Forensic Audit and Climate & Culture Investigation

of the Public Works Department

Town of Mansfield, CT

FINAL REPORT

February 2026

65th North Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Mansfield, Connecticut, engaged 65th North Group to conduct an independent forensic audit and workplace culture investigation of the Public Works Department. The engagement was initiated in response to concerns regarding time reporting, use of Town vehicles, supervisory oversight, vendor billing accuracy, high staff turnover, purchasing abnormalities, and department culture. The intent was to identify potential internal wrongdoing, evaluate control weaknesses, and provide corrective recommendations to support long-term improvement. To ensure objectivity and to remove any perceived bias or concern, the Town made the professional decision to outsource the investigation to an independent third party.

Scope and Methodology

The review covered activities from January 1, 2025, through November 17, 2025. It included analysis of signed timesheets, GPS vehicle data, vendor invoices, bid documents, budget and expenditure trends, Town policies, and employee feedback gathered through interviews and an anonymous survey provided to all current Public Works Department non-management employees and all employees who left service within the past year from the Town of Mansfield Public Works Department.

Key Findings

Inaccurate Time Reporting

A comparison of signed timesheets and GPS activity for Operations Manager Brian LaVoie identified 63.12 hours of inaccurate reporting or unaccounted time. This included idle time at his residence, late departures, early returns, and unrecorded mid-day home presence. Mr. LaVoie acknowledged poor documentation and admitted that an administrative employee completed his timesheets, which he signed, even though they did not accurately reflect the time he worked. Additionally, Mr. LaVoie claimed 18.47 hours of work time, which we cannot conclude had any legitimate business purpose (including apparent meal stops, numerous stops at the Oak Grove Montessori School, and 29 stops at the Natchaug Hospital).

Supervisory Oversight Deficiencies

The investigation identified control weaknesses in how supervisors reviewed and approved time records. Supervisors did not validate attendance, field activities, or vehicle use before approving timesheets. The lack of review and enforcement allowed

irregularities to persist and contributed to broader accountability issues within the department.

Vendor Billing and Contract Compliance

Invoices from Arborist Tree Care lacked adequate detail to substantiate billed work. Many invoices listed only "Tree Work as Proposed," without identifying locations, work performed, or the basis for total charges. A review comparing invoiced amounts to bid-based rates identified $7,394 in direct overbilling and $22,286 in total questioned billing. Tree service spending increased significantly after Arborist Tree Care was awarded the contract in 2019, even though it was not the low bidder that year. The absence of supporting documentation and an invoice-level review reflects a failure in procurement oversight or, at a minimum, a failure to adequately document the reasons a perceived low bidder did not receive the award.

Material Disposition Practices

Employees reported that contractors were allowed to remove roadway millings and other materials from Town projects without charge or documentation. Management acknowledged that the practice occurred but stated it was done for convenience, not personal benefit. Regardless of intent, this practice represents improper asset disposition and a control breakdown.

Workplace Culture and Confidentiality

Survey results and interviews reflected significant concerns about inconsistent accountability, favoritism, and a lack of professionalism among Public Works Department management. Multiple employees reported that the Operations Manager had inappropriately shared confidential information, including health and personnel matters. He typically arrived late to work, was rarely seen by many employees during the day, created a hostile work environment, and was perceived as having conflicts of interest. These reports were corroborated by multiple sources and contributed to low morale and reduced trust within the department.

Purchasing Violations

The Public Works Department management engaged in multiple violations of purchasing policy within the lookback period and beyond. This includes awarding a tree bid to the non-low bidder without documentation as to the reason for that decision, approving invoices without appropriate documentation, approving invoices not consistent with approved contract rates, purchasing vehicles on multiple occasions without a valid purchase order (PO) in place prior to placing the order, purchasing several mowers for

$45,974 without a PO in place, and unilaterally contracting with a pavement vendor without an approved purchase order in place.

Leadership and Accountability

The investigation identified significant supervisory and oversight deficiencies within the Public Works Director's office, led by John Carrington. While cooperative and polite during the investigation, his leadership approach relied heavily on subordinate self-management, with insufficient monitoring or corrective action despite issues and concerns frequently being presented to him. The Operations Manager resigned during the investigation. It was recommended that the Director return to duty with clear expectations for work performance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The investigation confirmed several internal control weaknesses and conduct issues, but investigators do not recommend referral for criminal prosecution. The issues identified primarily reflect lapses in management oversight and in the enforcement of existing policies.

The Town has an opportunity to strengthen its internal control environment, improve documentation and accountability, and rebuild workplace trust. Recommended corrective actions include requiring employees to complete and certify their own timesheets; implementing a geo-fenced electronic timekeeping system; enforcing invoice documentation standards; prohibiting the informal disposal of Town materials; providing confidentiality and ethics training; and establishing measurable performance expectations for department leadership.

By implementing these recommendations, the Town of Mansfield can further reinforce accountability, strengthen management oversight, and promote a professional and transparent organizational culture.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The Town of Mansfield, Connecticut, engaged 65th North Group to conduct a forensic audit and a climate and culture investigation of the Public Works Department. This engagement was initiated in response to management concerns regarding timekeeping, supervision and oversight, purchasing and vendor practices, and broader workplace culture issues. The intent of the engagement was to conduct a thorough, independent review of relevant records and employee input; identify internal control vulnerabilities and any apparent wrongdoing supported by evidence; and provide practical recommendations to reduce future risk exposure and improve accountability and operational effectiveness.

This report is written to support management decision-making. It is fact-based and relies on documentation, data analysis, and interview and survey inputs gathered during the engagement. Where information could not be verified from the materials reviewed, the report does not speculate; instead, it identifies the limitation or the additional documentation needed for confirmation.

1.2 Investigation Objectives

The objectives of this engagement (either initially or developed throughout the course of the investigation) were to:

- Identify whether PW senior managers' time reporting and related supervisory approvals were accurate and properly supported.
- Evaluate whether supervisory practices and oversight controls were functioning as intended.
- Assess procurement and vendor management practices within the department, including invoice adequacy and pricing alignment to bid-based rates when applicable.
- Evaluate employee-reported workplace culture and identify issues affecting morale, professionalism, and willingness to report concerns.
- Provide recommendations to strengthen internal controls, reduce exposure to misuse of resources, and improve management practices going forward.

1.3 Investigation Methodology

The engagement also included a fact-specific review of departmental records and datasets relevant to the allegations and concerns raised by Town management. Work performed included:

- Review of applicable Town policies and procedures relevant to timekeeping, supervision, purchasing, vehicle use, ethics, and workplace conduct.
- Review and analysis of assigned vehicle GPS activity for the Operations Manager, including time and location patterns relevant to start-of-day activity, mid-day home presence, travel time to work, stop locations, and stop duration patterns.
- Comparison of GPS activity indicators to signed and approved timesheets for the period reviewed, and quantification of time variances identified through the Town's analysis.
- Review of vendor documentation for tree services, including bid materials, invoice documentation, spending trends, and a Town-prepared invoice variance analysis identifying billed-versus-expected variances.
- Collection and evaluation of employee input through interviews and an anonymous survey instrument addressing professionalism, ethical culture, comfort raising concerns, leadership effectiveness, perceived risks, and morale.

1.4 Information Reviewed

The work relied on materials provided by the Town during the engagement. These materials included, at a minimum:

- Timesheets and related timekeeping documentation for the Operations Manager for the period reviewed.
- GPS vehicle activity data for the Operations Manager's assigned take-home vehicle and related analysis outputs.
- Bid documents and pricing information for the Town's on-call tree trimming and removal services, including 2019 and 2022 bid materials.
- Purchase orders for capital equipment that were issued after the order was placed or received.

- Tree services invoices for the period reviewed, and the Town's invoice variance analysis spreadsheet.
- Budget and actual spending data for tree services across multiple years.
- Relevant Town policies and procedures addressing employee conduct, supervisory responsibilities, purchasing practices, and related controls.
- Survey results and narrative comments from employees and former employees.
- Interview notes and communications were provided during the engagement.

1.5 Scope and General Approach

This was not a financial statement audit. The work focused on specific areas of concern identified by Town management and those supported by the data and employee inputs available for review. Where the report identifies issues, those issues are tied to one or more of the following:

- Documented records and data patterns identified through analysis.
- Inconsistencies between signed records and objective data indicators.
- Internal control design weaknesses that allowed errors or irregularities to occur or persist without detection.
- Multiple independent employee reports of the same concern, particularly where the concern relates to observable management practices or conduct.

Where the engagement identified issues involving individual actions, the report distinguishes between the conduct itself and the control environment that failed to prevent or detect the issue. In particular, the report addresses both operational-level controls (day-to-day supervision, timekeeping validation, invoice review) and department-level controls (policy enforcement, oversight expectations, corrective action practices).

1.6 Important Limitations

This report is based on the materials made available during the engagement and the time period covered by those materials. Some topics raised during interviews and survey comments may warrant follow-up through additional documentation, system records, or third-party confirmations that were not part of the materials reviewed. When that occurs, the report avoids conclusory statements and instead frames the issue as a control

concern, a management practice concern, or an item requiring additional documentation to validate.

A subsequent limitation is that the Operations Manager resigned during the investigation and refused to participate in further interviews.

1.7 Report Organization

This report is organized to help Town leadership understand what was reviewed, what was identified, and the basis for our recommendations. The chapters that follow summarize the investigative findings by topic area, including time reporting and supervisory approval practices, vehicle and work activity indicators, vendor invoice adequacy and pricing alignment, management oversight expectations, workplace culture themes, and recommended corrective actions.

CHAPTER 2: INTERVIEW THEMES

2.1 Overview

Interviews were conducted with Public Works Department leadership, including the Director and Operations Manager, as well as with a cross-section of current and former employees representing field operations, maintenance, administrative support, and related functions (31 current and 5 former employees interviewed). The purpose of these interviews was to better understand daily operational practices, supervisory expectations, internal controls, and the overall workplace climate and culture. Interview input was analyzed to identify recurring patterns and themes, including areas of alignment and those where perspectives differed between management and staff.

2.2 Leadership Oversight and Accountability

A recurring theme across interviews was the perceived inconsistency in daily oversight and accountability at the management level. Multiple employees reported a lack of visible leadership during key times of the workday, particularly at the start of shifts, when crews typically expect direction, coordination, and responsiveness to operational issues. Several employees reported that management's work hours and daily routines were not clearly understood by staff and, as a result, were viewed as less accountable than the expectations applied to hourly employees.

Management described a work environment built on trust and professional judgment, with an emphasis on getting the work done rather than strict timekeeping. Employees, however, frequently framed the issue as a fairness concern, describing what they perceived as a double standard and noting that inconsistent management presence can disrupt morning coordination, delay decisions, and undermine confidence in leadership.

2.3 Communication and Direction

Communication gaps were frequently cited as a core contributor to inefficiency and frustration. Many employees described limited communication from management, inconsistent follow-up, and a lack of clarity about priorities. Some employees indicated they received minimal direction at the beginning of the day and were often required to proceed based on their own judgment or direction from immediate supervisors rather than consistent communication from senior leadership.

Several employees also described a culture where raising concerns was discouraged, especially if it involved escalating issues beyond the chain of command. This dynamic

was described as contributing to guarded behavior, reduced transparency, and a reluctance to surface problems early.

2.4 Workplace Culture and Morale

Interviews revealed a department where many employees take pride in serving the community and maintain positive relationships with peers, yet morale is influenced by distrust and internal tension. The majority of employees interviewed described morale as low, attributing it to leadership behavior, perceived favoritism, inconsistent accountability, and interpersonal conflict. A common theme was the perception of an "us versus them" dynamic, with employees expressing skepticism that concerns will be addressed fairly or consistently.

A smaller subset of interviewees described the department as generally functional and expressed positive views of certain leadership behaviors. However, even among those more positive perspectives, there was acknowledgement that morale and cohesion vary by work group and are impacted by communication and follow-through.

2.5 Timekeeping and Attendance Practices

The absence of a time clock or other objective attendance control was frequently raised as a vulnerability. Employees described uncertainty about how work hours are documented and verified, particularly for management roles. Concerns focused less on isolated incidents and more on the perception of routine inconsistencies, which employees believe affect fairness and accountability.

Management described a culture of trust and professionalism, indicating that employees are expected to complete the work regardless of rigid clock-based controls. Employees often viewed that approach as insufficient, particularly when management schedules and attendance expectations are not documented, clearly communicated, or consistently applied across roles.

2.6 Professionalism, Conduct, and Confidentiality

Interview input reflected mixed perceptions of professionalism and appropriate workplace conduct. Employees said internal workplace behavior by management undermines trust and respect, including interpersonal conflict, negative commentary, and, in some cases, bullying or harassment.

Some interviews also raised concerns about the handling of confidential employee information, including instances in which the Operations Manager discussed private

personnel information with other employees who should not have been privy to confidential information.

2.7 Operational Effectiveness and Role Clarity

Interviews highlighted differing views on the effectiveness of the management role and on role clarity. A limited number of employees described management as responsive and supportive in certain contexts, while the majority reported inconsistent follow-through, limited visibility, and unclear accountability for ensuring work is completed efficiently. Several employees raised concerns that supervisory practices and internal coordination could be improved through clearer expectations, stronger daily planning, and more consistent on-site leadership presence.

2.8 Purchasing, Vendors, and Resource Controls

Most employees did not report routine purchasing or vendor control problems in their day-to-day work. However, a smaller number of interviews raised concerns about whether vendor choices and purchasing decisions are consistently documented and justified, and whether policy expectations are applied consistently. These concerns were generally described as reinforcing broader themes regarding fairness, transparency, and accountability.

2.9 Summary of Interview Themes

Overall, the interview themes depict a department with dedicated non-managerial staff who generally believe that Public Works Department management significantly contributes to issues affecting trust, morale, and overall operational effectiveness. The most consistent themes include inconsistent communication and follow-through, perceived inequities in accountability, and a workplace climate in which employees feel guarded about raising concerns. These themes provide context for the survey results and the data review and analysis, and they help explain why control weaknesses and management practices—particularly those related to timekeeping, supervision, and transparency—have an outsized impact on morale and departmental cohesion.

CHAPTER 3: ANONYMOUS STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

3.1 Overview

An anonymous stakeholder survey was distributed to all current Public Works employees and to former employees who separated from the Town within twelve months of the audit's start date. A total of 37 invitations were issued, and 21 responses were received, for a 57% response rate (which is a typical response rate for such surveys). The survey provided employees with an opportunity to express their views on professionalism, communication, leadership, accountability, and morale. Responses were anonymous and were analyzed to identify broad trends and themes rather than individual opinions.

3.2 Response Summary

Of the 21 respondents, 81 percent were current employees and 19 percent were former employees. Results indicate generally low satisfaction with leadership and leadership accountability, moderate satisfaction with peer relations and work pride, and widespread perceptions of favoritism and weak communication within Public Works Department leadership, particularly among the Operations Manager and Public Works Director.

3.3 Question-by-Question Results

Q1 – Are you a current or former employee of the Public Works Department?

