KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Naturally Knowlton Green Team

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MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Date / Time	September 15, 2026 — convened 6:30 p.m.; adjourned 8:20 p.m.
Location	Knowlton Township Municipal Building, 628 Rt. 94, Columbia, NJ
Meeting Type	Work Session — no formal action
Recording	The meeting was recorded.

Call to Order, Pledge & Open Public Meetings Act Statement

The Co-Chair called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Open Public Meetings Act statement was read: notice of the meeting and the agenda were posted on the Township website and on the bulletin board at the Municipal Building, and the meeting was recorded. The Co-Chair restated the work session rules adopted by the Commission: no formal action is taken at a work session; all meetings are in person and open to the public; formal action is taken at regular meetings; work sessions are reserved for non-voting matters or emergent issues.

The Co-Chair noted that the Township website currently lists Committeeman Stockton as Chair of the Environmental Commission Sub Committee and Committeewoman Adele Starrs as Co-Chair, and that the Township Committee liaison assignment should be confirmed with the Township.

Roll Call & Quorum

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

Absent — excused: Jaime Murray.

Also present: Pam Rusweiler, Naturally Knowlton Green Team – Recycling Initiative Lead; Committeeman Stockton, Knowlton Township Committee.

Quorum: A quorum was present. Had votes been taken, the alternate would have been seated in Ms. Murray's place; no votes were taken.

It was noted that consistent with the bylaws, Green Team Action Leads can participate in all EC discussion; whether to extend discussion participation to others was noted is a matter that may be taken up at the regular meeting.

Sustainable Jersey Certification — Administrative Work

This was the sole item of business. The Co-Chair reviewed the purpose of the work session: administrative work supporting the Township's Sustainable Jersey certification, including discussing, reviewing, and organizing action documentation and compiling materials and evidence for existing and potential actions. The Co-Chair explained for the Committeeman that draft action sheets are generated from each lead's description of the action, returned to the lead to revise, and will become part of the language presented to the Township Committee for annual action approval and prioritization and used in the Sustainable Jersey Certification submission. Matters not related to Sustainable Jersey work are deferred to the next regular meeting.

NEW — Knowlton Bird and Bat House Habitat Project

Action Lead / EC Liaison: Rick Clarkson

The Commission worked through the draft action sheet with the lead. Rick Clarkson brought a sample bluebird house and a bat house and explained that the project's value lies in installation, education/outreach, and visibility for the Commission. Discussion and revisions included:

- **Title.** The action is renamed the Knowlton Bird and Bat House Habitat Project; "build" and "installation" are dropped from the title because houses will be purchased where an inexpensive source exists and built only where none does.
- **Purchase vs. build.** Bluebird houses that open for cleaning are available for about $10 each from a craftsman at the Saylorsburg flea market, apparently made from recycled pallet wood; he can supply as many as needed. Rick will ask him about wood duck and bat houses and will also check the Johnsonville feed store (Lions Club-built bat houses). Vince Gaeta offered to build wood duck houses if no source is found. All houses must open for cleaning; wood must not be pressure-treated; houses are not painted — natural or dull stain only — though students/sponsors may mark the bottom or side of a house they helped install.
- **Existing installations and expert guidance.** Ramsaysburg currently has three bluebird houses, three wood duck houses, and three larger-hole boxes (species to be confirmed) installed by Boy Scout Troop 140 over the years; the bluebird boxes are mounted too high (about 15 feet rather than 6 feet) and do not open, and will need correction. We will compile questions for Jen Correa-Kruegel, Warren County naturalist, on spacing, mounting height, wood duck density, paired boxes for tree swallows, and bat house success, and invite her to a meeting.
- **Sites (brainstorming list).** The Commission built a brainstorming site list to be prioritized and pared down at a regular meeting. Bluebird (15): Tunnel Field 4 (one existing), Knowlton Elementary School 2, September 11th National Memorial 3, DPW yard 2, municipal building park 2, Columbia Beach (2) Columbia Footbridge kiosk corner - maybe. Wood duck (7): Columbia Lake 2, Delaware Lake 2, Delaware Lake Pond 1, Columbia Beach 1, Delaware Beach 1. Bat (6): Brugler Preserve, September 11th National Memorial, Columbia Lake trail/parking area, Delaware Lake, Columbia Beach (in the woods), and Delaware Beach; bat houses are to be sited away from where children gather, and were not added at the school, Tunnel Field, the DPW/municipal park, or the kiosk corner.
- **Ownership and permissions.** Several sites are State land (Columbia Wildlife Management Area under NJ Fish and Wildlife; the Paulinskill / September 11th National Memorial Trail corridor, understood to be maintained by Kittatinny Valley State Park). Michelle St. Andre will confirm the responsible agencies

