KNOWLTON TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Naturally Knowlton Green Team

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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Date / Time	September 1, 2026 — convened 6:30 p.m.; adjourned 9:02 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 by the Co-Chair at 6:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Open Public Meetings Act statement was read into the record, noting that this is a Regular Meeting at which formal action, including voting, may be taken, that notice was posted on the Township website and the Municipal Building bulletin board, and that the meeting was being recorded.

Roll Call

Members present: Jaime Murray, Vince Gaeta, Rick Clarkson, and Tara Mezzanotte.

Absent: Michelle St. Andre (excused)

Alternates present: Jim Ashe (Alternate 1), seated to vote on Environmental Commission matters in Michelle St. Andre's absence, and Lenny Clifford (Alternate 2).

Also present: Pam Rusweiler, Green Team member and Recycling Program lead; Adele Starrs, Township Committee Liaison; Bob McNinch, Chair of the Knowlton Trail Advisory Subcommittee (presenting); and one member of the public, Allison Bickhart.

Quorum: The record reflects that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

a. July 21, 2026 Work Session (tabled August 4). The minutes were presented for approval.

> **Motion (Clifford):** To approve the minutes of the July 21, 2026 Work Session as presented. Second: Gaeta. Result: All in favor; APPROVED.

b. August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting. The minutes were presented for approval

> **Motion (Gaeta):** To approve the minutes of the August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented. Second: Ashe. Result: All in favor; APPROVED.

c. August 18, 2026 Work Session. Approval was tabled. Attendees were Jaime Murray, Vince Gaeta, and Tara Mezzanotte; Jaime Murray had not yet had an opportunity to read the minutes.

> Approval of the August 18, 2026 Work Session minutes was tabled to a future meeting.

Agenda Prioritization

With the Township Committee Liaison present, the Commission agreed to take up the Bylaws item (Township Attorney guidance) immediately after the Trail Advisory Subcommittee presentation. Pam Rusweiler asked that the Recycling Initiative update also be taken early, as she had gathered information to finalize the action description. Items taken out of order are recorded below in their agenda positions.

Knowlton Trail Advisory Subcommittee — Bob McNinch

Bob McNinch, Chair of the Knowlton Trail Advisory Subcommittee and a former Township Committee member, presented the Subcommittee's work as the Commission's first existing, Township-approved initiative to be formalized as a Sustainable Jersey action. He introduced the Township's Open Space and Recreation Plan (prepared with Rene Mathez as part of the Master Plan), which includes a trails chapter; he and Rene expect to present the full Open Space Plan to the Commission at a later meeting. The Township Committee established the five-member Trail Advisory Subcommittee last year (Tara Mezzanotte is a member) with a focus on developing trails in the Brugler Preserve. The existing half-mile paved path at Tunnel Field is to be connected to a new loop of approximately 1.5 miles into the Preserve; the loop was roughed out last year with volunteer help, and the Township is addressing dead ash trees along the route. The next step is trail signage to delineate the loop, particularly the less obvious section around the back of the ball field. He has met with Township staff about sign placement that will not interfere with mowing, and with the VFW about helping with the project; roughly $500 in materials is needed this year. A $5,000 grant request submitted earlier this year was not funded (approximately 330 applicants for six awards). Handout with Proposed Trail Map, Open Space Plan page and Sign Proposal to be attached to minutes.

Committeewoman Starrs question was asked about using the asphalt millings stockpiled at the Lions Club for the trail surface, Bob McNinch explained that although millings are permitted by NJDEP in some cases for driveways and parking lots, there are environmental concerns; the Subcommittee has also considered wood chips to define the trail. The surface choice remains to be determined.

The Co-Chair read the initiative into the record. Lead: Bob McNinch; Environmental Commission sponsor: Tara Mezzanotte (every project originating outside the Commission requires a Commission sponsor to speak to it and provide progress updates). Title: Knowlton Brugler Preserve Trails – Tunnel Field Initiative. Description: connects the existing half-mile paved walking path at Tunnel Field to a new 1.5-mile trail on the Township-owned Brugler Preserve, expanding access to a wooded natural area for walkers, hikers, and nature and history enthusiasts; guided by the Trail Advisory Subcommittee, the initiative enhances passive recreation, improves habitat connectivity, and links community open-space assets across the Township; future phases envision additional loops and trail connections to the historic lime kiln within the Preserve; this is a community project with many ways for volunteers to contribute. The Brugler Preserve trail project was approved by Knowlton Township via Resolution 2025-34, which authorized the Subcommittee to "prepare plans for new trails, develop funding sources including grants, develop maintenance plans, and specifically proceed with layout, funding, and related planning for a new trail through the Brugler Preserve connecting to Tunnel Field and providing safe access to the historic lime kiln."

ANJEC grant. The Co-Chair reviewed the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship grant program ($1,500; 2026 was in its 13th year, and the 2027 portal is expected to open around February). Eligible categories include trail building. Trail signage for the Brugler Preserve loop fits squarely within the program. In January the Commission will decide, among all eligible Environmental Commission – Naturally Knowlton Green Team projects, which to submit. Attending the ANJEC conference in September and joining ANJEC in January will help establish the Commission's presence; ANJEC and

Sustainable Jersey grants are distributed statewide, and very few Warren County municipalities apply (Hope has been successful), so the Commission has every reason to apply and hope for a favorable outcome.

> **Motion (Murray):** To adopt the Knowlton Brugler Preserve Trails – Tunnel Field Initiative as an existing Township-approved Sustainable Jersey action, with Bob McNinch as lead and Tara Mezzanotte as Environmental Commission sponsor. Second: Clarkson. Result: All in favor (Green Team vote). APPROVED.

