

**TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON
COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
MEETING MINUTES
February 9, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM with the Salute to the Flag.

The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, with notice published in the New Jersey Herald and/or the Express Times Thursday, Warren County, NJ Zoned edition, and provided in the Municipal Clerk's office.

The meeting was recorded.

CUB SCOUTS PACK 140

Mayor Shipps welcomed Cub Scouts Pack 140, who attended the meeting as part of their community and municipality requirements. Six Webelos scouts introduced themselves and recited the Scout Law. Mayor Shipps noted that all six scouts began in kindergarten, have progressed through the ranks of Lion, Tiger, and Wolf, and will be crossing over to Arrow of Light in early June, with all six expected to ultimately achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Deputy Mayor Baley, Committeeman Mazza, Committeewoman Starrs and Mayor Shipps. Absent: Committeeman Lembeck. Also present were Deputy Clerk Apgar and Attorney St Angelo.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comment limited to 20 minutes with a three-minute speaking time per member of the public

Mayor Shipps asked the public to be mindful that children were present.

Resident Rene Mathez spoke on behalf of Tara Mezzanotte and Michelle St. Andre, who were unable to attend. He relayed their question of whether two members of the Land Use Board may simultaneously serve on the Environmental Commission. The Township Attorney responded that dual membership is permissible, provided the two members do not constitute a quorum of the Land Use Board.

Resident Vince Gaeta reported that the vendor delivered three RO membrane sets but that residents are still owed additional sets per their signed release agreements. Attorney St. Angelo confirmed that the delivery terms are clearly documented in the signed releases and committed to following up with the vendor directly. If the vendor's response is unsatisfactory, residents were asked to notify the Clerk's office.

Resident Pamela Rusweiler also raised the RO membrane issue, noting she received only three of her five entitled sets and that the vendor indicated no further deliveries would be made. The Township Attorney committed to following up with the vendor on her behalf as well.

Resident Keith Stouch of Countryside Road inquired about the Township's hiring process for a DPW laborer position, noting that his son, local resident with a Class A CDL and multiple safety awards, submitted an application but was never contacted for an interview. Mayor Shipps

explained that the position had been filled on a probationary basis before all applications were fully reviewed, and that the posting remained up as a precautionary measure.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

DPW Tom Steckel reported on ongoing maintenance activities. Key items included:

- Pricing is being obtained for road plates and gravel for Ferry Lane access, in coordination with the Fire Department's need for emergency vehicle water access. A Delaware Water Gap kayaking group is also planning events using Delaware Beach and Ferry Lane, anticipated in approximately one month.
- The JCP&L LED lighting upgrade program was discussed. The program covers all municipal building lighting except the lower level due to ceiling height. The total Township cost is approximately \$2,900. The Committee voted unanimously to approve participation in the program. DPW will coordinate with the Clerk's office for invoicing.
- Plumbing issues at the DPW shop were noted. DPW will obtain pricing from a licensed plumber.
- A GMC truck repair was approved by roll call vote for approximately \$3,000.
- Salt supply: The Township has adequate salt. The Committee noted that salt costs reached approximately \$54,000 this season due to regional shortages. Salt expenditures are shared 50/50 with Hardwick Township.
- A broken garage door at the DPW shop will be addressed to prevent recurrence.
- A new refrigerator and microwave for the DPW break room have been ordered by the Clerk's office.
- JCP&L forestry is reviewing a tree on Township property for potential removal.

Simpson Road / Route 46 Truck Parking. Tara Mezzanotte reported on a dangerous truck parking situation along Simpson Road and Route 46 near the Delaware Water Gap Travel Center. Trucks have been parked on shoulders and in the roadway, particularly after snowstorms, and "No Parking" signs that were previously posted on the county road have been removed, leaving no enforcement mechanism. The situation is expected to worsen given a potential new food establishment application for that corridor. The Committee discussed sending a resolution to the county requesting sign reinstatement and improved pedestrian safety measures. Ms. Mezzanotte noted this could also support a future Complete Streets grant application. The Township Attorney advised that a second opportunity to submit comments would arise when the adjacent property application goes before the county planning board. Ms. Mezzanotte will draft a resolution for the Committee's review.

I-80 / Route 611 / Amtrak Delaware Water Gap Area Update.