and contacts. Township Committee approval is needed for the project and for working with the State; school property requires the school's agreement.

- **Materials and mounting.** Bluebird houses on 2x2 by 8-foot posts or donated metal poles or conduit; wood duck houses on 4x4 by 8-foot posts (about 6 feet above ground) with wood shavings inside; bat houses on 12 to 14-foot metal poles set in tamped rock or quarry base, with possible DPW assistance for installation. Hardware to be listed. Members noted that bat houses hold roughly 25 to 300 bats depending on chambers and are best on structures, but structures near people are not suitable.
- **Donations and funding rules.** Whether the Commission may solicit or accept donations of money, materials, or finished houses is a question for the Township Committee liaison; members understood that donated finished houses and materials are generally acceptable while cash must go through the Township. A sponsor-a-house jar was discussed and set aside pending that answer. To be put on the TC Liaison list of questions.
- **Education and outreach.** The lead's vision is a visible, educational project: presentations to Knowlton Elementary School, North Warren Regional High School (environmental science), Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Knowlton Seniors Group and the Warren County seniors group, and the Lions Club, with students installing and marking bluebird houses. A short presentation or poster for each group was suggested.
- **Community Day, October 24, 2026.** Because the Township Committee cannot act before Community Day (the September 28 Township Committee meeting is canceled; the next is October 26), the Commission will display the project at Community Day on October 24 as a proposed project pending approvals. Eleanor Rickson will be asked to help with the poster and Michelle St. Andre will coordinate.
- **Timeline and funding.** Adopt the project at the October 6 regular meeting; add Township Committee approval to the liaison's list for the next Township Committee meeting; obtain pricing; prepare a formal proposal for a January 2027 budget request; explore ANJEC and Sustainable Jersey grants; if possible, install before the 2027 nesting season. The Co-Chair explained that Sustainable Jersey credit can be earned on installations completed in 2027 and carried into later cycle years; action categories will be confirmed when Sustainable Jersey releases its revised system.

No formal action taken (work session).

Action: Tara to revise the action sheet with the new title, site list, materials, and timeline and send it to Rick for review; Rick to price wood duck and bat houses and compile questions for Jen; Michelle to identify State agency contacts for the trail and lake sites and coordinate poster.

NEW — Native Landscaping Ordinance Initiative (Article 24A)

Action Lead / EC Liaison: Michelle St. Andre

Michelle St. Andre distributed her rewording for the SJ Action sheet and the Commission reviewed it. The description reads: create a draft ordinance for Township Committee consideration amending the Land Development Ordinance to require the use of only native species in landscaping plans submitted to the Land Use Board for site plan commercial applications. Discussion included:

- **Scope.** The initiative applies to new applications going forward. An existing site that returns to the Land Use Board (for example, for a compliance matter) would be subject to it for any new or replacement landscaping; plantings that die after an approval must be replaced with native species. Whether to broaden the scope is a decision for the full Commission, after which the ordinance wording would be adjusted.

- **Master Plan connections.** The Master Plan bullet citing Goal 23.f ("require replacement plantings…") was removed as requested because the ordinance does not itself require replacement plantings; the Goal 24.c bullet (pesticides, fertilizers, integrated pest management) was removed because the ordinance does not address those subjects. The three retained connections (rural and woodland features; water quality and quantity; wildlife and wildlife habitat) are combined paraphrases rather than quotations; page references to the Master Plan are to be added for consistency and the Sustainable Jersey documentation.
- **Sustainable Jersey points.** Not reviewed, as Sustainable Jersey is revising its action list and point values. The Environment, EC Mission, and Green Team Mission connections were left as drafted.
- **Definition of commercial.** The definition of "commercial" (commercial versus non-residential) must be settled before the ordinance is finalized. The Co-Chair noted that the Commission previously agreed on non-residential language in its July memo to the Township Committee and could be considered for efficiency reasons; the lead prefers to revisit the definition fresh in the context of the ordinance. The question will be taken up at the November regular meeting.
- **Ordinance and cover letter.** The lead distributed hard copies of the draft ordinance and a draft cover letter to envisions to go to the Township Committee. The as the ordinance is new business for a regular meeting, so discussion was limited only to the SJ Action sheet. Because the lead will be absent in October, the ordinance will be placed on the November 17 regular meeting agenda; the Co-Chair will convert the documents to PDF and circulate them.