Action: Knowlton Brugler Preserve Trails – Tunnel Field Initiative to be on the Sustainable Jersey Action List to be presented to the Township Committee early 2027 for approval; the Commission to consider a 2027 ANJEC $1,500 grant application for Brugler Preserve trail signs when the portal opens; Bob McNinch and Renee Mathez to present the Open Space and Recreation Plan at a future meeting.

Township Referrals — Land Use Board (LUB) Matter

Taken up as a learning exercise (approximately 30 minutes; discussion only, no formal action). The Co-Chair who is also the LUB Liaison, explained the process: the Land Use Board Secretary now forwards every application to the Commission as it is submitted to the Township, and the Commission's statutory window to provide input is 30 days from submission, not from a completeness determination. The Verizon/Honey Run Rd Driveway application was submitted in July, so the window has passed; tonight's exercise was to begin to understand the process and practice developing questions. The Commission previously decided to provide input to the Land Use Board primarily as a list of questions rather than opinions, in part so that Vince Gaeta and Tara Mezzanotte, who also serve on the Land Use Board, do not cross a line that would require recusal; the Co-Chair/LUB Liaison has communicated that approach to the Land Use Board.

Hope–Honey Run Road / Knowlton-Driveway access – Verizon cell tower. Hope Township has approved the tower; the matter before the Knowlton Land Use Board is whether the existing gravel/dirt driveway in Knowlton, which has never been used for commercial purposes, satisfies Knowlton's driveway standards for access to the facility. The applicant states that the existing Knowlton driveway would be used and that no improvements to the Knowlton property are proposed. The Board Engineer's review states that the submission does not establish compliance with Knowlton's driveway access standards and calls for evaluation of sight distance and fire-truck turning movements; it also notes NJDEP GeoWeb-mapped wetlands approximately 150 feet from the driveway and recommends a wetlands Letter of Interpretation if driveway improvements are required. The Co-Chair measured approximately 153 feet from the driveway to the mapped wetland on GeoWeb (the transition-area buffer is 150 feet). The Engineer's review often arrives only a few days prior to the Land Use Board meeting, so in future the Commission will need to notice such items. Using the application plans, the Co-Chair oriented members to the parcel (Honey Run Road, Auble, Cemetery, the Hope/Knowlton line) and the driveway location; the Township's internet connection was too slow to display GeoWeb It was noted a spare television with HDMI could be made available for future displays.

Members raised questions and concerns for consideration: the meaning of "no improvements" and what improvements Knowlton's driveway permit might require; sight-distance clearing; emergency-vehicle access; wetlands and transition areas and whether a Letter of Interpretation is needed; wetlands permitting if work is required; existing drainage; traffic-related erosion and drainage effects; what vehicles will use the driveway (construction traffic, cranes, fuel-delivery trucks for the required backup generator and its holding tank, maintenance pickups); construction access; generator servicing and fueling; driveway grade and erosion susceptibility; long-term maintenance; tree and vegetation management; future co-location by other carriers and cumulative use; unmapped water features; and whether the Commission will be able to review any changes later proposed. Radio-frequency emissions cannot be considered (settled by litigation), and the tower itself is not within Knowlton's purview. Jaime Murray asked whether the Township has a cell tower ordinance; it does, and the Co-Chair will circulate it. Jaime Murray also stated that where an impact is clear (for example, a Category One waterway buffer), the Commission should state the concern directly rather than only asking a question; Rick Clarkson suggested framing such items as "given the riparian area, how do you intend to address…". Lenny Clifford suggested a simpler generic checklist

(impacts on air, water, etc.), while Vince Gaeta noted that the driveway-improvement question matters because any required improvement triggers wetlands certifications and permits.

Process going forward. Vince Gaeta suggested to not circulate questions in advance, so as not to shape members' views, that each member should prepare their own questions independently and discuss them only at the meeting, and the Commission should limit itself to one application per meeting given the 30-day clock.
The Burdge, Simpton Road, and Quiet Valley applications were not discussed

Action: Members to prepare their own questions independently on future Land Use Board applications and bring them to the meeting; the Co-Chair will forward applications on receipt and will not circulate her personal question list; Tara to circulate the Township cell tower ordinance; one application per meeting.

Continuing Business

a. Bylaws — Township Attorney Guidance and Township Committee Comments (Adele Starrs)

Township Committee Liaison Adele Starrs reported that the Township Committee had reviewed the bylaws, as adopted by the Commission on June 16, 2026 and submitted to the Township Committee, with the Township Attorney, and shared that feedback. Items 1 and 2 below were the Township Attorney's comments; item 3 reflected the Township Committee's view:

> 1) Land Use Board conflict language (page 3). The provision that a member who also serves on the Land Use Board "shall evaluate whether participation can create a conflict" should be removed. Whether a member has a conflict is determined by the attorney, not by the member; any member may still recuse at will. The Attorney also cautioned that, while reviewing Land Use Board applications is a proper statutory function, the Commission is an advisory body, not an enforcement body, and its primary focus should remain environmental matters rather than Land Use Board business. The Co-Chair noted that one Commission member must also be a Class IV Land Use Board member (not alternate); because Vince Gaeta serves as a Class II (municipal employee) member, that role falls to Tara Mezzanotte.
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> 2) Definition of "Environment". The Attorney considers the words "public health, safety, and welfare" an overreach beyond the traditional definition used by other environmental commissions, which pertains to natural and environmental resources; "land, water, air, ecological integrity, and quality of life" are acceptable. Because the definition is referenced throughout the bylaws and related documents, the Co-Chair will highlight each location so members can confirm they are comfortable with the removal. Jaime Murray indicated agreement with the change request.
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> 3) Township Committee Liaison definition (page 4). Committeewoman Starrs noted that state law does not establish or require a governing-body liaison, so the definition may be omitted entirely. She stated that, as drafted, the language limits the liaison to a non-voting point of communication who cannot count toward a quorum, make or second motions, or vote, rather than a participant. Historically the Township Committee member participated in the Environmental Commission as a full member (she served on the Commission for about eight years); she stated that the Township Committee in general would prefer to keep it that way, and that she personally agrees. The Co-Chair noted the language was drafted around the liaison's own earlier request that the Commission represent itself with the liaison in a support role. Discussion followed: by Ordinance 26-07 the Commission is a five-member body with two alternates; making the liaison a voting member would require expanding to seven members with two alternates (nine total), which requires an ordinance amendment with attorney review; a seven-member board would need four for a quorum; Pam Rusweiler has expressed interest in membership; Jaime Murray suggested simply deleting "non-voting" from the definition; and Committeewoman Starrs suggested, as a compromise, removing the liaison language for now (she participates under her Township Committee subcommittee assignment) and revisiting membership next year. Members agreed they would like the option of having a Township Committee member to serve on the Commission. Pam asked whether bylaws are required at all; the 2026 ordinance provides that the

