

**MINUTES OF KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP  
WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES  
December 9, 2019**

The monthly meeting of the Knowlton Township Committee was held on this date at the Municipal Building, 628 Route 94, Columbia, New Jersey. This meeting was called to order at 7:00 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 and/or the Star Ledger as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk's office."

**Roll Call**

Present: Committeewoman Cuntala, Committeeman McNinch, Deputy Mayor Shipps (arrived at 7:06 pm) and Mayor Starrs

Also present was Township Engineer Ted Rodman, DPW Supervisor Brian Peck, and Gebhardt & Kiefer Attorney Tara St. Angelo.

Absent Committeeman Van Horn

**PRESENTATION**

Trooper Mike Butler from the NJ State Police Hope Barracks provided an update. They have been receiving a lot of complaints about speeding along Route 46 and Route 94 and so the State Police have increased patrols in that area. Trooper Butler also provided an update regarding burglaries and some tips to help prevent them. He said there were 6 burglaries in Knowlton this year, which is frequently theft from unlocked cars. Trooper Butler said that the video door bells and social media have been a great help. There was a break-in at the JCP&L substation which is currently under investigation. Trooper Butler also said that there has been a Third Detective hired at the Hope Barracks. Committee thanked him for coming and Trooper Butler also advised that they try to be present at the Township's second meeting of each month to give update. His email address is: [lpp7283@gw.njsp.org](mailto:lpp7283@gw.njsp.org).

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to go into Executive Session at 7:02 pm.**

**Resolution 2019-142 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. Personnel-DPW Employment

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 return to public session at 7:30 pm**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Resident Vincent Gaeta asked when the Columbia Dam project will be done. Mayor Starrs will ask Beth Styler Barry from the Nature's Conservancy to come to a future meeting to provide an update.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

DPW Supervisor Brian Peck did not have any new updates for the Committee.

Mayor Starrs discussed the 5-year Capital plan with the committee while Mr. Peck was present.

Mayor Starrs explained that the most pressing thing is a request from Fire & Rescue for air packs.

Committee reviewed plan.

Motion was made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve the 5-year Capital Plan as a tentative plan.

### **Township Engineer Ted Rodman**

State aid for Linaberry was approved but for much less than the township requested. Discussion took place regarding the intersection of Route 94 and Frog Pond Rd. NJDOT claims that they do not own that property. Mayor Starrs asked Attorney St. Angelo for advice on how to approach the owners. Mr. Rodman is going to reach out to NJDOT to get confirmation that the property is privately owned.

Mr. Rodman sending information to NJDEP regarding the tunnel field water system.

Mayor Starrs asked Mr. Rodman about the coring of Stark Road. Mr. Rodman explained that there is a penalty. After discussion regarding the Co-op agreement, a Motion was made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to have to Attorney St. Angelo look over the wording of the contract so that she may draft a letter to the contractor.

Discussion regarding Generator Ordinance which was pulled at the last minute. Ordinance will be introduced at the first township meeting in 2020.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

Committeeman McNinch provided the written suggestions which had obtained from the Historic Commission and Open Space Committee and requested that the committee hold action on 3 lots pending hearing the recommendations directly from the Historic Commission and Open Space Committee. Committeeman McNinch further requested that an application to Green Acres be made for the purchase of Block 4 lot 3 as his opinion would maximize the sale price. Mayor Starrs stated that, after examining it, Habitat for Humanity is not interested in the lot on Route 46. Mayor Starrs also was approached by a business owner who is interested in purchasing the property near Columbia Beach. Discussion took place. Majority of the committee agreed to move forward with an Auctioneer for all lots.

### **2019-134- Resolution Authorizing the Retainer of An Auctioneer for the Sale of Foreclosed Properties Owned by the Township of Knowlton**

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton is the owner of 9 foreclosed properties due to tax sales, Block 4 Lot 3, Block 15 Lot 11, Block 28 Lot 13 Block 41 Lot 8.04, Block 55 Lot 12, Block 68 Lot 23, Block 71 Lot 14 and Block 46 Lot 3.03; and

WHEREAS, the Township desires to retain a Professional Auctioneer to market and auction for public sale said lands in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12-13(a).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey, as follows:

The Township Committee hereby declares Max Spann Real Estate & Auction Co. (hereinafter "Auctioneer"), to be retained as Auctioneer for sale to the highest bidder by open public sale at auction, of the

property and lands located at 154 Mt. Pleasant ( Block 4 Lot 3), 22 Columbia (Block 15 Lot 11), 17 Rte 46 (Block 28 Lot 13), 166 Vail Rd (Block 41 Lot 8.04), 10 Clinton St (Block 55 Lot 12), 163 Knowlton (Block 68 Lot 23), 4 Ramsayburg ( Block 71 Lot 14) and 36 Knowlton Rd. (Block 46 Lot 3.03).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution take effect immediately.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Clerk is authorized to sign and execute the Professional Service Resolution hereby attached as.