Figure 1: Survey Question 1 Responses

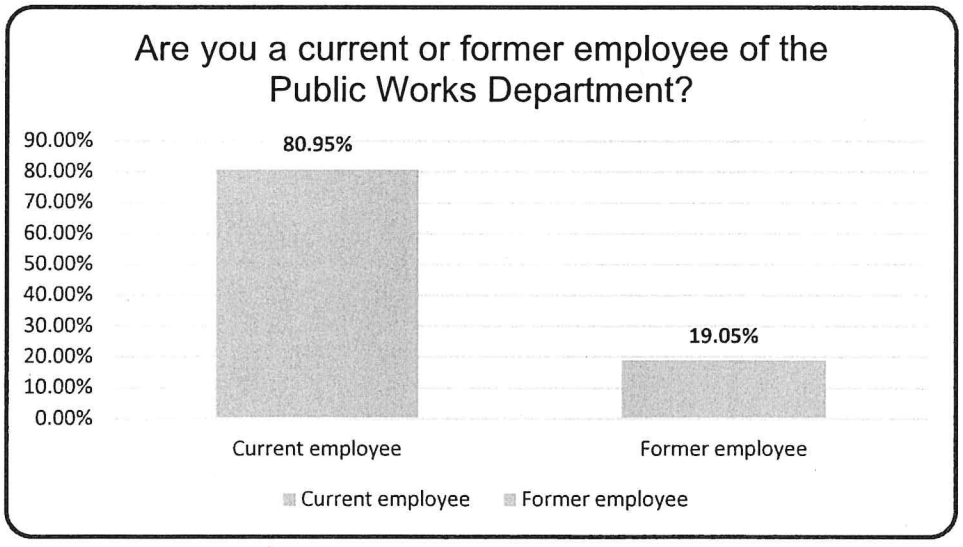


Table 1: Survey Question 1

Are you a current or former employee of the Public Works Department?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Current employee	80.95%	17
Former employee	19.05%	4
	Answered	**21**
	Skipped	**0**

Q2 – How would you describe the overall level of professionalism within the department?

Figure 2: Survey Question 2 Responses

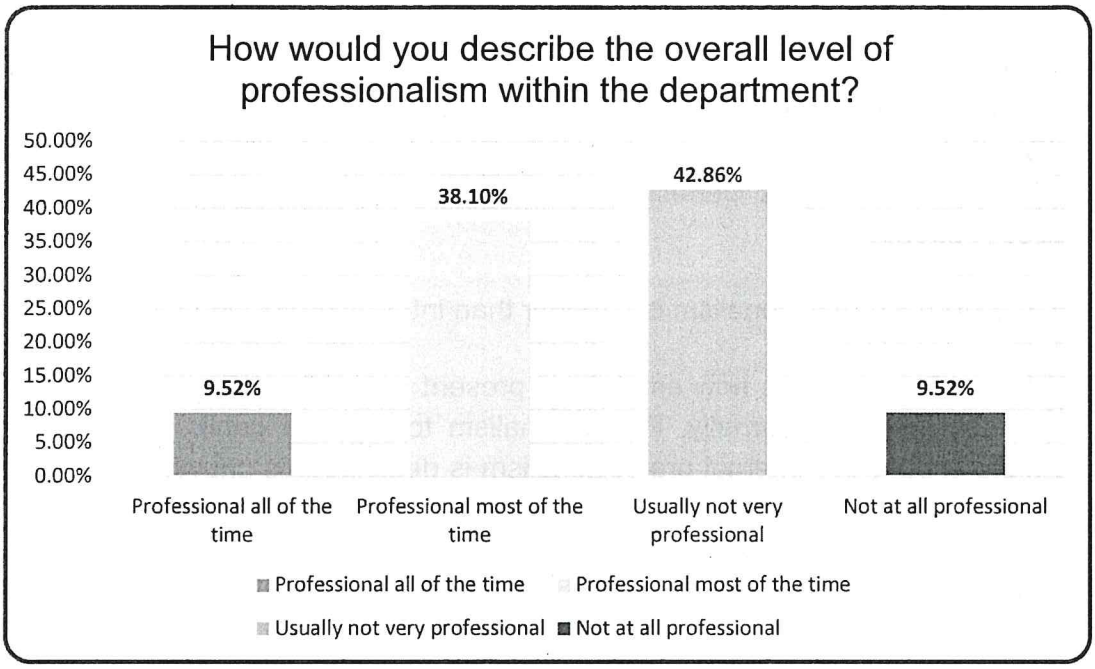


Table 2: Survey Question 2

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
How would you describe the overall level of professionalism within the department?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Professional all of the time	9.52%	2
Professional most of the time	38.10%	8
Usually not very professional	42.86%	9
Not at all professional	9.52%	2
Explain your view on the level of professionalism within the department.		18
	Answered	**21**
	Skipped	**0**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 18 respondents:

Theme 1: Core crews are widely viewed as professional and service-oriented

A consistent thread is that day-to-day field staff and many crews take their responsibilities seriously, show pride in their work, and maintain professional standards while serving the public. Several responses describe the department as generally operating well and emphasize that "nothing is perfect," but that overall professionalism among most employees is strong.

Theme 2: External professionalism is stronger than internal professionalism

Respondents often separate how employees present to residents from how employees and leadership interact internally. Professionalism toward the public is described as reliably high. In contrast, internal professionalism is described as uneven, particularly in the tone and conduct of supervisory and upper-level interactions with staff.

Theme 3: Management conduct and consistency drive perceptions of professionalism

Many responses define "professionalism" less as etiquette and more as leadership behavior—showing up consistently, being available, setting expectations, and responding appropriately to issues. Several comments raise concerns about leaders being late or absent for morning direction and describe situations in which leadership did not intervene to stabilize conflict or correct inappropriate behavior. Where leadership is perceived as reactive, threatening, dismissive, or absent, professionalism ratings decline.

Theme 4: Favoritism and retaliation fears are framed as professionalism issues

A major theme is that professionalism is perceived as dependent on relationships and perceived favoritism. Some respondents describe pressure to withdraw grievances, fear of retaliation through undesirable assignments, and concerns that classification or upgrade decisions were influenced by preferences rather than objective qualifications. These perceptions directly undermine trust in workplace professionalism and suggest that employees view "professionalism" as closely tied to fairness, impartiality, and respectful treatment.

Theme 5: Communication gaps are repeatedly cited as unprofessional

Multiple comments identify a lack of communication—about decisions, changes, expectations, or what is happening in the department—as a core professionalism concern. This includes perceptions that certain groups or parts of the department are not

communicated with, and that tools or administrative processes may be substituting for direct leadership interaction. In the responses, limited communication is linked to disengagement, confusion, and reduced morale.

Theme 6: Workplace behavior concerns exist, but respondents differentiate normal camaraderie from inappropriate conduct

Some respondents acknowledge that normal, appropriate non-work conversation among coworkers is appropriate and do not view it as unprofessional. At the same time, other comments raise concerns about negative attitudes among certain leaders, inappropriate sharing of employee information, and behavior seen as threatening or disrespectful. This indicates respondents are not expecting a sterile environment; they are drawing a line between normal collegial interaction and conduct that damages trust and psychological safety.

Theme 7: A split perception suggests professionalism varies by workgroup and by proximity to leadership

Taken together, responses show a divided experience: many employees view the crews and peer-to-peer interactions as professional and positive, while a meaningful portion attribute professionalism problems primarily to leadership behaviors, inconsistency, and perceived unfairness. This suggests professionalism is not uniformly experienced across the department and may depend on work assignment, supervisor relationships, and how directly an employee interacts with management.

Q3 – Do you believe that public works management instills a strong ethical culture within the department? If no, please explain.

Figure 3: Survey Question 3 Responses

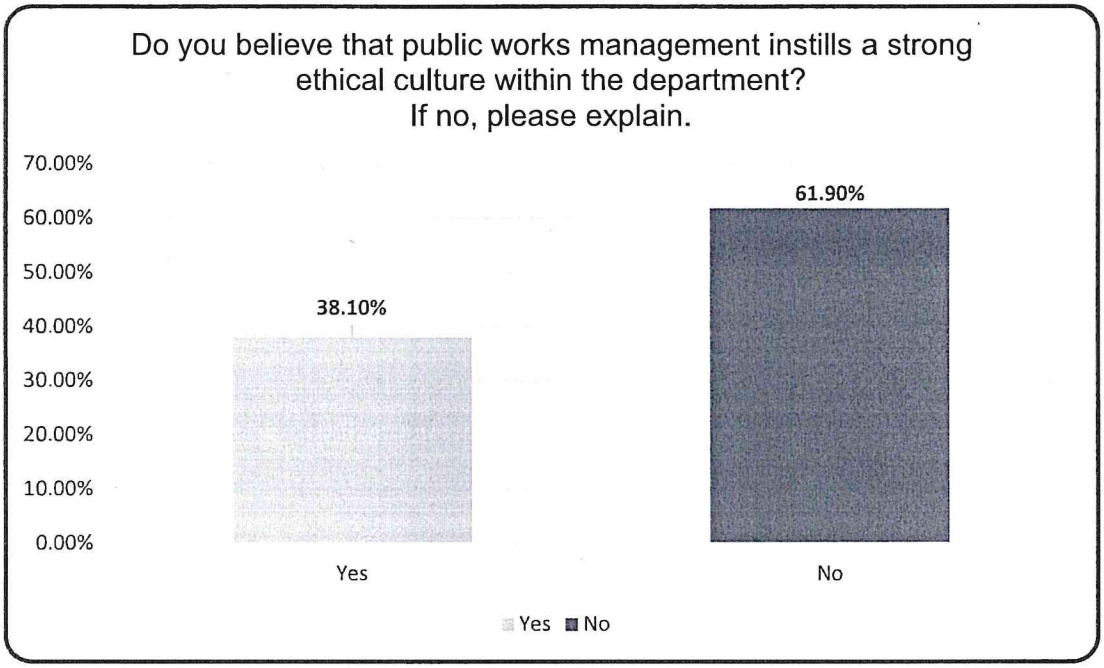


Table 3: Survey Question 3

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
Do you believe that public works management instills a strong ethical culture within the department? If no, please explain.		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	38.10%	8
No	61.90%	13
Explain any "No" response		17
	Answered	**21**
	Skipped	**0**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 17 respondents:

Survey Question 3: Perceptions of Management Instilling a Strong Ethical Culture — Major Themes

Theme 1: Ethical standards are talked about, but many respondents perceive inconsistent management action when issues arise

A dominant theme is the gap between stated expectations and what employees believe happens when ethical concerns are raised. Several responses reflect that management may communicate the importance of professionalism and ethics, but employees do not consistently see timely, decisive follow-through. This is described as delayed action, selective action, or action that only occurs when a complaint becomes visible or escalates beyond the department.

Theme 2: Perceived favoritism and "cronyism" are viewed as the most damaging ethical issues, driven by management decisions

Respondents repeatedly connect ethical culture to decision-making, hiring, assignments, promotions/upgrades, and contractor/vendor relationships. A major theme is the belief that some decisions favor certain individuals or "buddies," including within the department and among contractors. Even where employees do not provide documentation in the survey itself, the recurring perception is that leadership either participates in these dynamics or allows them to continue without meaningful correction, undermining confidence in fairness and integrity.

Theme 3: Employees describe ethics as dependent on who you are, because accountability is viewed as uneven or selective

Many responses frame the ethical culture as inconsistent: employees are expected to meet standards, but leadership is not always reciprocating. Some employees receive public reprimands, while others receive private or no consequences. This theme emphasizes management inaction as an ethical issue in itself, because inconsistent enforcement is seen as a signal that standards are optional for certain individuals.

Theme 4: Handling of sensitive employee information is cited as a high-impact ethical leadership concern

A recurring theme is concern that private employee matters were discussed more broadly than appropriate, including references to counseling/EAP-related matters, drug testing,

or other sensitive information. The emphasis in the responses is not only on the underlying incident, but also on the perception that leadership allowed confidentiality boundaries to be crossed and did not take corrective action strong enough to prevent recurrence. This is viewed as a direct ethical culture issue because it erodes trust and discourages reporting.

Theme 5: Management presence, reliability, and communication are treated as ethical leadership behaviors—not just operational habits

Multiple comments connect ethical culture to basic leadership practices: showing up on time, being available, knowing what is happening in each division, communicating what needs to be done, and engaging consistently with all parts of the department. Where employees perceive management as frequently late, absent, or disconnected from day-to-day operations, they interpret that as an ethical leadership weakness—because it reflects a lack of accountability, a lack of stewardship, and a lack of attention to fairness across workgroups.

Theme 6: Some respondents perceive management as approachable and trying to do the right thing, but they describe the problems as concentrated in a few individuals and not effectively corrected

A smaller but meaningful theme is that the ethical culture is not universally viewed as poor; some respondents describe management as approachable and the general ethical intent as positive. However, even in these more favorable responses, employees often describe concerns as tied to specific individuals whose behavior has continued over time. The key management-action takeaway in these responses is that issues were reportedly raised through formal and informal channels, yet employees did not see lasting corrective action, allowing repeat concerns to persist.

Theme 7: Employees describe delayed, bundled, or reactive discipline as undermining ethical culture

Some responses characterize discipline or corrective action as occurring only after multiple issues accumulate, rather than being addressed promptly and specifically. This is perceived as unfair and difficult for employees to respond to, and it weakens ethical culture by making accountability feel unpredictable rather than consistent and principled.

Theme 8: Trust in oversight outside the department is mixed, and the perceived lack of follow-through is seen as enabling repeat problems

A notable theme is that concerns were reportedly raised beyond the department over time, yet employees did not see a meaningful resolution. Some respondents attribute this to HR inaction; others to public works management's unwillingness to address issues. Regardless of who is responsible, the consistent theme is that a lack of effective follow-through reinforces employees' belief that reporting concerns does not lead to correction, thereby weakening ethical culture.

Q4 – Do you usually feel comfortable raising concerns, ideas, or issues to public works management without fear of negative consequences?