Commission will be governed by bylaws, which the Co-Chair and Michelle St. Andre had recommended for durability and continuity, and which was therefore included in the township resolution creating a re-establishment committee.

All members will review the bylaws and ordinance over the coming month and come to the October Regular Meeting prepared to decide how to address each item.

Action: Tara to include links to the bylaws and Ordinance 26-07 in the post-meeting email, highlighting the Land Use Board conflict language, every reference to the "public health, safety, and welfare" language, and the liaison definition; Adele to forward the former Environmental Commission ordinance for circulation; Tara to look into where striking it might create other conflicts in other places. All members to review and bring thoughts to the October 6 Regular Meeting.

b. Social Media Policy & Facebook Page - carried

c. Commission Member Orientation — Members' Binders

The approximately 75-page orientation packet was shown. Rick Clarkson and Lenny Clifford each declined a printed copy (the searchable PDF is sufficient); Jim Ashe will take a printed copy. Printed binders will therefore be prepared for Tara Mezzanotte, Jim Ashe, and Pam Rusweiler, with a hard copy to be placed in the Environmental Commission cubby for public access.

Action: Tara to finalize printed binders once the bylaws are settled (Mezzanotte, Ashe, Rusweiler) and place a hard copy in the Environmental Commission cubby.

d. Non-Residential Land Use Approvals — Memos 1 & 2

The Co-Chair reviewed the Township Committee minutes for the meeting at which Memo 1 (recommending an annual Land Use conditions-of-approval report) and Memo 2 (questions to the Township Attorney regarding the Commission's authority to review non-residential conditions) were considered. The minutes list the item as "Environmental Commission Memo / Land Use Board Compliance Review" and record that the Township Attorney advised that such enforcement review falls to the Zoning Officer rather than the Environmental Commission, and that a motion (Starrs/Baley, all in favor) directed the Zoning Officer to review non-residential Land Use Board approvals from July 2024 through July 2026 and report on compliance by the end of 2026. The minutes therefore reflect what the Co-Chair heard at the meeting: the two memos were treated as one matter, the annual review recommendation was not adopted, and the Commission's legal question was not put to the Attorney as written. The report will go to the Township Committee (the Commission had recommended it also go to the Land Use Board and the Commission); it is expected to be presented in a public session. The Co-Chair noted that had the recommendation been transmitted by resolution, as per our bylaws for recommendations, rather than as memos, the outcome might have been clearer and the intention better understood. It was noted this was a learning experience and a point of reference for next time. The Commission agreed not to revisit the matter at this time.

Action: None — item closed; future recommendations to the Township Committee to be transmitted by resolution.

e. Green Team Members and Actions Listed on the EC Webpage

The Co-Chair read the proposed webpage content into the record. Above "Our Commission Members" the page would add "Our Green Team Projects (Sustainable Jersey Actions approved by the Township Committee)," with a link to Sustainable Jersey and the statement: "We encourage anyone who wishes to help with an existing project or has ideas on new projects to come to a meeting or email: Knowlton.Environmental@gmail.com," followed by a listing of Action Name, Description, Green Team Member Lead, and Active or Completed. Names only would be listed, with no contact information; for example, the Recycling Initiative would list Pam Rusweiler as lead. Because Bob McNinch does not wish to be listed as a Green Team member, how to present actions led by others (such as the Trail Subcommittee) remains to be worked out. Posting will be held until the Township Committee formally adopts each initiative as a Knowlton Sustainable Jersey action.

> **Motion (Gaeta):** To approve the Green Team Projects webpage layout and language as read. Second: Murray. Result: All in favor (Green Team vote). APPROVED.

Action: Tara to hold the approved listing for posting until the Township Committee adopts the related Sustainable Jersey actions, and to resolve how non–Green Team leads are presented.

f. 2026 Goals & Sustainable Jersey Action Work Plan

1) Native & Non-Invasive Landscaping Ordinance Initiative (Michelle St. Andre). Tabled in Michelle St. Andre's absence.

