



KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Naturally Knowlton Green Team

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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, July 7, 2026

Date / Time	July 7, 2026 — convened 6:30 p.m.; adjourned 8:15 p.m.
Location	Knowlton Township Municipal Building, 628 Rt. 94, Columbia, NJ
Meeting Type	Regular Meeting
Recording	The meeting was recorded.

Call to Order, Pledge & Open Public Meetings Act Statement

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Open Public Meetings Act statement was read into the record.

Oath of Office

The Oath of Office was administered to Lenny Clifford.

Roll Call

Members present: Michelle St. Andre, Vince Gaeta, Lenny Clifford, Rick Clarkson, Jim Ashe, and Tara Mezzanotte.

Absent: Jaime Murray.

Also present: No members of the public or a township committee liaison.

Quorum: The record reflects that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 16, 2026 Regular Meeting were presented for approval. No changes or updates were offered.

Motion (Vince): To approve the minutes of the June 16, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented.

Second: (Michelle) **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

The Co-Chair asked whether the AI-generated day-after meeting summary should continue to be circulated to members. Members saw no harm and agreed the practice can be helpful.

Continuing Business

a. Bylaws — Update

The bylaws adopted on June 16 were transmitted to the Township Committee together with a simple draft resolution prepared for the Committee's use (not a Commission resolution). The bylaws are expected to appear on an upcoming Township Committee agenda. No action was required.

b. Township Webpage Content

The Commission reviewed the language added as requested to distinguish regular meetings from work sessions.

The public webpage language was finalized as: "All meetings are held in person and are open to the public. Formal action will be taken at regular meetings. Work sessions will be reserved for non-voting matters or emergent issues."

Motion (Tara): To adopt the Township webpage content as revised.

Second: Michelle St. Andre. **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

c. Social Media Policy

The Commission reviewed the a one-page summary that synthesizes the full social media policy, which had been developed over prior weeks. Members reviewed the summary individually and raised questions, which were addressed as follows:

- Moderation is to remain viewpoint-neutral. Criticism of the Commission is to be allowed; comments are hidden (preferred over deletion) only when they cross a defined line, such as threats of violence.
- Only the designated administrators post content on behalf of the Commission; the Commission does not approve or moderate outside posts.
- The policy includes template demonstrating examples of response scripts to redirect off-topic comments, policy questions (directed to a meeting), and personal grievances to the appropriate township office, with the aim of de-escalating and not opining.
- Social media content is a public record subject to OPRA, as are meeting recordings.
- Photos: A gap existed regarding soliciting permission to use a person's photo – obtaining written permission was discussed as necessary. The Commission agreed a photo permission/release form should be created and included with the policy. Tara will create the form and include it with the policy

Motion (Vince): To transmit the social media policy summary and the full policy to the Township Committee, with the new photo release form to be created, requesting permission to create the Commission's Facebook page.

Second: Rick. **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

d. Commission Member Orientation — Members' Binders

The assembly of the orientation packet was paused so members could first review the document memorializing the history of the Commission's re-establishment, to ensure everyone is comfortable with how it is presented. Members reviewed the document at the meeting and found it well done, including its reference to inspiration drawn from other communities (e.g., Stillwater).

Motion (Jim): To approve the re-establishment history document for the record and for inclusion in the orientation packet.

Result: Michelle. **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

Work on the consolidated, searchable PDF orientation packet and printed copies continues.

e. Memos — Non-Residential Land Use Approvals: Conditions Follow-Through

The two memos directed at the June 16 meeting were presented for review.

