



Strategic Management Program Plan

Step 4
Management Audit

Final Report - July 2025



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**Department of Community
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Step 4

Management Review

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Management Review Audit

This management audit and operational assessment of Reynoldsville Borough was conducted as part of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP). The STMP provides a structured pathway for local governments to evaluate internal operations, identify

Step 4 of the DCED STMP process provides a structured framework for evaluating each Borough department through staff interviews and operational analysis to identify opportunities for reform and strengthen long-term fiscal and administrative sustainability.

opportunities for reform, and implement best practices to strengthen fiscal and administrative sustainability. The program's Step 4: Management Audit requires a detailed, department-by-department evaluation of municipal functions, including interviews with leadership and key personnel, an analysis of organizational structure and service delivery, and a thorough assessment of operational strengths, weaknesses, and challenges.

Over the course of this assessment, each primary department and functional area of Reynoldsville's government was reviewed. Borough Council members, department leaders, and administrative staff participated in structured interviews to provide insight into both day-to-day operations and long-term institutional needs. Where applicable, outside agencies and regional service providers were also consulted to provide context and supplement internal observations.

This report is structured to reflect both the functional organization of the Borough and the broader systems that affect its governance - such as financial management, human resources, economic development, and intergovernmental coordination. Each section includes:

- ☐ A narrative summary of duties and responsibilities.
- ☐ A summary of staffing levels.
- ☐ A discussion of key observations.
- ☐ A candid appraisal of existing strengths and operational pain points,
- ☐ And specific recommendations based on local needs and widely accepted best practices.

To guide the reader through areas requiring immediate attention, the report uses color-coded callouts:



Orange → Indicates issues of critical concern, structural risk, or urgent need for corrective action.



Green → Identifies notable strengths, operational innovations, or practices that merit recognition and reinforcement.

This assessment is intended not only to inform Borough leadership, but also to serve as a practical roadmap for implementing meaningful, achievable reforms. The Borough's participation in STMP reflects a forward-looking commitment to responsible stewardship, improved service delivery, and long-term organizational stability. By embracing the insights and recommendations presented here, Reynoldsville is positioned to build a more resilient and responsive government capable of meeting the needs of its residents well into the future.

General Government Overview

Reynoldsville Borough's current condition reflects the broader challenges facing many small municipalities across Pennsylvania - declining populations, aging infrastructure, and limited administrative capacity. This assessment provides a comprehensive review of the Borough's general governance structure, with particular focus on how closely it aligns with the Pennsylvania Borough Code and current best practices in municipal management. Areas examined include the legal framework provided by the PA Borough Code and the potential benefits of Home Rule Charter adoption, the statutory and functional role of the Borough Secretary, and the overall organizational culture and leadership dynamics.

The review also includes an evaluation of the Borough's boards and authorities, internal information technology systems, vehicle fleet, and public facilities. Each area is compared against established standards and best practices, culminating in a set of practical recommendations for how Reynoldsville can modernize operations, improve accountability, and strengthen long-term sustainability.

Currently, Reynoldsville provides only the most basic municipal services, reflecting its limited administrative capacity and chronic underinvestment in local government. The Borough lacks formal planning, community and economic development initiatives, and does not operate any structured parks or recreation programming outside of the community pool. Municipal functions are carried out with minimal staffing and resources, and many essential administrative duties remain incomplete or delayed. The result is a local government that struggles to meet day-to-day operational needs and lacks the capacity to plan for long-term sustainability or community revitalization.

Reynoldsville delivers only the most basic municipal services, with minimal staffing and chronic underinvestment leaving the Borough unable to meet daily operational needs or plan for long-term sustainability.

Core municipal services currently provided by Reynoldsville include -

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- Basic street maintenance and snow removal through the Public Works Department.
- Limited local police coverage through a small Borough police department.
- Seasonal operation of the community pool, overseen by the volunteer-based Pool Board.
- Code enforcement services, though staffing and technology are inadequate.
- General administrative functions such as basic recordkeeping, though not at the level expected for compliance or effective governance.

While these services are essential, they are narrowly focused and delivered without the infrastructure, staffing, or systems necessary for a resilient and responsive local government.

Pennsylvania Borough Code

The Borough of Reynoldsville operates under the Pennsylvania Borough Code, which establishes the legal framework for borough governance across the Commonwealth. This structure is designed to ensure local decision-making, accountability, and compliance with state law. As such, Reynoldsville is governed by an elected Borough Council, which serves as the legislative and policy-making body, and is supported by an appointed Borough Secretary who manages the administrative operations of the Borough. This division of responsibilities promotes both democratic representation and professional management.

Reynoldsville operates under the Pennsylvania Borough Code, with an elected Council making policy decisions and an appointed Borough Secretary handling daily administration - balancing local representation with professional management.

The Pennsylvania Borough Code outlines the general powers and responsibilities of Borough Council, which typically include:

- Adopting the annual budget and setting the local tax rate
- Enacting ordinances and resolutions
- Overseeing public services such as police, fire, code enforcement, and public works
- Approving contracts, expenditures, and financial reports
- Managing Borough-owned property, infrastructure, and facilities
- Appointing key personnel, including the Borough Secretary and solicitor
- Representing the interests of residents and promoting community development
- Holding public meetings and ensuring government transparency

The Borough Secretary is appointed by Council and serves as the chief administrative officer in many small boroughs. While specific duties can vary by community, the Secretary typically handles:

- Preparing meeting agendas and official records
- Recording and maintaining minutes of Council meetings
- Managing municipal records in compliance with state retention laws
- Coordinating correspondence, public notices, and communications
- Supporting the implementation of Council policies and directives
- Assisting with budget preparation, grant administration, and day-to-day operations

While the Borough Secretary is responsible for ensuring smooth and lawful administration, all major policy, financial, and governance decisions rest with the elected Council. This structure ensures that operations are conducted efficiently while maintaining public accountability and oversight.

Home Rule Charters

Home Rule Charters offer Pennsylvania municipalities an opportunity to take greater control over their local governance by moving beyond the constraints of the state's standardized municipal codes. Authorized by the Pennsylvania Constitution and governed by the Home Rule and Optional Plans Law, these charters empower municipalities to craft a governance structure that reflects the specific needs and values of their community, while still remaining subject to overarching state and federal law.

A Home Rule Charter allows Pennsylvania municipalities to replace state-mandated codes like the Borough Code with a locally tailored framework that gives them greater control over how their government is structured and operates.

Under a Home Rule Charter, a municipality essentially replaces the statutory code that applies to its class - such as the Borough Code - with a locally developed legal framework. This framework can reshape how elected officials are chosen, how government powers are exercised, and what administrative structures are put in place.

In practice, a Home Rule Charter often addresses:

- The composition of the governing body, such as number of council members, use of wards or at-large elections, term lengths, and whether to retain a mayor.
- Executive structure (ex. elected mayor, appointed manager, or hybrid models).

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- Budget and fiscal rules, including limits on taxation and competitive bidding.
- Citizen access to government processes beyond the Sunshine Act, such as initiative and referendum powers.
- Adoption of an administrative code and supporting policies to provide operational clarity.

Adoption Process

The journey toward Home Rule begins with a question placed on the ballot, asking voters whether a government study commission should be formed. At the same election, voters elect the members of the study commission. If approved, the commission is tasked with thoroughly evaluating the current structure of local government and determining whether drafting a Home Rule Charter is advisable.

If the commission decides to move forward, it must develop the charter through a detailed, scheduled process. Rushing is discouraged - completeness, legal soundness, and thoughtful public engagement are key. Once a draft is completed, the proposed charter is presented to voters through a referendum. Voter approval is required for the charter to take effect. To guide the commission through this complex legal process, it is critical to engage both a solicitor with municipal legal experience and a consultant well-versed in Pennsylvania's Home Rule Law.

Figure 1 - Home Rule Charter Adoption Process Overview



According to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), a Home Rule Charter typically includes the following foundational elements:

1. **General Grant of Powers** – Clearly defines the municipality's legal authority.
2. **Form of Government** – Specifies elected and appointed officials, distribution of powers, and structural organization.
3. **Legislative and Administrative Procedures** – Establishes how laws are enacted and decisions made, including due process safeguards.
4. **Citizen Participation** – May include provisions for initiative, referendum, and other public input tools.

5. **Administrative Best Practices** – Can mandate budgeting, auditing, or personnel systems.
6. **General Provisions** – Includes definitions, transition plans, and amendment procedures.
7. **Transitional Provisions** – Provides a roadmap for implementing the new structure.

Advantages and Drawbacks

Like any significant change in local governance, adopting a Home Rule Charter comes with both potential benefits and challenges that communities should carefully weigh before moving forward.



Flexibility in Taxation - Municipalities can adjust earned income tax (EIT) limits to better match revenue needs and potentially reduce reliance on property taxes.

Custom Governance Structures - Councils can be downsized, and executive authority can be restructured to better reflect current demographics or leadership availability.

Improved Efficiency - Administrative codes and clear procedures can lead to more responsive and transparent governance.

