

**TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON
COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
June 8, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Open Public Meetings Act:

The meeting was held with the Open Public Meetings Act (as amended by Public Law 2025, chapter 72). Notice of this meeting and the agenda was posted on Knowlton Township's website and on the bulletin board at the municipal building.

Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Deputy Mayor Baley, Committeeman Mazza, Committeewoman Starrs and Mayor Shipp. Also present were Clerk Shipp and Attorney St Angelo.
Committeeman Lembeck was absent.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion by Mayor Shipp, seconded by Committeewoman Starrs, and carried to go into executive session at 6:01 pm.

2026-75 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. Attorney Advice
- B. 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 was made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to return to Open Session at approximately 7:06 p.m.

Self-Examination of Budget – Resolution 2026-84.

Auditor Mooney advised that the Township qualifies for self-examination of its 2026 municipal budget this year in lieu of State review.

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A.40A:4-78b has authorized the Local Finance Board to adopt rules that permit municipalities in sound fiscal condition to assume the responsibility, normally granted to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services, of conducting the annual budget examination; and,

WHEREAS, N.J.A.C.5:30-7 was adopted by the Local Finance Board on February 11, 1997; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C.5:30-7.2 thru 7.5 the Township of Knowlton has been declared eligible to participate in the program by the Division of Local Government Services, and the Chief Financial Officer has determined that the Township of Knowlton meets the necessary conditions to participate in the program for the 2024 budget year, so now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton that in accordance with N.J.A.C.5:30-7.6a & b, and based upon the Chief Financial Officer's certification, the governing body has found the budget has met the following requirements:

1. That with reference to the following items, the amounts have been calculated pursuant to law and appropriated as such in the budget:
 - a. Payment of interest and debt redemption charges
 - b. Deferred charges and statutory expenditures
 - c. Cash deficit of preceding year
 - d. Reserve for uncollected taxes
 - e. Other reserves and non-disbursement items
 - f. Any inclusions of amounts required for school purposes
2. That the provisions relating to limitation on increases of appropriations pursuant to N.J.S.A.40A:45.2 and appropriations for exceptions to limits on appropriations found at 40A:4-45.3 et seq. are fully met. (Complies with the "CAP" law.)
3. That the budget is in such form, arrangement and content as required by the Local Budget Law and N.J.A.C.5:30-4 and 5:30-5.

4. That pursuant to the Local Budget Law:
 - a. All estimates of revenue are reasonable, accurate and correctly stated;
 - b. Items of appropriation are properly set forth;
 - c. In itemization, form, arrangement and content, the budget will permit the exercise of the comptroller function within the municipality.
5. The budget and associated amendments have been introduced, publicly advertised and adopted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Budget Law, except that failure to meet the deadlines of N.J.S.A.40A:4-5, shall not prevent such certification.
6. That all other applicable statutory requirements have been fulfilled.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, Second by Deputy Mayor Baley and approved by Roll Call: Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Lembeck – Absent; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes. Motion carried 4-0.

2026 Budget – Public Hearing/Adoption

Auditor John Mooney reviewed the 2026 municipal budget with the Committee and the public. He advised that the municipal tax rate will increase two cents, resulting in an approximate \$42 annual (\$3.48 monthly) increase for the average home assessed at \$205,000. The budget utilizes approximately \$90,000 more of fund balance than the prior year. Notable cost drivers include an increase of approximately \$35,000 in health benefits premiums and approximately \$18,000 in the health benefits waiver, along with funding of a \$50,000 emergency appropriation carried over from the prior year. There is no bond interest included in this year's budget, as outstanding debt was paid off and not reissued.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to open the public hearing on the 2026 Budget.

Public Comment:

- Betty Cestari of the Knowlton Senior organization objected strongly to an approximate \$1,000 reduction in funding for the senior program, noting the organization had not received an increase in many years.
- Bob McNinch (Knowlton) objected to reductions affecting senior funding.
- A resident (Knowlton) invited Committee members to attend the senior group's meetings and raised questions regarding roadside mowing.
- A resident (Knowlton) questioned the rationale for reducing program funding given the Township's fund balance. Auditor Mooney explained the purpose of maintaining fund balance for emergencies and tax appeals, and the statutory appropriations (3.5%) and levy

caps governing the budget. He noted the budget remains a fluid document, and that mid-year transfers are possible if a demonstrated need arises.

- Committeeman Mazza offered to personally contribute \$500 toward the senior organization to address the funding concern raised by the public.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to close public comment on the Budget.