Tara Mezzanotte reported on the Amtrak/PennDOT corridor study (Step 2). PennDOT confirmed that the Township's previously adopted resolution expressing concerns and requesting input has been placed on record and will be considered during the environmental analysis phase. Step 2 will produce a comprehensive report addressing all project questions including cost, scope, and impacts.

A virtual public meeting is scheduled for February 19 at 4:00 PM. Ms. Mezzanotte encouraged Committee members to register and participate and offered to share the link. She recommended that the Township submit formal comments during the public comment period, drawing from the previously adopted resolution.

Environmental Commission.

Ms. Mezzanotte reported that the Environmental Commission re-establishment committee is active and progressing well. An ordinance is in preparation to formally reconstitute the commission. Meetings are being held twice a month: the first Tuesday as needed, and the third Tuesday regularly from 6:30 to 8:00 PM. Meetings are open to the public. Ms. Mezzanotte asked that Committee Liaison Ryan Lembeck (absent) be notified of the upcoming meeting schedule.

Zoning Officer Report.

Zoning Officer George presented two proposed ordinance amendments sent to the Committee by memo:

- Amendment to Chapter on Pre-Existing Non-Conforming Structures: Current ordinance permits expansion of pre-existing non-conforming residential structures under certain conditions. The proposed amendment would extend this allowance to also include accessory and secondary structures. The Township Attorney indicated this can be accomplished as a simple language amendment to the existing ordinance.
- New Ordinance – Prohibited Uses: To clarify enforcement, the Zoning Officer proposed codifying the legal interpretation that any use not specifically permitted in the ordinance is prohibited. This would allow a specific ordinance number to be cited in summonses. The Township Attorney suggested this language be added to Article 35 under General Zone Regulations.

MEETING MINUTES:

December 8, 2025, Executive Session Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2025, Public Session Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2026, Reorganization Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Mayor Shipp, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to approve the above minutes.

ORDINANCES:

Public Hearing/ Adoption:

2025-01 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 156, Article IV, Entitled “Soil Importation”

The Township Attorney advised that a revised version of this ordinance incorporating changes made by the attorney, and Zoning Officer George had not been reflected in the agenda copy. **The ordinance was tabled to allow the corrected version to be distributed. The Township Attorney will send a clearly titled revised version to the Clerk’s office for the next meeting.**

Introduction:

2025-02 An Ordinance Regulating Short-Term Rentals (STRs), Establishing the Knowlton Township Short-Term Rental Program, Including an Annual Permit and Self-Certification System, Implementing Master Plan-Consistent Land-Use Standards, and Providing for Administration, Enforcement, Revocation, Appeal and Reapplication Limitations.

The Committee discussed the proposed ordinance. A question was raised regarding the applicability of the 3% occupancy tax to short-term rentals. The Township Attorney clarified that STRs do not fall under the State’s definition of a hotel and are not subject to the hotel/motel

occupancy tax under current law. She noted that some municipalities impose such a tax by specific ordinance but recommended against it at this time as the issue is expected to be legally challenged imminently. The tax assessor may review STR properties and, in some cases, reclassify them as commercial use for assessment purposes, which is within his independent authority. The Committee moved forward with the introduction of the ordinance.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to introduce Ordinance 2025-02.

CONSENT AGENDA:

The following resolutions were presented on the Consent Agenda. Resolution 2026-32 and Resolution 2026-33 were pulled for further review. The remaining items were approved on roll call vote.

1. Resolution 2026-30: Establishing Policy for the Removal of Trees within the Right-of-Way

WHEREAS, the Township receives many requests from residents to prune or remove allegedly hazardous trees; and

WHEREAS, under New Jersey law, the ownership of a tree is determined by the trunk location and

WHEREAS, trees that are in the right-of-way easement of Township roads are generally still the responsibility of the property owner, not the Township; and

WHEREAS, the term “right-of-way easement” is meant to refer to the strip of land along and including a Township roadway that permits by easement the public use of the roadway and sidewalks and expansion thereof; and

WHEREAS, where roadways are established by a “right of way” easement, the adjacent property owner retains ownership of the underlying property and such property line extends into the paved roadway; and

WHEREAS, where roadways and the associated right-of-way are established by fee simple ownership, the property owner does not retain ownership of the underlying property and such property line may run to the edge of the paved roadway or some place near the edge of the paved roadway; and