2) Knowlton Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) Update Initiative (Jaime Murray). Jaime Murray presented the initiative language developed at the August 18 work session. A Natural Resources Inventory gathers the Township's natural resource information and mapping in one place: geology and steep slopes; soils (including hydric soils); groundwater resources (aquifers, recharge and discharge areas, water quality, wellhead protection areas); surface waters (the Delaware River, the Paulins Kill, streams, Category One waterways, watersheds and sub-watersheds, trout classifications, dams, water intakes); wetlands, floodplains, and vernal habitats; air quality (including data from the NJDEP monitoring station in the Township); climate conditions and trends; noise sources and corridors; vegetation and land cover; existing land use and development patterns; wildlife and habitat, including threatened and endangered species, Natural Heritage Priority Sites, and the Bobcat Alley/Kittatinny connectivity corridor; preserved and protected lands by type and ownership; trails and recreational resources (drawing on the Open Space Plan map rather than duplicating it); scenic and visual resources; historic and cultural resources; major infrastructure and utility corridors; and stormwater infrastructure. The Township's only NRI dates from 1991 and is available as a reference. Updating the NRI is the number-one recommendation of the Township Master Plan. Jaime Murray had prepared an outline with ANJEC in 2019 and the Township applied unsuccessfully for a Sustainable Jersey grant at that time; she noted that once an NRI is adopted, Land Use Board applications must be referred to the Environmental Commission and it is no longer optional forfor review. Sustainable Jersey grants now go up to $20,000 and are awarded for projects of this kind; the Township remains a registered Sustainable Jersey municipality and will pursue certification beginning next year. Because the grant cycle opens early in the year and the Commission is new, a 2027 application is not realistic; the 2028 cycle is the target, which will require a defined scope, cost estimates from prospective consultants, and Township Committee support, since the grant is applied for by the Township. Vince Gaeta, who raised the question at the work session, suggested that historic resources be obtained from the Historic Commission rather than included, to keep the document manageable; the decision on whether historic, cultural, and scenic resources remain in scope was deferred to the scoping stage next year.

> **Motion (Clarkson):** To adopt the Knowlton Natural Resources Inventory Update Initiative as a new potential Sustainable Jersey action, with Jaime Murray as lead. Second: Gaeta. Result: All in favor. APPROVED.

Action: Jaime and the Commission to develop the NRI scope and cost estimates during 2027, decide the treatment of historic, cultural, and scenic resources at scoping, and target the 2028 Sustainable Jersey grant cycle.

3) Knowlton Rare Wildlife Sighting Reporting & Habitat Connectivity Education Initiative (Tara Mezzanotte). Tabled to a future meeting at the Co-Chair's request.

4) Delaware Water Gap Scenic Byway — Resubmission (Jaime Murray). Carried to the next Regular Meeting for a full presentation and formal adoption, as the initiative is new to several members. Jaime Murray recalled that the Township submitted an approximately 50-page scenic byway application after years of work,

which the State stalled because of the Route 80 rock-wall project. The Co-Chair has observed the County support another scenic byway designation and has spoken with Commissioner Director Lori Ciesla, who indicated she could see the County support a Knowlton resubmission. Jaime Murray will share the prior application and mapping for adoption.

5) Recycling — Knowlton Township Recycling Program Initiative (Pam Rusweiler, lead; Lenny Clifford, EC sponsor) (taken early). Pam Rusweiler presented edits to the Sustainable Jersey action sheet: because recycling already exists in the Township by statute, the description will read that the EC/NKGT will enhance and supplement the Township-wide recycling program to strengthen Knowlton's compliance with New Jersey mandatory source separation, rather than "establish" a program; and all references to the Trex plastic-film program are removed. Trex has changed its program from a bench award to a points-and-drawing system, and after ACME and the Lions Club stopped accepting film, Pam Rusweiler concluded a public collection is not worth the effort (Trex collections elsewhere have been contaminated with trash); the local school still runs a Trex collection, and Allison Bickhart offered to check on that program and report back. Pam Rusweiler spoke with Liz at Sanico: #3 and #6 plastics (including styrofoam) are not accepted even though the container labels list plastics; no soiled bags or boxes; containers must be clean, with a limit on residue; shredded paper is not recyclable; and Sanico has a two-page flyer, available online, that should be circulated to residents. Members agreed that resident education on what can and cannot be recycled is the likely part of the reason for low recycling numbers and a good starting point. The Co-Chair asked Adele Starrs whether the Township Committee would permit the Commission to begin acting on the recycling initiative now, ahead of the 2027 presentation of the full Sustainable Jersey action list, and whether the Commission could take over and upgrade the Township's recycling webpage; the Co-Chair also confirmed with Adele Starrs that in Nov or Dec the Commission will ask her to walk through the Sustainable Jersey program and the list of actions to be presented to the Township Committee, so she can support it.

Action: Pam to forward the Sanico flyer and her notes to Tara for circulation; Adele to raise with the Township Committee whether the Commission may begin recycling education now and take over the Township recycling webpage; Allison Bickhart to check on the school's Trex program.

6) Community Birdhouse / Bat House Build (2027) (Rick Clarkson, Michelle St. Andre, Jim Ashe). Rick Clarkson reported that a bat house design is in hand, that some funding will be needed, and suggested that birdhouses and a bat house be installed along the Brugler Preserve trail in addition to the recreation site; Bob McNinch was receptive. Rick Clarkson agreed to attend the September work session so the initiative name, description, and form can be completed with the Co-Chair.

Action: Rick to attend the September work session to complete the initiative documentation; Rick, Jim, and Michelle to continue scoping (sites, design, sponsors, NRCS grant inquiry, needs list, and cost estimate) for the December budget.

7) OEM Community Preparedness & Emergency Communications Program (Vince Gaeta). Carried

8) Other Existing Sustainable Jersey Actions. Deferred (Ramsaysburg, Open Space & Farmland Preservation, Historic Commission, Warren County Pollinator Habitat). Carried.

9) Pending — New and Old Ideas. Community Solar: Lenny Clifford reported that he has looked into community solar, which differs from the Township's earlier third-party energy-aggregation program (an opt-out program that generated controversy despite its merits). With community solar, a solar field (he believes one exists in Warren County) offers a fixed generating capacity to which residents, and possibly the Township, subscribe until it is fully subscribed. The Co-Chair noted that community solar is a recognized Sustainable Jersey action with supporting materials and that towns at the ANJEC conference reported very positive experiences. Lenny Clifford agreed to take the lead and continue researching; the item will be featured on the agenda so updates can be given without prompting, and it will receive an initiative sheet for

Commission to adopt it. Other pending ideas (natural gas line, dark-sky lighting ordinance, newsletter, welcome packet, Green Life Energy Solutions) were carried.

Action: Lenny to lead research on community solar; Tara to feature Community Solar as its own agenda item.

New Business

Work Session Scope Concern (carried from August 4). Tabled to the October Regular Meeting in Michelle St. Andre's absence.

Action: Tara to carry the work-session scope question to the October 6 Regular Meeting.

Township Referrals

Land Use Board — see the Land Use Board Matter above. There were no other Township referrals.

Correspondence

08.17.2026 email from Jeannine Idrissa to the Upper Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors, copying KTEC–NKGT,: Concerns about Data Center in Mount Bethel: Do not sign the MOU: Meeting Monday, August 17,2026 at 7 pm: urging the Supervisors not to sign the developer's memorandum of understanding, and noting the Board's Monday, August 17, 2026 meeting. All members received the email. Discussion of the data center is recorded under Interesting Items below.

Interesting Items / In the News & How It Relates to Knowlton EC–NKGT Missions

Upper Mount Bethel Township data center. Jaime Murray reported attendeding the August 17 Upper Mount Bethel Board of Supervisors meeting at the firehouse, which drew an estimated 250–300 people, including local Native American representatives and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. Public comment was overwhelmingly opposed: speakers said the developer (Slate Belt) is pressing the Township to sign a memorandum of understanding before any application is filed, urged the Supervisors not to be rushed while their ordinances are being updated, and raised air quality, water sourcing and cooling-system discharge, energy, noise, and real-estate concerns. She encouraged members to educate themselves on how data centers operate (processing heat, closed-loop cooling and chemical discharge, water and grid demands, and in some cases on-site generation).

The Co-Chair summarized the current facts as she knows them: there is no application or proposal before any body. Upper Mount Bethel is deciding whether to enter an MOU with the developer and Talen Energy, and what its terms would be, and is considering a text amendment to its zoning ordinance regarding data centers. A developer exhibit prepared for discussion showed 22 buildings on the west side of the river road site. Talen holds an active Federal Energy Regulatory Commission permit at the former Portland power plant site and has stated any new generation would be natural gas rather than nuclear; current activity at the site is remediation and decommissioning, not data-center construction. Regulators include FERC (energy generation) and the Delaware River Basin Commission (water withdrawal, discharge, quality, and temperature). Jaime Murray noted a recent Pennsylvania executive order requiring municipal approval of data-center plans before state environmental review, and Lenny Clifford summarized Pennsylvania proposals under discussion: developers must bring their own energy, removal from fast-track permitting, no tax exemptions, no non-disclosure agreements, a proposed three-year statewide moratorium, and authority for municipalities to pause projects for up to 18 months. Knowlton has already prohibited data centers in all zones by ordinance (drafted by the Co-Chair). The open question for the Commission is when, how, and why it should engage as a body on matters originating outside the Township that could affect Knowlton's water, air, noise, and quality of life; residents may ask the Commission what it is doing. Members were reminded that they may share information with the full Commission by email but must not share opinions or reply-all, which would constitute deliberation outside a public meeting.

Community Solar. See Continuing Business, item f.9.

Action: Tara to email Upper Mount Bethel's proposed data-center ordinance to the Commission, Bob McNinch, and Allison Bickhart; members to share information (not opinions) with the full Commission; the Commission to discuss at the October meeting whether it has the bandwidth to take up the noise question raised in public comment.

Confirmation of Action Items

#	Action Item	Responsible	Target	Status
New Action Items — September 1, 2026				
1	Bylaws: circulate links to the bylaws and Ordinance 26-07 with the Township Attorney's three items highlighted (LUB conflict language; every reference to "public health, safety, and welfare"; TC Liaison definition); all members review and bring positions	Mezzanotte / All members	Oct 6 mtg	New
2	Forward the former Environmental Commission ordinance to Mezzanotte for circulation	Starrs	Near-term	New
3	Decide the Township Committee Liaison question: remove the definition, delete "non-voting," or seek an ordinance amendment to seven members plus two alternates; revisit membership for 2027	Commission	Oct 6 mtg	New
4	Recycling: forward the Sanico flyer and notes to Mezzanotte for circulation; finalize the SJ action description (enhance/supplement; Trex references removed)	Rusweiler / Clifford	Near-term	New
5	Ask the Township Committee whether the EC may begin recycling education now (ahead of the 2027 SJ list) and take over/upgrade the Township recycling webpage	Starrs	Sept TC mtg	New
6	Check on the school's Trex plastic-film program and report back	Bickhart	Next mtg	New
7	Land Use Board reviews: members prepare their own questions independently; Co-Chair forwards applications on receipt and does not circulate her list; one application per meeting; circulate the Township cell tower ordinance; arrange a display screen	Commission / Mezzanotte	Ongoing	New
8	NRI Update Initiative (adopted 9/1): develop scope and cost estimates; decide treatment of historic, cultural, and scenic resources at scoping; target the 2028 SJ grant cycle	Murray / Commission	2027	New
9	Present the Delaware Water Gap Scenic Byway resubmission (prior application, mapping, County support) for formal adoption	Murray	Oct 6 mtg	New
10	Birdhouse / Bat House (2027): attend the September work session to complete the initiative name, description, and form; consider installations along the Brugler Preserve trail	Clarkson / Mezzanotte	Sept work session	New
11	Reschedule the September work session from Sept. 22 to Sept. 15; update the Township website and provide required notice	Mezzanotte	Immediate	New

12	Email Upper Mount Bethel's proposed data-center ordinance to the Commission, McNinch, and Bickhart; discuss Commission bandwidth for a proactive cumulative-noise standard	Mezzanotte / Commission	Oct 6 mtg	New
13	Community Solar: continue research as lead; feature as its own agenda item	Clifford / Mezzanotte	Ongoing	New
14	Knowlton Community Day (Oct. 24): members bring availability and ideas for an EC–NKGT table	All members	Oct 6 mtg	New
15	Green Team Projects webpage listing (approved 9/1): hold posting until the TC adopts the SJ actions; resolve presentation of non–Green Team leads	Mezzanotte	After TC adoption	New
16	Brugler Preserve Trails (adopted 9/1): pursue 2026 sign funding; consider a 2027 ANJEC $1,500 signage grant when the portal opens; schedule the Open Space & Recreation Plan presentation	McNinch / Mezzanotte	Jan–Feb 2027	New
17	Bring the August 18, 2026 Work Session minutes back for approval	Mezzanotte	Next mtg	New
Completed (from the August 4 / August 18 action lists)				
18	Present the NRI Update Initiative for adoption	Murray / Mezzanotte	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE — adopted 9/1
19	Design the website member/lead listing (names only) and bring it for approval	Mezzanotte	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE — approved 9/1
20	Review the Honey Run cell tower application as a learning exercise	Commission	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE — 9/1
21	Confirm binder print preferences with Clarkson and Clifford	Mezzanotte	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE — both declined
22	Register Gaeta, Ashe, and Mezzanotte for the Sept. 25 ANJEC conference ($450, within budget)	Mezzanotte	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE
23	Place the work-session scope question on the Sept. 1 agenda	Mezzanotte	Aug 4 list	COMPLETE — tabled to Oct 6
24	Circulate the municipal data-center toolkit	Murray	Aug 18 list	COMPLETE
25	Non-Residential Land Use Approvals — Memos 1 & 2	Co-Chair	Aug 4 list	CLOSED — no further action
Carried Forward / In Progress				
26	Bylaws — Township Committee adoption by resolution (now subject to Township Attorney comments; see items 1–3)	Co-Chairs	Oct 6 mtg	In progress
27	Transmit the social media policy summary, full policy, and photo release form to the TC (Facebook-page permission) after the bylaws are adopted	Mezzanotte	After bylaws	Pending bylaws
28	Compile printed binders (Mezzanotte, Ashe, Rusweiler); place a hard copy in the EC cubby	Mezzanotte	Ongoing	In progress
29	Native & Non-Invasive Landscaping Ordinance Initiative — present for adoption	St. Andre	Oct 6 mtg	Carried (absent 9/1)
30	Rare Wildlife Sighting Reporting & Habitat Connectivity Education Initiative — present for adoption	Mezzanotte	Upcoming mtg	Carried

31	OEM Hazard Mitigation Plan — landslide/steep-slope and hazmat-transport action plans for Commission input; update the OEM plan; Township dams inventory	Gaeta	Upcoming mtg / 2027	Carried
32	Schedule ready existing SJ actions (Ramsaysburg, Open Space & Farmland, Historic Commission, Warren County Pollinator) for formal processing	Mezzanotte	Upcoming reg. mtgs	In progress
33	Invite the Township Committee liaison to walk through the SJ program and action list before the presentation to the TC	Mezzanotte	Jan–Feb 2027	In progress
34	Work-session scope question (handling of new business)	Commission	Oct 6 mtg	Tabled

Dates to Keep in Mind

Next Meeting: September 15, 2026 — Work Session, 6:30 p.m. (rescheduled from September 22; website and notice to be updated).

2026 schedule: Sept 15 (Work), Oct 6 (Reg.), Oct 20 (Work), Nov 3 (Election Day — no meeting), Nov 17 (Reg.), Dec 1 (Reg.), Dec 15 (Work). Knowlton Events: Saturday, October 24 — Knowlton Community Day (members to bring table ideas and availability to the October 6 meeting); Saturday, November 7 — Explore Warren History Trail, Ramsaysburg (10 a.m.–4 p.m.). ANJEC Conference — September 25 (Rutgers, New Brunswick). ANJEC 2027 grant portal expected to open around February.

Public Comment

Bob McNinch, drawing on his professional experience with power plants, urged the Commission to be proactive on the data center by focusing on the impact that would affect Knowlton residents most: noise. Unlike intermittent noise (a motorcycle or lawnmower), a data center or power plant produces a constant hum 24 hours a day, so the relevant measure is cumulative sound exposure (sound pressure level in dBA multiplied by time) rather than peak level. He suggested the Commission define an acceptable daily cumulative sound exposure for Knowlton residents, particularly those along the river, before the developer proposes a limit that satisfies Upper Mount Bethel's standards but not Knowlton's; nothing of the kind was done when the Portland power plant was built. He acknowledged the measurement is complicated. The Co-Chair asked whether he would help the Commission with such an effort and stated that the Commission would discuss next month whether it has the bandwidth to take it on, noting the Commission is set up to have helpers.

Adjournment

The Co-Chair thanked the members, Green Team members, liaison, and guests for staying through a long agenda.

> **Motion (Gaeta):** To adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. Second: Clarkson. Result: 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:** 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.

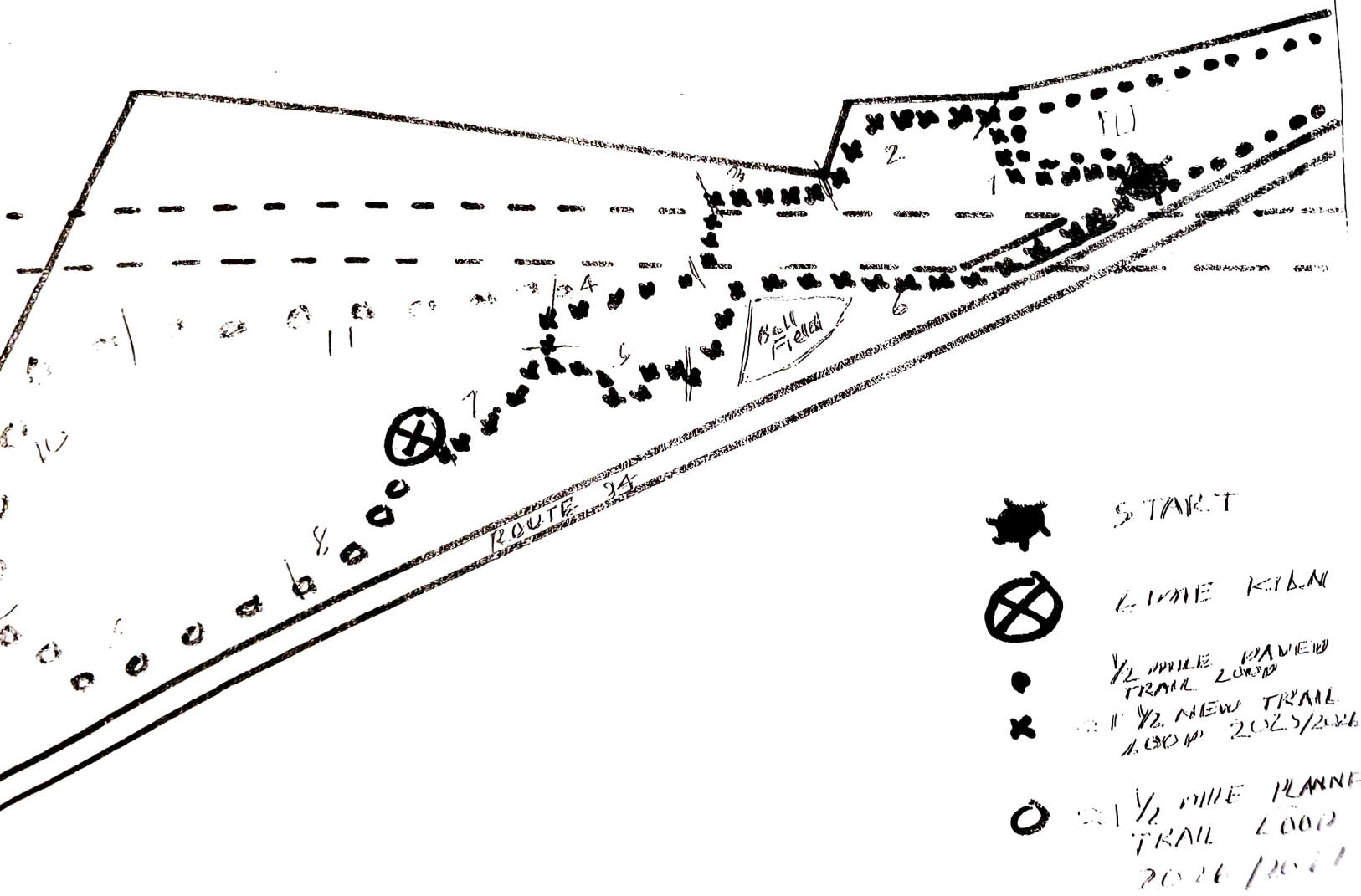
🌿 **NKGT:** The mission of the Naturally Knowlton Green Team is to engage residents through education and outreach to build a vibrant, resilient, and connected community.

🌿 **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: October 6, 2026. Motion: Vince Second: Rick AIF

TUNNEL FIELD / BRUGLER PRESERVE TRAILS



TRAILS

Trails are the total package: they provide public health, economic and transportation benefits. They reflect a community's identity and connect people to places they want to go and see.

The Township is blessed with two rivers to build trails along and many old railway beds to build trails on.

Current Major Trails

1. The Paulins Kill Valley Trail traverses approximately 2.4 miles from the Blairstown Township Border to Brugler Road where it connects with the Warrington Columbia Trail. The Warrington Columbia Trail then traverses approximately 1.7 miles from Brugler Road to the Columbia walking bridge over the Delaware River. Both of these trails form a part of the Liberty Water Gap trail that traverses all of New Jersey.

2. Portions of the Worthington State Forest Trails that start at the Dunnfield parking area, traverse from Hardwick Township into the northwest portion of Knowlton Township. They are the very popular Mount Tammany Red Dot and Blue Dot Loop Trails, and the challenging Mount Tammany Fire Road Loop.

3. The Township also has a short (0.5-mile) paved walking trail loop at Tunnel Field.

Proposed Trails

1. The proposed "Warren Railroad Trail Extension" (2.7 miles) would run parallel to the Delaware River from the historic hamlet of Delaware and the White Township border where Beaver Brook Wildlife Management Area is located. It would connect the historic hamlet of Delaware to the Ramsaysburg Homestead and Beaver Brook Wildlife Management Area's existing Warren Railroad Trail.

2. The proposed "Lehigh & New England Railroad Trail" (3.1 miles) would run northwest from Columbia and connect to the Paulins Kill Valley Trail (previously the Blairstown Railroad). This proposed trail could start at the Columbia walking bridge, run along the Delaware River through Columbia Beach, Decater Street, across I-80, along Simpson Road to connect to the old railroad bed, and run northwest all the way to the Tunnel Field recreation area.

ESTIMATE [illegible]
TRAIL IDENTIFICATION SIGNS/MARKERS
AND TRAIL BULLETIN BOARD

A [illegible] IDENTIFICATION SIGNS/MARKERS



CAP $ [illegible] TO [illegible]

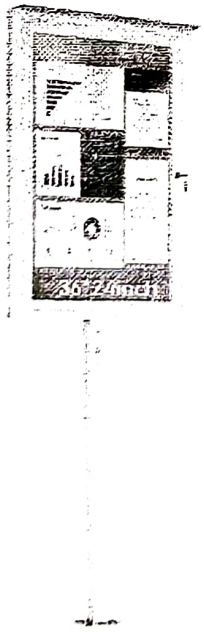
ALUMINUM SIGN 7"X10" $ 14.85 X 10

PRESSURE TREATED POST 4"X4" $ 12.34 X 10

TOTAL EST COST INCLUDING 10% CONTINGENCY $ [illegible]

BULLETIN BOARD

Standing Enclosed Bulletin Board 36"x24", Outdoor Cork Display Case Board with Aluminum Frame & Steel Pole Stand, Weatherproof Lockable Enclosed Notice Board for School, Office, Commercial, Community



$ 43.[illegible] TO [illegible]
DEPENDING ON
SIZE

TOTAL MATERIAL COST EST
$ [illegible] TO $ [illegible]

Outlook

Concerns about Data Center in Mount Bethel: Do not sign the MOU: Meeting Monday, August 17, 2026 at 7 pm

From Jeannine Idrissa <jeannineidrissa@yahoo.com>

Date Mon 8/17/2026 12:15 PM

To supervisorbermingham@umbt.org <supervisorbermingham@umbt.org>; supervisorfriedman@umbt.org <supervisorfriedman@umbt.org>; supervisoreckman@umbt.org <supervisoreckman@umbt.org>; supervisoralbert@umbt.org <supervisoralbert@umbt.org>; supervisorerler@umbt.org <supervisorerler@umbt.org>

Cc ktespta@knowltonschool.com <ktespta@knowltonschool.com>; stiehla@knowltonschool.com <stiehla@knowltonschool.com>; baierk@knowltonschool.com <baierk@knowltonschool.com>; dabkowskin@knowltonschool.com <dabkowskin@knowltonschool.com>; moritzr@knowltonschool.com <moritzr@knowltonschool.com>; kriegergr@knowltonschool.com <kriegergr@knowltonschool.com>; smitht@knowltonschool.com <smitht@knowltonschool.com>; wittreichr@knowltonschool.com <wittreichr@knowltonschool.com>; lciesla@co.warren.nj.us <lciesla@co.warren.nj.us>; jkern@co.warren.nj.us <jkern@co.warren.nj.us>; jsarnoski@co.warren.nj.us <jsarnoski@co.warren.nj.us>; administrator@co.warren.nj.us <administrator@co.warren.nj.us>; asmdimaio@njleg.org <asmdimaio@njleg.org>; asmpeterson@njleg.org <asmpeterson@njleg.org>; rosalie.lamonte@doe.nj.gov <rosalie.lamonte@doe.nj.gov>; senSteinhardt@njleg.org <senSteinhardt@njleg.org>; baris@foodshedalliance.org <baris@foodshedalliance.org>; dshipps@knowlton-nj.com <dshipps@knowlton-nj.com>; mbaley@knowlton-nj.com <mbaley@knowlton-nj.com>; jmazza@knowlton-nj.com <jmazza@knowlton-nj.com>

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PA 18343-5220
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Fax:(570) 897-0108

Supervisors John Berminham, David Friedman, Cori Eckman, Jason Albert, and Jonathan Erler,

My name is Jeannine Idrissa. I live in Knowlton Township, New Jersey, less than 2 miles from the proposed data center being contemplated by Upper Mount Bethel Township near the former Portland Power Plant. I am writing to request that the Board not sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the developers of this project and take the time necessary to enact regulations that will protect not only the residents of Mount Bethel but also your neighbors here in New Jersey. The regulations currently posted on the Township's website do not meet these standards.

I am very concerned about the non-stop noise, heat, air, and water pollution that may come from this hyperscale data center. For many years until it closed, every Saturday evening in the summer I heard music from the Overlook restaurant on N. Delaware Dr., even though the Overlook was more than a half mile away on the other side of the river. Data centers emit a constant humming noise that neighbors cannot escape. In this case, the proposed data center's location next to the river practically guarantees that the sound emitted will travel further than it would in other environments. Our quality of life and home values here in New Jersey will be negatively affected by this project just from the noise alone. Moreover, the Knowlton Township Elementary School (KTES) is approximately a half mile from the proposed data center. KTES educates students ages 3 to approximately 12 in its preschool through sixth grade programs. The preschool program educates students with disabilities, like my son, who has both Down syndrome and autism, and other students with chronic conditions, like my daughter, who has asthma. Both of my children have now graduated from KTES but spent nearly half, or more than half, of their lives attending KTES, which is the only public elementary school in our township. How will the children in Knowlton be expected to learn or play at their elementary school with a constant humming noise emitted by this proposed facility? Many of them will not even be able to escape the noise when they go home. And I have only mentioned the noise they will hear. There are also reports from people living near data centers on the health impact of low-frequency vibrations that we cannot hear. Knowlton's children will

also be subject to the air pollution carried over from the onsite generators at the data center and the likely increase in air temperature year-round.

There are many more problems with data centers that need to be explored before the Board can, in good faith, allow one to develop in the Township, including, but not limited to, the amount of water any data center will be able to consume without depleting local resources and the types of pollutants used by data centers that need to be regulated. In my opinion, the long-term harm to home values, the people, and the environment caused by data centers cannot be justified or offset by any amount of potential tax revenue or even a $50 million special payment from the data center to the Township.

I understand the Board faces challenges from the property owners about their ability to develop on this site. I hope the Board has excellent legal advice from a law firm that practices in this area so it understands its options to push back against the developer and the potential legal consequences if it does not. My guess is the Board will also face challenges from Mount Bethel residents and environmental groups if it allows a data center in its community, especially a hyperscale data center like the one proposed.

Please do not sign the MOU and explore your options to ban data centers in your community (at least ones on the scale of the data center currently proposed) and/or to regulate them in a way to ensure the health and safety of the environment, the people in Mount Bethel, and your neighbors across the river.

Thank you.

Jeannine Idrissa
14 Alpine Drive
Columbia, NJ 07832
908.540.2020