Auditor Mooney further addressed a committee question regarding projected health benefits increases, noting State Health Benefits Plan premiums rose approximately 32-35% statewide this year.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeeman Mazza and approved by roll call vote to adopt the 2026 Municipal Budget.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Lembeck – Absent; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes.

Motion carried 4-0.

Presentation – Planet Networks.

A representative of Planet Networks provided the Committee and public with an update on the company's fiber-optic broadband buildout within the Township, anticipating high-speed service availability in most above-ground areas by the end of summer 2026, with underground-utility neighborhoods requiring additional time. Residents were encouraged to visit planet.net to check availability and register interest, which assists the company in prioritizing construction.

Television service is anticipated to become available in July 2026. The representative also presented a \$1,000 donation to the Township's senior program, matching the Committee's earlier commitment.

Public Comment:

- Pam Rusweiller (Columbia) expressed concern regarding difficulty reaching the Animal Control Officer, citing an unanswered voicemail during a recent incident involving a deceased animal. Mayor Shipps agreed to follow up with the Animal Control Officer.

Department Reports:

Public Works: The DPW summer paving schedule was discussed, with paving of Auble Road anticipated by late July 2026 in coordination with Blairstown Township, which is paving an adjoining section. The Committee discussed a recent vehicle repair matter and directed DPW to coordinate mowing along roadsides near recreational areas following reports of children being stung due to overgrown vegetation at Tunnel Field.

Fire & Rescue: The Fire Department reported 11 incidents in May 2026 (67 year-to-date), including 4 motor vehicle accidents, 1 EMS call, 2 activated alarms, 4 calls canceled in route, 1 structure fire, and 1 appliance fire. Hose, ladder, and pump testing were completed for the year, with Tanker 71 to be rescheduled following repair. The Department is applying for a FEMA grant for portable radios and recently conducted mutual aid rural water supply training with the Belvidere Fire Department. The Department is also developing county-level standard operating procedures for electric vehicles and lithium-ion battery fires and recently held a chicken barbecue fundraiser with PTA support.

Recreation: Upcoming events include a movie night and water slide event in July, the Township's 250th Anniversary/Community Day on October 3, Clean Communities Day on October 17, and a Christmas tree lighting on December 4 (Fire Department to coordinate Santa's arrival by fire truck). The Committee discussed replacement of recreation equipment (popcorn machine and stove), the ongoing search for a missing event projector, and a proposal to offer a resident yoga program at the park pending review of an insurance reimbursement arrangement.

I-80/611/Amtrak (Lackawanna Cutoff) Area Update: Tara Mezzanotte reported that NJ Transit responded to the Township's follow-up questions, confirming no plans exist to use the restored rail line for freight service; that passenger stop determinations for Blairstown remain undetermined; that construction- and operational-phase emergency access details have not yet been finalized; that NJ Transit is seeking Township feedback regarding forest fire suppression and remote area access; that no changes are anticipated to Tunnel Field access; and that no impact to the Paulins Kill or Delaware River is anticipated.

MINUTES

April 27, 2026, Executive Session Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2026, Public Session Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, Executive Session Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2026, Public Session Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeeman Mazza and carried to approve the above minutes.

Ordinances:

Public Hearing/Adoption.

Ordinance 2026-09 – An Ordinance of the Township of Knowlton, Warren County, New Jersey, Amending and Supplementing Chapter 151, Land Use, of the Code of the Township of Knowlton to Designate Data Centers as a Non-Permitted Use in All Zoning Districts.

§ 151-1 LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

The Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton hereby finds and declares that the Knowlton Township Master Plan emphasizes the preservation of the Township's rural character and rural quality of life, agricultural lands, scenic landscapes, environmental resources, and historic and cultural heritage, and supports only those land uses and forms of development that are compatible with the Township's rural setting and limited infrastructure, taking into account considerations of scale, intensity, operational characteristics, and infrastructure demands, and that can be reasonably accommodated within the Township without resulting in adverse impacts that cannot be reasonably mitigated, consistent with the Master Plan and the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Township Committee further finds that data centers, by their nature, constitute an unusually intense and specialized form of land use, characterized by continuous, twenty-four (24) hour operation and extraordinary demands for electrical power, cooling infrastructure, backup generation, and supporting mechanical systems, and that such characteristics are inherently inconsistent with the Knowlton Township Master Plan, including, but not limited to, Master Plan goals and objectives that emphasize the preservation of the Township's rural and scenic character; the protection of agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive resources, including

groundwater; the maintenance of low-intensity development patterns compatible with surrounding residential and rural uses; and the protection of community quality of life, including the minimization of intrusive noise, vibration, and other operational disturbances.