Figure 4: Survey Question 4 Responses

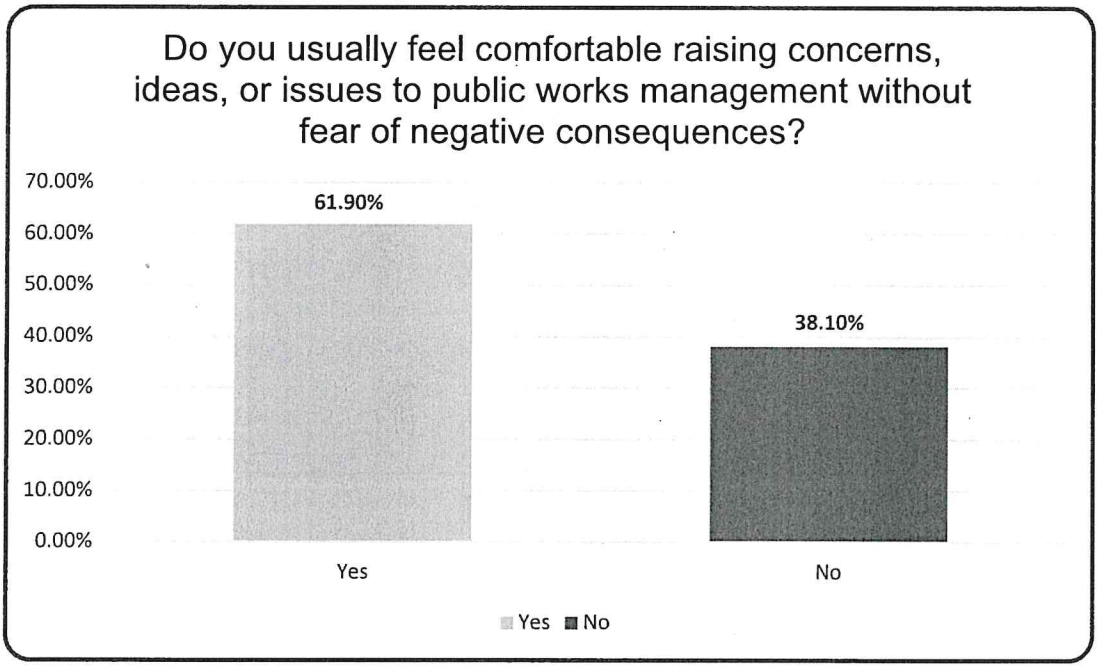


Table 4: Survey Question 4

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
Do you usually feel comfortable raising concerns, ideas, or issues to public works management without fear of negative consequences?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	61.90%	13
No	38.10%	8
If no, please explain.		13
	Answered	**21**

	Skipped	**0**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 13 respondents:

Survey Question 4: Comfort Raising Concerns Without Fear of Negative Consequences — Major Themes

Theme 1: Mixed experience, with comfort often depending on which manager is involved

A clear pattern is that comfort levels are not uniform across "management" as a group. Several respondents report feeling comfortable raising concerns with certain leaders perceived as approachable and open to feedback. In contrast, other responses describe heightened caution with at least one manager, where raising issues is perceived to carry a higher risk of strained interactions or negative consequences. This theme emphasizes that employees' willingness to speak up is more strongly shaped by individual leadership behavior than by formal policy.

Theme 2: Fear of retaliation is a recurring barrier and is described in practical, job-related terms

When employees do not feel safe raising concerns, the fear is not abstract. Respondents describe expected consequences, including undesirable assignments, being labeled a "bad apple," losing opportunities for upgrades or preferred work, and changes in day-to-day treatment. This theme indicates that employees associate speaking up with tangible workplace outcomes, suggesting a perceived culture of retaliation, even if it is not experienced by all employees.

Theme 3: "Chain of command" is viewed as both a process expectation and a control mechanism that discourages escalation

Multiple responses emphasize the chain of command and describe perceived penalties for going outside it (such as going to HR). Rather than being experienced as a neutral process, the chain of command is described by some respondents as a constraint that can deter reporting or prevent issues from being escalated. The management-action implication is that employees may not trust that raising concerns through the expected pathway will be handled fairly or without consequence.

Theme 4: Management inaction or dismissive behavior reduces psychological safety even when "open door" messages are communicated

Some respondents acknowledge that leaders say their door is open and that they are willing to listen. However, other responses describe experiences in which concerns were

not meaningfully heard, meetings were not handled attentively, or leadership behavior in group settings felt intimidating or punitive. This theme highlights that psychological safety is shaped more by what happens in practice—timeliness, attentiveness, tone, and follow-through—than by stated openness.

Theme 5: Disrespectful talk about employees is perceived as evidence that raising concerns is unsafe

Several responses cite leadership commentary about employees (such as mocking illness or questioning injuries) as a sign that management may not handle sensitive issues professionally. This behavior is described as fostering distrust and reinforcing the perception that raising a concern could lead to ridicule, disbelief, or negative treatment. The management-action takeaway is that comments and informal remarks can materially undermine trust in safe reporting pathways.

Theme 6: The overall environment is described as open by some, but fragile due to a subset of behaviors that discourage reporting

A smaller but important theme is that some respondents report consistently positive experiences when raising concerns and even seeing ideas implemented. At the same time, many responses indicate that the reporting environment can feel unpredictable, depending on the situation and who is involved. The result is a department climate in which "safe to speak up" is not a shared experience across the workforce.

Q5 – Do you have reason to believe that any employee, including managers, might not be working their complete shift?

Figure 5: Survey Question 5 Responses

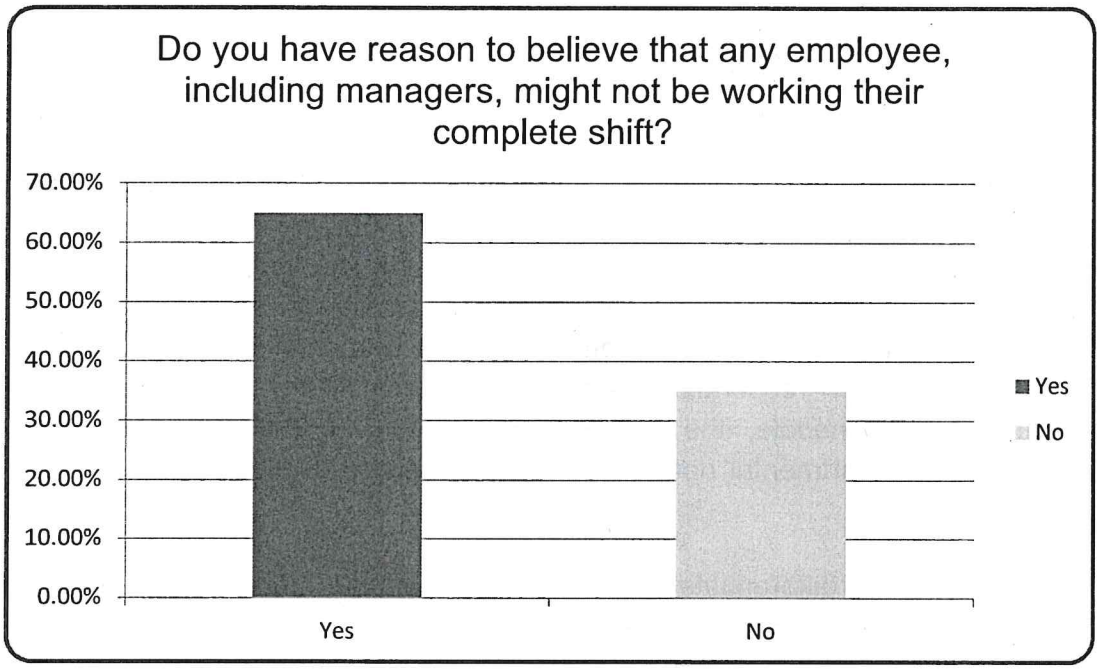


Table 5: Survey Question 5

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
Do you have reason to believe that any employee, including managers, might not be working their complete shift?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	65.00%	13
No	35.00%	7
If yes, please explain who and why.		16
	Answered	**20**
	Skipped	**1**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 16 respondents:

Survey Question 5: Perceptions of Employees Not Working Their Complete Shift — Major Themes

Theme 1: The most consistent concern centers on the Operations Manager's start time and perceived schedule flexibility

Across responses, the most frequently cited issue is the Operations Manager arriving after the start time observed for the rest of the workforce. Employees report repeated late arrivals of roughly 30–90 minutes and describe them as routine. Several respondents also note an attitude that salaried status allows flexible hours, and some interpret that as effectively exempting the position from the same expectations applied to other employees. Even when respondents acknowledge they do not know the Operations Manager's official schedule, the recurring perception is that arrival patterns are inconsistent with departmental norms and visible enough to affect staff confidence in accountability.

Theme 2: Employees differentiate between leadership roles and accountability, with a perceived double standard impacting morale

A recurring theme is that employees cannot verify timecards directly, but they observe patterns of management absence at the start of the workday and irregular presence throughout the day. This is often coupled with the perception that some employees face consequences for time-related issues while others do not, creating a sense of unequal enforcement. The concern is less about occasional flexibility and more about whether consistent standards exist and whether leadership is held accountable in the same way as frontline staff.

Theme 3: Some respondents view certain leaders as punctual or working beyond normal hours, creating mixed perceptions about overall management time

Not all responses are negative. Several respondents report that certain leaders are perceived as punctual or responsive outside normal hours, including handling emails and issues after hours. One respondent also suggests that the Operations Manager may work outside normal hours in ways most staff would not see, implying that observed late starts may not tell the full story. This theme shows that perceptions vary by role visibility and interaction patterns, and that the central issue for many employees is the lack of a transparent, trusted timekeeping and accountability system for management schedules.

Theme 4: Additional concerns extend beyond managers to specific supervisory roles and field presence

Beyond management's arrival times, at least one response raises concern that the road foreman spends most of the day at the shop and is rarely seen on job sites. This suggests that shift-completion concerns extend beyond upper management and that field supervision and productivity monitoring are part of the broader accountability discussion within the department.

Q6 – Do you trust the Public Works Department managers to "do the right thing" when it comes to their management and leadership of the department? If not, please provide details on which manager(s) you do not trust to do the right thing, and why you feel that way.

Figure 6: Survey Question 6 Responses

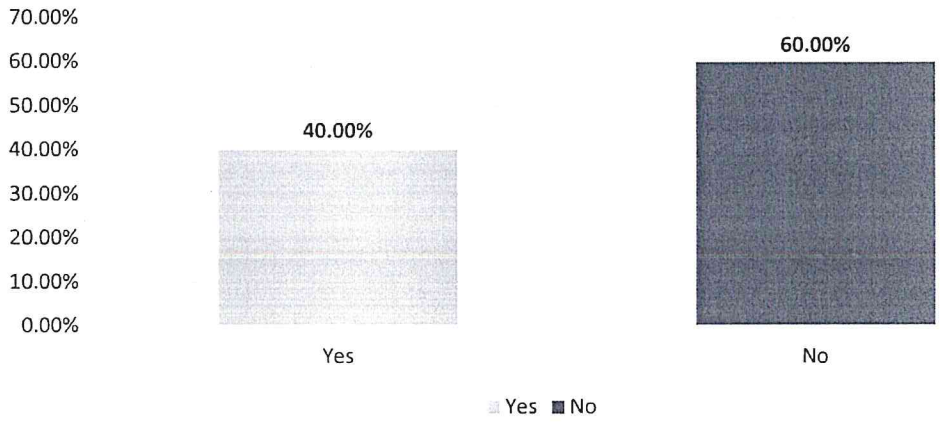


Table 6: Survey Question 6

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
Do you trust the Public Works Department managers to "do the right thing" when it comes to their management and leadership of the department? If not, please provide details on which manager(s) you do not trust to do the right thing, and why you feel that way.		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	40.00%	8
No	60.00%	12
If no, explain who and why.		14
	Answered	**20**
	Skipped	**1**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 14 respondents:

Theme 1: Trust varies by manager, with recurring concerns tied to Brian LaVoie and perceptions of Director support

Respondents do not evaluate "management" as a single unit. Some express general trust in leadership, and one manager (Alain Bourassa) is described as a stabilizing presence and a reliable communicator. In contrast, multiple responses identify Brian LaVoie as the primary source of distrust, describing him as inconsistent, failing to follow through, or contributing to negative outcomes when issues are raised. Several comments also suggest that concerns about Brian LaVoie are reinforced when the Director (John Carrington) is perceived as backing him or failing to intervene effectively.

Theme 2: Trust is shaped by whether issues are addressed consistently and fully resolved

Many responses link trust to how leaders respond when problems arise—whether incidents are taken seriously, investigated appropriately, and resolved in ways employees view as fair and complete. Trust declines when respondents perceive issues as minimized, delayed, handled informally, or set aside rather than resolved. This theme appears in both public-facing incident examples and internal personnel or conduct concerns.

Theme 3: Perceived favoritism and uneven accountability undermine confidence in leadership integrity

Multiple comments link low trust to perceptions that rules, discipline, and expectations are not applied uniformly. Respondents report a belief that some employees or groups receive preferential treatment, that disciplinary follow-through is inconsistent, and that accountability depends on relationships rather than standards. This theme is often directly linked to Brian LaVoie and, in some comments, to broader leadership alignment among John Carrington, Brian LaVoie, and Alain Bourassa.

Theme 4: Leadership credibility depends on follow-through and consistency of direction

A repeated theme is that employees judge trust based on whether managers do what they say they will do. Several comments describe changing direction, unacted-on commitments, or warnings/corrective actions discussed but not completed. This is cited as eroding credibility and creating a perception of unreliable leadership.

Theme 5: Role clarity and workload distribution affect trust in management effectiveness

At least one respondent frames trust in part by how leadership roles operate in practice, describing Alain Bourassa as covering responsibilities that would typically fall to an Operations Manager. This contributes to perceptions that the management structure is not functioning as intended and raises questions about whether certain leadership roles are being fulfilled effectively.

Theme 6: Communication and engagement influence trust across divisions

Some responses cite limited management presence in certain areas, inconsistent engagement with specific workgroups, and weak internal communication as factors that erode trust. Others describe positive experiences in which management was responsive and respectful, suggesting that employee trust is strongly influenced by day-to-day interactions and the consistency of leadership engagement.

Q7 – Please describe any barriers or challenges that prevent you from doing your job effectively.

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided by 16 respondents:

Theme 1: Mixed experience, with many respondents reporting few or no barriers

A notable share of responses indicate that employees do not perceive significant obstacles to completing their work effectively. Several respondents report feeling supported by management, having the tools and resources needed, and working within a clear chain of command. Some comments frame challenges as personal (e.g., self-doubt) rather than organizational, while others express overall satisfaction and appreciation for their jobs.

Theme 2: Perceived inequity in attention and resources across divisions, with "roads" viewed as prioritized

A recurring theme is the perception that the roads crew receives disproportionate attention, staffing, and equipment compared with other functions. Respondents report that work outside roads is treated as less important or "trivial," leaving other departments to operate with fewer resources. This creates frustration and is described as a barrier to effectiveness for those outside the prioritized area.

Theme 3: Management and leadership are identified as barriers, including references to the Operations Manager and Public Works Director

Several respondents identify management as a barrier, either directly (e.g., "Management," "The Operations Manager") or through descriptions of leadership style and decision-making. One response specifically references John Carrington as disruptive to established routines, suggesting a leadership approach that alters processes employees felt were working. Other comments indicate that leadership decisions or behaviors impede efficiency and clarity in day-to-day operations.

Theme 4: Communication and visibility gaps within and across divisions

Multiple responses cite internal communication challenges as barriers—particularly a lack of information about departmental activities or management's lack of understanding of what certain teams do day-to-day. This theme also includes challenges related to cross-departmental requests and coordination, where employees describe difficulty managing external requests or being kept apprised of what is happening across the department.

Theme 5: Operational and safety consistency issues, especially related to road work practices

At least one response identifies inconsistencies in safety protocols as a barrier, including variability in traffic control measures and instances of workers being sent to perform roadwork alone. This theme reflects concerns that inconsistent procedures create inefficiencies and potential safety risks, which employees view as obstacles to effective work.

Theme 6: Crew-level practices affecting productivity

One response cites worksite disruptions attributed to a crew leader's behavior (leaving the jobsite multiple times) and describes them as preventing an efficient workday. While not widely echoed in the provided comments, it reflects a perceived barrier related to supervision and job-site management practices.

Q8 – How effective is department leadership in supporting employees, resolving issues, and providing guidance?