Citizen Engagement - Charters can expand opportunities for public input beyond those guaranteed by state law.



Tax Burden Shifts - Increases in EIT may place a larger share of the tax burden on working residents.

Political Concerns - Changes in council size or elimination of roles (like mayor) may be perceived as power consolidations.

Complexity - An overly detailed or rigid charter can hamper government flexibility and be difficult to amend.

Initiative Misuse - Citizen referendum powers may be used by special interest groups in ways that do not benefit the broader community.

Home Rule in Reynoldsville

Reynoldsville has not adopted a Home Rule Charter. The Borough, like many small Pennsylvania communities, is facing long-term structural challenges. Since 1940, the Borough's population has declined by more than 1,000 residents, falling to just 2,549 as of the 2020 Census. This steady decline - coupled with an aging population, blighted properties, and limited private investment - has weakened the local tax base and placed a growing burden on fewer residents to fund essential services.

As costs rise and revenues fall, the community's ability to invest in infrastructure, public safety, and quality of life continues to erode. Under the constraints of the Pennsylvania Borough Code, Reynoldsville has limited flexibility to respond to these challenges in meaningful ways. A Home Rule Charter offers a potential solution.

By adopting Home Rule, Reynoldsville could restructure its local government to better reflect current realities - streamlining operations, strengthening financial tools, and enabling more sustainable revenue options. Home Rule would also give the community greater control over its future, allowing residents to shape a government that is both responsive and resilient. For a borough already engaged in recovery planning through programs like STMP, Home Rule represents a proactive step toward long-term stability and local empowerment.

Reynoldsville has not adopted a Home Rule Charter, despite facing population decline, financial strain, and aging infrastructure - challenges that a Home Rule Charter could help address by giving the Borough more flexibility and local control.

Reynoldsville Borough Council

In Reynoldsville, the Borough is governed by a seven-member elected Council - including a Council President, Vice President, and five at-large members - alongside the Mayor. The Council is responsible for passing ordinances, setting local policies, and making decisions related to the Borough's finances,



Reynoldsville's Borough Council suffers from persistent turnover and instability, with frequent appointments replacing elected leadership, hindering consistent governance and long-term progress.



We keep getting people appointed and then they resign - it's hard to keep momentum.



infrastructure, and

services. However, maintaining a stable and engaged leadership team has been an ongoing challenge. Frequent turnover, often due to personal circumstances or the demands of public service, has led to recurring vacancies that are typically filled by appointment rather than election - creating instability and making it difficult to sustain progress on long-term priorities.

Recognizing these challenges, Borough leaders are thoughtfully considering a reduction in council size from seven to five members. This approach, which would require a formal petition to the court and coordination with the solicitor, is intended to promote more focused decision-making and improve continuity in leadership.

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Council dynamics reflect a range of perspectives and motivations. Some members are seen as deeply committed to fiscal responsibility or community traditions, while others are perceived as less engaged or influenced by personal or political alliances. These differences can strain collaboration but also reflect the

Council dynamics are marked by uneven engagement and personal or political agendas, contributing to a fractured culture that lacks the professional leadership needed for effective governance.

complexity of small-town

governance, where residents often serve out of a sense of duty rather than political ambition but may lack the professional experience to effectively lead.

Some of us are just here because no one else wants to be.

Borough Council members are not only responsible for legislative decision-making but also actively serving on various committees that support the Borough's day-to-day operations, as noted in Table 1 below. These committees focus on key areas such as personnel, the pool board, the water and sewer authority, and streets. Of the seven current Council members, four have terms set to expire in December 2025 raising concerns about continuity and leadership stability. This is especially significant given the Borough's history of frequent council turnover, which has often disrupted momentum and made it difficult to sustain long-term planning and community initiatives.

With four of seven Council terms expiring in December 2025, Reynoldsville faces a serious risk to leadership continuity - amplifying longstanding issues of turnover that have repeatedly stalled long-term progress.

Table 1 - Borough Council Members and Committee Assignments

Council Member	Committees	Term Expires
Zach Garman, President	Pool Board Volunteer Fire Department	December 2027
Joy Hartzell, Vice President	Pool Board Water and Sewer Authority Board	December 2025 (Resigned - 6-25-2025)
Dave Fleeger		December 2027
Jeff Siple	Streets Committee	December 2027
Tony Rhed	Volunteer Fire Department	December 2025
Shawn Kniseley		December 2025
Dave Rupert		December 2025

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The current reporting structure in Reynoldsville reveals significant issues in governance and operational oversight. An excessive number of employees report directly to members of Borough Council, as noted in Figure 2 below, blurring the lines between policy oversight and day-to-day management. For example, the Streets Foreman reports directly to Council, placing

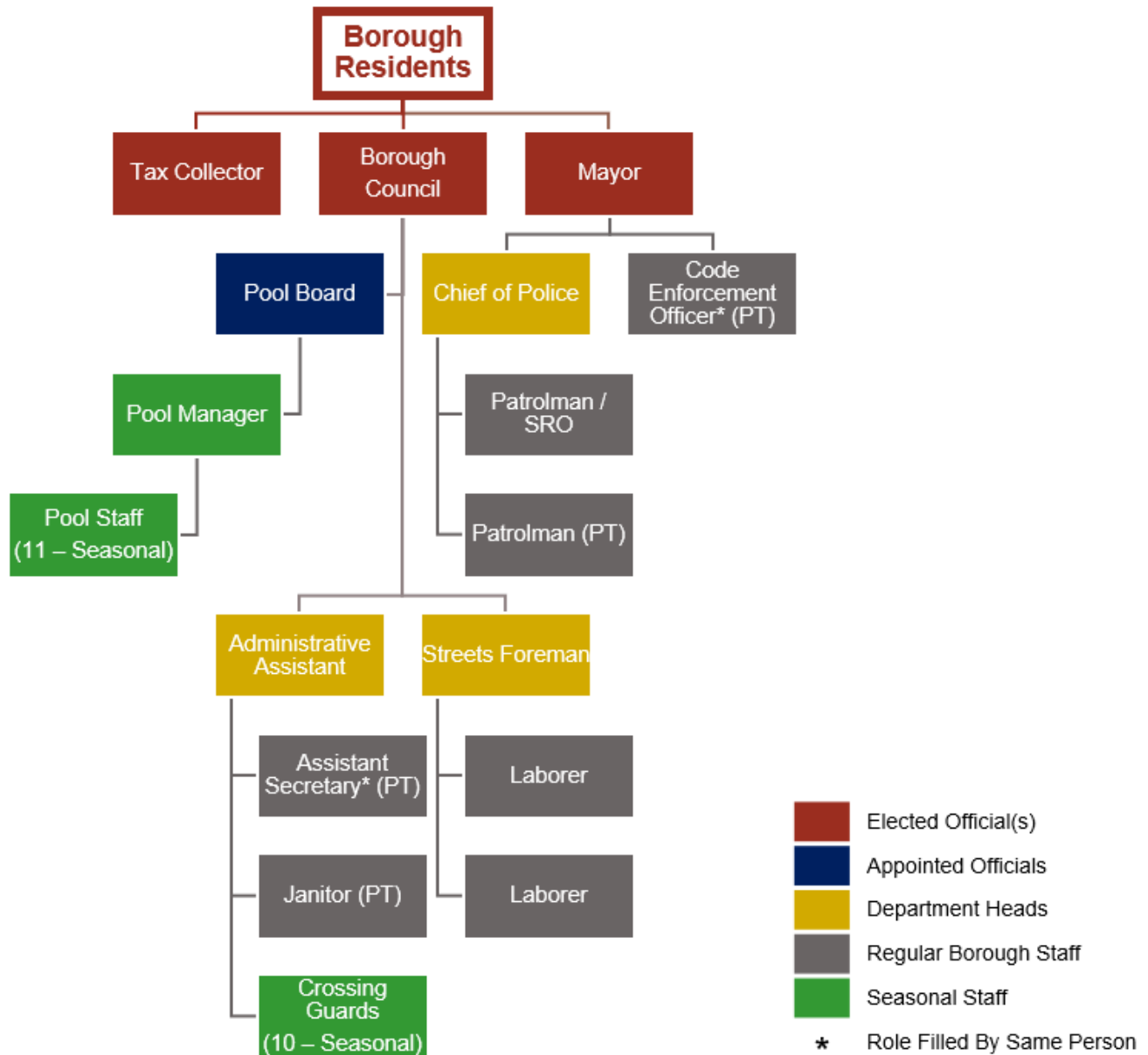
Reynoldsville's current reporting structure places too many employees under direct Council oversight, blurring the line between governance and management and highlighting a lack of professional administrative coordination.

operational supervision in the hands of elected officials whose role should be focused on setting policy, not managing staff. Similarly, Council oversees the Pool Board, which in turn supervises all pool staff, creating an indirect but still problematic line of authority that lacks professional coordination.