WHEREAS, trees within a right-of-way easement are the responsibility of the underlying property owner; and

WHEREAS, trees within a right-of-way owned in fee simple by the Township are the responsibility of the Township; and

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

1. The Township is not responsible for the removal of hazardous trees within a County or State right-of-way.
2. The Township is not responsible for the removal or maintenance of hazardous trees within a right-of-way easement.
3. The Township is only responsible for the removal or maintenance of hazardous trees within a right-of-way owned in fee simple by the Township.
4. Where the location or ownership of a tree is disputed and a property owner is requesting removal of or maintenance of said tree, it shall be the obligation of the property owner to provide a survey establishing ownership of the tree.
5. The Township reserves the right to maintain or remove trees that pose an imminent hazard to motorists or pedestrians. In the event the Township removes a tree within a right-of-way easement, the Township is not responsible for removing the stump.

2. Resolution 2026-31: Authorizing Execution of a Shared Service Agreement for Municipal Court Services Between Knowlton Township and the Township of Allamuchy
WHEREAS, the Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation Act, N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1, et. seq., authorizes municipalities to enter into agreements for the exchange and sharing of services; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 2B:12-1(c) allows two or more municipalities, by ordinance or resolution, to agree to provide jointly for courtrooms, chambers, equipment, supplies and employees for their municipal courts and agree to appoint judges and administrators without establishing a joint municipal court; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Allamuchy (“Allamuchy”) and Knowlton Township (“Knowlton”) entered into a Share Court Agreement beginning in 2021 and have extended such agreement through the end of 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Allamuchy (“Allamuchy”) and Knowlton Township (“Knowlton”) recognize the benefit to their respective communities in sharing Municipal Courts; and

WHEREAS, Allamuchy and Knowlton agree that a partnership to advance this shared service should be developed between the entities and is authorized by N.J.S.A. 2B:12-1, *et seq.* and N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1, et. seq.; and

WHEREAS, reductions in state aid and increased operating expenses are leading many municipalities in New Jersey to consolidate municipal courts; and

WHEREAS, the consolidation of municipal court operations can save costs by reducing the number of court facilities, reducing staff size, sharing court security measures, expanding management’s scope of control and consolidating administrative oversight, and

WHEREAS, at this time both Knowlton and Allamuchy are desirous of entering into the attached Shared Service Agreement to extend the existence of the Shared Court for a term of two

years through 2027, subject to approval by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Vicinage Assignment Judge, if required.

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

1. The Mayor and the Clerk are hereby authorized to execute the Shared Services Agreement with the Township of Allamuchy in substantially the same form that is annexed hereto as Exhibit “A” and any other documents necessary in furtherance of same.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

2. Resolution 2026-32: Appointing Geoff Littlehale as Maintenance Custodian for Knowlton Township – Pulled for further discussion regarding employment classification and tax withholding. Mr. Littlehale will be invited to attend the next meeting.
3. Resolution 2026-33 Resolution Consenting to the Person -to Person Transfer of Plenary Retail Consumption License No. 2113-44-011-004 for Shree Natghi Corp to Columbia Liquor Corp.
4. Resolution 2026-34: Implementing Online Publication of Municipal Legal Notices Pursuant to P.L. 2025-72

WHEREAS, on June 30, 2025, Governor Murphy signed Bill S4654/A5788, which provides for the publication of required municipal legal notices on municipal websites and through certain online news publications; and

WHEREAS, P.L. 2025-72 states that legal ads placed by a municipality will not need to be published in newspapers beginning on March 1, 2026, but will have to be placed on the Township of Knowlton’s official website; and

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

1. After March 1, 2026 the advertising of ordinances and other public notices, which the municipality may be required by any law to publish, shall be published on the official Internet website of the Township of Knowlton, at the following address:
<https://knowlton-nj.com/>.