**Motion was made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve Resolution 2019-143.**

**2019-143-** Resolution of the Stroudsburg Borough Council Supporting Safety Improvements of the Route 80 Project 18M, Opposing Certain Elements of Proposed Designs and Urging Support from Officials and Project Designers to Reconsider and Modify Proposed Designs – **tabled to a later meeting.**

**2019-144- Cancel 2019 Taxes Due to Township Purchase**

WHEREAS, during 2019 the township purchased 3 properties. The properties became tax exempt at that time. Since the township does not pays taxes to itself it is necessary to cancel the outstanding 2019 taxes on the properties to avoid having to place them in tax sale in 2020 for unpaid 2019 taxes. The properties and amounts are listed below:

Block 48, Lot 9	\$1835.68
Block 48, Lot 7	\$3565.14
Block 48, Lot 5	\$2965.30

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor .and Township Committee of Knowlton Township, County of Warren the 2019 taxes on the above lots in the amounts shown above are hereby cancelled.

**Motion made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Committeeman McNinch and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala--yes, McNinch--yes, Shipps--yes, Van Horn--absent, Starrs—yes to Resolution 2019-144.**

**2019-145- Cancel 2019 Taxes Due to Duplicate Property Block 69, Lot 9**

WHEREAS, the owner of the above lot has several properties in the township. The Tax Assessor in order to address an issue created a new block and lot designation. The old block and lot line item should have been deleted from the 2019 tax duplicate but was not. The owner become aware of this when the new tax bills were issued.

WHEREAS, after conferring with the Tax Assessor and property owner it appears as if former Block 68, Lot 9 is duplicated with new Block 68, Lot 9.04. The Tax Collector has transferred the payments made on lot 9 to new lot 9.04. It is necessary to cancel the 2019 taxes on the former lot 9 in the amount of \$7,216.21. Lot 9 has been removed from the 2020 tax duplicate by the Tax Assessor.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Township Committee of Knowlton Township, County of Warren the 2019 taxes on the above lot 9 in the amount of \$7,216.21 are hereby cancelled.

**Motion was made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by Committeeman McNinch and carried to approve Resolution 2019-145.**

**2019-146- Cancel 2019 Taxes Due to Foreclosure**

WHEREAS, the Township Committee approved the foreclosure of several of the liens it holds to collect delinquent taxes. The foreclosure proceedings were completed on August 16<sup>th</sup> when the following properties received final judgment which transferred ownership to Knowlton Township

WHEREAS, these properties are now tax exempt and it is necessary to cancel the 2019 taxes on the properties to avoid placing them on tax sale in 2020 for unpaid 2019 taxes. The properties and amounts involved follow:

- |                    |          |                  |           |
|--------------------|----------|------------------|-----------|
| Block 4, Lot 3     | \$930.23 | Block 68, Lot 23 | \$3800.75 |
| Block 15, Lot 11   | \$222.14 | Block 71, Lot 14 | \$600.48  |
| Block 28, Lot 13   | \$510.24 | Block 76, Lot 2  | \$753.21  |
| Block 41, Lot 8.04 | \$201.32 |                  |           |
| Block 46, Lot 3.03 | \$881.63 |                  |           |
| Block 55, Lot 12   | \$211.73 |                  |           |

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Township Committee of Knowlton Township, County of Warren the 2019 taxes on the above properties are hereby cancelled.