Memo 1 — Recommendation that the Township Committee institute an annual Land Use conditions-of-approval report. The memo recommends the Township Committee take responsibility for an annual report reviewing whether Land Use conditions attached to approvals are being implemented and maintained, with the report going to the Township Committee, the Land Use Board, and the Environmental Commission, each of which could then act within its own purview. The Commission's role ends with the recommendation; no further Commission action occurs unless the Township Committee responds. Members made the following revisions during review:

- The memo intentionally does not designate who conducts the review (e.g., Zoning Officer or Township Engineer); that assignment is for the Township Committee to decide.
- The bullet “apply the same standard to every property within the scope” was struck, to avoid implying that differing standards currently exist.
- The section describing ways the Environmental Commission could assist (conducting the review or providing administrative support) was struck in its entirety.
- A clarifying question will be flagged for the Township Attorney as to whether the review may properly be limited to non-residential applications, in response to a member's recollection of a comment on that point.

Motion (St. Andre): To transmit Memo 1, as amended, to the Township Committee.

Second: Rick Clarkson. **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

Memo 2 — Questions to the Township Attorney Regarding EC Legal Authority to Review Land Use Non-residential Conditions. The memo provides background and defines the specific questions: whether the Commission has the authority to review conditions attached to past non-residential Land Use approvals, and whether liability could attach; the questions are sequential, so if the Commission lacks authority the remaining questions are moot. Because the Commission cannot engage the Township Attorney directly (an expenditure of township funds), the memo asks the Township Committee to refer the questions to the attorney. Members confirmed that transmitting the memo does not commit the Commission to proceeding; if the attorney's answer permits, the Commission would still have to vote separately on whether to adopt the study as a Sustainable Jersey action.

Motion (Vince): To transmit Memo 2 to the Township Committee with the request that it be shared with the Township Attorney.

Second: (Rick). **Result:** All in favor. APPROVED.

f. 2026 Goals & Work Plan

Native & Non-Invasive Landscaping Ordinance. Michelle presented the standards assembled by Warren County (Commissioner Kearn), which the county has incorporated into its own standards and recommends each municipality adopt for non-residential development. The standards limit plantings to native, non-invasive species (tree standards are handled separately by the county Shade Tree Commission, which Michelle will follow up with). The ordinance would apply prospectively, through applications coming before the Land Use Board; existing sites replacing plantings in kind under prior approvals would not be affected. Members noted the value of moving promptly given pending non-residential activity (e.g., the proposed restaurant near the truck stop / EV charging area). Michelle will email the county document to Tara, who will convert it into Knowlton Township ordinance language (replacing county references) and circulate the draft to the full Commission for review before it is presented to the Township Committee. No motion was required; this is work-plan activity to be converted into a Sustainable Jersey action.

Tire Recycling / Township Recycling Initiative. Lenny will follow up with Frank regarding the farmers' board. The Commission discussed broadening the effort into a general Recycling Initiative that could be adopted as a Sustainable Jersey action, encompassing: reviewing and updating the recycling content on the Township website (as Committeewoman Starrs requested); establishing the Township's baseline recycling tonnage, which per Dave Deck (Warren County Recycling Coordinator) generates a financial credit; raising members' repeated observations of recyclables being collected with garbage directly with the president of Sanico, as Mr. Deck suggested; and resident education on proper recycling practices, possibly including a session with Mr. Deck.

Tabled to the August to determine who might lead it.

Community Birdhouse / Bat House Build. Rick, Jim, and Michelle discussed scoping this as a 2027 project. Rick noted that proper installation (10–15 ft poles) is needed to do it right, particularly at Tunnel Field, and will require funding; candidate locations include Tunnel Field, Ramsaysburg, and the township the river beaches. Ideas discussed: asking DPW about surplus materials (e.g., retired sign poles), potential sponsors (e.g., Blue Ridge), NRCS (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) grants, which Michelle can inquire about, and a demonstration build at next year's Knowlton Community Day. A needs list and cost estimate (materials and any DPW time) is to be developed by December for the 2027 budget request. Rather than approaching DPW directly, it was agreed that Tara will ask the Township Committee at an upcoming meeting for permission for the Commission to consult DPW about surplus materials.