5. Resolution 2026-35: Enabling Resolution for Supplemental Funding Request

ENABLING RESOLUTION FOR SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program (“State”), provides loans and/or grants to municipal and county governments and grants to nonprofit organizations for assistance in the acquisition and development of lands for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton has previously obtained grants of \$1,355,753.84 from the State to fund the following project(s): Green Acres Project # 2113-03-079-1; and #2113-03-079-5

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton desires to further the public interest by requesting an additional Green Acres loan of \$ _____ and/or an additional Green Acres grant of \$515,000 from the State [and an additional Urban Park loan of \$ _____ from the State] to fund the project(s); and

WHEREAS, the State shall determine if the supplemental funding request is complete and in conformance with the scope and intent of the Green Acres Program and notify the applicant of the amount of the funding award; and

WHEREAS, the applicant is willing to use the State's funds in accordance with its rules, regulations and applicable statutes, and is willing to enter into an Amendment of the Agreement with the State for the above-named project;

NOW, THEREFORE, the governing body/board resolves that:

1. Mayor Debra Shipps or the successor to the office of mayor is hereby authorized to:
 - (a) request such a loan and/or grant,
 - (b) provide additional information and furnish such documents as may be required and,
 - (c) act as the authorized correspondent of the above-named applicant; and
2. The applicant agrees to provide the local government/nonprofit share if a match is required
3. The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations in its performance of the project.
4. This resolution shall take effect immediately

6. Resolution 2026-36: 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 Mayor Shipps, second by Committeeman Mazza and approved by roll call vote: Baley—yes, Lembeck –absent, Mazza—yes, Starrs—yes, Shipps—yes. Consent Agenda Items 1–2, 4–6.

RESOLUTION FOR DISCUSSION:

Resolution 2026-37: Updating the Job Description for Recreation Director

The Committee presented a restructured Recreation Director job description transferring all grounds maintenance to DPW. The revised role focuses on event coordination, liaison duties, field use oversight, and annual budget preparation, with four new events added to the existing programming. Compensation would be reduced to \$8,000 per year.

Recreation Director Dennis Lembeck attended and raised concerns about the pay reduction given ongoing weekend responsibilities. The Committee will email him the revised description for his consideration. No action was taken; his decision was expected at the next meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Brake Retarder Sign Request.

Tara Mezzanotte presented a draft noise ordinance addressing engine brake noise in the villages of Hainesburg, Columbia, and Delaware. She noted that several nearby municipalities have passed similar ordinances, and that doing so could position Knowlton Township for Complete Streets grant funding by establishing a public record of resident quality-of-life concerns. The draft was submitted to the Township Attorney for review.

Streetlights.

Tabled pending a presentation from the JCP&L representative scheduled for the next meeting. Several streetlights in the Township are located on residential rather than municipal property. The Committee will receive further information on the LED upgrade brochure and billing implications before proceeding.

GPS Systems DPW Vehicles.

Mayor Shippo reported that the Township has already received insurance grant funding to install GPS units in DPW vehicles. Installation is pending. The grant was obtained following examples from other municipalities where GPS records were used to refute false liability claims.

Time Clocks.

Tabled. The Clerk's office is conducting a trial run of the time clock system.

NEW BUSINESS:

Resignation – Land Use Board.

The Committee accepted the resignation of Joe Werner from the Land Use Board. Mayor Shippo will send a formal letter of acknowledgment. An application for the vacant Class IV position has been received and will be reviewed prior to the next meeting.

Authorized Banking Signatures.

Mayor Shippo reported that authorized banking signatures have not been updated in approximately five to six years. Appointments are scheduled with the bank to update the authorized signatory list.

Senior Programs – Age-Friendly Grant.

Committeewoman Starrs reported on a brainstorming session with approximately six seniors regarding the NJ Department of Human Services Age-Friendly Grant. Ideas included a generator lending program, an additional walking path, transportation support, fitness stations, pickleball lessons, and a storage shed. The Committee raised concerns about transportation and generator proposals given existing resources and prior experience. No commitments were made pending the grant's official opening and review of eligibility requirements.

Municipal Office Hours.

Committeewoman Starrs noted two resident complaints regarding municipal office accessibility. The Committee agreed to remove the current appointment sign, while noting that the Deputy Clerk should continue to close the office during her lunch break and need not admit residents if

she does not feel comfortable doing so alone. Normal office hours will resume as staffing normalizes.

Space Farms.

The Township will continue its agreement with Space Farms for roadkill removal at \$35 per year.

Animal Control Officer Salary (ACO was duly noticed for this discussion).

Mayor Shipps reported that Animal Control Officer Bonnie has completed her probationary period and has performed exceptionally well. The Committee reached consensus to increase her compensation to the rate previously paid to the prior ACO, consistent with the terms of her original engagement. A salary resolution will be prepared.

Green Acres / Open Space Preservation.

Resident Renee Mathez reported on three active acquisition efforts with 50% Green Acres matching funds: a 14-acre parcel adjacent to the Township field, a 100-acre parcel on Mount Pleasant Road, and an 80-acre parcel on Camelot Road. Mayor Shipps noted a 280-acre property with a helicopter landing zone is also on the market, with potential for the county to acquire adjacent land for a county park. The Nature Conservancy is supporting several of these efforts.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The following correspondence was acknowledged:

1. January 15, 2026, from NJDEP – Subject: Holdover Term Notice.

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Deputy Mayor Baley

Buildings & Grounds / DPW: Covered in DPW report above.

Fire & Rescue: Spoken with Chief Travis Christie. The department is working on the ambulance contract, which must be discussed in a personnel/executive session context due to the nature of the matter.

Personnel: Employee meetings are being planned.

Board of Education: No updates.

Finance / Recreation: No additional updates.

Committeeman Mazza

Land Use Board: One matter was presented to the Board at the last meeting. The gallonage letter to the wastewater treatment plant is being addressed and has been referred back to the Township engineer.

Wastewater: Committeewoman Starrs and Committeeman Mazza met with the new engineer. Billing matters are being resolved, and a plan is being developed to move forward with wastewater improvements.

Transportation: No updates.

Recycling: No updates.

Committeewoman Starrs

COAH / Housing: Two notable developments: (1) Gene Makarecivh has approached the Township about voluntarily developing a property at 20 Knowlton Road to help fulfill low-income housing obligations. The Township Attorney noted that while the Township's housing plan has already been approved by the court, any additional units would count toward the unmet need, and this proposal can be explored. (2) Rene Mathez has volunteered to serve as the Township's COAH liaison at no cost and will pursue Rutgers University certification. The Committee agreed to move forward with a non-compensated appointment, with consideration of reimbursing certification costs upon completion.

Communications / Utilities: Contacted an Optimum representative (Brian Quinn) after outreach through multiple channels, including the Governor's office. Two goals have been established: (1) obtain updated maps of Optimum's current service footprint, and (2) identify and address areas where Optimum ran wiring but failed to complete connections, including Mount Pleasant Road near Taylor Campground and Countryside Road.

Historic Commission: The Historic Commission was awarded \$72,450 in a grant from the New Jersey DOT. A meeting with Bob and the Clerk's office will be scheduled to ensure proper accounting procedures are in place for the grant.

Grants: No additional updates; Senior Grant discussed under New Business.

Mayor Shipps

Finance: A meeting with the CFO and auditor will be scheduled.

Insurance: The ambulance contract is under review. No further details can be discussed in the public session.

Recreation: Covered under Resolution 2026-37 discussion.

Utilities: The JCP&L representative is scheduled to attend the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:

A representative of the Knowlton Athletic Association (KAA) spoke regarding field scheduling, field use agreements, sports insurance, and coordination with the Township. Key items raised:

- Field use applications and agreements will be processed through the Clerk's office. Sports organizations should submit applications to the Clerk.
- The Township website should be updated to reflect a single point-of-contact email for Knowlton Sports (Knowltonsports@gmail.com) in place of personal email addresses.
- KAA requested clarity on the annual \$4,000 budget allocation and insurance reimbursement process. Mayor Shipps confirmed that the Township has historically paid KAA's sports accident insurance policy (approximately \$1,230/year) and issued an end-of-year reimbursement check for the remaining budget balance. The last check issued was June 13, 2022, for \$2,770. The CFO will provide records for the past three years.
- KAA requested a coordination meeting with the Committee liaison and DPW regarding field preparation, equipment storage, seasonal setup and winterization, and net installation. The Committee agreed to schedule a workshop meeting in late February or early March. The sports meeting schedule has been updated: Township Committee regular meetings are now held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to go into Executive Session at 9:15 PM.

2026-38 Authorizing 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

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 made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to close Executive Session at 9:50 PM.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin Shipps,

Municipal Clerk

Township of Knowlton

Minutes prepared by the Municipal Clerk from the official audio recording. Clerk not present at the meeting