The Township Committee further finds that data center operations—including continuous cooling systems, mechanical equipment, ventilation infrastructure, and emergency or backup power generation—create ongoing and unavoidable impacts related to noise, vibration, air quality, water use, community character, and long-term land use planning objectives, which are incompatible with the Township’s Master Plan vision and policies.

The Township Committee further finds that preliminary data and technical assessments, including information cited by members of the New Jersey State Legislature, indicate that large-scale data centers may require millions of gallons of water per day, including direct on-site water consumption for cooling systems as well as substantial indirect water consumption associated with the regional generation of electricity required to support such facilities. These concerns are reflected in legislative actions including Senate Bill 4293/Assembly Bill 5548, which require quarterly reporting of data center water usage, and Assembly Bill A5892, which would require the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to evaluate water impacts associated with data centers.

The Township Committee further finds that preliminary studies and state legislative reporting requirements indicate that certain data centers may require up to approximately three hundred (300) megawatts of continuous electrical power, placing significant strain on regional electrical infrastructure and associated natural resources. This conclusion is supported by New Jersey legislative actions such as Senate Bill 4293/Assembly Bill 5548, which require quarterly reporting of electricity usage, and by load forecast and reliability planning documentation issued by PJM Interconnection, L.L.C., reflecting the contribution of data centers to continuous regional load growth.

The Township Committee further finds that the impacts associated with data centers are inherent to the use type and cannot be adequately mitigated through site-specific conditions, buffering, or operational controls.

Based upon the foregoing, the Township Committee finds that permitting data centers within the Township of Knowlton would pose unacceptable risks to environmental and natural resources, public infrastructure systems, and the Township’s long-term planning goals, and would be inconsistent with the objectives and policies of the Knowlton Township Master Plan.

§ 151-2 DEFINITIONS.

DATA CENTER. Any facility used primarily for the storage, management, processing, or transmission of digital or electronic data, including servers, network equipment, telecommunications equipment, substations, generators, cooling systems, redundant power supplies, and related infrastructure.

§ 151-3 PROHIBITED USES.

Data centers are hereby designated as a non-permitted use, whether as a principal or accessory use, in all zoning districts within the Township of Knowlton.

§ 151-4 LAND USE BOARD REVIEW.

Upon introduction, this Ordinance shall be referred to the Knowlton Township Land Use Board for review and comment pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-26 and N.J.S.A. 40:55D-64.

§ 151-5 REPEALER.

All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

§ 151-6 SEVERABILITY.

If any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is adjudged invalid, such determination shall not affect the remaining provisions.

§ 151-7 EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Ordinance shall take effect upon final adoption and publication according to law.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to open public hearing.

No public comment.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to close public hearing.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, Second by Committeewoman Starrs and approved by roll call vote to adopt Ordinance 2026-09.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Ordinance 2026-10 – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 134, “Parks and Recreation,” to Prohibit Dogs in the Public Parks of the Township of Knowlton.

WHEREAS, due to the potential nuisances caused by allowing dogs within public parks, the Township Committee desires to prohibit dogs within the public parks of the Township of Knowlton.

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

SECTION 1. Section 134-4.1 of the Code of the Township of Knowlton, entitled “Prohibition of dogs in public parks,” is hereby added as follows:

- A. No dog, except a service dog as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) (42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*) accompanying a person with a disability, is permitted in any public park of the Township of Knowlton, regardless of whether such dog is controlled by a leash.
- B. Enforcement. The Township Recreation Director, Animal Control Officer, and / or Police Department are hereby authorized to enforce this section. Those authorized to enforce this Section shall have the authority to eject from the public park any person acting in violation of this section.
- C. Violations and Penalties. Any person violating the provisions of this section shall be punished by a fine of \$15 to \$200 for the first offense and \$25 to \$200 for subsequent offenses.

SECTION 2. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict or inconsistent with any part of this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent that they are in conflict or inconsistent.

SECTION 3. If any section, provision, or part of provision of this Ordinance shall be held to be unenforceable or invalid by any court, such holding shall not affect the validity of this Ordinance, or any part thereof, other than the part so held unenforceable or invalid.