**Motion made by Committeewoman Cuntala, second by McNinch and carried to approve by roll call vote: Cuntala--yes, McNinch-- yes Shipps--yes, Van Horn--absent, Starrs—yes to Resolution 2019-146.**

**2019-147-Interest Resolution Extension of August Grace Period**

WHEREAS, when tax rates were certified in May state aid numbers were considered finalized. Tax bills were required to be mailed by June 14. The amount of state aid is no longer considered finalized until the state budget is signed by the governor around July 1st. Tax rates are received from the county tax board after the state budget is signed and all requirements for setting the rates are met. It was not possible for Knowlton Township to receive the certified rate and extended tax duplicate, complete proofing, adjustments, printing, stuffing and mailing of tax bills by July 15 and,

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 54:4-66.3 (d) requires an interest free period of at least 25 days after the mailing of the tax bills before interest can be charged on payments due August 1. This requirement supersedes the normal 10-day grace period required in the resolution adopted by the Township Committee in January and;

WHEREAS, since the tax collector completed mailing of the bills on August 10, the township was required by the state law to extend the interest free period for taxes due August 1 to September 6 to comply with this requirement. Since the extension must appear on the tax bills the billing was not delayed until the next township

committee meeting was held on August 12.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Township Committee of Knowlton Township, County of Warren the Township Committee acknowledges the action of the tax collector in extending the interest free period for taxes due August 1 to September 6 to comply with N.J.S.A. 54:4-66.3(d). A copy of this resolution will be provided to the auditor when the audit for 2019 is being done to avoid potential concerns that the tax collector failed to collect all required interest.

**Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeeman Cuntala and approved by roll call vote: Cuntala--yes, McNinch--yes, Shipp--yes, Van Horn--absent, Starrs—yes to Resolution 2019-147.**

**2019-148-Resolution Approving 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 Committeeman Cuntala, second by Mayor Starrs and carried to approve by roll call vote: Cuntala--yes, McNinch--yes, Shipp--yes, Van Horn--absent, Starrs—yes to Resolution 2019-148.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Route 80 Rockwall Update**—Committeeman McNinch provided the committee a copy of a letter from December 3<sup>rd</sup> which requested the rockfall incident report.

**Foreclosed Lots & Draft Resolutions**—Discussed during resolutions

**Personnel Manual Update**—Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve the changes to be made to the Personnel Manual, with Attorney St. Angelo's wording and Clerk Shipp's confirmation that all the hours are correct.

**Halloween Policy**—Discussion regarding the township having a Halloween policy. Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to have the Halloween Policy going forward that the township sets the date and time but then leaves the decision up to parents whether to trick-or-treat in inclement weather. Attorney St. Angelo will provide a brief statement to post on the website and recommended that the Township Committee make an exception and cancel if the State declares an emergency.

**Industrial Zone Analysis**—Mayor Starrs discussed the study that was prepared by the NJ Highlands Coalition for Warren County, which shows all the areas in the county that have industrial zones that

could be developed into large warehouse complexes. Mayor Starrs pointed out that Knowlton Township is did not have any areas that qualified.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Tree Trimming** —List of roads to be trimmed by JCP&L will be posted on the township website. Tree trimming will begin in January.

**5 Year Capital Plan**-discussed during Department Report

**Board of Adjustment Opening**—Chuck Walsh will fill the vacancy seat on the Board of Adjustment

**NJDOT Denial of Mural on Viaduct**—Mayor Starrs updated the committee on a letter that was sent to NJDOT requesting to have a mural painted on the viaduct at Station Road. NJDOT denied the request.

**Reorganization Meeting Date**—Reorganization meeting will be held on January 6, 2020 at 7 p.m.

### **Language on Signs**

Committee had discussion regarding a complaint about a sign that had foul language on it that was near a bus stop. There is no language in the township’s sign ordinance regarding foul language. After discussion with Attorney St. Angelo, the committee agreed that they cannot change the sign ordinance because foul language is protected under the First Amendment right to free speech.

**Letter to JCP&L about Meadow Ridge**—Motion was made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve the draft letter that Mayor Starrs provided to the committee regarding power outages on Meadow Ridge.

**CORRESPONDENCE**—No Correspondence

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Resident Pam Russweiler asked if there was follow up regarding the DPW on site Trailer. There was no update that the committee had at that time.

Ms. Russweiler also commented on the DRJTBC is out of control with salting the road they are now doing both side and that there seems to be salt pouring out of the auger when at a stop.

Resident Rene Mathez commented on having a kayak company purchasing the piece of land near Columbia Beach. There could be an issue in the future regarding noise and losing control if they decided to use motorized boats.

Resident Vincent Gaeta recommended setting a reserve price on the foreclosures.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to approve to go into Executive Session at 9:25 pm.**

Resolution 2019-149 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. 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 return to public session at 9:50 pm**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion was made by Mayor Starrs, second by Committeewoman Cuntala and carried to adjourn tonight's Township meeting at 9:51 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



Kristin Shipps  
Municipal Clerk