The situation is further complicated by the Mayor, who receives direct reports from both the Chief of Police and the Code Enforcement Officer. This overlapping and fragmented chain of command results in confusion, inefficiency, and a lack of clear accountability. It also makes it difficult to evaluate performance or implement consistent personnel practices. Overall, the Borough's current structure undermines effective administration and highlights the urgent need for professional management. A more defined and centralized reporting system - ideally through a Borough Manager or similar administrative role - would help ensure clarity, consistency, and a more efficient delivery of services.

The Mayor's direct oversight of both the Police Chief and Code Enforcement Officer contributes to a fragmented and inefficient chain of command, underscoring the need for centralized, professional management to ensure accountability and effective administration.

Figure 2 - Organizational Structure (as of April 2025)



Reynoldsville has maintained productive relationships with several neighboring municipalities, including Sykesville, Bell Township, and Falls Creek. These partnerships have allowed the Borough to share key equipment - such as a street sweeper - and coordinate certain services, helping to stretch limited resources and improve service delivery in a cost-effective manner.



Reynoldsville has successfully leveraged strong intermunicipal partnerships to share equipment and coordinate services, maximizing limited resources and enhancing service delivery in a cost-effective way.

Although the Borough is not currently an active member of the Jefferson County Council of Governments (COG), Ordinance #464, adopted in 1991, authorizes Reynoldsville to participate in the COG. Under this ordinance, the COG is empowered to submit grant applications on behalf of the Borough, and the Council President and Borough Secretary are authorized to execute any agreements related to the financing and execution of joint projects. While the Borough has previously worked with the Centre County COG and expressed interest in reviving PAYCOG, it may benefit from reengaging with the Jefferson County COG to leverage existing authorizations for regional collaboration.

This openness to intergovernmental cooperation reflects both practicality and a recognition that working together can help small communities like Reynoldsville overcome resource constraints and improve long-term sustainability. Rebuilding or rejoining a regional COG structure could offer new opportunities for technical assistance, cost-sharing, and coordinated planning that would benefit the Borough and its residents.

Borough Secretary

The Borough is currently operating without a formally appointed Borough Secretary, as required by the Pennsylvania Borough Code. Although the role was historically filled by a longtime employee who has served the Borough for over 40 years, that



The Borough is operating without a formally appointed Secretary or Treasurer, in violation of the Pennsylvania Borough Code and its own ordinance, leaving critical administrative and financial responsibilities unfulfilled and undermining basic municipal operations.

individual's position was downgraded to Administrative Assistant two years ago for unclear reasons. As a result, there is no officially designated Secretary or Treasurer - despite Ordinance #406 (1975) formally combining those roles - and key administrative and financial responsibilities are not being performed to the level expected of a functioning municipal office.



The Borough office lacks the professional staff, systems, and practices necessary to support effective local government, leaving key duties unmet and underscoring the urgent need to appoint a qualified Borough Secretary and reinvest in administrative capacity.

The Borough office currently operates without the professional capacity, modern systems, or foundational practices necessary to support effective local government. Day-to-day operations are barely functioning, and members of Borough Council are

frequently burdened with stepping in to address administrative tasks that should fall under staff responsibilities. Despite the critical importance of this role, the Borough Secretary (i.e. the

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administrative assistant) is not performing many of the core functions expected under the Pennsylvania Borough Code. Key deficiencies include:

- **Lack of formal human resources infrastructure**, including no personnel policies, job descriptions, or employee handbook.
- **Outdated financial procedures**, relying on a desktop version of QuickBooks not recommended by DCED.
- **No structured financial reporting, tracking, or trend analysis** to inform budgeting or policy decisions.
- **Absence of basic grant management practices**, including tracking deadlines, reporting requirements, or leveraging available opportunities.
- **No public communication or community outreach**, such as maintaining an informative website or responding to resident concerns in a timely, consistent manner.
- **No specific or strategized community and economic development efforts**, though these are critically needed.
- **No long-term planning or administrative support for capital projects or strategic goals.**

As a result, the Borough's administrative capacity is focused solely on the most basic tasks - many of which are still delayed or incomplete. The absence of professional leadership has not only weakened Borough operations but has also placed undue strain on elected officials. Addressing this issue should be a top priority, starting with the formal appointment of a qualified Borough Secretary and reinvestment in the administrative office.

Attempts to provide support through a part-time Assistant Borough Secretary have been ineffective, due in part to interpersonal and family-related conflict, and the position has not contributed meaningfully to the professionalization of Borough operations. Overall, the lack of qualified leadership in the Secretary's



The lack of qualified leadership and ineffective support from the Assistant Secretary role - hindered by interpersonal and family-related conflict - has left the Borough without the administrative capacity or systems needed for accountable and effective governance.

office, combined with chronic underinvestment in administrative capacity, has left Reynoldsville without the basic tools and systems necessary to support accountable, transparent, and effective local government. Establishing a qualified Borough Secretary and investing in professional administrative leadership should be an immediate priority.

Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture

Reynoldsville Borough operates with a small staff, and as such, employee engagement is a critical component of overall organizational effectiveness. Multiple conversations with Borough personnel - including the secretary, assistant secretary, police chief, public works foreman, and members of Borough Council - revealed deep concerns about workplace culture, communication, and leadership. Overall, staff morale appears low, and dissatisfaction is widespread across departments.

A consistent theme throughout these discussions is the absence of clear, professional leadership. Without a Borough Manager to provide objective oversight, strategic direction, and daily support, the organization lacks a unifying figure to model best practices, manage conflict, and hold all parties accountable. The secretary, while central to administrative operations, has made it clear she does not serve in a managerial capacity and is also a union employee. As a result, leadership is fragmented and often politicized, contributing to a climate of confusion and mistrust.



Operating at only 20 hours per week, the position is significantly under-resourced and insufficient to meet the demands of effective code enforcement in the Borough.



The Borough's small staff is burdened by interpersonal conflict, perceived favoritism, and a lack of trust - all intensified by the absence of clear policies, defined roles, and professional boundaries.

The organizational culture suffers from a range of interpersonal challenges. Some employees report feeling targeted by members of Council, while others describe conflict among staff, including within a subset of employees who are related and whose personal dynamics have contributed to workplace disruptions. The small

size of the team magnifies these interpersonal issues, and a lack of formal policies, job descriptions, or training exacerbates tensions. Staff routinely question one another's duties and authority, and there is little mutual trust between Council and employees, or even among staff themselves.

Retention and compensation are ongoing concerns, and a lack of training leaves several employees feeling ill-equipped or unsupported in their roles. The overall environment reflects a "small-town mindset" in which personal relationships and informal practices take precedence over professionalism, process, and accountability.



Ongoing issues with retention, low compensation, and insufficient training reflect an informal workplace culture where personal dynamics and ad hoc practices overshadow professionalism, leaving staff unsupported and the organization lacking structure and accountability.

Addressing these cultural and structural issues will require the establishment of professional management, clear operational standards, and a commitment to building a workplace grounded in trust, equity, and organizational integrity.



Fiscal Management

A comprehensive assessment of Reynoldsville Borough's financial practices reveals a deeply concerning picture of operational fragility, inadequate systems, and unsustainable fiscal management. While a full financial condition assessment and trend analysis is covered in the Step 1 and Step 2 STMP reports, it is clear that the Borough's basic financial infrastructure is insufficient to support effective governance, long-term planning, or even consistent day-to-day operations.

Budgeting and Planning Deficiencies

The Borough's annual budget process is informal and heavily reliant on historical precedent. The Administrative Assistant prepares a draft budget based on prior years' figures, which is reviewed and typically adopted by Borough Council in December, just ahead of the statutory deadline. While experienced staff can produce a balanced budget - such as the proposed but unadopted \$1 million 2025 budget - there is no use of cash flow budgeting, no incorporation of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and no alignment with strategic goals or operational needs. Budgeting is strictly incremental, with little flexibility or forward-looking analysis.

Reynoldsville's budget process is outdated and reactive, with no strategic planning, cash flow forecasting, or capital budgeting in place.

Inadequate Financial Reporting

The Borough's reliance on QuickBooks Desktop, without fund accounting or structured reporting, severely limits transparency and financial oversight.

The Borough uses QuickBooks Desktop as its primary financial management tool. Although it contains years of transactional data, QuickBooks is not a fund accounting system and lacks many features required for compliance with public sector accounting standards. The current chart of accounts is arbitrarily structured and not aligned with DCED best practices. There is no use of classes or departmental structures to support meaningful reporting. These limitations make it difficult to track restricted funds, grant allocations, or capital accounts - and often require manual workarounds to produce even basic reports.

The Borough uses QuickBooks Desktop as its primary financial management tool. Although it contains years of transactional data, QuickBooks is not a fund accounting system and lacks many features required for

Lack of Internal Controls and Oversight

There is no formal financial reporting to Council beyond basic budget vs. actual comparisons, and no established internal control framework for reconciliation, review, or oversight. While Borough audits are conducted by a third party, they offer no management analysis or decision-making tools. Moreover, critical functions such as grant management, financial forecasting, and asset lifecycle planning are not being performed.

There are no formal internal controls or routine financial reporting mechanisms, leaving elected officials with limited tools for effective fiscal management.