Existing Sustainable Jersey Actions (toward certification). Tara explained that her administrative catch-up work on existing actions for 2027 Sustainable Jersey Certification will continue at work sessions, and asked that the Commission permission to begin formally processing the actions one at a time: Existing

Action Leads, after modifying and approving the draft documenting represent their work, will attends a regular EC meeting, present their work, and the Commission formally adopts it as a Sustainable Jersey Action for next year's submission — a process that can then be replicated for the others. Documentation has been reviewed and is ready for: Ramsaysburg (Chairman Tom Drake), Open Space & Farmland Preservation (Co-Chairs Renee Mathez and Bob McNinch), and the Historic Commission (Chairman Hal Brohm). Tara will coordinate with the leads and schedule the first available action for formal processing at an upcoming regular meeting. Michelle offered to prepare her Warren County Pollinator Protector Action as well and will review and edit the support documentation.

ANJEC — Conference, Membership, and Budget. The ANJEC conference is Friday, September 25 at Rutgers, New Brunswick. Registration for members is \$150 per person. Tara reported that attending last year was both inspiring and fulfilling. Interested attendees: Vince, Jim, Tara and perhaps Jaime. Up to four members (\$600) would attend if our budget permits (EC has a \$500 budget). If we join ANJEC this year, with no prorated option, it costs \$475 and there is a \$20 per person discount to attend.

On ANJEC membership (\$475, calendar-year, not prorated — joining now would require paying again in January), members reviewed the benefits (free trainings & webinars, a \$05 conference discount, and loaner educational displays useful for Community Day) and reached consensus not to join for the remainder of 2026, revisiting membership for 2027. Members also noted the value of being visible at ANJEC events when future grant and funding opportunities are considered.

The Commission discussed how to prioritize its \$500 budget for the remainder of the year — whether toward the conference or toward other projects. The Commission agreed to ask the Township Committee for additional funds if needed, and Tara will also ask the Committee about the possibility of applying recycling (tonnage) funds toward the conference if four people do wish to go.

Motion (Lenny): To proceed with attendance at the ANJEC conference (up to four members), subject to Township Committee funding

Second: Michelle. **Vote:** Unanimously Approved.

Tabling of Remaining Agenda Items

The remaining agenda items were tabled due to time constraints:

Green Team Roster — decide how the roster is handled — whether, and which, Green Team members and volunteers are listed publicly on the website, and how and why they are included on the Sustainable Jersey roster.

Environmental Commission Roster & Contact Information — review and update the member roster and contact information (for Township records, the ANJEC member list, and the Sustainable Jersey roster). Discuss the different ways the different lists and rosters are used.

Result: All in favor. TABLED.

Township Referrals — Land Use Board

A Land Use Board packet was received; detailed review was deferred and tabled with the remaining agenda items to a future meeting.

Correspondence

No correspondence was acted on; the item was tabled with the remaining agenda items.

11. INTERESTING STUFF, IN THE NEWS & HOW IT RELATES TO KNOWLTON EC–NKGT MISSIONS

Confirmation of Action Items

#	Action Item	Responsible	Target	Status
New Action Items — July 7, 2026				
1	Post the adopted webpage	Mezzanotte	Near-term	New
2	Create photo permission/release form; transmit social media policy summary and full policy to Township Committee requesting permission to create the Facebook page	T. Mezzanotte	Near-term	New
3	Finalize LUB Approval Conditions Memos 1 and 2 with the July 7 amendments	T. Mezzanotte	Near-term	New
4	Email Warren County / Kearns landscaping standards to Mezzanotte; follow up with county Shade Tree Commission on tree standards	M. St. Andre	Near-term	New
5	Draft Knowlton native & non-invasive landscaping ordinance language from the county standards; circulate to the Commission for review	T. Mezzanotte	Near-term	New
6	Ask Township Committee permission for the Commission to consult DPW regarding surplus materials (e.g., sign poles) for the birdhouse / bat house project	T. Mezzanotte	Next TC mtg	New
7	Scope 2027 Birdhouse / Bat House project: sites, design, sponsors, NRCS grant inquiry (Ashe), needs list and cost estimate for the 2027 budget request; confirm field lawn treatments are bat-safe	Clarkson / Ashe / St. Andre	Dec 2026	New
8	Recycling Initiative: identify a lead; consider inviting Dave Deck (County Recycling Coordinator) to educate the Commission; gather website/tonnage/Sanico information	Commission	Next mtg	Tabled
9	Coordinate and schedule one ready Sustainable Jersey action for formal processing at an upcoming work session, with the appropriate presenters available; re-send documentation to St. Andre for her action	T. Mezzanotte	Upcoming work session	New
10	Confirm interested members' availability for the Sept. 25 ANJEC conference; request Township Committee funding for registration (up to four	T. Mezzanotte	Next TC mtg	New