Figure 7: Survey Question 8 Responses

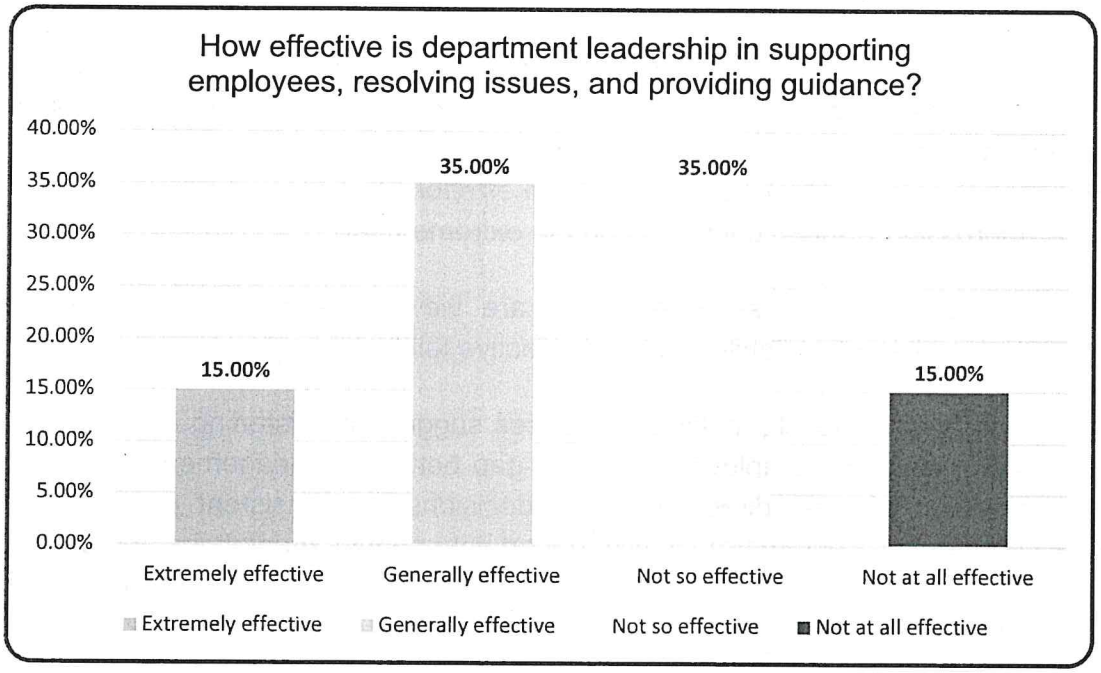


Table 7: Survey Question 8

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
How effective is department leadership in supporting employees, resolving issues, and providing guidance?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely effective	15.00%	3
Generally effective	35.00%	7
Not so effective	35.00%	7
Not at all effective	15.00%	3
Please explain		19
	Answered	**20**
	Skipped	**1**

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 19 respondents:

Theme 1: Mixed perceptions, with some employees reporting strong accessibility and support

Several respondents describe leadership as available, approachable, and willing to listen when issues arise. Some note that when they needed help or guidance, they could ask questions and receive support. A few comments suggest that leadership has worked well with them personally and that management makes efforts to address employee well-being (e.g., by addressing working conditions during extreme heat).

Theme 2: Guidance and issue resolution are viewed as inconsistent, with some employees describing "availability" without effective follow-through

Alongside positive feedback, multiple responses suggest that listening does not always translate into resolution. Employees report a gap between management's accessibility and its provision of clear direction, timely decisions, or consistent problem-solving. Several comments reflect frustration with uncertainty about expectations and outcomes, including perceptions that employees receive conflicting feedback and that there is limited clarity on what "right" looks like.

Theme 3: Fear of retaliation and reluctance to raise concerns remains a barrier to effective support

A recurring concern is that some employees do not feel safe raising issues or fear negative consequences. This theme is expressed as a direct statement of fear of retaliation and is reinforced by other comments describing discouragement from speaking up, concerns about how issues are handled, and perceptions that raising problems can lead to negative labeling.

Theme 4: Leadership structure and role distribution are viewed as uneven, affecting departmental effectiveness

Several responses indicate that leadership responsibilities may be concentrated in one person, with that individual perceived as carrying duties beyond their formal role to keep operations running. Some comments also describe leadership as fragmented or passed down the line rather than actively managed, contributing to perceptions that the department operates well but lacks cohesive leadership coordination.

Theme 5: Communication, transparency, and fairness issues affect confidence in leadership

Some respondents express concerns about leaders discussing employees rather than addressing issues directly, inconsistent treatment of employees, and favoritism. Others note that management addresses issues broadly across entire crews rather than targeting the individuals involved, which is perceived as unfair and unproductive. This theme links leadership effectiveness to transparency, consistent standards, and respectful communication practices.

Theme 6: Professional development and resource support are viewed as limited in specific areas

At least one response points to a perceived lack of support for employee advancement—specifically, changes in CDL requirements and the expectation that employees fund required training themselves. This is presented as an example of leadership failing to provide adequate support or resources to help employees meet evolving job requirements.

Theme 7: Employees note that leadership effectiveness varies by department and level of direct supervision

Several comments indicate that employees' experiences depend on their immediate supervisor and the extent to which leadership is visible in their day-to-day work. Some report strong support from a direct supervisor but also note limitations imposed by that supervisor's manager. Others say leadership is rarely present in their area and does not fully understand their work, which reduces the perceived quality of guidance and support.

Q9 – Are you aware of any practices, behaviors, or activities that may expose the department to risk (such as inefficiencies, misuse of resources, or policy non-compliance)?

Figure 7: Survey Question 9 Responses

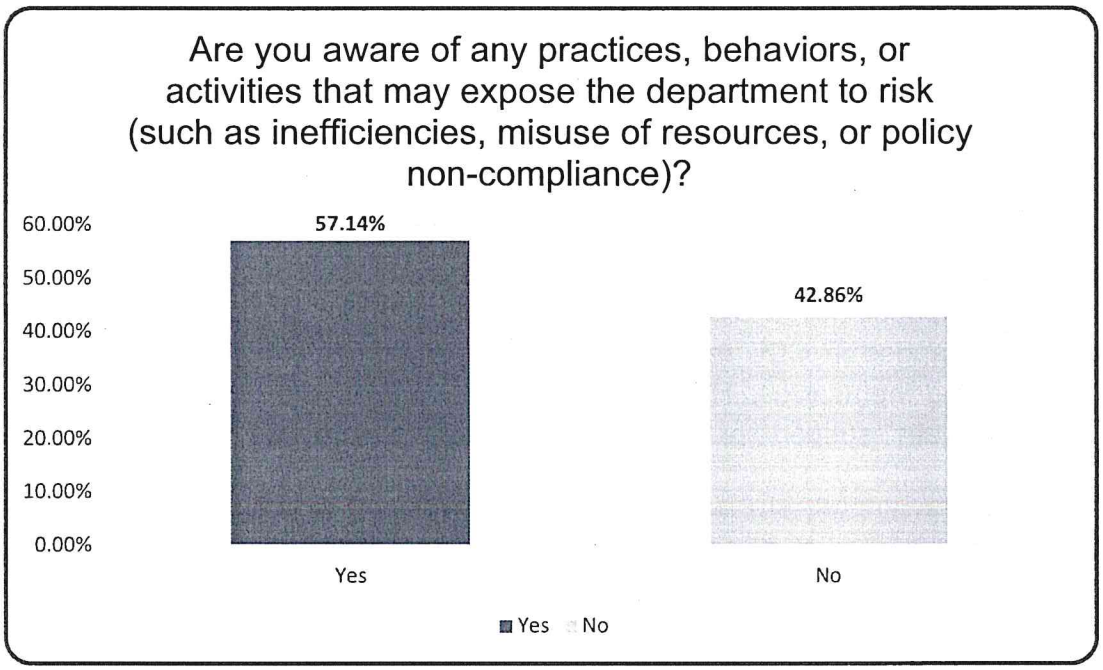


Table 7: Survey Question 9

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey		
Are you aware of any practices, behaviors, or activities that may expose the department to risk (such as inefficiencies, misuse of resources, or policy non-compliance)?		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	57.14%	12
No	42.86%	9
Please explain any "yes" response		13
	Answered	**21**
	Skipped	**0**

Collectively, respondents frame these issues as risks tied to planning discipline, compliance, and accountability.

Theme 5: Hiring, promotions, and job classification practices are viewed as vulnerable to favoritism or manipulation

A recurring theme is concern about hiring and advancement practices. Respondents cite "hiring friends," "friends of friends," and changing job descriptions to support a preferred candidate. Some comments suggest that perceived favoritism in staffing decisions creates operational risks (skill mismatches, morale impacts) and potential HR/legal exposure.

Theme 6: Training and competency gaps, with employees placed in roles without adequate preparation

At least one response identifies the risk of employees being placed in positions without sufficient training. Respondents frame this as both an operational risk (errors, inefficiency) and a safety/compliance risk, depending on the nature of the assignment.

Theme 7: Divergent perspectives, including a minority view that no meaningful risk behaviors are observed

While many comments identify risk exposures, at least one respondent reports not observing inappropriate behavior by management. This highlights that risk perceptions are not uniform and may vary by role, workgroup, or level of exposure to the cited issues.

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 13 respondents:

Theme 1: Safety compliance concerns, particularly in road operations and jobsite controls

Several responses identify safety as a significant risk area. Common concerns include inconsistent use of PPE and jobsite controls, workers assigned to road work alone, and reports of employees working in unsafe conditions (e.g., work near excavation/equipment without consistent protective measures). Respondents also report perceived pressure to accelerate roadwork timelines (e.g., "pipe in the ground" to support paving), which they associate with shortcuts or inconsistent adherence to safety procedures.

Theme 2: Personnel conduct and workplace behavior creating legal and organizational risk

Multiple comments point to harassment, misogynistic behavior, and inappropriate interactions as risk exposures, including the belief that issues were reported over time without sufficient corrective action. Respondents describe risk not only in the alleged behavior itself but also in the perception of prolonged inaction following the raising of concerns. Related comments also raise concerns about employee privacy and the sharing or discussion of sensitive employee information, which respondents view as compliance and liability risks.

Theme 3: Misuse of time and resources, including concerns about vehicle use and work time accountability

Several responses raise concerns about inefficiencies and resource misuse, including allegations of misuse of a Town vehicle and excessive driving or mileage. Other comments describe perceived misuse of work time, lack of oversight of managerial schedules, and inefficiencies caused by leadership not being present when needed or failing to follow through on operational responsibilities. This theme is often associated with the Operations Manager role and, in some comments, with Brian LaVoie specifically.

Theme 4: Weak oversight and quality control for contracted or completed work

Some respondents report a lack of management oversight of third-party work and internal work quality, including perceptions that projects are not consistently supervised, inspected, or closed out with appropriate verification. Comments also cite situations where jobs allegedly required rework and instances where projects were delayed or stopped because permits or required paperwork were not obtained in advance.

Q10 – Please describe any concerns related to workplace conduct, timekeeping, use of equipment, purchasing, or other practices you believe should be reviewed.

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided from 17 respondents:

Theme 1: Timekeeping controls and accountability are a primary concern, with repeated calls for a time clock

The most consistent theme is the perceived lack of accountability after the removal of a time clock. Multiple respondents explicitly request the reinstatement of a time clock and attribute the absence to reduced control over start times and daily accountability. Related comments include concerns that timesheets reflect a start time that does not align with observed arrival times, and that stronger timekeeping controls would improve consistency and fairness.

Theme 2: Concerns about overtime practices and schedule enforcement

Some respondents express concern that overtime opportunities may be misused by certain employees or departments. Other comments link timekeeping concerns to broader schedule-enforcement issues, including perceived inconsistencies in management's punctuality and availability. Collectively, respondents describe this as both an equity and a control issue.

Theme 3: Purchasing and procurement practices warrant review, including purchase order discipline and vehicle/equipment specifications

Several comments point to purchasing practices as an area needing review. Specific concerns include purchasing parts without a purchase order (at least one instance noted as corrected by current management) and disagreement with certain purchases from a taxpayer perspective. Another recurring operational purchasing concern relates to vehicle acquisitions—respondents describe trucks being purchased with extensive "add-ons" rather than focusing on essential needs.

Theme 4: Oversight of contractors and bidding practices, with concerns about favoritism

Multiple responses suggest that contractor selection and bidding procedures should be reviewed. The comments raise concerns about the appearance of favoritism—specifically, that a manager's close friend was perceived as repeatedly receiving the tree service contract—and recommend reviewing whether bidding procedures are applied consistently and objectively.

Theme 5: Equipment stewardship and asset protection concerns

Some respondents express concern that vehicles and equipment are being damaged or "destroyed" by individuals who fail to care for Town assets. These comments underscore the need for clearer accountability for equipment use, expectations for care, and consequences for misuse or neglect.

Theme 6: Workplace conduct and internal handling of complaints, including HR follow-through

A subset of responses suggests that workplace conduct concerns and their documentation and handling should be reviewed, with particular emphasis on whether concerns raised with Human Resources received appropriate follow-through. This theme is framed less as isolated conduct issues and more as the need to evaluate the adequacy and consistency of the internal response process over time.

Theme 7: Isolated or limited-visibility responses indicate variation in awareness

Some respondents indicate they have no concerns, nothing to add, or that the question is not applicable to their level of knowledge. This suggests that awareness of potential issues varies by role, access to information, and proximity to the cited practices.

Q11 – Describe your view of employee morale within the department, and if you believe morale can be improved, what will help improve it?

The following themes emerged based on individual comments provided by 20 respondents:

Theme 1: Morale perceptions are mixed, ranging from "strong/okay" to "very low," often varying by workgroup and day-to-day experience

Responses reflect a wide range of views. Some describe morale as "okay," "decent," or "fairly strong," noting that employees generally get along and continue to complete necessary work. Others characterize morale as "awful," "at the bottom," or "an all-time low," citing distrust among employees, fatigue, and frustration. Several comments indicate that morale varies by location or subgroup (e.g., "garage" versus "Town Hall"), suggesting the department may not have uniform morale.

Theme 2: Leadership effectiveness and accountability are frequently cited as key drivers of morale

A significant share of respondents link morale directly to leadership. Some explicitly state that morale can improve only with a leadership change, while others emphasize stronger accountability from management and clearer expectations for supervisors and crew leadership. Even among respondents who view morale positively overall, there are calls for "little changes" to move performance from good to outstanding—often framed as improved leadership structure, follow-through, and consistent standards.

Theme 3: Communication and transparency—especially between Town Hall and Public Works—are seen as practical levers to improve morale

Several comments point to a perceived disconnect between Town Hall and the Public Works Department and argue that greater transparency and clearer communication would improve morale. This includes improving information flow, reducing barriers, and helping staff feel more connected to the town's broader priorities. A few comments also summarize morale challenges simply as "no communication" and "less drama," reinforcing the view that communication issues are a recurring underlying contributor.

Theme 4: Workplace culture, cohesion, and recognition matter, including requests for appreciation and team-building

Some respondents highlight cultural and interpersonal factors: "less drama," improved employee trust, and stronger cohesion. Others point to a lack of recognition or celebration (e.g., no retirement celebrations, no holiday gatherings), suggesting that visible

appreciation, team-building, and shared events could help rebuild morale and strengthen relationships.