Critical Cash Position and Verification Concerns



The Borough is facing a potential cash shortfall nearing -\$180,000, yet cannot produce basic bank statements to verify its financial position.

Perhaps most alarming is the Borough's deteriorating cash position. Internal reports suggest Reynoldsville may have ended the most recent fiscal year with a negative cash balance approaching - \$180,000. Staff were reportedly asked to delay cashing paychecks

due to a lack of available funds - underscoring the severity of the situation. Yet, despite repeated requests, the Borough has not provided necessary documentation such as bank statements to verify its true financial position. This lack of transparency is a serious red flag and suggests that routine fiscal controls are either absent or not being enforced.

Recurring Tax Anticipation Notes (TANs)

To address liquidity issues, the Borough routinely relies on TANs. While not uncommon, this practice - combined with weak financial forecasting and no reserve fund - leaves the Borough vulnerable to short-term disruptions and fiscal emergencies.

Absence of Capital Planning and Reserves

There is currently no capital budgeting process, no CIP, and no dedicated capital reserve. Deferred maintenance and unfunded needs are extensive across the Borough's fleet, facilities, and infrastructure. With no sinking fund, multi-year scheduling, or prioritization system, these issues will continue to accumulate and place further pressure on operating funds.



With no Capital Improvement Plan or reserve funds, the Borough has no clear strategy to address urgent infrastructure and equipment needs.

Administrative and Structural Gaps



The lack of professional administrative capacity have left critical financial functions incomplete or mismanaged.

As noted, the Borough's finance-related roles are carried out by an Administrative Assistant - not a formally appointed Borough Secretary/Treasurer as required by Ordinance #406 (1975). There is no HR

infrastructure, no grant tracking, and no formal policies governing procurement or expenditure. The Borough's organizational structure lacks the professional capacity needed to support even basic financial functions.

Reynoldsville's current financial practices are far below the standards required for sound municipal governance. Absent immediate reforms and better administrative oversight, the Borough's fiscal distress may worsen and could potentially meet the statutory criteria for Act 47 designation. The resistance to basic data requests and lack of transparency further impede the ability of state-supported recovery planning to be effective. The Borough must act swiftly to professionalize its financial operations, restore fiscal integrity, and build a foundation for long-term sustainability.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

Reynoldsville currently maintains two collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) - one with AFSCME Local 1460, representing public works laborers and administrative staff, and the other with Teamsters Local 110, representing

Reynoldsville maintains two outdated and overly permissive collective bargaining agreements that do not align with operational needs, legal standards, or best practices in municipal labor relations.

members of the Borough's Police Department. A review of both contracts was conducted to evaluate their structure, content, and alignment with operational needs, applicable laws, and best practices in municipal labor relations. A comprehensive review of the CBAs was conducted in March 2025 by Stephanie Fera, Esq. of Gabriel Fera PC. The following narrative outlines key findings and provides recommendations for future negotiations and contract administration. Please note, the evaluation can be found in its entirety in Appendix A of this report.

AFSCME Local 1460 - Public Works and Clerical Staff

The Borough's contract with AFSCME Local 1460 is notably outdated and incomplete. Although administrative assistants were added to this bargaining unit in 2018, the contract still fails to acknowledge their inclusion, creating confusion and undermining transparency. The agreement contains several

The Borough's AFSCME contract is outdated, poorly maintained, and carelessly drafted, with missing updates and overly broad provisions that create confusion and expose the Borough to unnecessary risk.

provisions that are either redundant - duplicating legal protections already in place - or overly generous without justification. For example, the anti-discrimination clause adds little value but opens the door to unnecessary grievances, suggesting a lack of careful contract drafting.

There are also contradictions within the contract's language around overtime, reflecting a lack of clear negotiation or understanding. The current generous sick leave benefit - 15 days annually - is well above what comparable municipalities offer, imposing an unnecessary financial burden on the Borough. Similarly, the rushed 15-day timeline for promotions is



The AFSCME contract reflects poor negotiation and prioritizes excessive employee benefits over practical operations, burdening the Borough with costly leave policies, conflicting terms, and unworkable timelines.

impractical given public meeting requirements and hampers the Borough's ability to manage staffing effectively. Provisions granting lengthy personal leaves and unlimited union leave reflect a contract tone that prioritizes employee perks over operational realities, placing unnecessary strain on this small employer.

Health insurance coverage, as currently structured, is overly generous, with the Borough paying nearly full premiums and reimbursing employees for medical expenses. This outdated approach fails to encourage employee accountability or cost-sharing, a standard practice in most modern public-sector contracts. The grievance and discipline sections severely limit the Borough's ability to hold employees accountable for serious misconduct and tie its hands with rigid procedures that do not allow flexibility for unique or urgent situations. Overall, this contract demonstrates a pattern of overly permissive terms that risk undermining fiscal responsibility and managerial authority.



The Borough's AFSCME contract includes overly generous health benefits and rigid grievance procedures that undermine fiscal responsibility, limit accountability, and restrict managerial authority.

Teamsters Local 110 - Police Department



The police contract prioritizes union protections over effective governance, with the inclusion of the Chief in the bargaining unit blurring managerial lines and weakening leadership structure.

The police contract similarly suffers from an overly restrictive and poorly balanced approach that favors union protections at the expense of the Borough's operational needs. Including the Chief of Police in the bargaining unit blurs important managerial

lines and hampers effective leadership. The Borough would be well advised to reconsider this arrangement, as separating management from rank-and-file bargaining unit members is a fundamental labor practice that helps clarify roles and responsibilities.

The contract unnecessarily limits scheduling flexibility by restricting full-time officers to weekdays only - a restriction that ignores the realities of modern policing and could leave critical gaps in coverage. Leave benefits, including personal day accruals, are excessively generous and inconsistent with the other bargaining unit, adding complexity and escalating costs. The compensatory time policies create potential liabilities by allowing officers to bank

significant amounts of paid time off indefinitely or choose payout options that strain the Borough's budget.

Other contract provisions add confusion rather than clarity. The call-out time rules are convoluted and invite disputes, while the maternity and paternity leave policies are outdated and lack the gender neutrality required under current law. Although the health insurance terms are somewhat clearer than those in the AFSCME agreement, the absence of any employee premium contribution is a glaring omission that leaves the Borough fully exposed to rising healthcare costs. The grievance process is excessively slow and restricts the Borough's rights to appeal arbitration decisions or efficiently resolve discipline issues. Taken together, this contract reflects a troubling imbalance that favors union protections over practical governance and fiscal discipline.

The police contract is confusing, outdated, and overly protective of union interests, leaving the Borough exposed to legal risk, rising costs, and weakened control over discipline and operations.

Overall Impressions

Both agreements reflect a troubling pattern of overly generous, inflexible, and sometimes contradictory provisions that hinder the Borough's ability to manage its workforce effectively and control costs. These contracts lean heavily in favor of employee benefits and protections, often without regard for operational feasibility or financial sustainability. In their current form, they expose the Borough to unnecessary risk, reduce managerial flexibility, and create challenges that could be avoided with more carefully crafted agreements. Going forward, it is essential that the Borough take a more assertive stance in negotiations, prioritizing modernized language, clearer managerial rights, equitable employee benefits, and stronger cost controls to ensure long-term viability and effective municipal service delivery.

Boards and Authorities

Reynoldsville Borough supports two key entities that deliver essential services and maintain valued community assets - the Reynoldsville Water & Sewer Authority and the Reynoldsville Recreation Committee, which oversees operations of the community swimming pool.

Reynoldsville Sewer and Water Authority

The Reynoldsville Water & Sewer Authority is an independent municipal authority that manages the Borough's water distribution

The Reynoldsville Water & Sewer Authority independently oversees utility operations, but continued coordination and oversight by the Borough - given its role in board appointments - is essential to ensure fiscal accountability and alignment with local infrastructure goals.

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and wastewater systems. While the Borough is not directly involved in daily operations, it appoints members to the Authority's board and should require regular financial statements to ensure oversight and alignment with Borough priorities. The Authority actively pursues grant funding to support infrastructure improvements and long-term sustainability.

In recent years, the Authority has strengthened its financial practices, including efforts to collect nearly \$85,000 in delinquent accounts through liens or service disconnections. It also participates in the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System, which reported a pension surplus in 2021, demonstrating sound pension management. Continued coordination with Borough officials is essential to maintain transparency and integrate financial and capital planning.

The Authority serves about 1,236 customers in Reynoldsville Borough and 100 in Winslow Township with a staff of five full-time and one part-time employees. Drinking water is supplied by a reservoir and treated with media filtration and clarifier systems, with major rehabilitation completed in 2021 to replace media, valves, and the SCADA system. A future rehabilitation project is planned for the water tank and fill line.