#	Action Item	Responsible	Target	Status
	attendees. Ask about applying the \$500 budget / tonnage funds and additional funds if needed			
Completed (from the June 16, 2026 action list)				
11	Prepare two memos: (a) recommend annual conditions-of-approval review policy; (b) define questions to Township Attorney re: EC authority/liability on past approvals	T. Mezzanotte	July 7 mtg	COMPLETE
12	Finalize Township webpage content (regular vs. work-session distinction)	Murray / Mezzanotte	July 7 mtg	COMPLETE
13	Finalize Social Media Policy; seek Township Committee approval for Facebook page	Murray / Mezzanotte	July 7 mtg	COMPLETE 7/7 — approved for transmittal; TC approval pending
14	Transmit adopted bylaws to Township Committee for adoption by resolution	Co-Chairs	Near-term	COMPLETE — transmitted with draft resolution
15	File 2026 meeting schedule notice with Clerk; post on bulletin board and website	Co-Chairs / Clerk	Complete	COMPLETE (June)
Carried Forward / In Progress				
16	Compile consolidated, searchable PDF orientation packet (Ordinance, Bylaws, Master Plan, ANJEC Handbook, re-establishment history)	T. Mezzanotte	Ongoing	In progress — history document approved 7/7
17	Warren County / Kearns non-invasive landscaping ordinance — prepare for presentation to Township Committee	M. St. Andre / Mezzanotte	Upcoming mtgs	In progress — advanced 7/7 (see items 4–5)
18	Tire recycling / general recycling information gathering (Mosquito Commission, farmers' board via Frank, tonnage, website)	Clifford / Murray	Ongoing	In progress — folded into Recycling Initiative (item 8)
19	Update OEM plan	V. Gaeta	Early next year	In progress
20	Review Rosters EC& GT: Decide how to handle Rosters. Green Team roster — whether, and which, Green Team members and volunteers are listed publicly on the website	Commission	Future mtg	Tabled 7/7

Dates to Keep in Mind

Next Meeting: July 21, 2026 — Work Session, 6:30 p.m.

2026 schedule: July 21 (Work), Aug 4 (Reg.), Aug 18 (Work), Sept 1 (Reg.), Sept 22 (Work), Oct 6 (Reg.), Oct 20 (Work), Nov 3 (Election Day — no meeting), Nov 17 (Reg.), Dec 1 (Reg.), Dec 15 (Work). ANJEC Conference — September 25 (Rutgers, New Brunswick). Knowlton Community Day — October.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

The Co-Chair thanked the members for their participation and contributions.

Motion (Lenny): To adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. **Second:** Michell. All in favor. ADJOURNED.

Environment: *The interconnected natural resources and human activities within Knowlton Township that affect land, water, air, ecological integrity, public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life.*

KTEC mission: *to promote the preservation of Knowlton's unique rural character by guiding the community in protecting natural resources, advancing environmental sustainability, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening our relationship with the environment for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

NKGT mission: *to engage residents through education and outreach to build a vibrant, resilient, and connected community.*

References: [ANJEC EC Handbook](#) • [Knowlton Master Plan](#) • [Township Ordinances](#)

Approved as Final: August 4, 2026. Motion: Vince. Second: Jim. **Vote:** Passed, 3-0, with Michelle abstaining.