Theme 5: The investigation itself is perceived by some as a morale stressor

At least a few responses indicate that being investigated has negatively affected morale, describing it as "not helping" or even "destroying morale more." This theme, alongside broader morale concerns, suggests that the process, regardless of the outcomes, has affected how some employees feel about the workplace environment.

Theme 6: Compensation and perceived fairness are mentioned as morale factors

A smaller but notable theme is that improving morale may require addressing pay equity and workload-based compensation. This relates to how employees feel valued and treated fairly and is linked to concerns about trust, workload, and overall satisfaction.

Q12 – You are completing a job performance evaluation for the public works director, Mr. John Carrington. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.

Figure 8: Survey Question 12 Responses

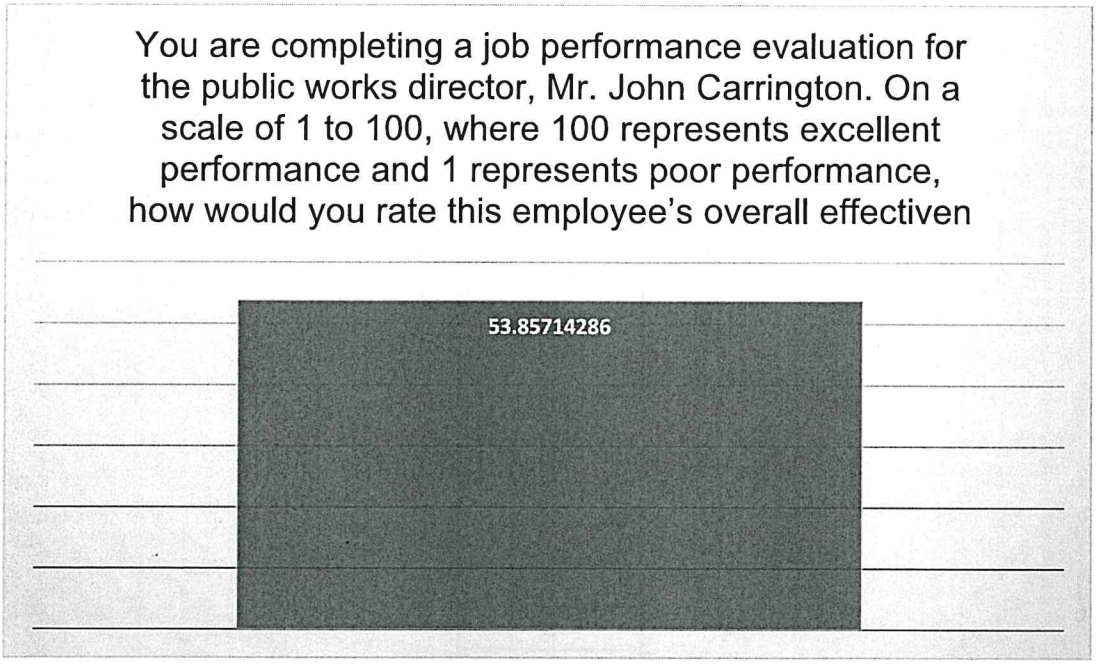


Table 8: Survey Question 12

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey			
You are completing a job performance evaluation for the public works director, Mr. John Carrington. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.			
Average Number	Total Number	Responses	
53.85714286	1131	100.00%	21
		Answered	**21**
		Skipped	**0**

Individual Responses
100
95
93
90
90
90
85
80
80
58
50
45
45
40
30
25
20
10
2
2
1

Q13 – You are completing a job performance evaluation for the assistant public works director, Mr. Derek Dilaj. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.

Figure 9: Survey Question 13 Responses

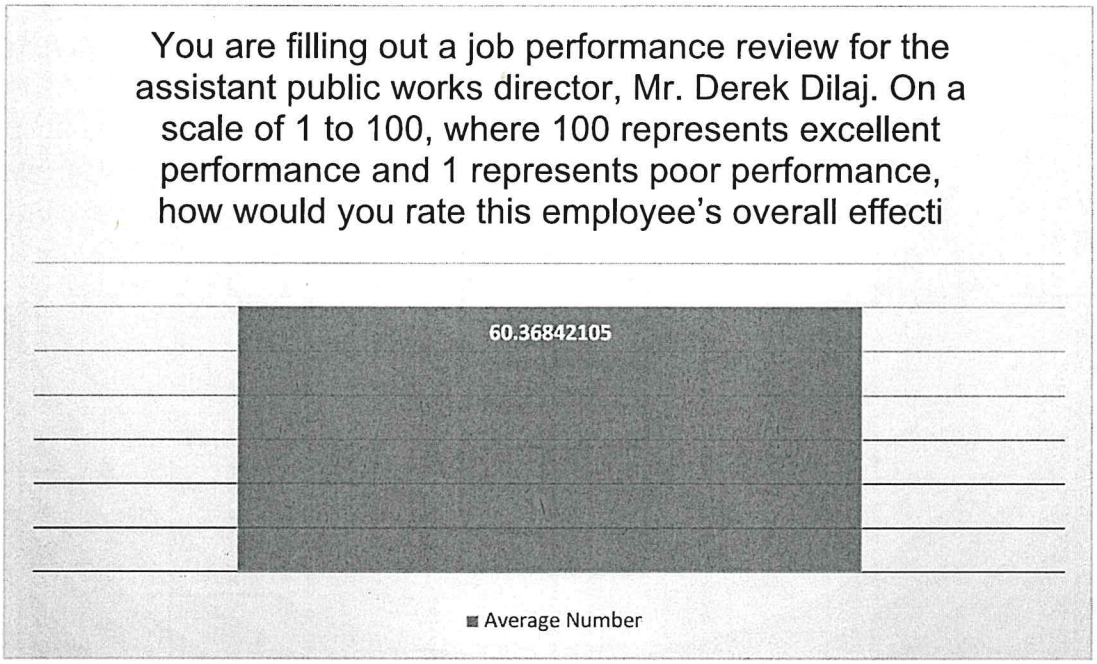


Table 9: Survey Question 13

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey			
You are filling out a job performance review for the assistant public works director, Mr. Derek Dilaj. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.			
Average Number	Total Number	Responses	
60.36842105	1147	100.00%	19
		Answered	**19**
		Skipped	**2**

Individual Responses
100
100
100
95
93
90
90
90
84
80
61
51
42
25
20
10
10
5
1

Q14 – You are completing a job performance evaluation for the Operations Manager, Mr. Brian LaVoie. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.

Figure 10: Survey Question 14 Responses

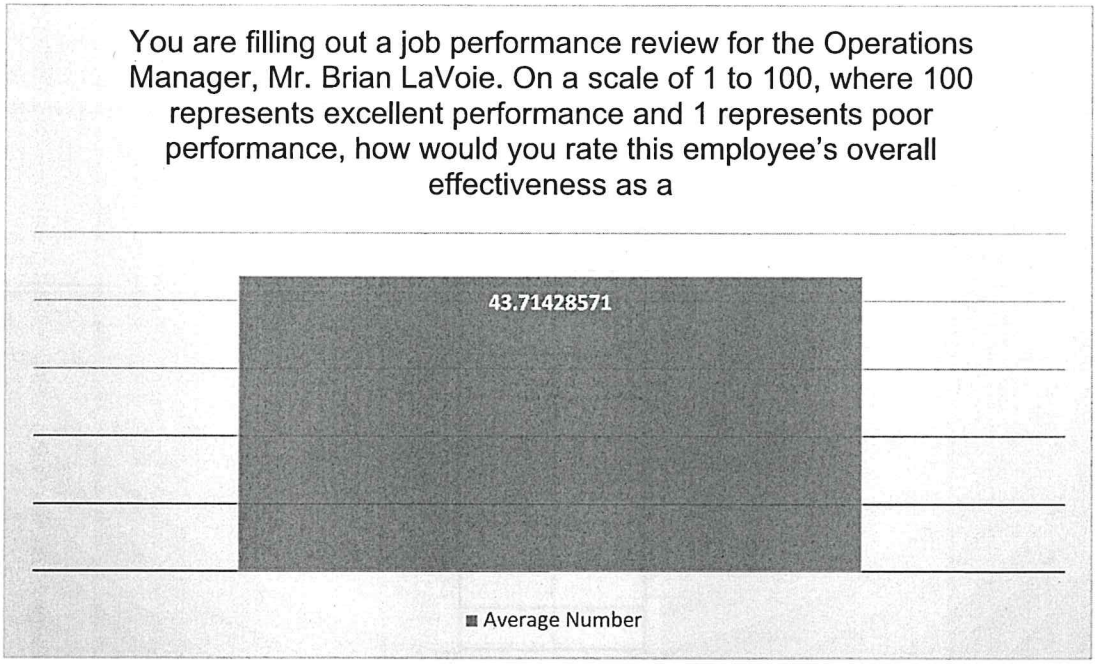


Table 10: Survey Question 14

Town of Mansfield Confidential Public Works Employee Feedback Survey			
You are filling out a job performance review for the Operations Manager, Mr. Brian LaVoie. On a scale of 1 to 100, where 100 represents excellent performance and 1 represents poor performance, how would you rate this employee's overall effectiveness as a manager and leader within the Public Works Department? Use the sliding scale to record your response.			
Average Number	Total Number	Responses	
43.71428571	918	100.00%	21
		Answered	**21**
		Skipped	**0**

Individual Responses
100
100
90
80
80
80
70
70
65
48
40
40
30
9
5
5
2
2
1
1
0

Q15 – If you could change ONLY ONE THING within the department or how it operates, what one thing would you change?

Responses varied, but included desiring a time clock for all employees to use, working better as a team instead of what feels like silos between the different divisions, wanting new management (but not hiring internally), wanting management to be more approachable, evaluating the need to even have an Operations Manager position, specific concerns about the Operations Manager and a desire for him to no longer be employed with the Town of Mansfield, wanting Alain in charge of the garage, and holding management accountable for their own actions.

Q16 – Is there anything else you would like to share regarding possible misconduct within public works operations?

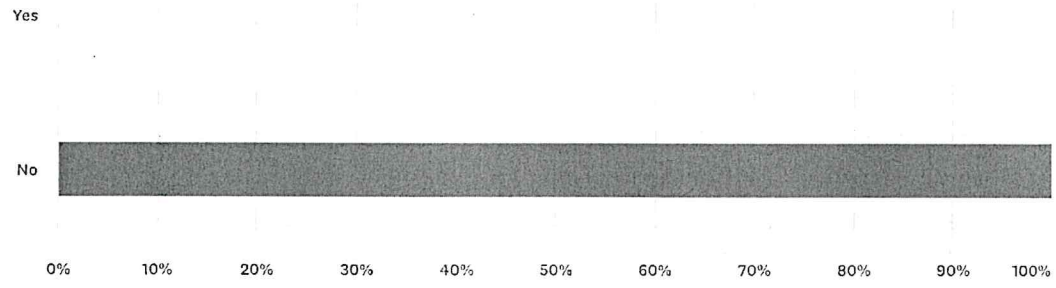
Responses varied, but included concerns about Rocco Massaro being a close friend of the Operations Manager and a septic pumping contractor who is the Road Foreman's brother, with the latter receiving valuable materials for "peanuts", and being "yelled at" during COVID with apparent threats of repercussions if anyone got the Operations Manager "sick".

Q17 – Has anyone attempted to influence any of your responses to these questions or any interviews that you might have completed related to this review of Public Works Department operations?

Figure 11: Survey Question 17 Responses

Has anyone attempted to influence any of your responses to these survey questions or any interviews that you might have completed related to this revie of public works department operations?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Yes	0%	0
No	100.00%	21

3.4 Summary of Major Survey Takeaways Related to Management Effectiveness

Survey responses present a mixed view of management effectiveness. Some employees describe leadership as approachable and supportive, while others cite inconsistent guidance, uneven follow-through, and limited visibility—particularly at the start of shifts and across certain divisions.

A recurring theme is that employees experience management differently under different managers. John Carrington and Derek Dilaj are described by some as accessible and responsive, even outside normal hours. In contrast, Brian LaVoie is repeatedly mentioned in comments about perceived lateness, limited availability, inconsistent direction, and concerns about follow-through. Alain Bourassa is frequently characterized as a stabilizing, operationally reliable presence and, in some comments, as carrying responsibilities that employees believe extend beyond his formal role.

Several respondents say that trust and morale are shaped by whether accountability is applied consistently. Comments cite perceived favoritism, concerns about retaliation or negative consequences for raising issues, and a belief that outcomes can depend on relationships rather than uniform standards. Some respondents explicitly report a perception that the "chain of command" is used to discourage escalation beyond the department.

Communication and engagement are repeatedly linked to management effectiveness. Respondents cite gaps in internal communication, limited understanding of day-to-day work in certain divisions, and a belief that leadership engagement is uneven across workgroups. When communication is perceived as weak, employees report confusion, frustration, and reduced confidence in leadership.

Finally, respondents link management effectiveness to core controls and oversight, particularly timekeeping accountability (including repeated calls for a time clock), consistent enforcement of schedule expectations, and clearer oversight of purchasing and contractor practices.

CHAPTER 4: DATA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview

The forensic audit and internal control assessment encompassed operational data from January 1, 2025, through November 17, 2025, including GPS location logs, vehicle fueling records, payroll time entries, purchasing card transactions, vendor invoices, and supporting correspondence. Interviews were conducted with the Public Works Director, Operations Manager, supervisors, and staff. These data sources were analyzed collectively to assess whether Public Works operations complied with the Town of Mansfield's adopted policies, financial controls, and ethical standards. After his initial interview, Mr. LaVoie declined the Town's request for additional interview(s).

4.2 Methodology and Data Sources

Each record set was evaluated using forensic matching procedures. GPS ignition and location data were cross-referenced with payroll-reported start and stop times (signed time sheets), and vehicle assignments. Limited purchases were compared with authorized purchase orders, contracts, bid documents, and vendor invoices. Vendor invoices, particularly those for tree services, were evaluated for proper documentation, price justification, and compliance with purchasing thresholds outlined in the Finance Policies and Procedures Manual (Sections H.2–H.6). Where applicable, data were validated through interviews and corroborating documentation from Town Hall departments.

4.3 Timekeeping and Attendance Review

Analysis of daily GPS data revealed recurring discrepancies between the Operations Manager's reported hours on the timesheet and the vehicle's actual activity. On multiple days, the assigned vehicle was stationary for extended periods during claimed working hours or remained at a private residence past scheduled start times. In several cases, the vehicle returned home significantly before the recorded end of the shift. These findings suggest that timesheets did not accurately reflect true hours worked.

Under Section J.2.a of the Finance Manual and Section 6.3 of the Personnel Rules, supervisors are required to verify time records prior to submission. The lack of review and correction demonstrates a failure by the Public Works Director, who is also accountable for failing to enforce established verification controls. The absence of a departmental time clock and no clear documentation from the Public Works Director as to where the

Operations Manager must report to work each morning further weakened accountability mechanisms.

4.4 Procurement and Vendor Management Practices

Procurement review identified multiple instances when a purchase order was issued after goods had already been obtained—contrary to Finance Manual Sections H.4–H.5, which requires pre-approval by the Department Head and Finance Director.

Under the policy, the Director of Finance serves as Purchasing Agent, but department heads are responsible for initiating compliant requisitions. Therefore, both the Operations Manager and Public Works Director share responsibility for the violations.

The Public Works Department management engaged in multiple violations of purchasing policy within the lookback period and beyond. This includes awarding a tree bid to the non-low bidder without documentation as to the reason for that decision (addressed elsewhere in this report), approving invoices without appropriate documentation (tree vendor invoices addressed elsewhere in this report), approving invoices not consistent with approved contract rates (tree vendor discussed elsewhere in this report), purchasing vehicles on multiple occasions without a valid purchase order (PO) in place before placing the order (PO 26000504 for $37,000 issued on 7/29/2025 with an invoice dated 7/30/2025 and PO 26001712 for $55,727.20 issued on 10/1/2025, but the invoice was dated 9/22/2025), purchasing several mowers for $45,974 without a PO in place (PO 26001046 for $45,974 issued on 8/21/2025 with the invoice dated 8/21/2025), and unilaterally contracting with a pavement vendor without a purchase order in place (All State had the bid and PO, but Public Works Department management had part of the paving contract awarded to another company, apparently because of a disagreement between the Road Foreman and All State, all without proper documentation or following procedures). Town management said that when Public Works Department management was asked about it, their response was "We Fucked up". Regardless of the reason, the facts remain that there is a consistent pattern of Public Works Department management failing to follow proper purchasing policies, established procedures, or basic internal controls over purchasing operations.

4.5 Vendor Invoice Analysis

Tree-related service invoices for 2025 were reviewed. The documentation lacked sufficient detail to verify the scope, location, or labor hours for the work billed. No photographs, site logs, or work order cross-references accompanied the invoices, despite Finance Manual I.1.a–I.1.b requiring verification of goods or services prior to payment.

Invoices were approved at the department level without supporting verification from field supervisors, reflecting significant internal control vulnerabilities. The Operations Manager and Public Works Director were the approving authorities and, therefore, responsible for ensuring completeness and accuracy of the documentation.

4.6 Ethics, Fraud Prevention, and Policy Cross-Analysis

Several data points align with criteria set forth in the Town's Fraud Prevention Policy (2016), which defines potential fraud indicators as misreporting time, unauthorized use of assets, and circumvention of purchasing controls. The Ethics Code further prohibits employees from engaging in conduct that creates the appearance of a conflict of interest. The association between the Operations Manager and certain vendors (including prior working relationships) creates a perceived conflict that was neither disclosed nor mitigated through written recusal or justification.

The cumulative evidence demonstrates the Operations Manager's non-adherence to the ethical standards expected of Town employees and weaknesses in the department's tone at the top. The Public Works Director holds primary responsibility for enforcing the Ethics Code within the department and for escalating potential violations to the Town Manager's Office.

4.7 Supervisory Oversight and Accountability

Interviews and record reviews indicate that supervisory review processes were minimal. The Public Works Director acknowledged relying on professional trust rather than actively verifying time or purchase records. No structured internal audit or compliance checks were conducted within the department. The lack of monitoring permitted control failures to persist for months, and possibly longer, without correction.

According to Personnel Rules §9 and the Fraud Prevention Policy, supervisors are expected to detect and act upon irregularities. Failure to do so represents a management control deficiency attributable to both the Operations Manager (day-to-day supervision) and the Public Works Director (department-wide enforcement).

4.8 Departmental Culture and Systemic Implications

Employee feedback and interview data indicate that the department operated with minimal accountability and inconsistent application of rules. Staff reported frustration with unequal workload distribution and perceived favoritism. Several employees stated that Public Works Department management openly discouraged filing grievances or raising complaints with Town Hall. Management reportedly had a strict chain of command, and

anyone wanting to talk with someone in the Human Resources Department was discouraged from doing so. Employees stated they feared retaliation if they raised concerns about workplace behavior with anyone at Town Hall. This cultural environment, coupled with ineffective supervisory oversight, allowed policy violations to go undetected and without consequence.

These conditions meet the definition of a "control-conducive environment" in which internal compliance mechanisms are documented but not functionally applied. The Public Works Director's tolerance of informal practices undermined Town policies and facilitated an erosion of integrity standards across operational levels.

4.9 Summary of Accountability

The forensic review established a clear chain of responsibility for observed issues:

- The **Operations Manager** directly controlled timekeeping verification, vehicle use, fueling, and purchasing activity. Irregularities in these areas are his direct accountability.
- The **Public Works Director** failed to enforce policy compliance, review financial activity, or provide adequate oversight of the Operations Manager and subordinate staff.
- The **Finance Department** performed its duties as a purchasing agent based on departmental certifications; therefore, its exposure is procedural, not causal.
- The **Town Manager's Office** relied on departmental leadership to maintain internal control integrity; a lack of upward reporting limited awareness of these failures until audit intervention. Town Management stated they raised concerns to the Public Works Director on several occasions, with little to no follow-through from the Director.

4.10 Conclusion of Analytical Phase

The extensive data review revealed consistent patterns of noncompliance and weak oversight across timekeeping, purchasing, and vendor management. Each dataset independently indicated irregular activity; together, they form a cohesive picture of a deficient internal control culture within the Public Works Department and inadequate supervisory enforcement.

These findings provide the factual basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

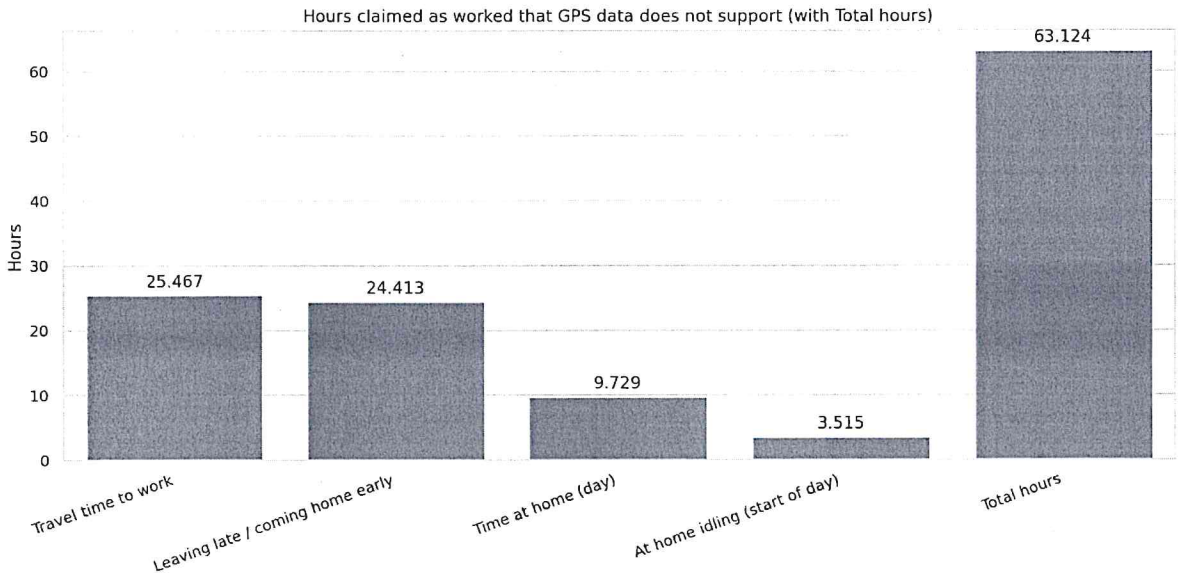
5.1 Inaccurate Time Reporting and Timesheet Falsification

An analysis of Mr. Brian LaVoie's signed and approved timesheets for the period January 1, 2025, through November 17, 2025, identified recurring discrepancies between the start and end times certified on his timesheets and the activity reflected in GPS data for his assigned take-home Town vehicle. For purposes of this review, GPS data was used as an objective indicator of vehicle activity associated with the beginning and end of the workday, including first vehicle movement from the residence, periods where the vehicle started and remained idling at the residence before departing, mid-day returns to the residence, and other travel patterns relevant to workday timing.

Based on those GPS indicators, a total of 63.12391 hours were identified as not being accurately reflected on the timesheets Mr. LaVoie signed and submitted. This total includes 9.7294 hours where the vehicle was at his residence during the workday, 3.51491 hours where the vehicle started and idled at his residence at the beginning of the day before departing, 25.46666 hours of "to work" travel time, and 24.413 hours associated with late arrivals and/or early departures that were not reflected on the timesheets.

Mr. LaVoie resides approximately one minute outside the Town limits of Mansfield and approximately eight minutes from the Public Works garage. The travel time "to work" listed below shows over 25 unsupported "drive time" hours throughout the lookback period; however, they do not represent any travel time "to home" at the end of the day.

Figure 12: Hours Worked Not Supported by GPS Data



During his interview, Mr. LaVoie stated that he often comes into work on Saturdays, does not record that time on his timesheet, and does not use a Town vehicle on those occasions because he has his dog with him. Based on the materials reviewed for this report, there is no independent method available to verify this claim.

Mr. LaVoie acknowledged timekeeping documentation issues during his interview, stating, "Bad documentation – absolutely," and further acknowledged that his timesheets do not reflect the time he actually worked. He repeatedly attributed timesheet inaccuracies to an administrative employee (' '), stating that she completed his timesheet and he then signed it. He also stated that told him he does not know how to complete his own timesheet, and therefore, she completes it for him. He further stated, "I was under the understanding that salary didn't need to document." When asked about signing timesheets showing a 6:00 a.m. or 6:30 a.m. start time when the GPS vehicle activity did not align with those times, he did not dispute the underlying concern and again cited 's completion of the timesheet.

Mr. LaVoie stated that he does not have permission to work from home or to go home during the day. Regarding meal periods, he stated that lunch periods are "working lunches only." When asked whether he ever takes breaks longer than he should, he responded, "Probably." When asked about time away from work that may not be recorded as leave, he stated that, "maybe if I had a doctor's appointment, but I wouldn't necessarily claim it as time off if I planned to stay late or I had comp time."

In summary, Mr. LaVoie acknowledged deficiencies in timekeeping documentation, acknowledged inaccuracies in his timesheets, and confirmed that an administrative employee completed his timesheets, even though he had certified them with his signature. He confirmed he does not have permission to work from home and acknowledged that he "probably" takes breaks longer than he should. He admitted that his timesheets are false, but chalked it up to " ' completing them or that, because he is a salaried employee, he didn't need to record all of this work time.

A separate spreadsheet titled "LaVoie GPS Data" has been provided to the Town in support of these findings and the underlying calculations reflected above.

Recommendation
Ensure every employee knows where and when to report for work each morning.

Recommendation
Consider implementing a mandatory time clock, even if certain employees are authorized to access it remotely (with geofencing security measures in place).

Recommendation
Require all employees to prepare and sign off on the accuracy of their own timesheets.

Recommendation
Require all supervisors to approve subordinate timesheets only after verifying that the time worked is accurately recorded.

5.2 Idle Time and Late Departures at the Start of the Day

A review of GPS data for Mr. Brian LaVoie's assigned take-home work vehicle identified 3.51491 total hours of vehicle "start" events occurring at his residence, where the vehicle remained stationary and idling at the start of the workday, from January 1, 2025, through November 17, 2025. This total represents the cumulative duration of these idle periods over the review period.

The GPS data further indicates twelve (12) instances in which the vehicle started at Mr. LaVoie's residence and idled there for more than a brief period before departing. The longest recorded idle period occurred on February 9, 2025, and lasted 59 minutes. While limited idling can occur for legitimate reasons (warming a vehicle, loading items, or coordinating work), repeated, extended idling at the residence at the start of the workday is inconsistent with typical expectations for a scheduled start time and creates avoidable ambiguity about whether the workday was underway.

This issue is compounded when recorded timesheets show a fixed start time (e.g., 6:00 a.m. or 6:30 a.m.) without supporting documentation for delayed departures from the residence. Without consistent documentation, the Town cannot reasonably distinguish permissible work-related activity from unproductive paid time, creating a timekeeping control weakness and an avoidable accountability concern for a supervisory position.

Recommendation
Require supervisory personnel with take-home vehicles to document same-day exceptions when work vehicle movement does not begin near the scheduled start time (including extended residential idling).

Recommendation
Direct the Public Works Director to periodically review GPS start-of-day activity against timesheet certifications to confirm compliance.

5.3 Paid Breaks and Mid-Day Home Presence

The Town of Mansfield provides "working lunches" to Public Works employees, with the expectation that this time is spent continuing work while eating (for example, at a desk or while briefly stopping in the field). Under this expectation, employees are not to use paid time to drive to a restaurant and take an extended sit-down meal. Town of Mansfield "Policy on Meal and Coffee Breaks", dated March 1, 2017, states that a working lunch is allowed for public works employees and "lunch breaks will be taken at the job site and considered to be a working lunch…".

GPS data from Mr. Brian LaVoie's assigned work vehicle shows repeated stops at or near locations that appear to be food establishments. Because GPS data records only location and duration (not the purpose of the stop), it does not independently confirm whether each stop was work-related (for example, meeting a contractor, speaking with a resident, or taking a brief working call) or a meal break inconsistent with the Town's "working lunch" expectation. However, the duration and frequency of certain stops indicate a pattern of extended stationary time at food-related locations, warranting review for compliance with timekeeping and break expectations.

- Two (2) stops at a parking lot near "That Breakfast Place", totaling 108.25 minutes, or averaging 54.1 minutes per stop.
- Five (5) stops in the parking lot at "That Breakfast Place", totaling 161.22 minutes, or averaging 32.2 minutes per stop.

- Thirty-two (32) stops at the Blaze Pizza/Dunkin Donuts shopping center, totaling 427.03 minutes, or averaging 13.34 minutes per stop.

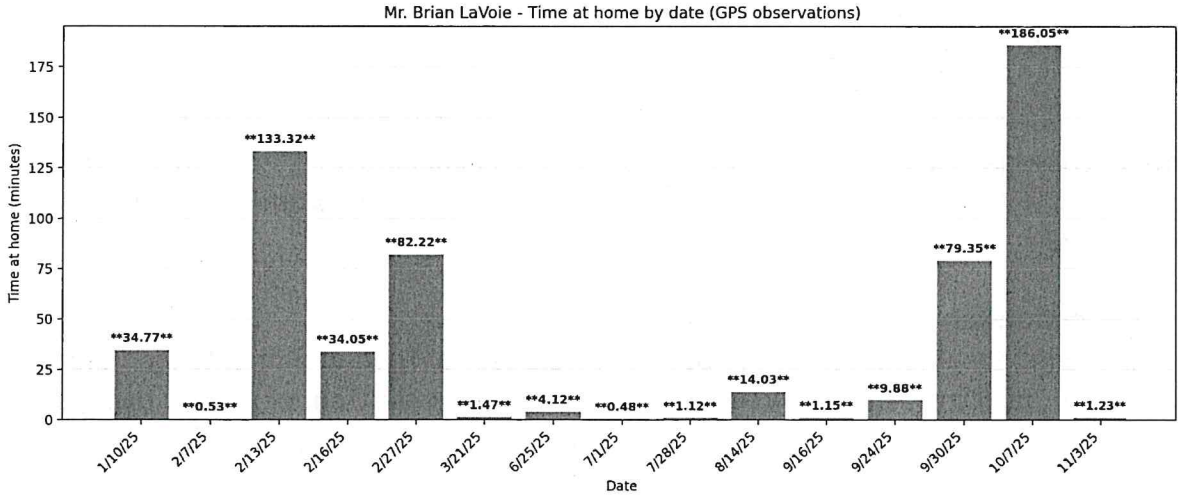
- One (1) stop at "Toast, Four Corners" restaurant for 91.7 minutes.

During his interview, Mr. LaVoie acknowledged that he stopped for food while working. The GPS data and interview statement, taken together, indicate a need for clearer expectations and documentation to distinguish permissible "working lunch" activity from paid time used for extended meal breaks.

A review of times his vehicle GPS showed him at his house, during the workday (not staying home a few minutes in the morning or coming home a few minutes early, but generally midday stops), identified fifteen (15) times in the lookback period in which he spent a total of 9.729 hours at home, or 583.766 minutes. The following chart shows the dates and times for his "midday" time when his vehicle was at his house.

During his interview, Mr. LaVoie stated that he did not have permission to work from home. Further, Information Technology verified Mr. LaVoie did not utilize remote access to work remotely.

Figure 13: Time at Home During the Workday, By Date



Recommendation

Clarify and enforce "working lunch" expectations in writing for all Public Works employees, including defined limits for off-site meal stops during paid time, and require supervisory-level personnel to document the business purpose for extended stops at food establishments during work hours.

Recommendation
Supervisors should conduct periodic spot reviews of GPS/time records to confirm compliance.

5.4 Unusual Stop Locations

A review of GPS stop locations identified the following repeated stop patterns at non-Town facilities. These locations may have legitimate work-related purposes (for example, meetings with residents, employee-related matters, vendor or contractor coordination, or other administrative needs). However, the GPS data alone does not identify the business purpose of each stop, and there is no accompanying work documentation that explains why these locations were visited, what work was performed, or what outcome was achieved. When Mr. John Carrington was asked why Mr. LaVoie would be stopping at these locations for work, Mr. Carrington stated that he did not know why Mr. LaVoie would have been stopping there as often as he did.

The following stops were identified as "unusual" based on the location type and frequency:

- Oak Grove Montessori School, nine (9) stops totaling 108.25 minutes, or 23.08 minutes averaged per stop.
- Natchaug Hospital, twenty-nine (29) stops totaling 329.67 minutes, or 11.4 minutes averaged per stop.

Without additional context from Mr. LaVoie (and without supporting records such as emails, call logs, calendar invites, work orders, or documented assignments tied to these stops), it is not possible to determine whether these visits were work-related, incidental, or personal.

Recommendation
Require brief documentation of the business purpose for repeated or extended stops at non-Town facilities during work hours, with periodic supervisory review for reasonableness and consistency with assigned duties.

5.5 Excessive Non-Work Activity at Town Hall and with the PW Foreman

GPS data reflects a high volume of recorded stops at Town Hall and the Public Works garage:

- Town Hall: 268 stops totaling 13,334.98 minutes, averaging 49.75 minutes per stop.

- Public Works garage: 707 stops totaling 13,225.93 minutes, averaging 49.91 minutes per stop.

Both locations serve legitimate work-related purposes. Town Hall can reasonably host meetings with the Public Works Director, administrative coordination, HR/finance interactions, and other Town operational needs. The Public Works garage is a standard operational hub for assignments, staging, supervision, equipment coordination, and crew activity. Standing alone, the presence of stops at these locations is not inherently unusual.

The concern is the combination of (a) the volume of stops and (b) the average duration per stop, which together indicate frequent extended stationary periods that are not independently verifiable as productive work time without supporting records. Town management also reported receiving multiple concerns that Mr. LaVoie would enter Town Hall offices and remain for extended, non-work-related conversations. While brief, informal interactions are normal in any workplace, repeated, extended, non-work conversations during the workday create avoidable productivity loss, undermine public confidence, and contribute to perceptions of weak management accountability.

In addition, interviews and anonymous survey feedback repeatedly described Mr. LaVoie spending substantial work time with the Public Works Foreman, including extended periods driving together in Mr. LaVoie's assigned Town vehicle. When asked, Mr. LaVoie did not dispute that he and the Foreman spent significant time together and stated that this was necessary to discuss issues and assignments. There are legitimate reasons for a manager and a foreman to be together in the field (site inspections, urgent problem-solving, contractor coordination, training, and prioritization). However, when this occurs frequently and for extended durations, it creates two operational risks: (1) opportunity cost, as two supervisory resources are consumed by the same activity rather than supervising independently, and (2) the appearance of inefficient use of time, particularly when the activity is not supported by clear documentation of purpose, locations reviewed, decisions made, or work outcomes achieved.

This issue is best addressed through clearer expectations and documentation rather than assumptions about intent. If meetings at Town Hall are needed to coordinate with the Director, they should be planned, time-bound, and tied to defined work outputs. If ride-alongs with the Foreman are needed, they should be targeted to specific operational purposes (for example, scheduled field reviews, complex issues requiring joint decisions, or periodic structured check-ins), rather than becoming a routine default that reduces supervisory coverage across the department.

Recommendation

Establish clear expectations and documentation requirements for Town Hall visits and

recurring ride-alongs (including purpose, approximate duration, and work outcomes), and implement periodic supervisory review to confirm that the time is reasonable, necessary, and aligned with assigned duties.

5.6 Tree Services Contract and Invoice Irregularities

Purpose and scope of review

During the investigation, concerns were raised about the reported personal/professional relationship between Operations Manager Brian LaVoie and the current tree vendor's owner (including prior overlap in another municipality). Based on those concerns, the review focused on (1) bid award documentation, (2) vendor pricing commitments reflected in bid materials, (3) invoice sufficiency to support payment, (4) invoice-to-pricing reasonableness based on available pricing schedules, and (5) year-over-year spending trends.

Bid history and award documentation

The Town's 2019 bid tabulation shows that Arborist Tree Care was not the low bidder, yet the firm was awarded the contract. In the bid materials provided for review, no written justification was found for awarding the contract to a bidder other than the low bidder. When interviewed, Mr. LaVoie said he didn't know how the bid was awarded and that the PW Director was the one who decided who received the bids. Mr. LaVoie admitted during his interview that he worked with Rocco (the owner of Arborist Tree Care) at the Town of West Hartford and has known him for years.

When interviewed, the PW Director said that in 2019, he was the interim town manager and had nothing to do with the award to Arborist Tree Care, stating that Derek Dilaj was acting Public Works Director and was responsible for that action. Per Town policy, only the Town Manager or Finance Director would have the authority to make such a decision.

The 2022 solicitation/bid materials indicate Arborist Tree Care as the low bidder and include pricing terms that the Town used as the basis for the vendor's on-call pricing, including a 2% annual escalation. The 2022 bid documents indicate that the bid was awarded based on a "daily crew rate" that varies by bucket truck size and crew size (1-, 2-, or 3-person). There is also an emergency hourly rate of $245 per hour for a 2-person crew and a 50-foot bucket truck, plus a 2% annual price escalator for 2 years beyond the first full year of the agreement. The 3-person crew rate with a 50-foot bucket truck is $1,870 per day. For a 2-person crew and a 50-foot bucket truck, the rate is $1,440 per day. A 1-person crew and a 50-foot bucket truck is $940 per day. A 2-person crew and a 75-foot or greater bucket truck is $1,465 per day. These are the initial 2022 rates.

Invoice documentation sufficiency

A central issue identified in every invoice from 2025 is the limited substantiation of work performed relative to the amounts billed. Across invoices, the description of work is frequently limited to language such as "Tree Work as Proposed," sometimes accompanied by the dates worked, but without documentation that would allow an independent reviewer to confirm what was done or whether the billed amount is reasonable and contract-consistent.

Common documentation gaps in invoices include the absence of itemized scope details, such as specific locations, the number of trees addressed, whether trees were trimmed or removed, or the basis for size or complexity charges. In addition, invoices generally do not include supporting materials, such as job summaries tied to work orders, photographic documentation, or other objective evidence linking billed amounts to verifiable work completed.

These documentation gaps materially limit the Town's ability to confirm that charges were allowable under the approved pricing structure and that invoices were accurate, complete, and reasonable prior to approval and payment.

Pricing reasonableness and billed-versus-expected variances

Using the pricing reflected in the 2022 bid materials and the Town's invoice variance analysis spreadsheet, differences were identified between the invoiced totals and the expected amounts based on the applicable escalated rates and the work descriptions shown on the invoices. The Town's analysis spreadsheet documents invoice-level variances and includes notes explaining why certain charges could not be reconciled to the bid-based pricing structure. Based on the Town's analysis, the total identified apparent direct overbilling was $7,394.00, and the total questioned billing was $22,286.00, including items for which insufficient supporting documentation was provided.

Examples of invoice concerns identified in the Town's analysis include the following:

- A January 21, 2025, invoice included a loader charge, even though the bid documents did not provide for such additional fees, and there was no documentation indicating a separate, pre-approved loader fee. This invoice also incorrectly calculated approved rates based on documented days worked. The analysis calculated an overbilling amount of $3,664.87 based on the bid pricing structure.

- A March 7, 2025, invoice shows the Town was billed for six (6) days, while the invoice listed only five (5) days worked.

- An April 22, 2025, invoice shows multiple billing concerns identified in the analysis, including possible overbilling of $14,890.52, billing assumptions inconsistent with the bid pricing structure, and charges for "supplies" without receipts or documentation sufficient to substantiate what was purchased, in what quantity, and at what cost (including whether supplies were marked up and if so, at what justification).

- A comparison of two invoices reflecting the same stated duration and crew size shows inconsistent billing. A July 29, 2025, invoice reflects five (5) days of work for a three-person crew billed at $11,358.30, while a September 27, 2025, invoice for five (5) days and a three-person crew reflects $10,780.83. Using the bid-based daily rate assumption applied in the analysis, the expected total for each invoice would have been $9,724.00. The analysis calculated overbilling of $1,634.30 for the July invoice and $1,056.83 for the September invoice.

Collectively, these invoice-level examples demonstrate that invoices were approved for payment despite (1) limited descriptive support for the work performed, (2) charges that did not align with bid-based pricing assumptions, and (3) apparent calculation or billing inconsistencies that were detectable through basic review. This pattern reflects internal control vulnerabilities in invoice review practices and management oversight.

Figure 14: Tree Invoicing Discrepancies

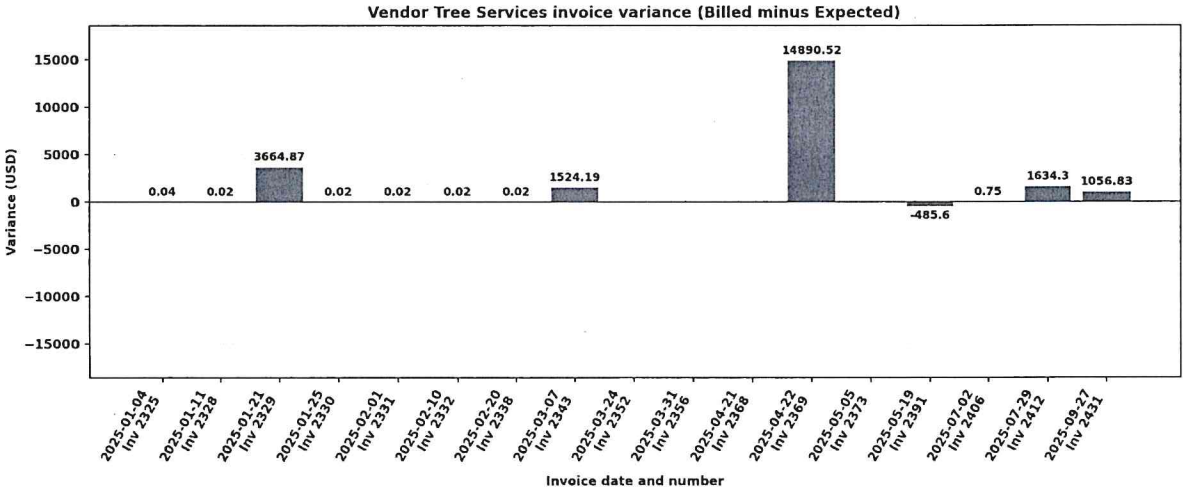
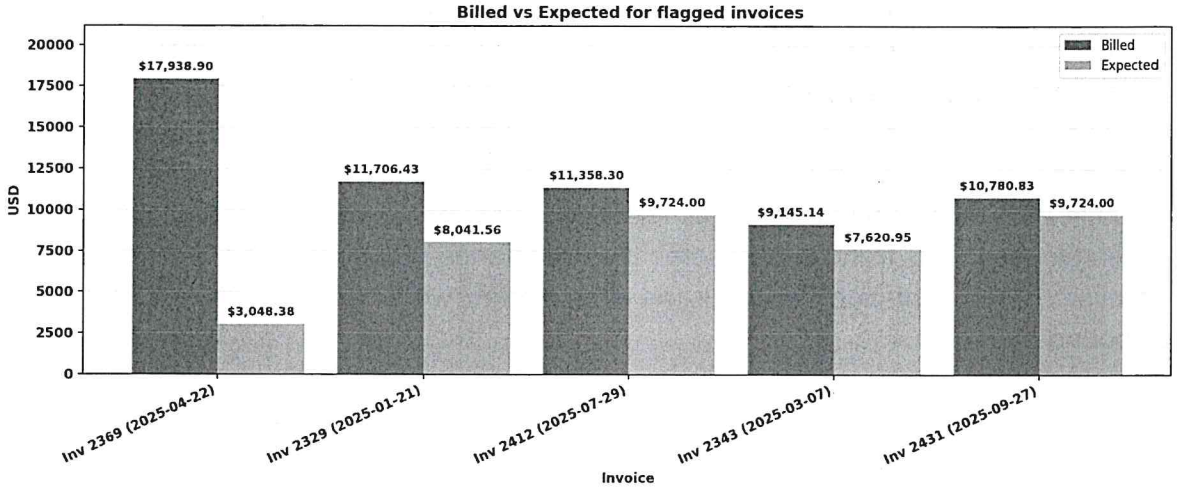


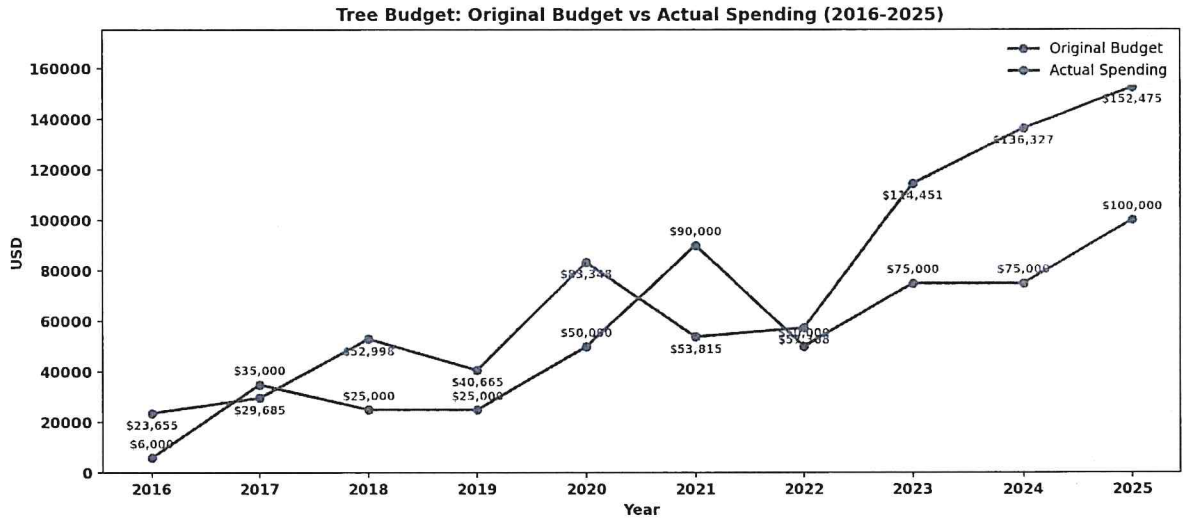
Figure 15: Tree Invoicing Variance (Over $500) Only



Spending trends and budget variance observations

The Town's tree budget and actual spending data for 2016–2025 show sustained variance between budget and actual spending, with higher actual expenditures in more recent years. Reported actual spending includes $40,665 in 2019, $83,348 in 2020, $114,451 in 2023, $136,327 in 2024, and $152,475 in 2025. These amounts were significantly higher than the budgeted and spent amounts from prior years, including $6,000 in 2016 and $25,000 in 2019. The Town also maintains its own tree crew of full-time employees. This trend underscores the importance of robust contract administration and invoice documentation standards, as even modest weaknesses in invoice control can compound over time.