The wastewater treatment plant, which handles about 0.25 MGD, uses an Imhoff clarifier, rotating biological contactors (RBCs), final clarifiers, and chlorine contact

The facility's NPDES permit expired in 2017, and renewal may require upgrades to meet modern standards.

tanks before discharging into Sandy Lick Creek. RBCs were replaced in the last decade following contamination from natural gas wastewater, which is no longer accepted. While the facility currently meets permit limits, its NPDES permit expired in 2017, and renewal may require upgrades to meet modern standards. Like many combined sewer overflow (CSO) systems, the Borough experiences significant inflow and infiltration, leading to untreated discharges into Sandy Lick Creek, Pitchpine Run, and Soldier Run during wet weather events.

Reynoldsville Recreation Committee (Pool Board)

The Reynoldsville Recreation Committee manages the community pool with support from seasonal staff and volunteers, but sustained Borough involvement is needed to address infrastructure challenges and plan for the facility's future.

The Reynoldsville Recreation Committee, often referred to as the Pool Board, oversees the operation of the community pool - a seasonal facility and cherished asset for Borough residents. The committee hires and supervises a Pool Manager, who is responsible for managing

10 to 11 seasonal employees, including lifeguards and maintenance staff. In addition to formal

staffing, the pool also relies heavily on volunteer support, with the volunteer fire department recently stepping in to help resolve urgent maintenance issues.

Despite strong community involvement, the pool facility continues to face infrastructure and maintenance challenges, including the need for leak repairs and the recent purchase of a new heating system estimated at \$60,000–\$70,000. While there is currently no formal feasibility study or master plan in place, both are recommended to guide future investment and ensure the pool's long-term sustainability.

Together, the Water & Sewer Authority and the Recreation Committee illustrate how Reynoldsville leverages both formal governance and community partnerships to provide critical services. However, structured Borough oversight, improved long-range planning, and additional professional support would strengthen the impact and sustainability of these efforts.

Community and Economic Development



Shops on Main Street in Reynoldsville.

Reynoldsville Borough lacks a coordinated strategy for community and economic development, a deficiency that undermines its ability to attract investment and revitalize struggling areas like Main Street. The absence of a zoning ordinance disqualifies the Borough from critical grant programs - such as DCED's Main Street Matters - and limits its ability to guide land use, protect neighborhoods, or plan for future development. There is no redevelopment plan for vacant properties, no active

effort to revitalize the downtown corridor, and no strategic approach to address visibly deteriorating buildings.

While the County Redevelopment Authority manages a revolving loan fund, it is not supported by a broader vision or outreach strategy, and Jefferson County's lack of a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) further limits regional development planning. Administrative



Reynoldsville has no coordinated community or economic development strategy - leaving areas of Main Street to decline, missing key grant opportunities, and failing to plan for redevelopment or revitalization.

capacity remains a barrier - the Borough has not completed a blight study, code enforcement remains under-resourced, and efforts to secure outside help have been minimal. Calls for greater County involvement in land banking and redevelopment functions have gone largely unanswered.

To move forward, Reynoldsville must actively identify and engage with available partners, programs, and funding streams. Mapping its community and economic development ecosystem - including county agencies, nonprofits, and regional planning organizations - would help pinpoint gaps, strengthen collaboration, and position the Borough to pursue revitalization more effectively. Without this, the community risks missing critical opportunities at a time when population decline and fiscal instability demand decisive action.

Information Technology

Reynoldsville's current information technology (IT) systems are minimal, fragmented, and do not meet basic standards for public sector operations. There is no centralized network or dedicated server infrastructure, and internet access appears limited to basic online account use. Staff are using personal email accounts and cell phones for official Borough business - particularly in code enforcement - raising serious concerns about data security, records retention, and legal compliance.



Reynoldsville's fragmented IT system - lacking a centralized network, official email, or secure infrastructure - undermines data security, legal compliance, and basic standards for public sector operations.



The Borough's failure to maintain secure email archives and reliance on personal devices violates key provisions of Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law and Sunshine Act, compromising transparency, accountability, and legal compliance.

The lack of email journaling or secure archival systems directly conflicts with the requirements of Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law, which mandates that public records - including emails and digital communications - be accessible and retrievable upon request. Similarly, the

use of personal devices and non-secure platforms undermines transparency and accountability required under Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act, which ensures public access to governmental operations and decisions.

The Police Department's technology needs are especially critical. The absence of a secure connection - audited and authorized by the Pennsylvania State Police - likely prevents officers from accessing sensitive data such as FBI or state criminal databases. If so, this means the Borough must rely on outside agencies to conduct routine law enforcement queries, delaying operations and compromising public safety. The Code Enforcement Officer's outdated laptop is also insufficient for field documentation and administrative responsibilities.



The lack of secure, compliant technology in the Police Department and the outdated equipment used by Code Enforcement severely hinder essential functions, delay operations, and compromise public safety and service delivery.

In addition, the Borough's municipal website lacks interactive features and provides limited information to the public. This contributes to a perception of inaccessibility and limits opportunities for civic engagement, service requests, and community transparency.

Establishing even a minimal internal network, adopting official Borough email accounts, and ensuring that law enforcement operates on a secure, compliant system are foundational steps that must be prioritized. Doing so will not only modernize Borough operations but also ensure compliance with state laws and the expectations of public accountability.

Capital Assets - Facilities and Fleet

Aging infrastructure and an overextended fleet are placing strain on Reynoldsville Borough's ability to deliver essential services. Municipal facilities - including the Municipal Building, Police Department, Public Works Garage, and Community Pool - suffer from outdated systems, limited accessibility, and years of deferred maintenance. Although some grant funding has been secured, critical improvements remain pending.

The Borough's vehicle fleet is small but vital. With several units in poor or inoperable condition and no formal replacement plan in place, maintenance remains reactive and short-term. Together, these challenges underscore the need for strategic investment and long-term capital planning to ensure safety, efficiency, and continued service delivery.

Facilities

The Borough's municipal facilities are outdated, inefficient, and in need of substantial investment to meet modern standards for safety, accessibility, and functionality. The condition of key facilities - including the Municipal Building, Police Department, Public Works Garage, and Community Pool - reflects years of deferred maintenance and limited capital investment.

The Municipal Building, which houses the Borough's administrative offices, library, and police department, is in poor physical condition. Heating and cooling systems are outdated, with the first floor relying on inefficient window or wall units, and boarded-up windows contributing to energy loss and poor aesthetics. The second floor is



The Borough's Municipal Building is in poor condition, with outdated heating and cooling systems, limited accessibility, and inadequate security - forcing key operations into makeshift spaces and highlighting the urgent need for modernization and functional upgrades.

inaccessible to individuals with disabilities, forcing operations such as the police department and public meetings into makeshift spaces on the first floor. As a result, Council meetings are held off-site at the fire department. Consideration should be given to installing an elevator and reconfiguring office space for functionality. If that is not feasible, first-floor office layouts should be restructured to better match operational needs, with storage relocated upstairs. Security at the Borough Office is also lacking, with no access control or surveillance in place; investment in video monitoring, secure service windows, and keycard access is strongly recommended.

Although a repair was reportedly made 2-3 years ago above the 1996 library addition, the age and condition of the roof remains largely unknown, and the inability to inspect it during the review suggests further assessment is necessary.

To address these issues, the Borough has secured Local Share Account (LSA) funding for the Municipal Building and is considering applying for Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funds to support additional improvements to the building. It should be noted, however, that though funds have been received, they have not yet been expended on improvements.

The Police Department is especially strained by its facility limitations. It occupies a small footprint, including a ~200 sq. ft. chief's office, a tiny auxiliary police office, a small holding area, a garage, and upstairs storage. Security of the overall space is a serious concern - specific vulnerabilities are not detailed here due to public safety risks, but the building's current configuration and aging infrastructure make it difficult to secure sensitive areas, including the evidence room, which is only accessible by the Police Chief and located on the floor above the intake area.



The Police Department operates in an inadequately sized and aging facility with serious security and functional limitations, making it difficult to safeguard sensitive areas and support basic law enforcement needs.

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The holding area, located just outside the Chief's office, consists of a simple bench with handcuff restraints and lacks proper security features.

The Chief's office is in decent condition with functional heating and a window AC unit. The holding area is rudimentary, consisting of a bench with handcuff attachments, and sits just outside the chief's office. The second police office has no air conditioning, a single small window, and minimal usable space.

Upstairs storage and the evidence room show no visible roof leaks, but vines are growing through window frames, indicating serious weatherproofing and building envelope issues. Storage areas are cluttered and unorganized, raising

concerns about records retention and evidence chain-of-custody practices.

The police garage is in very poor condition. It has suffered repeated structural damage from garbage trucks, leaving the wall visibly buckled and potentially unsafe. Windows are boarded up, and the space is cluttered with disused equipment, including an old police vehicle. Adjacent offices, once used by police and code enforcement, recently flooded due to a water leak, leaving the floors soft, damp, and moldy. Heating and air conditioning are nonfunctional in this area, and mold poses a potential health hazard.



The police garage has structural and water damage - raising safety concerns and requiring assessment to determine whether repair or demolition is the best option.



Structural damage is noted at the Police Garage.

The Public Works Garage needs continued upgrades, including repair to its overhead heating system and conversion to energy-efficient LED lighting. These changes would improve both the work environment and reduce utility costs.

