

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

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
September 24, 2015**

A regular meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee was held at the Knowlton Township municipal building on September 24, 2015. Present were Mayor Starrs, Deputy Mayor Cuntala and Township Committee members Mathez and Farber. Also present were Dick Cushing, Municipal Attorney and Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer. 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve the February 26, 2015 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mayor Starrs. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Shippis – absent, Farber – abstain, Starrs – yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ken Metcalf presented an update on the progress of the Ramsaysburg trail project. He reported he is obtaining quotes for interpretive and trail marker signage. Mr. Metcalf stated a bridge will need to be built across the stream. The stream is one to two feet wide. Design plans will be conscious of the 100 year flood plain. Plans are underway for presentation of a revised budget. Mr. Metcalf requested a deadline from the Township Committee for budget approval. Township Committeeman Mathez asked Recreation Department employee, George Trongone for a deadline. Mr. Trongone said December 31, 2016 is the deadline.

Mr. Trongone asked if provisions for parking are being addressed. He stated it is dangerous to park cars along Route 46. Mr. Metcalf reported he is working with the NJDOT for parking provisions. The Township Committee thanked Mr. Metcalf and asked him to contact the CFO for a budget deadline.

ORDINANCES:

**Ordinance 15-10
Ordinance Amending 2015 Salary Ordinance
(copy attached)**

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to introduce Ordinance 15-10. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala - yes, Farber – no, Shippis – absent, Starrs – yes. A public hearing for Ordinance 15-10 will be held on October 22, 2015.

RESOLUTIONS:

**Resolution 15-85a
Resolution Authorizing The Termination Of The Position Of Personnel Administrator And Transferring
The Duties Of The Personnel Administrator To Other Employees
(copy attached)**

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-85a. Committeeman Farber stated information left for him indicated the municipal clerk carried out duties of the personnel administrator for the last 10 years with no additional pay. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-86a
Resolution Authorizing The Hiring Of An Office Manager
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-86a. Mayor Starrs explained the savings from eliminating the personnel administrator will be used for the hiring of an office manager. Committeeman Farber asked if a contract has been presented to the candidate. Mayor Starrs stated terms of the contract were discussed. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-87a
Resolution Approving Professional Services Agreement – Office Manager
(copy attached)

It was noted that the municipal clerk did not receive a signed contract. Committeeman Farber recommended the resolution be passed tentatively, conditioned on the receipt of a signed contract. Attorney Cushing recommended that the resolution be approved contingent upon a signed contract from the prospective employee or consultant. Mayor Starrs stated the contract will not exceed \$15,000. A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-87a. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Mathez. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-88
**Resolution Of The Knowlton Township Committee Authorizing An application of
The Knowlton Township Municipal Alliance Funding For The 2016 Calendar Year**
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-88. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-89
Resolution Approving Payment Of Vouchers
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-89. Committeeman Farber stated he had a question on an attorney bill with items missing. He asked where the money will come from to pay this bill. Mayor Starrs stated there is almost \$900,000 in surplus. She added there is extra income from weigh station revenue. Committeeman Farber repeated there are items missing off the bill. Mayor Starrs stated the municipal attorney sent an e-mail requesting her to redact information off the bill, but she inadvertently redacted the wrong information.

Committeeman Farber stated bills for a lot less than the special counsel invoice were held up for explanation before payment was made. The special counsel bill is for almost \$11,000. He stated the Mayor claims we should just keep spending. Committeeman Farber stated the invoice should be better categorized. Mayor Starrs stated the Township Committee could hold off on payment of the invoice. Committeeman Farber stated most incomplete bills are set aside. He also stated he wants to see the number of hours spent on this work.

A motion was made by Mayor Starrs to approve payment of vouchers with the exception of the special counsel invoice.

A resident commented that the probability of the work being done is good. Committeeman Farber stated number of hours worked is missing off the document. The resident asked if Committeeman Farber is disputing the work was done. Committeeman Farber stated he is disputing hours worked because it is missing from the invoice.

Attorney Cushing stated the amount and number of hours on an attorney invoice are public information.

Deputy Mayor Cuntala seconded the motion. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-90
Resolution Authorizing The Filing By Special Counsel Of An Action Before The
Department Of Community Affairs Regarding A Municipal Employee
(copy attached)

Committeeman Farber stated from information delivered to his home, it is obvious that the majority of Township Committee members have made up their minds before any discussion in a meeting. He stated everything is being done last minute. He did not even have opportunity to review the information presented to him.

Committeeman Mathez stated the information was present for a long time. Committeeman Farber stated the information was not brought before the Township Committee who should have been given ample opportunity to review the report.

Mayor Starrs stated the resolution calls for a meeting in 10 days to try to resolve the problem. A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-90. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-02d
Resolution Approving Compensated Appointments
(copy attached)

Mayor Starrs stated the resolution appoints Theresa Tamburro as office manager. Committeeman Farber stated he does not see the necessity for this appointment when a professional service contract resolution was already passed.

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-02d. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – no, Shipps – yes, Starrs – yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

Route 46 & Roy Ace, Clinton Streets Light

Mayor Starrs reported that she and Committeewoman Shipps met with fire company representatives regarding the light at the intersection on Route 46. The fire company's recommendation is to remove the light and replace it with stop signs at Clinton and Roy Ace Streets.

