

Knowlton Township Land Use Board
Minutes
Tuesday, February 24, 2026

The regular meeting of the Knowlton Township Land Use Board was held on Tuesday, February 24, 2026. Chairman Taylor led the Board in the flag salute at 7:00 p.m. He announced that adequate notice of the meeting has been provided in accordance with the "Open Public Meetings Act" by publishing notice of all regularly scheduled meetings in the NJ Herald and Express Times legal advertising edition, as well as providing said schedule in the Municipal Clerk's Office and the official Township Website. A moment of silence was held for our Military Personnel serving in harm's way.

Roll call:

Present: Baley, Allen, Mathez, O'Neill, Smith, Gaeta, Drake,
Mezzanotte and Taylor.

Absent: Mazza

Also Present: None

Approval of Minutes:

The January 27, 2026 minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. With no corrections or additions needed. A motion was made by Mr. Mathez to adopt the minutes. Motion seconded by Mr. Gaeta. Roll call vote: Baley – abstain, Allen – yes, Mathez – yes, O'Neill – yes, Smith – yes, Gaeta- yes, Drake – yes, Mezzanotte – yes, Taylor – yes.

Public Comment:

The meeting was open to public comments, with no public comments. Public Comment portion of the meeting was closed.

Other Business:

Data Centers: Model Ordinance

Ms. Mezzanotte was complimented on her work creating this model ordinance. Basing it on the county ordinance, she stated that she was pleased the county took the lead on this to say we can prohibit. Chairman Taylor noted we can, but there are certain things we can't, like cell towers. Ms. Mezzanotte said she used the county ordinance and pulled everything she could out of our Master Plan. This is a rough draft that will go to the township committee and township attorney. Chairman Taylor noted in New Brunswick a large data center was recently rejected. The public protested and town officials said no they're not doing it because of the energy usage and the amount of water needed for cooling. Ms. Mezzanotte mentioned Phillipsburg has it on their agenda tonight inspired by the county. It is being introduced by the township committee. Mr. Mathez noted if we don't have this ordinance it would be permitted in commercial zones. He asked how New Brunswick stopped it. Chairman Taylor assumed it was a variance situation. It could also have been the public sentiment was so great against it. He is not sure of the specifics. Chairman Taylor asked if anyone had any questions. Mr. Mathez would like this to be voted on tonight. Chairman Taylor asked if there was a motion to send this to the committee for consideration and approval. Motion was made by Mr. Mathez. Motion was seconded by Mr. Smith. In a voice vote all were in favor with no objections or abstentions.

Attorney Advice: LUB/Environmental Commission Appointee Limits

Attorney Gavan's memo which referenced Municipal Land Use Law for Joint Land Use Boards was supplied to the board. Chairman Taylor noted our current ordinance still refers to article 2 as Planning Board. Article 3 is about Board of Adjustment. He has not seen any ordinance changes from the committee; there is no mention of the Land Use Board. In the memo, it lists limitations on holding other offices: Class IV restrictions and exceptions. The committee must have passed an ordinance to establish the Land Use Board. He could not find it under the ordinances on the website; the planning board and board of adjustment are still there. Ms. Mezzanotte found ordinance 2023-01 establishing a joint land use board on her phone. Chairman Taylor feels that ordinance established it, but is there an ordinance specifically about the members, classes and duties? Mr. Mathez questioned if that is contained within that ordinance. Ms. Mezzanotte read sections of the ordinance noting chapter 11-4 articles amended. Chairman Taylor agreed if it amended it, possibly then it's just not easily found yet. Ms. Mezzanotte then read from the ordinance the class descriptions. Chairman Taylor believes if we have two members on the Environmental Commission one should be class II and one could be a regular member. It was noted that the EC statute requires that one of the members must be on the board. Chairman Taylor listed other persons who can be class II including the tax collector, tax assessor, OEM. Mr. Smith feels there is conflicting information regarding the class for EC members. They differ between Attorney Gavan's memo and what Ms. Mezzanotte read from our ordinance. Ms. Mezzanotte then read over information from her AI assistant regarding circumstances related to class II membership. It stated in a 9-member combined land use board the EC member typically fills the class II seat. Chairman Taylor is not sure our ordinance agrees with municipal land use laws. Ms. Mezzanotte told the board according to the township attorney's thinking we can have more than one EC member on the board. She believes it could be structured with one as a class II and one as a class IV. Ms. Allen questioned the existing classes for the current board members. Chairman Taylor noted the class II now is Mr. Mathez, but he doesn't believe he qualifies. He is on the open space advisory committee, and it specifically says you can't be on an advisory committee. Class II could be OEM or Historic Commission also. This will all have to go to the committee and get straightened out. Ms. Allen asked if in the middle of a term members can be switched to other classes. Chairman Taylor said yes, the mayor does the appointments with the approval of the committee. Mr. Baley said we need to find out if the OEM classifies as a class II. Chairman Taylor noted we have 2 potential members of the environmental commission. Another thing he found in the municipal land use memo is if you have full membership in a vote, the alternates are not supposed to vote. They would only vote if someone were absent or someone is disqualified. Previously he thought they could vote, but they didn't count. More discussion took place about who is qualified to be in class II and what the exclusions are. There is a possibility of 3 potential people that could be class II, but can the other ones be a class IV. This is something the township committee will have to straighten out. We need to inform the committee that we believe the appointments do not conform to the municipal land use law.