Figure 16: Tree Vendor Spending (Budget vs. Actual) by Year



Conflict-of-interest risk and control implications

Where a vendor relationship is perceived by employees or stakeholders to involve a close association with a key operational decision-maker, the Town's control burden increases. Even if procurement and award decisions were made through formal processes, the appearance of favoritism can undermine confidence in the integrity of the bidding and invoice-approval processes, particularly when the file lacks written justification for a non-low award and when invoices lack sufficient detail to support payment decisions. From a management control standpoint, the core issue is not limited to vendor selection. The broader control concern is whether Public Works Department management maintained documentation standards and review rigor sufficient to demonstrate that vendor payments were (1) contract-consistent, (2) adequately supported, and (3) reviewed and approved with appropriate scrutiny given the heightened sensitivity around

perceived conflicts. While many management staff proactively sought consultation and submitted proactive disclosure conflict of interest statements to the Ethics Board, Mr. LaVoie did not do this.

Recommendation
Require all tree-services invoices to include the minimum documentation standards prior to approval and payment, including work location(s), scope by site, number of trees addressed, photographic evidence of work performed, whether trimming or removal was performed, and an itemized labor/equipment basis or a unit-pricing tie-out to the applicable bid pricing and escalation schedule.

Recommendation
For any non-unit-priced or flat-rate tree projects, require written pre-authorization that documents the agreed scope, agreed price, and the approving authority before work begins, and require post-completion documentation sufficient to confirm the work was performed as authorized.

Recommendation
Strengthen procurement file controls by ensuring bid tabulations, award documentation, and any non-low-bid selection rationale are retained in the official contract file and available for audit review.

Recommendation
Implement conflict-of-interest safeguards for vendor relationships involving perceived or reported personal connections to department leadership, including written disclosure, documentation of recusals where appropriate, and independent review of that vendor's invoice approvals. Require all employees with any level of purchasing authority to complete this form annually.

5.7 Purchasing Irregularities

Based on the analysis in section 4.4, the Public Works Department Operations Manager and Director engaged in a pattern of improper purchasing decisions and failed to follow proper internal controls for purchasing.

Recommendation
With a pattern of improper purchasing activity, the Town Finance Director should implement periodic sampling of Public Works Department purchases to review all activity to ensure proper procedures were followed.

Recommendation

The Public Works Director should attend remedial purchasing training to ensure he understands proper policy and procedures and the important role his position plays in effective purchasing-related internal controls.

5.8 Millings and Material Disposition

During employee interviews, multiple current and/or former employees raised concerns that roadway millings generated through Town work were made available to one or more Public Works vendors at no charge, and that the Town could have used those millings for its own operational needs. Employees stated they did not know whether the millings were given away or sold for personal profit, but emphasized that the department wanted millings for Town work and that the material was no longer available when needed.

During interviews, the Public Works Director stated that allowing vendors to take millings is a common practice and that the material was not provided for a fee. The Operations Manager also stated that this occurred and that it was not done for personal reasons. Town management received third-hand information from employees at a nearby local government that Mr. LaVoie had his personal driveway paved by a company that allegedly received these millings (the millings were given away for free per the Town of Mansfield Operations Manager and Public Works Director, and the third-hand information about Mr. LaVoie receiving a paved driveway also included a statement that he received it free of charge from this vendor).

Even if the practice was intended to avoid hauling costs or for other operational convenience, the underlying concern remains that the Town did not maintain clear documentation showing what materials were generated, what quantity was retained for Town use, what quantity (if any) was released to third parties, and who approved the disposition. Without that documentation, the Town cannot reasonably demonstrate that the disposition of millings was consistent with Town interests, that the material was not diverted from Town needs, or that the practice was consistently applied and appropriately controlled.

A further concern is that Town management heard "talk" from a neighboring DPW. Apparently, Mr. LaVoie worked there before, and he recently got his personal driveway paved by one of the companies that allegedly received "free millings" from the Town of Mansfield. During the investigation, Mr. LaVoie told the Mansfield Town Manager (unsolicited) that he had paid for his own driveway to be done, which seemed unusual at the time, but now raises further suspicion of a conflict of interest, or worse. As Mr. LaVoie resigned during this investigation and chose not to participate in any further interviews,

the matter would now be a law enforcement matter if any further investigation were warranted.

Recommendation
Do not sell or give away Town assets, regardless of perceived value or cost, except through a process as established by written policy.

5.9 Workplace Culture and Confidentiality Violations

Survey responses, along with one-on-one interviews from current and former employees, reflect a workplace culture that is experienced unevenly across the department. While multiple respondents described great pride in workmanship, positive peer-to-peer relationships, and professional interactions with residents, a substantial share expressed concern that the internal culture is negatively affected by leadership tone, inconsistent accountability, and a lack of consistent communication. Several respondents described a climate in which employees feel they must "watch what they say," for fear of reprisal, navigate concerns about favoritism, or rely heavily on the chain of command, practices that discourage open problem-solving. In addition, multiple respondents indicated that morale and trust have been harmed by conflicts that are not addressed promptly and directly, resulting in ongoing frustration and division within and across workgroups.

A recurring theme in both interviews and anonymous survey responses is that employees distinguish between the quality of operational work and the internal culture in which that work occurs. Even respondents who said the department "gets the work done" described the environment as strained at times by perceived inconsistencies in how issues are handled, perceived retaliation or fear of negative consequences for raising concerns, and leadership practices viewed as reactive rather than steady and transparent.

Employees reported that Mr. LaVoie either directly stated or was described by others as having stated inappropriate and confidential information about employees' private medical matters and/or other sensitive personnel issues. To protect employee confidentiality, the specific statements and the individuals referenced are not repeated in this report. However, the concern is significant because it was reported by multiple employees and corroborated by multiple sources. [redacted] brought these concerns to John Carrington multiple times, counseled him, and requested Mr. Carrington address it with Mr. LaVoie. Mr. Aylesworth also addressed this with Mr. LaVoie, yet they continued to engage in this behavior.

Regardless of intent, the perceived disclosure of sensitive information undermines trust in management, discourages employees from reporting issues or seeking assistance when needed, and creates heightened legal, reputational, and employee-relations risk for

the Town of Mansfield. Further, Mr. LaVoie is reported to have made sexist comments to another employee at work (not mentioned specifically here to protect that employee), however, our investigators reviewed the alleged comments and agree that if said, it was highly inappropriate for a work setting. As Mr. LaVoie resigned, we decided not to pursue this matter further (at this time).

Recommendation
Implement and enforce (or reinforce) a formal standard for a respectful, confidential workplace for all supervisors and managers, including documented training, clear reporting pathways, prompt investigation of alleged violations, and consistent corrective action upon substantiation.

5.10 Employee Turnover

In conjunction with section 5.9 on workplace culture, numerous factors can cause employee turnover; poor morale is certainly one of them. When management seeks to promote an ethical workplace culture and ensure fair treatment for all employees, this contributes to a positive workplace culture. One concern noted during interviews with the PW director is a repeated statement about expecting that about half of the department will like him and Brian, while the other half will not. This view is concerning because it goes to an "us vs. them" attitude. As more fully described in the survey chapter of this report, employees view leadership within the PW department as failing to promote an ethical culture, failing to treat employees fairly, and contributing to poor morale. This view is reinforced by approval ratings for PW management staff, which were poor overall and very poor for Mr. LaVoie.

The department has 29 current employees, with eight (8) employees leaving employment within the prior 12 months (before the investigation began). This represents a one-year turnover rate of 27.59% within the department. According to both ICMA and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual turnover rate for public-sector maintenance and equipment workers (including public works) is 8-15%. According to the ICMA's *Local Government Workforce Initiative (2023)*, turnover rates exceeding 25% are considered red flags, indicating structural or operational challenges (e.g., weak supervision, unsafe conditions, pay disparities). Another long-time employee left while the investigation was pending and is not part of the 27.59% turnover rate calculation. Many of the Department staff members cited the Public Works Operations Manager's and/or the Public Works Director's poor leadership as a contributing factor in their departure.

It costs significant money to hire, train, and retain good employees. According to town management, several employees have resigned due to poor morale or mistreatment in the Public Works Department. When questioned about employee turnover rates, the PW

director appeared to dismiss the issue, stating that several employees have left employment elsewhere within the Town government as well.

In summary, employee turnover rates exceeding 25% annually in a Public Works Department may indicate one or more systemic issues within the department or the organization.

Recommendation
Ensure that all employees leaving Town employment are offered an exit interview that includes questions about whether they suspect wrongdoing within the organization and whether they perceive any cultural or ethical issues within their department.

5.11 Supervisory and Oversight Deficiencies

Based on the investigation's findings, multiple conditions were identified that reflect deficiencies in supervisory oversight and internal control within the Public Works Department. These deficiencies are not limited to a single activity area; they extend to timekeeping accountability, management review practices, and documentation standards supporting expenditures and operational decisions.

The following oversight conditions are supported by the investigative work completed and are reflected in the detailed sections above:

Supervisory review of timekeeping was not effective. The investigation identified recurring discrepancies between recorded time and observable work-vehicle activity for a Public Works Department Operations Manager. This employee acknowledged that timesheet documentation was not handled properly and that an administrative employee completed his timesheets, which he then signed. These conditions reflect a breakdown in basic supervisory expectations: employees accurately record time worked, and supervisors validate time records prior to approval. The fact that the Public Works Department Director approved these timesheets week after week without verifying their accuracy is concerning, especially since Mr. Carrington was at the DPW garage most mornings when Mr. LaVoie claimed to be at work but was not present.

Management review practices were not consistently documented. Across multiple areas reviewed, the available documentation did not establish a consistent standard for what must be verified, what must be retained, and what constitutes adequate support before approval. When reviews are informal, undocumented, or performed after the fact, the Town's ability to demonstrate proper stewardship and accountability is reduced. Vendor invoice support was inadequate to support approval decisions. The tree services review identified repeated invoicing practices that lacked sufficient detail to independently

substantiate the nature, location, and basis of the billed work. Approving invoices without sufficient supporting detail and without documented reconciliation increases the risk of improper payment and limits the defensibility of the expenditure.

Based on the nature of the deficiencies observed, accountability is shared across roles: Day-to-day supervision and timekeeping integrity are managerial responsibilities within Public Works. Where the Operations Manager is responsible for daily operations, time reporting, and staff expectations, that position carries direct responsibility for ensuring accurate timekeeping and proper documentation before certification. Department-wide enforcement, supervisory expectations, and control culture are leadership responsibilities. Where the Public Works Director is responsible for departmental oversight and enforcement of standards, that role entails ensuring consistent supervisory practices, including verification expectations and corrective action when deficiencies are identified.

Where other supervisors approve, forward, or rely on incomplete support, those individuals also contribute to the breakdown of control to the extent of their role in the workflow.

Recommendation
Establish and enforce a written supervisory review standard requiring documented verification of time records and vendor invoices prior to approval, including minimum documentation requirements, reviewer responsibilities by position, and a defined corrective-action process when deficiencies are identified.

5.12 Vehicle Fuel Use

Due to perceived inappropriate time usage, we also analyzed fuel use (dates, times, amounts) for all three PW department supervisors for the entire lookback period. Nothing unusual was identified. Of note, security camera footage of the fueling location was not available had we wanted to review it. Effective preventive and detective internal controls for fuel use management include ensuring that high-resolution security cameras capture identifying information about every vehicle receiving fuel, and that each driver is clearly visible on camera. Security camera footage should be maintained for at least 120 days (cycle days), if possible, to support quarterly fuel use verification reviews.

5.13 Summary

The collective evidence demonstrates a breakdown in internal controls and supervisory accountability within the Public Works Department. The most significant concerns center on falsified time reporting, noncompliant purchasing practices, inadequate documentation

of vendor payments, poor workplace morale, and the erosion of workplace integrity. The failures are managerial in nature and primarily within the span of control of the Operations Manager and the Public Works Director. Formal corrective actions should address both individual accountability and the design of systemic controls to restore operational integrity.

CHAPTER 17: CONCLUSION

Town leadership requested a thorough, independent review of Public Works operations to determine whether internal misconduct occurred and whether any matters warranted referral for potential criminal wrongdoing. Based on interviews, document review, and analyses completed during this investigation, we identified multiple areas of internal wrongdoing and control breakdowns that require corrective action. This report presents those findings and provides recommendations intended to strengthen accountability, restore trust, and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

During the investigation (after his first interview but before his scheduled second interview), the Operations Manager resigned. After completing all remaining interviews and analyses, we advised the Town Manager that the Public Works Director could return to regular duties and resume full oversight of the department. At the same time, the investigation identified clear "failure to supervise" concerns that must be addressed to ensure effective leadership and consistent enforcement of expectations.

A department head or director may have demonstrated strong performance in other organizations or prior roles, but can still need significant improvement in the Town of Mansfield's specific operational environment and expectations. For that reason, we recommend that the Town establish an expectation-setting process for the Public Works Director. This should include clear supervisory and control-accountability expectations, measurable performance objectives, defined timelines, and routine check-ins with the Town Manager to verify sustained improvement. This process can be written or verbal, so long as it occurs.

Finally, we believe the Town has an opportunity to move forward constructively. In our professional judgment, referral for criminal prosecution is not recommended, given the facts developed in this investigation, particularly because the primary contributor to the issues that precipitated the investigation resigned during the process, and from a criminal prosecution standpoint, proving something beyond a reasonable doubt is much greater than by a preponderance of the evidence. The Town's focus should now be on implementing the corrective actions outlined in this report, reinforcing consistent leadership practices, and re-establishing a stable and accountable workplace culture.