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Mayor Starrs to refer the recommendation to NJDOT. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Columbia Mail Delivery

Mayor Starrs explained Columbia residents can now install mailboxes. There must be 10 feet of clearance on either side of the mailbox. If 50% or more residents install mailboxes, free PO boxes for Columbia residents will be removed. Township Committee members present were in agreement not to publicize the change in mail delivery service.

48 Hour Notice For Agenda Items

The municipal clerk explained there is a 48 hour notice before a meeting date for agenda items. She explained this is in fairness to the public and the municipal clerk. Committeeman Mathez stated the policy should be at the discretion of the mayor. The municipal clerk agreed in the event of emergency, it would be necessary to forego the policy. She also explained she cannot be responsible for many last minute changes because she may be attending to other duties.

NEW BUSINESS:

Request For Private Drive / No Access Sign At 11 Station Road

The municipal clerk reported a resident requested installation of a private drive sign at 11 Station Road. Township Committee members present were in agreement not to provide the sign for a private driveway.

Brugler Farm

Mayor Starrs stated the Brugler house on Route 94 was demolished. She was asked why the Township Committee didn't stop the demolition. She reported the State Historic Preservation Office doesn't interfere with private property. Therefore, it was not in the Township Committee's ability to prevent the residence from being taken down.

James Cavall stated the owner didn't want to pay the \$10,000 property taxes. He stated there is a Facebook rumor that a demo permit was issued when no one knew about it. Discussion took place regarding notification to the Historic Commission when demolition permits are issued.

Ken Metcalf stated the Historic Commission did not address the demolition of the historic structure because the township did not have jurisdiction over the private property. Mr. Cavall stated the Historic Commission could have approached the owner to inquire if pictures could be taken or to salvage historic items. Mr. Cavall also stated significant private properties have been saved in other areas.

Committeeman Farber stated the Township could make sure notification is given if a demo permit is taken out, but can't legally stop the owner from taking the structure down.

Attorney Cushing reported a provision could be enacted in the demo ordinance to provide a waiting period and notification to the Historic Commission.

George Trongone, Polkville Road, asked if 150 Vail Road is a historic structure. Attorney Cushing said Shippo could determine if the property is listed on the state or federal registry of historic structures.

Committeeman Farber asked if the property on Hemlock is historic. Attorney Cushing stated the master plan often designates a historic element which lists historic areas.

Sandy Dorrell, Hemlock Road, said the building on Hemlock Road is a hazard. She also stated historic buildings can be hazardous. Mayor Starrs said the zoning office has issued a summons to the owners of
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the Hemlock Road building. Committeeman Farber stated that at some point, action may be necessary to address a dilapidated structure.

Ken Metcalf stated he will follow up with Mayor Starrs for direction on amending the demo ordinance to include notification to the Historic Commission.

Discussion took place regarding a Ferry Lane property previously refurbished. Mr. Cavall said farms are being lost along Route 94 and the character of Blairstown is changing.

Tom Drake, Columbia, said the Historic Commission could use more members. Committeeman Farber suggested the Historic Commission could find ways to help private owners refurbish historic structures. He said the cost of repairing older structures is often prohibitive.

Portland Generating Station / NRG

Discussion took place regarding the Portland Generating Station. Mayor Starrs reported the coal plant was scheduled to burn diesel, but has withdrawn their application to do so. Committeeman Farber stated the facility could be sold. Mayor Starrs said the facility is old.

State Police Tickets

Mayor Starrs reported there is a moratorium on issuing State Police tickets due to Governor Christie's freeze on troopers' raises and steps. She stated the Hope Barracks is still issuing tickets on Station Road. Tickets from the federally funded weigh station will continue to be issued.

COAH

Committeeman Mathez reported the COAH administrator has made a recommendation on a property. Attorney Cushing advised that this topic should be discussed in executive session.

On-line Tax Payments

Paul Ritter, Route 94, stated there is a problem with on-line tax payments. Committeeman Mathez will follow up with the tax collector.

Recreation Site

George Trongone reported the dugouts will be completed next week. Engineer Rodman stated a playground meeting is scheduled for next week. Discussion took place regarding a walking trail to be completed at the recreation site.

Open Space Tax

George Trongone asked if the open space tax rate changed. Committeeman Mathez said it has remained at two cents.

Knowlton Township Board Of Education

Kate McGuinness, Knowlton Township Board of Education, reported that a Strategic Plan Kick Off meeting will be held on October 14th. The plan is updated every five years. She reported that school enrollment is shrinking, modular units are still in use and the special needs preschool is still operating. She also said the Board meetings are open to the public; the board would appreciate public input regarding the strategic plan.

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Station Road Parking Permits

Howard Cowell, Route 94, asked why signs were installed by the Station Road bridge. He stated people fishing and hiking park vehicles along Station Road.

Mayor Starrs said people can come to the municipal building for a free permit. Mr. Cowell stated people cannot get a permit on the weekends. He asked if trouble is occurring at the viaduct, why is the parking ordinance being enforced by the bridge?

Committeeman Mathez stated the State Police will use discretion in issuing tickets. Mr. Cowell stated it could be problematic. Committeeman Mathez stated the ordinance could be revisited.

Mayor Starrs stated she attended the court session when kids from out of town were found guilty. Committeeman Mathez stated word will travel quickly. He said the Township Committee had to do something. The action taken had to be airtight and may cause some inconvenience.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no further comment.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 was made by Mayor Starrs and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk