the tax collector to address audit recommendations. She has issued a 45 day time limit to address the recommendations with an additional 15 days to show accomplishments.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Resolution 15-71 (copy attached)

A motion to enter executive session was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Starrs – yes, Shipps – yes.

The Township Committee returned to public session.

RESOLUTION 15-73
Resolution Authorizing The Hiring Of Special Counsel
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-73. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bill Clifford, Koeck Road, asked how much money has been spent in 2015 for personnel matters. Mayor Starrs said \$14,000 has been spent. Mr. Clifford said don't lie, there has been \$33,000 spent on personnel matters alone in 2015 which should have been handled by the Township Committee. The municipal clerk gave Mayor Starrs an accounting of personnel legal expenses in 2015 which was requested by a committee member.

Mr. Clifford stated it is time to cease wasting taxpayer money over a personal vendetta. It is ridiculous that the Township cannot pay for DPW doormats or needed computers, but can waste legal expenses. He stated these problems began when Mathez was appointed as personnel subcommittee. We never had these problems when Frank Van Horn was mayor, the problems began when Adele Starrs became mayor.

Mayor Starrs replied that while personnel matters cannot be discussed, she will say that residents will want to know why this was not done sooner.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk