TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON
COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
September 14, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM with the Salute to the Flag

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT:
The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (as amended by Public Law 2025, chapter 72). Notice of this meeting and the agenda was posted on Knowlton Township's website and on the bulletin board at the municipal building.
Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded.

OATH OF OFFICE:
Committeeman John Stockton was administered the oath of office by Clerk Shipps, filling the unexpired term vacancy created by the removal of Ryan Lembeck.

ROLL CALL:
Present: Deputy Mayor Baley, Committeewoman Starrs, Committeeman Stockton, and Mayor Shipps. Also present: Clerk Shipps.
Committeeman Mazza was absent (traveling).

PRESENTATIONS:
Warren County Mosquito Control Commission.
Jennifer Gruener, Superintendent of the Warren County Mosquito Control Commission, addressed the Committee regarding West Nile virus activity in the Township for the 2026 season. She reported that while it has been a busy year for West Nile virus, 2026 is not on pace to match 2018, the Commission's busiest year on record. She provided a general background on West Nile virus and mosquito biology and advised that information and guidance are available through the County.

VFW – Tunnel Field Project.
A representative of the Ronald Wildrick Jr. VFW Post 12246 (Knowlton) addressed the Committee regarding the Post's offer to provide volunteer labor, in partnership with Adam Murphy Tree Service, to clear brush and assist with trees and benches along the Tunnel Field trail. The representative discussed insurance coverage carried by the Post for volunteers conducting Post business, and the Committee agreed to have the Township's risk manager advise on whether the Township needs to be named as an additional insured, or whether volunteers may instead complete a Township volunteer application to fall under the Township's own coverage.
Motion made by Mayor Shipps, seconded, Deputy Mayor Baley to accept the donated services of Adam Murphy Tree Service and the VFW to proceed with tree and bench work at Tunnel Field.
Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Stockton – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Mazza absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Committeeman Baley agreed to serve as the Township's point of contact for coordinating the project. A member of the public asked about making personal VFW donations directly to the local Post; the VFW representative agreed to provide donation information.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Pam Rusweiller asked whether there was an update on the water system filter/membrane dispute with the Township's vendor (Portasoft). The Committee advised that the matter would be discussed in the executive session.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:
Public Works.
DPW reported that Tunnel Field was scheduled to be paved from Route 94 to the beginning of the tunnel on Wednesday, weather permitting, with the field closed for the day but available for evening sports; notice was posted to the Township website and Facebook. DPW is wrapping up the second round of roadside mowing and preparing hot-mix road patches for winter. Mike Carpenter met with Planet Networks regarding Wi-Fi/internet service at Tunnel Field, which will allow work on security cameras to move forward once finalized. The Committee declined a resident request to mow Tunnel Field twice weekly, citing capacity.

Knowlton Fire & Rescue:
Chief Travis, representing Knowlton Fire & Rescue, reported 14 incidents for the month and 119 year-to-date, including six motor vehicle accidents, one canceled In-route call, one brush/trail call, two power lines down, two water rescues, and two hazmat leaks on the highway. The Department's primary engine is temporarily out of service for repairs at Corey Brothers, with mutual aid covering in the interim; the engine is expected back by the end of the week, after which it will go out again for hose-reel replacement. The Department held its 9/11 memorial service, in its second year, with support from Michelle and Township officials; the Department plans to expand participation next year. The Department reported receipt of updated Narcan supplies through a county/state grant, a successful tricky-tray fundraiser (though ticket sales were modestly down), and ongoing EMS crew growth, including a multi-town mutual aid response and standby coverage for youth football. The Department also responded to a snakebite on the Red Dot Trail and urged residents bitten by a snake to seek immediate medical attention rather than attempting to drive themselves, noting Pocono Hospital carries antivenom for species found in the area.

I-80/611/Amtrak (Lackawanna Cutoff) Area Update:
Tara Mezzanotte reported on a proposed federal rule change affecting historic preservation review procedures, and the ongoing effort by the Township, Blairstown, Hardwick, Warren County, and Middle Smithfield Township to seek grandfathering of existing I-80 corridor project review under the current rules so as not to lose more than a decade of prior municipal and county input. She advised that the matter has not yet been published in the Federal Register for comment, and that a resolution of comment will likely come before the Committee once the comment period opens, anticipated in October.

MINUTES:
August 10, 2026, Executive Session Meeting Minutes.
August 10, 2026, Public Session Meeting Minutes.

September 8, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes.
Motion made by Committeewoman Starrs, second by Deputy Mayor Baley and carried to approve the above minutes.

ORDINANCE:
Public Hearing/Adoption:
Ordinance 2026-13 – An Ordinance Amending Permit Requirements for Use of Township Parks.
WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton desires to alter the requirements for the issuance of a permit to use Township park facilities.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Knowlton, in the County of Warren and State of New Jersey, as follows:
SECTION 1. Section 134-28 of the Knowlton Township Code regarding permits for use of Township park facilities, hereby amended as follows (additions noted in bold italic *thus*, and deletions noted in strikethrough ~~thus~~):
A. No park grounds or facility shall be reserved for use or rented by any group, organization or individual for any activity, function or meeting unless a permit for its use or rental has first been obtained from the Knowlton Township Recreation Director. *A person or entity seeking such a permit must complete the application form on file with the Township Clerk's office and provide all information required there, including the required insurance certificate.* The granting of a permit shall entitle the holder thereof to precedence in the use of the facility.
B. Permits for the use of facilities shall be required for any and all activities or functions of any size or type and shall be governed by the rules and regulations of the Township Committee and shall be subject to such schedule of fees as may be imposed or fixed by the Township Committee.
C. The fees for reservation of park facilities are as follows:
(1) Daily pavilion rental: fee of ***$200*** ~~$100~~.
(2) Field usage: $20 per hour per field.
(3) Use of bathrooms at Tunnel Field ***(for team sports only)***: $200 security deposit. The security deposit is to guarantee that the bathrooms are not damaged and will not require extraordinary cleaning after their usage. The deposit shall be returned to the applicant after it has been determined that bathrooms were left in an acceptable condition by the applicant and/or attendees.
D. Events and activities sponsored by the Knowlton Athletic Association, the Knowlton Township Recreation Committee or the Knowlton Recreation Foundation are exempt from the permit requirement provided that these events and activities are scheduled and approved by the Knowlton Township Recreation Director and the security deposit is paid.
E. Fees and deposits may be waived for other community organizations with the approval of the Knowlton Township Committee.
F. A refund of fees will be made for cancellations received 48 hours prior to the start of the event or activity. Refunds for cancellations made within 48 hours of the start of the event or activity may be granted with the approval of the Knowlton Township Committee.
SECTION 2. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict or inconsistent with any part of this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent that they are in conflict or inconsistent.
SECTION 3. If any section, provision, or part of provision of this Ordinance shall be held to be unenforceable or invalid by any court, such holding shall not affect the validity of this Ordinance, or any part thereof, other than the part so held unenforceable or invalid.

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

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to open the public hearing.
No public comment was received.
Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs and carried to close the public hearing.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs to adopt, and approved by roll call vote.
Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Stockton – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Mazza absent). Motion carried 4-0. Ordinance 2026-13 was adopted.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. 2026-111 Resolution to Appoint Charles E. Carro as Municipal Court Judge for the Township of Knowlton.
   WHEREAS, Knowlton Township shares a municipal court with Allamuchy Township (the "Shared Court") pursuant to an Agreement for a Shared Municipal Court dated February 9, 2026; and

   WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3 of the Agreement, Allamuchy chooses and appoints the judge of the Shared Court and Knowlton shall confirm such appointment via resolution; and

   WHEREAS, the Municipal Court Judge for the Shared Court retired effective July 1, 2026; and

   WHEREAS, as a result of such retirement, the Shared Court requires the appointment of a Municipal Court Judge; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2B:12-4, the governing body is authorized to appoint a Municipal Court Judge for the unexpired term expiring December 31, 2026;

WHEREAS, Allamuchy appointed Charles E. Carro to serve as the Municipal Court Judge of the Shared Court through December 31, 2026 pursuant to Resolution # 2026-80 adopted on May 27, 2026;

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

Charles E. Carro, Esq. is hereby appointed Municipal Court Judge of the Knowlton / Allamuchy Shared Court retroactive to July 1, 2026 thru December 31, 2026.

2. 2026-112 Resolution Authorizing Satisfaction of Tax Lien in Installment Payments.
WHEREAS, Knowlton Township holds a tax lien #2021-014 dated December 10, 2021 on property designated as Block 16, Lot 5 on the Township Tax Maps, in the original amount of $3,652.32; and

WHEREAS, the total amount due on said tax lien as of July 31, 2026 is $51,541.32 (which includes accrued interest, the outstanding principal, and any other redemption penalties); and

WHEREAS, the owner of such property has requested the opportunity, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-59, to satisfy the tax lien by making installment payments over a time period not exceeding 36 months, beginning November 1, 2026; and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector has calculated the monthly payments, representing principal plus interest, to be $2,098.16 each;

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

1. The owner of the property designated as Block 16, Lot 5 is to make payments in satisfaction of the above-referenced tax lien by installment payments over a period not exceeding 36 months each in an amount of $2,098.16 each.

2. Such payments shall commence on November 1, 2026 and are due on the first of every month for the term of the payment plan.

3. The failure to pay the installment when due, or failure to remain current on property taxes going forward shall render this resolution and resulting installment agreement null and void.

4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

3. 2026-113 Resolution Authorizing Application to the Highlands Conservation Act Grant. Program for the Hemlock Road Project.

WHEREAS, the Highlands region, encompasses more than three million acres of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands region is an area of national significance, possessing substantial natural beauty, containing contiguous forest and productive farmland, numerous cultural and historic sites, plentiful recreation opportunities, and the protection and supply of important drinking water sources for over fifteen million people; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress, in bipartisanship, passed the Highlands Conservation Act, Public Law 10-421 that was signed into law by the

President of the United States on November 30, 2004, designating the Highlands as a significant national conservation priority region; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress, passed the Highlands Conservation Reauthorization Act, Public Law 108-421 that was signed into law by the President of the United States on December 29, 2022, extending the program funding through Fiscal Year 2029 and expanding the region in which municipalities may opt-in to the Highlands; and

WHEREAS, the Highlands Conservation Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to Highlands States to preserve and protect high priority conservation land in the Highlands region; and

WHEREAS, manages a voluntary grant program to assist Highlands States, local units of government, and private forest and farm landowners in the conservation of land and natural resources in the Highlands region in coordination with willing sellers; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Knowlton, Warren County, NJ opted into the Highlands Conservation Act Expanded Opportunity Area and was approved for inclusion by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on December 6th 2024; and

WHEREAS, land preservation efforts in the Highlands region should link the parks, historic sites, wetlands, wildlife habitats, streams, rivers, reservoirs, watershed, trails, scenic and natural lands and other protected areas unique to the region for the enjoyment of future generations; and

WHEREAS, the 175-acre Hemlock Road Property meets the criteria for inclusion in the Highlands Conservation Act Grant Program as it supports the conservation of water, forest, wildlife, and recreational resources, and further supports the Presidential and DOI goals of the Draft DOI FY26-30 Strategic Plan by preserving American Heritage as wells as protecting important lands, waters, and opportunities for recreation; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the TOWNSHIP OF KNOWLTON authorizes application for $530,000 in Highlands Conservation Act Grant Program to permanently preserve the 175 acre Hemlock Road Property. This funding will be matched to $530,000 of the Township's existing Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant to provide the required 50% nonfederal match, thereby qualifying for financial and technical assistance provided by the U.S. Congress.

5. 2026-114 Payment of Vouchers.

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Knowlton, Warren County, New Jersey, that all claims attached are hereby approved as reasonable and proper claims against the Township of Knowlton.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that approval for payment is hereby given to the Chief Financial Officer to pay said claims, subject to the availability of funds.

Motion made by Mayor Shipps, second by Committeewoman Starrs to adopt, and approved by roll call vote the Consent Agenda Items 1-4 (no items pulled).
Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Stockton – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Mazza absent). Motion carried 4-0.

Unfinished Business:
Tunnel Field Security Camera Quotes – No action; the item remains pending finalization of internet/Wi-Fi service at Tunnel Field (see Public Works report above).

Streetlights – The Township Engineer, with assistance from Committeewoman Starrs, reviewed all 77 Township streetlights to identify fixtures that could be safely discontinued, screening out county/state intersections and locations where an unlit intersection could pose a safety risk.
Motion made by Committeewoman Starrs, seconded, Mayor Shipps to discontinue the 23 streetlights identified as low risk, with staff to follow up with JCP&L regarding any poles billed for a fixture that is not actually present.
Roll Call: Baley – Yes; Starrs – Yes; Stockton – Yes; Shipps – Yes (Mazza absent). Motion carried 4-0.

New Business:
Corrective Action Plan – The Clerk presented the Township's annual post-audit Corrective Action Plan. No action required; receipt was acknowledged.
Dog License Fee Increase – The Committee reviewed the Township's current dog licensing fees ($12 neutered/$15 unneutered) against neighboring municipalities (Blairstown: $20/$25, with a $5 senior discount; Hardwick: $15/$20) and the need to replenish the Township's animal control/rescue fund. The Committee reached consensus to increase the fees to $15 (neutered) and $20 (unneutered), effective at year's end, to be formally introduced and adopted by ordinance at a future meeting.

Data Center – Upper Mount Bethel Township – The Committee discussed resident concerns regarding a proposed data center and associated on-site electrical generation in neighboring Upper Mount Bethel Township, Pennsylvania, including potential traffic, air quality, and water impacts, and the Committee's limited authority over land use decisions in another state. The Committee agreed to continue monitoring the matter and directed Committeewoman Starrs to prepare a draft public statement for Committee review and input.

Correspondence:
8/14/2026 – Tracy Matlock, Deputy Clerk of the Warren County Board of County Commissioners – Warren County Resolution #409-26 Supporting S4333
8/17/2026 – Priya Jain, NJDOT – Safe Routes to School Request for Applications

9/3/2026 – Tara Mezzanotte – Update: Upper Mount Bethel Township data center plans, MOU, and ordinance changes
9/9/2026 – Tara Mezzanotte – Update: Section 106 federal rule changes (Preserve the Gap)
9/11/2026 – Tracy Matlock, Deputy Clerk of the Warren County Board of County Commissioners – Warren County Executed Resolution #452-26 Supporting Assembly Resolution #AR-149, Expressing Support for Law Enforcement Officers

Township Committee Reports:
Deputy Mayor Baley
Reported that Buildings & Grounds/DPW items were covered under the Department Report above, with nothing further to add on Fire/Emergency beyond Chief Travis's report, above. Reported that he and Committeewoman Starrs recently completed DPW employee performance reviews, with office staff reviews still to be scheduled. Reported that he has nothing further on the Board of Education, other than that the Superintendent reached out to arrange a visit. Reported nothing further on Finance or Recreation.

Committeeman Mazza
Absent; no report given.

Committeewoman Starrs
Reported on Communications that she issued Nixle alerts and social media posts, primarily regarding Community Day vendors and West Nile virus, and attended the September 1 Environmental Commission meeting, where the Commission discussed proposed bylaw changes and will follow up. Reported on Personnel that DPW reviews are complete, with office staff reviews still needed, and that she attended the movie night. Reported that the Township's wastewater meeting, previously set for August 20, was canceled shortly before it was to begin and has been rescheduled for September 16 at 4:00 PM.

Mayor Shipps
Reported on Finance that the Committee received approval to engage a title company for 11 properties under consideration for tax foreclosure, with the goal of returning them to the tax rolls. Reported on Recreation that the movie night drew a large turnout and recognized Recreation Director Kathy Cuntala; also discussed plans for the Christmas tree lighting in coordination with the Fire Department and confirmed Tunnel Field mowing will remain weekly. Reported on Buildings & Grounds and reminded the Committee of the need to winterize/close the building's water utilities.

Public Comment – Agenda Items Only.
Michelle suggested the Tunnel Field security camera project also consider improved lighting, such as motion-activated lighting, and recommended the Township provide residents a link to Upper Mount Bethel Township's own published data center information in response to inquiries.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:
Motion made by Mayor Shipps, seconded by Committeewoman Starrs, and carried to go into executive session at approximately 8:39 p.m.

2026-115 Authorizing Executive Session (Attorney Advice).
(A separate Executive Session Meeting Minutes document has been prepared for the closed-session portion of this meeting.)
WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act; N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., declares it to be the public policy of the State to insure the right of citizens to have adequate advance notice of and the right to attend meetings of public bodies at which business affecting the public is discussed or acted upon; and

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act also recognized exceptions to the right of the public to attend portions of such meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee find it necessary to conduct an executive session closed to the public as permitted by the N.J.S.A. 40:4-12; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Committee will reconvene in public session at the conclusion of the executive session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Knowlton Township, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that they will conduct an executive session to discuss the following topic (s) as permitted by N.J.S.A. 40:4-12:

A. Attorney Advice

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee hereby declare that their discussion of the subject (s) identified above may be made public at a time when the Township Attorney advises them that the disclosure of the discussion will not detrimentally affect any right, interest or duty of the Township or any other entity with respect to said discussion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee, for the reasons set forth above, hereby declare that the public is excluded from the portion of the meeting during which the above discussion shall take place.

Motion made by Committeewoman Starrs, seconded, Mayor Shipps and carried to return to Open (Public) Session at approximately 9:31 p.m.

Adjournment:
Motion made by Mayor Shipps, seconded, Committeewoman Starrs and carried to adjourn.
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin Shipps,
Municipal Clerk, RMC