SECTION 4. This Ordinance shall take effect after passage and publication in the manner provided by law

Prior to the hearing, it was discussed that the enforcement be transferred to the Animal Control Officer for logistical reasons, noting the change is administrative and does not require re-noticing.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to open public hearing.

No public comment.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to close public hearing.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and approved by roll call vote to adopt Ordinance 2026-10.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Ordinance 2026-11 – An Ordinance to Amend, Revise and Supplement the Code of the Township of Knowlton, County of Warren, State of New Jersey by Adding a New Chapter, Chapter 25, Entitled “Filming.”

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton (the “Township”) is desirous of amending the Township Code to add Chapter No. 25 entitled “Filming;” and

WHEREAS, the Township Mayor and Committee are desirous to encourage filming within the Township in an organized, efficient, and controlled manner in order to protect the safety, health and welfare of all persons; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee desire to add Chapter 25.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 25 of the Code of the Township of Knowlton (the “Code”), entitled “Filming,” is hereby added as follows:

Chapter 25. Filming.

§ 25-1. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter, the following items shall have the meanings indicated:

CREW. Actors, extras, crew and all other persons who will participate in the filming.

FILMING. The taking of still or motion pictures, or any incidental activities in connection therewith for commercial or educational purposes, intended for viewing or for institutional use for advertising purposes, any portion of which activity occurs on public lands.

MAJOR MOTION PICTURE. Any film which is financed and/or distributed by a major motion picture studio, including, but not limited to, the following: Universal Pictures; Warner Bros, Discovery, including New Line Cinema, HBO, DC Studios and Castle Rock Entertainment; Paramount, including Miramax, MTV Films, Showtime, Skydance, Dreamworks and Nickelodeon Movies; Walt Disney Studios, including 20th Century Studios, Searchlight Pictures, Hulu and Marvel Studios; Sony Pictures, including Columbia Pictures, Screen Gems and Tristar Pictures; Amazon MGM Studios; Netflix Studios; A24; any film for which the budget is at least \$20,000,000; or any recurrent weekly television series programming.

PUBLIC LANDS. Any and every public street, highway, sidewalk or square, public park or playground, or other public place within the Township which is within the jurisdiction and control of the Township.

§ 25-2. Film Commission.

There shall be a three-member Film Commission established, consisting of the Mayor or Mayor's designee, Municipal Clerk or Deputy Municipal Clerk, and one additional Committee member to be appointed by the Mayor, which is hereby authorized to issue permits for filming or performing incidental activities in connection therewith on public lands. The Film Commission may consult with the New Jersey State Police regarding filming permits.

§ 25-3. Permit Required; Applications; Information.

- A. No person or organization shall film or permit filming on public lands or on private property where such filming involves the use of public lands or other public property for the operation, placement, or temporary storage of vehicles or equipment utilized in such filming, including, but not limited to, any temporary structure, barricade or device intended to restrict or block off pedestrian or vehicular traffic, without first having obtained a permit from the Film Commission, which permit shall set forth the location of such filming and the date or dates when filming shall take place.
- B. No permits will be issued by the Film Commission unless applied for prior to four days before the requested shooting date, provided, however, that the Film Commission may waive the four-day period, if, in their judgment, the applicant has obtained all related approvals and adjacent property owners or tenants do not need to be notified.
- C. Permit application shall be obtained from the Township of Knowlton website or from the office of the Municipal Clerk (during normal business hours). Applications shall be returned to the Municipal Clerk and be accompanied by the permit fee set forth in §8-13 Fee Schedule.
- D. With each permit application, the applicant shall provide the following information:
 - 1. Filming locations and dates/times.

2. Total number of cast members.
 3. Total number of crew.
 4. Describe in detail the scene to be filmed.
 5. Detailed list of cars, box trucks, trailers, campers, vans or any other vehicles and parking arrangements.
 6. Detailed list of special production equipment (cranes, drones, etc.).
 7. Plans for Sanitary arrangements (if necessary) to be made for cast, crew and bystanders.
 8. Plan for crowd control measures.
 9. Plan for cleanup.
 10. A description of any special electrical requirements and methods of satisfying those requirements, including any permits required.
- E. No permit shall be issued for filming upon public lands unless the applicant shall provide the Township with satisfactory proof of the following:
1. If required by the Film Commission, the hiring of a police officer or security guard for all times indicated on the permit
 2. Proof of insurance coverage as follows:
 - a) Bodily Injury and Property Damage Liability: \$1,000,000 each occurrence.
 - i. Personal Injury Liability: \$1,000,000 each occurrence.
 - ii. Products/Completed Operations: \$1,000,000 each occurrence.
 - iii. Medical Payments: \$5,000.
 - iv. General Annual Aggregate: \$2,000,000.

b) Commercial Automobile Liability Insurance Coverage with minimum limits of \$1,000,000 per accident for all Owned, Leased, Non-Owned and Hired Vehicles.

c) Workers' Compensation and Employers Liability Insurance in accordance with the applicable State statutes and laws. Sole proprietorships, members of LLC's, and partners, who will be performing work may not "opt out" of coverage in states where allowed, coverage must be maintained.

i. Part A – Statutory benefits.

ii. Part B - \$100,000 each employee disease / \$500,000 policy limit / \$1,000,000 each accident.

d) Professional Liability Coverage (if applicable) with minimum limits of \$1,000,000 each claim / \$1,000,000 annual aggregate.

e) Liquor Law Liability Coverage (if applicable) with minimum limits of \$1,000,000 each claim / \$1,000,000 annual aggregate.

f) An agreement, in writing, whereby the applicant agrees to indemnify and save harmless the municipality from any and all liability, expense, claim or damages resulting from the use of public lands.

F. If a permit is issued and, due to inclement weather or other good cause, filming does not, in fact, take place on the dates specified, the Film Commission may, at the request of the applicant, issue a new permit for filming on other dates subject to full compliance with all other provisions of this Chapter. The Film Commission may waive the fee for this additional permit.

§25-4. Bond.

Prior to the issuance of the permit, the applicant shall post a cash bond in the amount of \$2,000 to assure that the applicant has fully complied with all the terms and conditions of the permit and to reimburse the Township for property damage. The posting of the bond shall not be in lieu of providing liability insurance meeting/exceeding the current levels of coverage required by the Township. The cash bond will be returned to the applicant, without interest, with 15 (fifteen) days of completion of wrap, unless the Township has unsatisfied claims against the applicant, in which case the Township will hold the bond, or a part thereof, until all claims against the applicant are satisfied.

§25-5. General Regulations.

- A. The holder of a permit shall take all reasonable steps to minimize interference with the free passage of pedestrians and traffic over public lands and shall comply with all lawful directives issued by the New Jersey State Police Department.
- B. The holder of a permit shall conduct filming in such a manner as to minimize the inconvenience or discomfort to adjoining the property owners attributable to such filming and shall, to the extent possible, abate noise and park vehicles associated with such filming off the public streets. The holder shall avoid any interference with previously scheduled activities upon public lands and limit to the extent possible any interference with normal public activity on such public lands.
- C. Where the applicant's production activity, by reason of location or otherwise, will directly involve and/or affect any businesses, merchants or residents,, these parties shall be given written notice of the filming at least three (3) days prior to the requested shooting date and be informed that objections may be filed with the Municipal Clerk, said objections to form a part of applicant's application and be considered in the review

of the same. Proof of service of notification to adjacent owners shall be submitted to the Municipal Clerk within two (2) days of the requested shooting date.

- D. The holder of a permit shall take all reasonable steps to minimize the creation and spread of debris and trash during filming and shall be responsible for removing all equipment, debris and other trash from filming location upon completion.
- E. Filming shall take place within the hours agreed upon by the Film Commission and the applicant.
- F. If determined by the Film Commission, each location shall have an off-duty police officer(s) at the film location, the cost of which shall be paid for by the applicant
- G. Street closures will be approved by the Film Commission or other applicable agency.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to open public hearing.

No public comment.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to close public hearing.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and approved by roll call vote to adopt Ordinance 2026-11.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Consent Agenda:

Items 1–8 and 11 (Item 9 previously adopted as Resolution 2026-84; Item 10 [2026-85] considered separately below):

2026-76 – Resolution to Refund Tax Overpayment.

WHEREAS the Township Committee authorized the Chief Financial Officer to refund Tax Overpayment to David and Lisa Machesney for Block 44.01 Lot 30 in the amount of \$1,777.03; and,

WHEREAS it has further been determined that said overpayment was a duplicate payment for second quarter,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton that the Chief Financial Officer is authorized to issue a check to David and Lisa Machesney in the amount of \$1,777.03.

2026-77 – Resolution Authorizing a Grant Application to NJDOT for the Lime Kiln Road Stabilization Project.

WHEREAS, Knowlton Township is submitting a grant application to the New Jersey Department of Transportation for a project to stabilize and reconstruct a portion of Lime Kiln Road; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton formally approves the grant application for the above stated project; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Engineer is hereby authorized to submit an electronic grant application identified as LAIF-2026-Lime Kiln Road Stabilization Project-00124 to the New Jersey Department of Transportation on behalf of the Township of Knowlton.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Mayor and Clerk hereby authorized to sign the grant agreement on behalf of the Township of Knowlton and that their signature constitutes acceptance of the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and approves the execution of the grant agreement.

2026-78 – Resolution Authorizing a Grant Application to NJDOT for the Auble Road Improvement Project.

WHEREAS, Knowlton Township is submitting a grant application to the New Jersey Department of Transportation for a project to pave a portion of Auble Road from Knowlton Road to Blairstown-Knowlton border; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton formally approves the grant application for the above stated project; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Engineer is hereby authorized to submit an electronic grant application identified as MA-2027-Auble Road Improvement-00223 to the New Jersey Department of Transportation on behalf of the Township of Knowlton.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Mayor and Clerk hereby authorized to sign the grant agreement on behalf of the Township of Knowlton and that their signature constitutes acceptance of the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and approves the execution of the grant agreement.

2026-79 – Resolution of Intent to Seek Film Ready New Jersey Certification and Adopting a Code of Conduct for Motion Picture and Television Production Companies.

WHEREAS, the New Jersey State Legislature has found that the development of a strong motion picture and television industry would contribute substantially to the State's economy and to the social well-being of the State and its people, and that New Jersey offers outstanding and unique human and natural resources for the development of a strong motion picture and television industry; and

WHEREAS, the legislature has established in the New Jersey Economic Development Authority a Motion Picture and Television Development Commission ("Commission"); and

WHEREAS, the Commission has developed a certification process through its "Film Ready New Jersey Program," for municipalities that would like to host motion picture and television production; and

WHEREAS, Knowlton Township's unique cultural, business, historic, scenic and geographic resources make it an ideal location for motion picture and television production; and

WHEREAS, local motion picture and television production would contribute materially to the health, welfare and economic advantage of the Township and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee believes it to be in the best interest of the Township to seek certification through the Commission's Film Ready New Jersey Program, and a requirement of the certification is that the municipality has adopted a code of conduct for production companies operating within the municipality.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, in the County of Warren, and New Jersey, that

1. Any motion picture or television production company seeking to film on location in the Township of Knowlton may apply for a Film Permit as set forth in the Township Code.
2. The Township hereby adopts the Filmmaker's Code of Professional Responsibility attached hereto as a requirement for any motion picture or television production company seeking to film on location in the Township of Knowlton.
3. The Township shall seek to be certified by the Motion Picture and Television Development Commission as a film ready community.

2026-80 – Adopting a Film Permit Application and Defense, Indemnification and Hold Harmless Agreement.

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton believes it to be in the best interest of the Township to seek certification through the New Jersey Film Commission's Film Ready New Jersey Program, and a requirement of the certification is that the municipality has adopted a permitting process.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, in the County of Warren and New Jersey, that

4. The Township hereby adopts the Film Permit Application, attached hereto as Exhibit "A," as the official application for all such requests within the Township.
5. The Township does also adopt the Defense, Indemnification and Hold Harmless Agreement, attached hereto as Exhibit "B."

2026-81 – Resolution Appointing Film Ready NJ Liaison.

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Motion Picture and Televisions Commission, in partnership with the New Jersey State Division of Travel and Tourism, has established the Film Ready New Jersey program to support municipalities in preparing for and managing film and television production activities; and

WHEREAS, participation in the Film Ready New Jersey program provides municipalities with enhanced opportunities for economic development, location promotion, and coordination with production companies; and

WHEREAS, conditioned upon her completion of the required certification course, Mayor Debra Shipps possesses the qualifications and administrative capacities to fulfill the responsibilities of the Film Ready New Jersey Liaison on behalf of the Township of Knowlton; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee believes it to be in the best interest of the Township to formally appoint a liaison for this purpose.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, in the County of Warren and New Jersey, that

1. Committeewoman Adele Starrs is hereby appointed as the **Film Ready New Jersey Liaison** for the Township of Knowlton.
2. That the Film Ready New Jersey Liaison shall serve as the Township's primary point of contact for all film and television production inquiries, shall assist with municipal processes related to the filming activities, and shall coordinate with the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission and any associated agencies as necessary.
3. That a copy of this Resolution shall be forwarded to the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission upon adoption.

2026-82 – Resolution Authorizing the Distribution of Leftover Township Wood.

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton had a Oak Tree Fall at Tunnel Field

WHEREAS, several Knowlton residents have contacted members of the Committee and the Township municipal offices expressing a desire to take possession of the leftover wood; and
WHEREAS, the leftover wood has no practical use or monetary value to the Township of Knowlton; and

WHEREAS, the Township wishes to accommodate these requests in as fair and equitable manner as possible.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Township Committee authorizes the Township Clerk to notify residents who have inquired and to allow those Knowlton residents to pick up the leftover wood located at Tunnel Field in Knowlton, NJ on a first come, first served basis during business hours beginning on June 10, 2026, and continuing until all the wood has been removed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the wood shall be made available only to those who sign a waiver absolving the Township of Knowlton of liability in connection with the wood.

2026-83 – Resolution Approving the Short-Term Rental (STR) Permit Application Process and Self-Certification Form.

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton permits Short-Term Rentals (STRs) as an accessory residential use subject to adopted ordinance requirements; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Township's STR regulations is to allow homeowners to earn modest supplemental income while preserving the residential character, public safety, and quality of life of Knowlton Township neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has reviewed and discussed the proposed Short-Term Rental Permit Application and Self-Certification Form establishing standardized operational, safety, insurance, nuisance, enforcement, and renewal requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee desires to establish a clear implementation schedule for all existing and future Short-Term Rentals.

WHEREAS, the Township Committee recognizes that major online short-term rental booking platforms, including Airbnb and Vrbo, have implemented successful nuisance-prevention policies, party-deterrence measures, and dedicated neighbor-reporting resources, and that these tools may serve as a supplemental means of resolving issues in coordination with, and not in place of, municipal enforcement; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee further finds that adoption of a uniform STR permit and self-certification process is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, preserve neighborhood character, and ensure fair and consistent enforcement of a STR Ordinance; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. The Short-Term Rental Permit Application and Self-Certification Form is hereby approved and adopted for official municipal use.
2. All Short-Term Rental listings operating within the Township shall be required to comply with and obtain approval under the adopted Permit Application and Self-Certification Form effective January 1, 2027.
3. Applications for initial permits and renewals under this program shall begin to be accepted and processed on October 1, 2026, in accordance with the Township's established submission window.
4. All persons seeking to operate a Short-Term Rental within the Township shall be required to submit a completed application and all required supporting documentation annually in accordance with the approved form and the STR Ordinance.
5. The Zoning Officer is hereby designated as the administrative authority responsible for review, approval, enforcement, suspension, and revocation of STR permits.
6. Failure to comply with any condition of the permit, certification, or STR Ordinance shall be subject to fines, enforcement action, and/or permit revocation, as provided by ordinance and Township fee schedule.

2026-86 – 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 Deputy Mayor Baley and approved by roll call vote Consent Agenda Items 1–8 and 11.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Prior to consideration of Resolution 2026-82, the Committee discussed protecting the Tunnel Field walking path from vehicle damage during removal of fallen tree wood by residents; Deputy Mayor Baley requested that DPW relocate the wood to the parking area for safer access.

2026-85 – Resolution Accepting Bids for Sale of 163 Knowlton Road (Block 68, Lot 23).

WHEREAS, pursuant to Resolution 2026-70, the Township of Knowlton authorized a sale by public auction of a certain parcel of real property owned by the Township identified as Block 68, Lot 23 and more commonly known as 163 Knowlton Road; and

WHEREAS such properties were offered for sale by public auction with bids opened on June 2, 2026; and

WHEREAS one bid was received in the amount of \$11,550.00 (\$750 per acre x 15.40 acres); and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has determined that it is in the best interests of the Township to accept such bid.

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

1. The Township Committee accepts the bid in the amount of \$11,550.00
2. Closing shall take place on or before July 9, 2026.
3. The sale of the Property is “as is” without conditions and the Township makes no statements on either land or environmental issues.
4. The Mayor and Clerk are hereby authorized to execute the attached contract in substantially the same form.
5. The Township Attorney is hereby authorized to prepare and the Mayor and Clerk are hereby authorized to execute all documents necessary to effectuate the sale and transfer of the Property.
6. In the event the successful bidder fails to close on the Property, he/she shall forfeit the \$1,000 deposit.
7. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeeman Mazza and approve by roll call vote Resolution 2026-85.

**Roll Call: Baley – Abstain; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent).
Motion carried 3-0.**

Unfinished Business:

- Clean Community Day – scheduled for Thursday, October 17, 2026.
- STR Documents – Committeewoman Starrs reported the compliance packet has been finalized for distribution to short-term rental owners, with a compliance deadline of October 1, 2026. Non-compliant properties will be referred to the Zoning Officer for enforcement.
- Tunnel Field Security Camera Quotes – installation remains pending awaiting availability of internet service at Tunnel Field.
- Streetlights – the Township Engineer is reviewing non-functioning streetlights for potential liability issues and permanent deactivation.

New Business:

- George Burdge – Laura Brill Bulk Variance Application: The Committee discussed a 1987 conservation easement affecting the applicant’s proposed garage construction. The Township’s land use consultant advised that a resolution modifying or releasing the conservation easement restriction would need to be prepared for consideration at the July 2026 meeting to allow the matter to proceed before the Land Use Board.
- Performance Reviews: The Committee agreed to reinstate periodic employee performance reviews and directed staff to review and update the existing performance review form contained in the Employee Manual.

- Effective June 1, 2026, the Department of Public Works will work summer hours from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. through Labor Day.
- Rabies Clinic – scheduled for December 12, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Resignation of Kailene Pierson, Acting Municipal Clerk:

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to accept the resignation of Kailene Pierson as Acting Municipal Clerk.

- Special Occasion Events Program Review: The Committee determined the Township currently has no regulations governing special events on preserved farmland; no further action was taken.

Resolution 2026-88 Approving Renewal of Liquor License for the 2026–2027 License Term. WHEREAS, the following renewal application has been completed, the proper fees have been paid to the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control and the Township of Knowlton; and

WHEREAS, the licensee is qualified according to all statutory, regulatory and local government NJABC laws and regulation.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, County of Warren, State of New Jersey approves the following NJABC liquor licenses renewal:

Memili Enterprises LLC 2113-33-006-009
Minton's Log Cabin Inc. 2113-33-008-005
Hunters Lodge Motel, LLC. . 2113-33-005-007
Chefs LLC 2113-33-002-006
COLUMBIA LIQUOR CORP. t/a Smitty's Liquor Store 2113-44-011-005

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to approve the resolution.

Blairstown Rotary Club Fourth of July Fireworks Contribution (previously budgeted).

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeeman Mazza and approved by roll call vote to authorize the Township's annual contribution. Motion/Second.

Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Mazza – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Lembeck absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Correspondence:

The following correspondence were received and filed:

- 5/4/2026 – Stefanie Williams, Township Engineer – Re: Knowlton Local Aid FY 2027.
- 5/15/2026 – Baris Sonmez, Food Shed Alliance – Re: Confirmation of Support of Resolution #288-25, Paulins Kill National Wild and Scenic River Reconnaissance Study.
- 5/26/2026 – Tara Mezzanotte – Re: Follow-up and Next Steps for the 10 Most Program.
- 6/4/2026 – Walter C. Lane, NJ Office of Planning Advocacy – Re: State Planning Commission Annual Report 2025 – Warren.

Township Committee Reports:

Deputy Mayor Baley: Reported on attendance at the county mayors' meeting hosted by Hope Township, at which the NJ State Police discussed staffing constraints during the upcoming FIFA World Cup matches in North Jersey and Philadelphia, and related public safety planning, including watch parties planned in Hope Township and Hackettstown.

Committeeman Mazza: No report.

Committeewoman Starrs: Reported on the COAH affordable-housing rehabilitation loan repayment matter, the Historic Commission/NJDEP lease matter is proceeding despite an earlier unfavorable public comment, with final approval anticipated in September 2026.

Mayor Shipps: Reported on coordination with the Township Engineer regarding non-functioning streetlights, confirmed that DPW/CPW systems are operating well.

Public Comment – Agenda Items Only:

- Bob McNinch (Knowlton) commended the Committee for including committee reports on the meeting agenda and thanked members for the substance of their reports, suggesting the Aging/Senior liaison provide periodic updates to the senior community.
- A resident (Knowlton) asked whether the NJDOT grant application meant the Township was proceeding with Lime Kiln Road rather than Auble Road; Mayor Shipps clarified that Auble Road paving is proceeding this year and that Lime Kiln Road remains contingent on grant funding and NJDEP permitting, with an estimated earliest completion in 2028 due to stream-adjacent permitting requirements.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn. Motion/Second. All in Favor.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Kristin Shipps,
Municipal Clerk, RMC**