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The Community Pool, a valued community amenity, also faces significant infrastructure issues. Water leaks must be repaired to reduce excess water usage - which, while not billed directly to the Borough, increases costs to residents via the Water Authority. A new heating system, estimated at \$60,000–\$70,000, had been purchased but not installed at the time of this assessment. While no formal feasibility study or master site plan is currently underway, both are recommended to guide future investment in the facility.

The community pool requires major repairs - including leak fixes and a new \$60,000–\$70,000 heater - and would benefit from a feasibility study and master site plan to guide future investment.

Overall, Reynoldsville's public facilities require strategic investment to ensure safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, and the continued delivery of essential services.

Fleet

Reynoldsville relies on a small but essential fleet to deliver core public services, particularly through its Public Works and Police departments. While several vehicles remain operational, a significant portion of the fleet is aging, in poor condition, or in immediate need of replacement. The Borough currently does not have a formal fleet replacement plan, which has resulted in a reactive approach to equipment maintenance and procurement.

The Borough lacks a formal fleet replacement plan, leading to a reactive approach to maintenance and a growing reliance on aging, deteriorating equipment.

Table 2 - Borough Fleet and Condition

Equipment	Department	Condition	Notes
2024 Chevy 2500 plow/dump truck	Public Works	Good	Most recently acquired and reliable asset
2013 GMC 3500 plow/dump truck	Public Works	Fair	Should be replaced in the next 2-3 years
2003 Ford F-550 plow/dump truck	Public Works	Poor	Currently inoperable; high-priority replacement
Grader (1990s model)	Public Works	Fair	
Backhoe (2016)	Public Works	Fair	
Tractor with mowing deck (2006)	Public Works	Poor	Identified for priority replacement
Skid Steer	Public Works		Condition not directly observed

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Equipment	Department	Condition	Notes
			but reported in good working order
Street sweeper (1995)	Public Works	Poor	Water system non-functional, limiting use to rainy weather; immediate replacement needed
Patrol Vehicle (2)	Police		Not directly observed. One of which was recently replaced through a donation from the Elk Run Volunteer Fire Company

As noted in Table 2 above, the fleet includes a 2024 Chevy 2500 plow truck, which is in good condition and represents the most recently acquired and reliable asset. The 2013 GMC 3500 is rated in fair condition but is nearing the end of its useful life and should be scheduled for replacement within the next one to two years. The 2003 Ford F-550, however, is in poor condition and currently inoperable, making it a high-priority replacement. The department's grader (1990s) and 2016 backhoe are both in fair condition and serviceable for the time being. The tractor/mower (2006) is in poor condition and also identified as a replacement priority.

Of particular concern is the 1995 street sweeper, which is in poor condition and no longer sprays water - limiting its use to rainy days and significantly impairing its effectiveness. The department has emphasized that this unit should be replaced immediately. While the excavator and skid steer were not directly observed, they were reported to be in good working order and are essential to ongoing stormwater and roadwork projects.



The Borough's street sweeper is not functional and should be replaced immediately.

On the police side, the Borough operates two patrol vehicles, one of which was recently replaced by a donated car from the Elk Run Volunteer Fire Company. This donation helped address one of the department's short-term vehicle needs, though a full review of the condition and lifecycle of police assets is still warranted.

The Code Enforcement Officer currently uses a personal vehicle to conduct Borough business, including inspections. This arrangement is not ideal and presents potential liability and insurance concerns for both the employee and the Borough.

The Code Enforcement Officer's use of a personal vehicle for official Borough business raises liability and insurance concerns and reflects a lack of proper operational support.

Overall, the Borough's fleet reflects a mix of aging and functional equipment. However, the lack of a formal vehicle maintenance and replacement schedule has led to reactive, rather than proactive, planning. Several core assets are in urgent need of replacement, and long-term capital planning will be essential to ensuring that critical public services can be maintained safely and efficiently.

Best Practices and Standards of Operation

Reynoldsville Borough's governance and operational practices fall dramatically short of established best practices outlined by leading municipal authorities such as the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB), the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's (SPC)

Reynoldsville Borough meets only 2 of 38 core best practices established by PSAB, DCED, and SPC, revealing severe deficiencies in transparency, accountability, administrative capacity, and strategic planning.

Essentials for Local Government. Of the 38 core best practices identified in this general governance overview, the Borough currently meets only two, exposing critical vulnerabilities in transparency, accountability, administrative capacity, and strategic planning.

These deficiencies not only hinder effective service delivery but also place the Borough at significant risk of legal noncompliance and financial instability. Urgent and sustained efforts to adopt and implement recognized best practices are necessary to restore competent local governance, rebuild public trust, and position Reynoldsville for long-term sustainability and growth. The following assessment and recommendations draw directly from proven standards to guide these essential improvements.

☐ **Factor: Responsibilities of Elected Officials**

All members of Borough Council, upon initial election, complete a training course for newly elected officials.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not currently require or ensure that all members of Borough Council complete a training course for newly elected officials. Newly elected and appointed councilmembers receive little to no formal orientation or structured onboarding, which contributes to confusion around roles, responsibilities, and procedures. To improve governance capacity and ensure compliance with the Pennsylvania Borough Code, Council should pursue formal training opportunities through PSAB or the Local Government Academy, both of which offer programs specifically designed to help new officials understand their legal obligations, budgeting authority, and ethical responsibilities.

The governing body has adopted and adheres to a code of ethics that complies with the standards.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

To date, Borough Council has not adopted a code of ethics, nor is there any indication that ethical standards or expectations have been formally discussed or documented. The absence of a code of ethics leaves the Borough vulnerable to conflicts of interest, inconsistent decision-making, and a lack of accountability among elected and appointed officials. A well-crafted code of ethics is a foundational governance document that helps ensure integrity in public service, clarifies acceptable conduct, and builds public trust.

The Borough has adopted an administrative code that defines the internal structure of the government, outlining the key functions and responsibilities of its departments, boards, commissions, and committees.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not adopted a formal administrative code that outlines the internal structure of its government. There is confusion around the roles and responsibilities of both elected officials and staff, and there is no clearly defined organizational structure documented in ordinance or policy. Without an administrative code, the Borough lacks clarity regarding the functions of its departments, boards, and commissions, leading to inefficiencies, role ambiguity, and limited accountability. Developing and adopting an administrative code -

modeled on best practices from PSAB and aligned with the Pennsylvania Borough Code - would provide the structural framework needed to support more professional, transparent, and effective governance.

☐ ***Factor: Transparent Operations***

The agenda for each public meeting is available to the public 24 hours before the meeting and copies are available at each meeting.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville Borough does not consistently make public meeting agendas available at least 24 hours in advance, nor are agendas reliably posted online or made easily accessible to the public. In some cases, agendas are distributed to Council members shortly before meetings, and copies are not always provided to attendees. This practice falls short of best practices for public transparency and may undermine community trust and participation in local government. The Borough should establish and enforce a standard procedure for agenda preparation and posting that ensures compliance with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act and aligns with transparency expectations recommended by PSAB.

Minutes from public meetings are regularly published on the borough website and are easy to find and review.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not regularly publish meeting minutes on its website, and when minutes are available, they are difficult for residents to locate and review. This lack of transparency limits public access to official records of Council decisions and undermines accountability.

☐ ***Factor: Competent Management and Outreach***

The individual hired as administrator has been educated or trained in the field of management/administration, or a related field, or is qualified based on equivalent experience. Such qualifications are established as part of the authorizing resolution, ordinance, or home rule charter provision.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville Borough does not currently employ a formally appointed Borough Manager or Administrator. The individual serving as Administrative Assistant -

who has historically performed some secretarial and clerical duties - is not formally qualified in public administration, municipal management, or a related field, nor has Council adopted an ordinance or resolution establishing qualifications for the role.

☐ ***Factor: Service Delivery***

Borough Council, the Borough Secretary, and department heads periodically review public services and administrative functions to determine whether existing operating methods are the most efficient and effective way to provide services and activities.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no evidence that Reynoldsville Borough Council, the Borough Secretary, or department heads regularly review public services or administrative functions to assess operational efficiency or effectiveness. Based on interviews and available documentation, the Borough lacks formal performance evaluations, benchmarking practices, or structured service delivery reviews. This absence of review mechanisms prevents the identification of inefficiencies, limits opportunities for process improvement, and hinders long-term planning.

☐ ***Factor: Operational Policies***

The Borough has developed and regularly updates comprehensive operational policies including an employee handbook and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), providing clear, accessible policies for consistent guidance on employee conduct, roles, and responsibilities while promoting safety, fairness, and accountability. SOPs ensure standardized execution of critical tasks, reducing errors and operational risks. Policies are reviewed annually and communicated regularly to all staff.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough lacks a comprehensive employee handbook and formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), resulting in unclear guidance for staff regarding roles, responsibilities, and conduct; this absence contributes to inconsistent operations, increased risk of errors, and diminished accountability. Policies are not regularly reviewed or communicated, underscoring the need to develop, adopt, and maintain up-to-date operational policies in line with best practices.

☐ ***Factor: Municipal Records***

The Borough adheres to the records retention and disposition schedule adopted by the Local Government Records Committee of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. For the records not covered by this timetable, the municipality has adopted a retention and disposition schedule based upon the administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical value of the records.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville Borough does not actively adhere to the records retention and disposition schedule issued by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Local Government Records Committee. There is no evidence that a formal policy has been adopted or implemented, and current practices reflect poor records management. Staff rely heavily on paper files and personal email accounts, and records are stored haphazardly with no clear retention system in place. There is no tracking or cataloging of documents, including those related to Right-to-Know requests, and no formal policies exist for the retention of digital communications.

These practices raise concerns about legal compliance, transparency, and the Borough's ability to respond to public information requests, and they fall significantly short of the standards recommended for Pennsylvania municipalities.

☐ ***Factor: Municipal Budget Development***

Budget preparation is the responsibility of an appointed official who has a general understanding of, or who has been trained in, budgeting and municipal financial management practices.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Budget preparation in Reynoldsville is currently handled by the Administrative Assistant, who is not formally appointed as Borough Secretary or Treasurer and does not have documented training in municipal budgeting or financial management. The process is informal and historically based, relying on prior year figures with minimal analysis or strategic input. There is no evidence that the individual responsible has received training on municipal finance, and the Borough lacks foundational practices such as cash flow forecasting, fund accounting, or structured departmental budgeting.

The annual budget contains a budget message which, among other things, draws attention to positive financial circumstances as well as areas of concern.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's annual budget does not include a formal budget message. There is no narrative highlighting positive financial circumstances or drawing attention to areas of concern, limiting the document's usefulness as a communication and planning tool for Council and the public.

The budget is comprehensive, covering all governmental, proprietary, and fiduciary funds for each fiscal year. The budget, as an essential element of financial planning, control, and evaluation, presents projected revenues and expenditures for both capital and operating areas for all funds.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's budget is not comprehensive; it primarily focuses on the General Fund and lacks inclusion of all governmental, proprietary, and fiduciary funds. Capital expenditures are not formally budgeted, and the budget does not provide a full projection of revenues and expenses across all funds, limiting its effectiveness as a tool for financial planning, control, and evaluation.

For each expenditure area of the budget, the responsible municipal department head presents a commentary to substantiate their expenditure requests. The request should include:

- 1) a statement of need,
- 2) the volume and nature of work to be performed, and
- 3) supporting data for estimated costs and possible benefits to be achieved.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not follow a formal process requiring department heads to present detailed justifications for their budget expenditure requests. Budget preparation lacks a structured approach where statements of need, workload volume, cost estimates, and anticipated benefits are clearly documented and reviewed, reducing transparency and informed decision-making.

The budget format displays all revenues and expenditures for the immediate past three to five years, the estimated actual total revenues and expenditures for the current year and projections for the coming year.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's budget format does not provide a comprehensive multi-year financial view; it lacks detailed historical revenue and expenditure data for the past several years, current year estimated totals, and forward-looking projections, limiting the ability of Council and staff to analyze trends and make informed fiscal decisions.

☐ *Factor: Multi-Year Capital Improvements Planning*

The municipality has prepared and is implementing a multi-year capital improvements plan. It identifies the estimated cost, starting and completion dates for each project, the amount of money to be spent each year, the method of financing each project, and the impact each capital project will have upon the operating budget.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not prepared or implemented a formal multi-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). There is no documented plan outlining project costs, timelines, financing methods, or anticipated impacts on the operating budget, leaving capital needs uncoordinated and funding strategies unclear.

The multi-year financial planning process includes projections for future revenue and expenditure programs. These projections are based upon various assumptions as to the future local environment.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough currently does not engage in multi-year financial planning or develop projections for future revenues and expenditures. Budgeting remains largely incremental and based on historical data, without incorporating assumptions about changing local conditions or long-term fiscal forecasting.

Detailed schedules of debt service requirements are presented in the annual budget.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not include detailed schedules of debt service requirements in its annual budget, limiting transparency and hindering Council's ability to fully understand and manage debt obligations and related financial impacts.

The replacement and maintenance of municipal equipment, vehicles or facilities is to be in accordance with a formal schedule. This plan is used for planning and in preparing the annual operating budget.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough lacks a formal replacement or maintenance schedule for municipal equipment, vehicles, and facilities; as a result, these needs are not systematically planned for or integrated into the annual budgeting process, contributing to deferred maintenance and operational inefficiencies.

☐ ***Factor: Financial Monitoring and Auditing***

Revenue and expenditure projections are realistic and based on valid supporting data.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Revenue and expenditure projections are largely based on historical data without rigorous validation or incorporation of current trends, which undermines their accuracy and limits the Borough's ability to make informed financial decisions.

Regular interim reports of actual revenues and expenditures, as compared to budgeted amounts, are prepared and presented to the governing body on a periodic basis, accompanied by commentary from the preparer to highlight extraordinary circumstances and concerns.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not consistently prepare or present regular interim financial reports, and there is a lack of formal commentary to explain variances or highlight significant concerns, limiting Council's ability to monitor fiscal performance effectively.

An internal control system exists and provides for both administrative and accounting controls. The benefits of the intended controls exceed the costs associated with establishing and maintaining the system.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough currently lacks a formal internal control system encompassing both administrative and accounting controls, which increases the risk of errors,

inefficiencies, and potential financial mismanagement, indicating a critical need to establish controls that balance cost with effective oversight.

The annual audit is conducted by an independent, professional auditor or auditing firm in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

While the Borough engages an independent auditor to conduct annual audits in accordance with accepted standards, the audit process has consistently revealed material weaknesses without providing clear, actionable recommendations for improvement, resulting in limited benefit to financial transparency, accountability, and operational enhancements.

☐ ***Factor: Revenue Generation***

Where fees and service charges have been established, they are adequate to recoup all direct and indirect costs of providing these services.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not have a published or recently updated fee schedule, resulting in a lack of clarity regarding fees charged for services; no formal documentation was provided to the consultant, indicating inadequate cost recovery practices and inconsistent fee administration.

The Borough has established and maintains an up-to-date fee schedule aligned with actual service costs and market standards. A transparent fee schedule ensures equitable cost recovery for services and helps avoid subsidy of user-specific expenses by the general fund. Fee schedules are reviewed periodically and publicly posted to enhance accountability and community understanding.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not established or maintained an up-to-date fee schedule that accurately reflects current service costs or market standards. There is no evidence of regular review or public posting of fees, which undermines transparency, equitable cost recovery, and may lead to unintended subsidization of user-specific services by general funds. This gap highlights the need for the Borough to develop a formalized, regularly reviewed fee schedule that is accessible to the public.

☐ **Factor: Financial Policies and Procedures**

The Borough has implemented strict cash handling procedures with defined controls to safeguard municipal revenues. Procedures include segregation of duties, timely deposit protocols, documentation of receipts, and regular reconciliations. These controls reduce the risk of misappropriation and support accurate financial reporting.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not implemented cash handling procedures with clearly defined internal controls. There is a lack of formal segregation of duties, standardized timely deposit protocols, comprehensive documentation of receipts, and consistent reconciliations. This absence increases the risk of revenue misappropriation and undermines the reliability and accuracy of financial reporting.

The Borough has adopted a formal investment policy that prioritizes safety, liquidity, and yield in accordance with state law. An investment policy guides prudent management of municipal funds, balances risk and return, and ensures transparency and accountability in investment decisions. Policy adherence is monitored through regular reporting to Council.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not adopted an investment policy, and without, there is no structured guidance for managing municipal funds prudently, balancing risk and return, or ensuring transparency and accountability. Additionally, there is no evidence of regular reporting to Council on investment activities or adherence to best practices, leaving the Borough's funds potentially exposed to unnecessary risk.

☐ **Factor: Technology and Equipment**

Clear policies governing personal device use and technology resources have been established to protect data security and maintain productivity. Policies address acceptable use, confidentiality, monitoring, and consequences of misuse. Training on cybersecurity best practices is provided to all employees.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Policies on personal device use have not been adopted. Staff frequently conduct official Borough business using personal cell phones and email accounts, particularly in code enforcement, which raises serious concerns about data

security, confidentiality, and compliance with Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law. There is no formal acceptable use policy, no monitoring protocols, and no cybersecurity training provided to employees, leaving the Borough highly vulnerable to data breaches, legal noncompliance, and operational inefficiencies.

The Borough has instituted a social media policy that defines appropriate conduct, content standards, and administrative responsibilities. A clear policy helps maintain professional, respectful, and transparent communication with the public while mitigating risks related to misinformation, privacy breaches, or inappropriate content.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not adopted a social media policy, though it does actively manage a presence on Facebook. In the absence of a policy, there are no standards governing conduct, content, or administrative responsibility for posts made on behalf of the Borough. This lack of guidance poses reputational and legal risks and prevents the Borough from leveraging social media as a low-cost tool for timely public engagement, transparency, and information dissemination.