Chairman Taylor made a motion to have the secretary send a letter to the committee, especially in light of the EC being reformed, that we believe that our appointments to this board do not conform to municipal land use law. We need to make sure everything is done properly. It's up to the township attorney to make sure the committee is following municipal land use law. Motion was seconded by Ms. Allen. In a voice vote all were in favor.

Affordable Housing Ordinances: Review for Consistency With Our Master Plan

Chairman Taylor spoke regarding the previous portion of the fair housing element of our ordinance that was sent on to the Fair Share Housing Center and they accepted it. So now the ordinance was created to implement what is in the housing element part of our Master Plan. Mr. Mathez spoke regarding the 4th round obligations. We have an obligation of 32 units. However, because we have no public sewer or water we get something called durational consideration. Which means you are temporarily absolved from the requirements of those 32. This is something new. We may still have to have an administrator, and we may still continue to deal with the county which does rehab. There is supposed to be a trust fund set up and there are requirements for that dealing with monitoring and reporting. Mr. Smith noted that this ordinance asks for an administrator. Mr. Mathez said he had volunteered for that position. Chairman Taylor wondered if they could set up one administrator for all the municipalities in the county. Regarding the review the township committee requested, Chairman Taylor noted an error in the ordinance on page 13 item G. The ending of the sentence seems to be missing and ends with the word "or". Mr. Mathez then questioned page 3 the 4th paragraph regarding the "affordability average" reads: means an average of the percentage. He feels average should be plural as you can't have an average of one thing. Possibly this was an issue with the template coming from the state. Ms. Mezzanotte then spoke regarding changes she thought happened in this ordinance within the farmland preservation district. She thinks the ordinance is allowing accessory apartments within the farmland preservation district. From her IA assistant she read over the farmland accessory uses. The existing farmland preservation zone accessory structure provision states no accessory structure shall be used for human habitation. Chairman Taylor replied these are 2 different things. This is not an accessory structure it is an accessory apartment; apartment attached to the main residence. He thinks this is allowed in all our zones. An accessory structure is a barn or garage. You cannot have a residence in an accessory structure. Mr. Smith directed everyone to page 19 item D in the Affordable Housing Obligations ordinance. Accessory apartment program lists AR-1, VR, and FP zones. Chairman Taylor believes this is allowed now. Ms. Mezzanotte referred to her IA assistant: accessory apartments are allowed in the AR-1 zone. But they are not allowed in the FPZ zone under current code. The current zoning ordinance for Farmland Preservation Zone does not list accessory apartments as a permitted or conditional use. Mr. Smith asked to check what it lists under permitted uses rather than accessory. Ms. Mezzanotte read in the FPZ zone in Knowlton's ordinance accessory apartments are not listed as a permitted accessory use. But rather appear only under the conditional use for the zone. Mr. Smith again referred to page 19, item D, section 1 "permitted as conditional uses". Chairman Taylor noted this ordinance then is not only consistent with our Master Plan, but also with our zoning.

Chairman Taylor stated our job with this was to determine whether these ordinances are consistent or inconsistent with our master plan. A motion deeming both of the ordinances (compliance with the affordable housing obligations and development fees for affordable housing) consistent was made by Mr. Mathez and seconded by Ms. Mezzanotte. With the 2 changes previously discussed, in a voice vote all were in favor with none opposed and no abstentions.

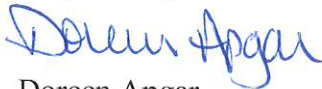
Approval of Bills:

Chairman Taylor asked if everyone had a chance to look over the bills. Mr. Smith made a motion to approve payment of the bills. Motion was seconded by Mr. Drake. With no discussion on the bills, in a roll call vote: Allen – yes, Baley – yes, Gaeta – abstain, Mathez – yes, O’Neill – yes, Smith – yes, Drake – yes, Mezzanotte – abstain, Taylor – yes.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Drake. In a voice vote all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Doreen Apgar,
Board Secretary