

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

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
December 28, 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 and Farber. 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.

PRESENTATION: Nature Conservancy – Columbia Dam Removal

Leander Lacy, Social Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, announced the possible removal of the Columbia Dam. He stated the Nature Conservancy is the largest conservation organization in the world. He reported the project is meant to improve water quality for rare, endangered or impaired species in the Paulins Kill River.

Mr. Lacy explained there are eight sections of the Paulins Kill from Blirstown to the mouth of the Delaware River. The goal of the project is to reconnect 40 miles of river. Currently, the Columbia Dam impedes organisms and fish from moving from the Delaware River upstream in the Paulinskill River. The project also involves restoring flood plains throughout the area.

Mr. Lacy said the Nature Conservancy is requesting public input regarding the 20 to 30 year project. He also stated there is possibility of installation of solar panels to compensate for the loss of hydroelectric power currently being produced at the site.

Sediments are trapped at the Route 80 bridge area. Sediment samples have been analyzed for contamination. Low contaminant levels exist at this time. The Conservancy is obtaining permits for state and county soil conservation. The process requires two types of public notice to surrounding land owners and advertisement in a newspaper. The fresh land permit process also requires notification to property owners within 200 feet and newspaper notification. By law, the state answers all public comment.

Mr. Lacy reviewed potential benefits of the project including social, recreational, and economic impacts. concerns include cost, education of public and getting private land owners to buy in on the concept. Committeeman Farber asked if there will be environmental impact studies including species assessment. He stated concern with trout being eaten by larger fish moving in from the Delaware River. He also stated the project could change the turtle environment.

A consultant stated NJDEP experts will review environmental concerns. Mr. Lacy stated community workshops could be conducted. Committeeman Farber stated most of the area is already under fish and wildlife jurisdiction. He also said the trail under Route 46 needs to be protected. Committeeman Farber noted the dam had already been bought by the state before the township was aware of it.

Mayor Starrs stated the dam license cannot be renewed after 2025 without extensive changes. She stated If the lake is filling up with sediment, the lake is dying to us. Mr. Lacy stated the community will help determine where access points will be located.

Committeeman Mathez asked what would happen if the project is not completed. A consultant to the Nature Conservancy stated the lake would continue to silt up and fill in. He stated a dam life is normally 75 years, the Columbia dam is over 100 years old and needs repairs.

Committeeman Farber asked if studies will cover the outcome of flooding up and downstream. The Nature Conservancy consultant said yes.

Discussion took place regarding how the area will look and how it will be maintained. Committeeman Farber asked where the public hearings will take place. The consultant stated notice will be given to the public in newspapers. Leander Lacy will be the contact person for resident questions.

Mayor Starrs asked when plans will be on file with the township. The Nature Conservancy consultant answered before July 2016.

Committeeman Mathez stated the project will be transformative for Knowlton. He stated it would be beneficial for eco-tourism and recreation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve the October 22, 2015 minutes with an amendment authorizing exterminator service for rodents. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

The municipal clerk stated it is customary to have exterminator service for rodents and insects in a records storage facility.

Township Committee members present were in agreement to table approval of the March 16, 2015 minutes.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 15-109
Resolution To Cancel 2015 Tax Overpayments Under \$10.00
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to approve Resolution 15-109. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-110
Resolution To Cancel Tax Balances Due Under \$10.00
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Farber to approve Resolution 15-110. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-111
Resolution To Cancel Added Assessment Exempt Veterans
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cuntala and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-111. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-112
Resolution For Extension Of August Grace Period
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Committeeman Mathez to approve Resolution 15-112. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-113
Resolution Approving Transfer Of Funds
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Committeeman Farber to approve Resolution 15-113. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Resolution 15-114
Resolution Approving Payment Of Vouchers
(copy attached)

A motion was made by Committeeman Farber and seconded by Mayor Starrs to approve Resolution 15-114. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

Gypsy Moths

Mayor Starrs reviewed 183 acres adjacent to Mt. Pleasant road have been identified as having gypsy moths. She stated Eric Weber reported the gypsy moth spray is helpful for fire fighting. Mayor Starrs said she is not convinced it is needed this year. She said the area adjoins Hardwick and Blirstown.

Committeeman Mathez stated last year and this year were dry years. He does not want to take the chance of defoliation of the trees. He stated consequences of not spraying are high. He also said he uses BT all the time and it is approved for organic farming.

Mayor Starrs raised concern over coordination with schools. Deputy Mayor Cuntala volunteered to coordinate with schools.

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to proceed with gypsy moth spraying. The motion was seconded by Committeeman Farber. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – no.

Knowlton Athletic Association

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala to fund 2016 KAA insurance. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shipps – absent, Starrs – yes.

Discussion took place regarding fundraising efforts. Mrs. Kise reported two dances and the pig roast were not very successful. Clean Communities Day proceeds and funds from the 5K race were more successful.

NEW BUSINESS:

Draft Septic Ordinance

A draft septic ordinance will be reviewed by the Township Committee.

2016 Wastewater Fees

Committeeman Mathez reported there has been no increase from Applied Water and suggested that wastewater fees remain the same in 2016.

The municipal clerk suggested that coordination with the new car travel area project's septic design should be initiated in 2016. Committeeman Mathez will follow up with Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer.

Land Use Escrow Accounts

After review of a memo from the land use secretary regarding escrow balances, Township Committee members present agreed to table the matter until the January 4, 2016 reorganization meeting.

Ramsaysburg

Ken Metcalf reviewed a grant application for \$88,000 for installation of electric on the Ramsaysburg Homestead. The grant is through Warren County Department of Preservation and the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund Conservancy.

Mr. Metcalf explained the statement of work will be redesigned to scale back costs. He also reported the Historic Commission will be forming a 501(3)C to raise funds for the project. He also reviewed progress of the trail project at Ramsaysburg.

Committeeman Mathez stated historic projects are extremely expensive. The township cannot fund them.

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez to authorize the mayor to sign the grant application. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Cuntala. Roll Call: Mathez – yes, Cuntala – yes, Farber – yes, Shippis – absent, Starrs – yes.

Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission

Mayor Starrs reported she and Committeeman Mathez met with representatives of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. She stated the Bridge Commission is withdrawing maintenance of Washington and Decatur Streets.

Discussion took place regarding liability, costs and jurisdictions. Committeeman Mathez suggested the matter be discussed with Debbie Hirt, NJDOT. Committeeman Farber suggested the matter be referred to Senator Oroho's office.

Mayor Starrs also stated the Bridge Commission will not take responsibility for the drain in front of the Russweiler property in Columbia.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Pam Russweiler, Columbia, reported she is re-sending a letter to the Bridge Commission requesting information with suggestions from the township attorney. She is asking if the trucks have been calibrated. Committeeman Mathez stated the initial request was too vague. Mayor Starrs reported they calibrate equipment each year. Mrs. Russweiler also said she is requesting the content of brine solutions and concentrations. She asked if it is time to get state representatives involved.

Discussion took place regarding a gulley behind Mrs. Valentine's property. Drainage from state highways and Bridge Commission properties flows into the gulley. Committeeman Mathez suggested the channel could

be made into an impervious surface. Committeeman Mathez also stated action cannot be taken until NJDEP salinity data is available.

Dawn Sullivan asked when the project will start with millings at the recreation site. Committee members stated the project will begin in the spring.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Committeeman Mathez and seconded by Mayor Starrs to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Patton
Municipal Clerk