No formal action taken (work session).

Action: Michelle to finalize the initiative description; Tara to add Master Plan pages. Tara to circulate the ordinance and cover letter and place them on the November 17 agenda; Commission to settle the definition of commercial / non-residential in November.

NEW — Community Solar Outreach Initiative

Action Lead / EC Liaison: Lenny Clifford

Lenny Clifford reported that he has spoken several times with one community solar provider — the company named in a recent newspaper article on Raritan Township's program — which offered to staff an information table at Community Day and asked for a follow-up call with its government community solar lead. He is hesitant to go further having approached only one firm. He distinguished two models: government energy aggregation, in which the Township contracts with a supplier and all households are enrolled on an opt-out basis (not researched; no green supplier identified), and community solar, in which individual residents voluntarily subscribe on their own to credits from a solar project and receive a lower, green rate. Under the second model the Township's only commitment is to approve the action; the Commission would simply make the information available to residents, no-opt out. Raritan did not run a Township program but made the option available to residents via educational outreach; eligibility follows the utility, so any project in JCP&L territory qualifies Knowlton residents. The Co-Chair will draft the action sheet from this discussion, drawing on Sustainable Jersey and NJ Board of Public Utilities resources, without naming a provider; vetting providers is a later step after the Commission adopts the initiative and the Township Committee prioritizes it.

No formal action taken (work session).

Action: Lenny to bring provider documentation and website links to the next regular meeting; Tara to draft the action sheet and send it to Lenny for review.

Items raised and deferred to a Regular Meeting

- **Community Day recycling containers —** Pam Rusweiler reported that Sanico quoted about $400 for ten trash and ten recycling containers for Community Day and advised that event recycling is usually contaminated; members suggested bringing their own labeled containers and taking recyclables to the County. Pam will bring options and costs to the next regular meeting. Committeeman Stockton who is also the President of the Lion's Club offered to see what they have to help.
- **Community Day table —** the Commission will have a table on October 24, 2026; the bird and bat house poster and materials for other actions to be coordinated.
- **Questions for the Township Committee liaison —** rules on soliciting and accepting donations (money, materials, finished houses); Township Committee approval of the bird and bat house project and of coordination with State land managers; confirmation of the Township Committee liaison and the Township website listing of Commission officers.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present. Committeeman Stockton, invited to comment, said he was glad to sit in and hear the work under way and will check with Lions Club on recycling.

Adjournment

Motion: A motion to adjourn the work session was made (Mezzanotte) and seconded (Gaeta).

Result: Approved by those present. The work session adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The Co-Chair noted that the AI-generated meeting summary would be sent to participants the following morning without edits, with formal minutes to follow for approval.

Next Actions — To Do / Outstanding Items from this Meeting

#	Item	Owner	Due
1	Bird & Bat House: revise action sheet (new title, site list, materials, timeline) and send to lead for review	T. Mezzanotte	Before Oct 6 reg. mtg
2	Bird & Bat House: price and source wood duck and bat houses (Saylorsburg craftsman; Johnsonville feed store / Lions Club); confirm recycled-wood source	R. Clarkson	Oct 6 reg. mtg
3	Bird & Bat House: compile questions for Jen Council (spacing, height, wood duck density, paired boxes, bat house success, wood type) and invite her to a meeting	R. Clarkson	Oct 6 reg. mtg
4	Bird & Bat House: confirm State agency contacts and permissions for Columbia Lake, Delaware Lake, Hunt's Pond, and the 9/11 Memorial Trail sites	M. St. Andre	Oct 6 reg. mtg
5	Bird & Bat House: adopt the project at the regular meeting; add TC approval (project, State coordination, DPW help, donations) to the liaison question list	Commission / T. Mezzanotte	Oct 6 reg. mtg; next TC mtg
6	Community Day poster — "proposed project, pending approval": sketch concept (Eleanor, via Michelle/Rick); produce poster; site photos and sample houses for the table	M. St. Andre / R. Clarkson / T. Mezzanotte	Oct 24, 2026
7	Bird & Bat House: research ANJEC and Sustainable Jersey grant options; formal proposal in December for the January 2027 budget request	T. Mezzanotte / R. Clarkson	Dec 2026 / Jan 2027

8	Native Landscaping Ordinance: convert ordinance and cover letter to PDF, circulate to absent members, place on the November 17 regular meeting agenda	T. Mezzanotte	Nov 17 reg. mtg
9	Native Landscaping Ordinance: finalize initiative description; add Master Plan page references; Commission to settle the definition of commercial / non-residential	M. St. Andre / Commission	Nov 17 reg. mtg
10	Community Solar: bring provider documentation and website links to the regular meeting; draft action sheet and send to lead for review	L. Clifford / T. Mezzanotte	Oct 6 reg. mtg
11	Community Day recycling: bring container options and costs (Sanico quote; member-supplied containers) to the regular meeting	P. Rusweiler	Oct 6 reg. mtg
12	Confirm the Township Committee liaison assignment and correct the Township website listing of Commission officers	T. Mezzanotte / TC liaison	Oct 6 reg. mtg
13	Send AI-generated meeting summary to participants	T. Mezzanotte	Sept 16, 2026 (done)

🌿 **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:** The mission of the Knowlton Township Environmental Commission is 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.

🌿 **KTNK:** The mission of the Naturally Knowlton Green Team is to engage residents through education and outreach to build a vibrant, resilient, and connected community.

🌿 **References:**

- Master Plan: Master Plan – Knowlton Township, New Jersey
- Township Ordinances Table of Contents - Township of Knowlton, NJ
- Sustainable Jersey: https://www.sustainablejersey.com/
- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission (ANJEC): ANJEC – Local Environment Matters

Approved as Final:. Motion: Ashe Second: Clarkson AIF October 6, 2026

PROPOSED DRAFT ORDINANCE FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION. ORDINANCE 2026 NO. ____

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 11 (LAND DEVELOPMENT) OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON TO ADD ARTICLE 24A, "NATIVE LANDSCAPE STANDARDS."

WHEREAS, The Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2, authorizes municipalities to adopt land development regulations that promote public health, safety and general welfare and conserve natural resources,

WHEREAS,
The Knowlton Township Master Plan Reexamination Report, establishes among its goals the following:

* retain the Township's rural and woodland features;
* retain water quality and quantity;
* minimize development impact upon wildlife; and encourage the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat and,

WHEREAS, The Township Committee finds that the use of native landscaping supports these adopted Master Plan goals and,

WHEREAS,
This ordinance mandates appropriate native landscaping which will support habitats for native pollinators dependent on native plants for all stages of their life cycles.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 11, Part V (Design Standards), is amended by adding a new Article 24A, immediately following Article 24 (General Regulations for All Zones).

§24A-1 **Purpose**
This article establishes native landscaping standards for Commercial Development within Knowlton Township in order to implement the goals and objectives of the Knowlton Township Master Plan.

§24A-1.1 **Definitions**

"**Native plant"** means a plant species indigenous to the northeastern and mid-Atlantic United States, and in particular to the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley ecoregions of Warren County, prior to European settlement, as reflected in the plant lists maintained by the Native Plant Society of New Jersey (NPSNJ).

"Invasive species" means a plant, whether terrestrial or aquatic, that is (1) non-native to NE US and, (2) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health, including any species listed on the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team "Do Not Plant List" maintained by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS).

"POLLINATORS"
Animals (primarily insects, birds or mammals) that fertilize plants through the movement of pollen, resulting in the formation of seeds and fruits that humans and other animals rely on for food. The majority of flowering plant species rely on pollinators such as native bees, butterflies and moths, and hummingbirds to make the seeds that will become the next generation of plants.

"STRAIGHT SPECIES"
A native plant that is not a cultivated variety (a.k.a., cultivar) or has not been bred to emphasize or minimize certain traits of the parent plant and is not a hybrid plant.

"KEYSTONE SPECIES"
Native plants that are essential to the ecosystem because they support 90% of the caterpillar species that are the food source for

terrestrial birds feeding their young. These are the plants that also serve as a food source to both generalist and native bee species who only eat pollen from certain plants. A list of Keystone Native Plants for Knowlton Township's ecoregion can be found
https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Plant-Native/Why-Native/Keystone-Plants-by-Ecoregion

§24A-2 **Applicability**

This article shall apply to Major Site Plans, Major Subdivisions, (to be discussed) Commercial and Industrial, Office, Multifamily , Institutional, Planned Developments, Public Utility Facilities, and other applications where landscaping is required by the Land Use Board. The Land Use Board may require compliance for Minor Site Plans when appropriate.

§24A-3 **Adoption of Warren County Standards**

Plans subject to this Article shall utilize native plants consistent with the Warren County Native Plant Standards (as listed below)to the maximum extent practicable with the exception that this ordinance is restricted to the use of native plants only and prohibits the use of any cultivars.
These standards as listed below will apply to any Knowlton Township commercial and industrial development applications.(wording to be discussed and coordinate with Applicability)

Warren County Native Plant Standards
(a) All landscaping and restoration projects within County right-of-way or as part of County-approved developments (applications) shall utilize New Jersey native plant
species to the maximum extent practicable.
(b) The official reference list for approved native plants shall be maintained by the Native Plant Society of New Jersey (NPSNJ), available

https://npsnj.org/native-plants/plant-lists/.
(c) Species selection shall prioritize plants native to the Piedmont and Ridge & Valley ecoregions of Warren County, emphasizing drought-tolerant, pollinator-supportive, and non-invasive varieties.
(d) Substitutions using non-native cultivars are prohibited unless approved by the County Engineer

§24A-4 **Landscape Plans**

Landscape plans shall identify existing vegetation to be preserved, proposed plantings, buffers, screening, tree protection measures, and a plant schedule demonstrating compliance with this Article.

§24A-5 **General Landscape Standards**

a.Development shall preserve existing native mature vegetation where practical, minimize unnecessary clearing, complement the Township's rural character, utilize native plant materials, and provide effective buffering and screening.

b. Non-native turf grasses are allowed.

24A-6 Invasive Species
Plant species identified as invasive by Warren County, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team, or the Township shall not be used to satisfy required landscaping under this Article.

§24A-7 **Installation and Maintenance**
Required landscaping shall be installed prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
Dead or diseased plants shall be replaced with the same or other native species and all required landscaping shall be maintained in healthy condition.

§24A-8 **Administration**

The Land Use Board shall administer this Article during development review. The Township Committee may, by resolution, adopt or update supplemental native plant lists to assist in the administration of this Article. Recognition of subsequent editions of the Warren County Native Plant Standards shall be governed by §24A-3. The Environmental Commission shall review the County Native Plant Standards and the applicable invasive species list at least annually and may recommend updates to the Township Committee.

§24A-9 **Waivers**

The Land Use Board may grant reasonable waivers where strict compliance is impracticable due to existing vegetation, topography,

SECTION 2. **Repealer**

All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith are repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION 3. **Severability**

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this ordinance is held invalid, the remainder shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 4. **Effective Date**

This ordinance shall take effect upon final passage and publication according to law.

DRAFT OF COVER LETTER TO THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE INTRODUCING THE DRAFT ORDINANCE REQUIRING NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPING IN COMMERCIAL APPLICATIONS

The purpose of this letter is to present to the Committee a draft of an ordinance developed by the Environmental Commission establishing landscape standards for all Commercial development applications to the Land Use Board.

The ordinance is based on the standards developed and recommended by the Warren County Commissioners and if adopted will require the use of only native landscaping in the Township. Adoption will assist in the development of ecosystems necessary to support the life-cycle of our native species, and will in turn, contribute to the pollination of our food sources.

You will find the draft in the attachment below. Please reach out if you need additional information or if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.