The Borough maintains an accessible, regularly updated municipal website that complies with ADA standards and provides key public information. The website includes meeting agendas and minutes, contact information, municipal codes, services, and emergency alerts. Ongoing maintenance ensures information accuracy and promotes public engagement.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's current website is outdated, lacks ADA-compliant formatting, and fails to provide even the most basic public information, such as meeting agendas, minutes, ordinances, or department contact details. There is no structure for regular content updates, and the site is not used to share emergency alerts, community news, or municipal services. This severely limits transparency and undermines public engagement. A functional, accessible, and informative website is a basic expectation of modern local government and is essential to supporting communication, compliance with the Sunshine Act, and community trust.

☐ ***Factor: Human Resources***

Detailed, up-to-date job descriptions that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and qualifications have been created for all positions.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Job descriptions have not been drafted for any position within the Borough's operations. This lack of clarity contributes to operational confusion, diminished accountability, and difficulty with onboarding, supervision, and performance evaluation. Clearly defined job descriptions are essential to establishing expectations, supporting equitable personnel decisions, and promoting professional management practices across departments.

The Borough has implemented standardized, merit-based hiring practices with clear recruitment strategies to attract qualified candidates. Processes include consistent application review, structured interviews, background checks, and orientation programs. Retention efforts focus on competitive compensation, training opportunities, and positive workplace culture.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough lacks standardized, merit-based hiring practices and does not follow a consistent recruitment strategy. Hiring decisions are often informal and undocumented, with indications that personal relationships or favoritism may influence employment decisions - contributing to perceptions of nepotism within the organization. There is no structured process for application screening, interviews, or onboarding, and no formal retention efforts. These practices undermine transparency, limit accountability, and contribute to low employee morale. Establishing fair, competitive hiring procedures and eliminating even the appearance of nepotism is critical to restoring public trust and attracting qualified candidates.

☐ ***Factor: Collective Bargaining***

The Borough engages in good faith collective bargaining with recognized employee unions, balancing labor rights with fiscal and operational considerations.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

While the Borough maintains active contracts with both AFSCME and Teamsters unions, there is limited evidence that collective bargaining has been approached strategically or in good faith in recent years. Contracts contain outdated, contradictory, or overly generous provisions that the Borough has failed to revise through negotiation - such as vague language around work hours, overly broad leave allowances, and inappropriate limitations on managerial discretion. Additionally, several contract provisions (ex. health insurance language,

grievance procedures) conflict with Borough interests or state law and have gone unchallenged. A more proactive and balanced approach to labor relations - grounded in legal compliance, operational feasibility, and financial sustainability - is urgently needed.

☐ *Factor: Land Use Policies and Regulations*

The Borough has adopted a comprehensive zoning ordinance which incorporates the purposes set forth in the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and reflects the latest legal requirements set forth in the Code.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville has not adopted a modern, comprehensive zoning ordinance consistent with the purposes and requirements outlined in the MPC. The Borough falls under a joint comprehensive plan covering several counties, which though it provides many applicable recommendations and strategies for Jefferson County, does not address the Borough's needs specifically.

The zoning ordinance has been updated within the last 10 years and is available online in a user-friendly format.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has not adopted a comprehensive zoning ordinance and thus does not provide zoning regulations in a consolidated, user-friendly format online. While the Borough does have standalone ordinances that address zoning-adjacent issues - such as setback requirements for structures, fences, and walls under Chapter 70 (Building Construction), group homes and transitional housing (Chapters 109 and 114), and junkyards (Chapter 117) - these are not organized within a unified zoning framework.

The fragmented structure of Reynoldsville's land use regulations undermines transparency and complicates enforcement. To modernize and improve land use governance, these various standalone ordinances should be consolidated into a single, comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that reflects the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), aligns with best practices, and is made accessible online.

The Borough has adopted a subdivision and land development ordinance, in accordance with provisions outlined in the MPC.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville Borough has not adopted a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) in accordance with MPC provisions. As a result, the Borough lacks the formal regulatory framework necessary to review and manage land development proposals, enforce design standards, or require improvements such as streets, sidewalks, stormwater facilities, or utility connections. The absence of a SALDO leaves the Borough without critical tools to shape future development, ensure infrastructure adequacy, or protect community character, and places additional strain on administrative capacity. Developing and adopting a SALDO should be a near-term priority to enhance local planning capabilities and establish a clear, enforceable development review process.

☐ *Factor: Comprehensive Planning*

The municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan. This plan includes, at a minimum, the following: an overall statement of objectives; plans for land use, housing, transportation, community facilities and utilities; a discussion of short- and long- range implementation strategies, and a plan for the protection of natural and historic resources.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville has not adopted a comprehensive plan. As a result, there is no formal document guiding long-term land use, infrastructure investment, housing needs, transportation systems, or the protection of natural and historic resources. The absence of a comprehensive plan significantly limits the Borough's ability to strategically manage growth, secure certain state and federal funding opportunities, or align zoning and capital improvements with community goals. Development of a modern, community-informed comprehensive plan is strongly recommended to establish a clear vision for the Borough's future and to support informed decision-making by Borough Council and staff.

The municipality has adopted a comprehensive redevelopment plan that identifies priority reinvestment areas, outlines realistic strategies for revitalization, and aligns with local economic and housing goals. The redevelopment plan serves as a roadmap for reinvestment, targeting underutilized, deteriorating, or strategically located areas for improvement. The plan was developed with community input and includes specific tools - such as zoning updates, grant strategies, infrastructure upgrades, and developer incentives - to attract investment. It aligns with DCED planning guidance and, where applicable, is eligible for programs such as the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) or CDBG funding. Regular progress evaluation ensures

that redevelopment goals remain achievable and responsive to market conditions.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville has not adopted a redevelopment plan and lacks a coordinated strategy to guide reinvestment in priority areas, address economic and housing challenges, or leverage state and federal funding opportunities like RACP or CDBG. The absence of a redevelopment roadmap limits the Borough's ability to attract investment, improve deteriorating properties, and promote sustainable revitalization. Developing a comprehensive redevelopment plan with community engagement and measurable goals is critical to support strategic revitalization efforts and economic growth.

The Borough established and maintains a regularly updated inventory of vacant, abandoned, and blighted properties to guide enforcement, redevelopment, and grant targeting. The inventory provides a data-driven foundation for code enforcement, land banking, and grant applications aimed at reversing neighborhood decline. It should include property condition, ownership, tax status, zoning, and enforcement history.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Though Borough officials identified blight as a challenge in the community, Reynoldsville currently does not maintain a regularly updated inventory of vacant, abandoned, or blighted properties. Without this essential tool, the Borough lacks a data-driven foundation for targeted code enforcement, strategic land banking, and effective grant applications. The absence of a comprehensive property inventory hinders efforts to combat neighborhood decline, prioritize resources, and support redevelopment initiatives.

Recommendations

Reynoldsville Borough faces significant governance challenges that undermine effective leadership, operational efficiency, and public trust. The following recommendations address critical structural, administrative, and policy deficiencies identified through comprehensive review and stakeholder input. Collectively, these recommendations aim to restore stability to Borough Council, professionalize municipal management, enhance transparency and accountability, and build internal capacity. Implementing these improvements is essential to moving Reynoldsville toward a more effective, responsive, and sustainable local government capable of meeting current and future community needs.

GOV 1 - Reduce Borough Council from Seven to Five Members

Complete the ongoing process to reduce the size of Borough Council from seven to five members in order to improve leadership stability, enhance decision-making, and reflect the practical realities of civic engagement in a small community. The Borough has consistently struggled to recruit and retain engaged council members, with frequent vacancies and high turnover disrupting continuity and weakening long-term governance. Many seats are filled by appointment rather than election, and the demands of public service often deter potential candidates.

Reducing the size of Council will allow for a more focused and functional leadership team, streamline deliberations, and promote consistent progress on policy priorities. This process should be completed in coordination with the Borough solicitor through a formal petition to the court.

GOV 2 - Conduct a Forensic Audit to Identify and Address Financial Irregularities

Engage a qualified, independent forensic auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive review of Borough finances over the past several years. With no established financial practices in place, incomplete records, and significant discrepancies in reported figures, the Borough must undertake a forensic audit to uncover where funds were spent, whether mismanagement or fraud occurred, and how procedural failures contributed to the current uncertainty. This deep investigation will trace transactions, evaluate compliance with laws and policies, and identify missing or misallocated funds.

The results will not only provide a factual account of past financial activity but also inform the development of strong internal controls, ensure accountability, and help restore public trust in Borough governance.

GOV 3 - Hire or Contract a Full-Time Borough Manager to Provide Professional Leadership

Establish a full-time Borough Manager position - either through direct hire or by contracting with a qualified third party as allowed under Pennsylvania law - to restore professional, centralized leadership to municipal operations. Reynoldsville currently operates without a Borough Manager or equivalent administrative professional, resulting in fragmented oversight, blurred reporting lines, and the absence of coordinated leadership. This has weakened day-to-day operations and hindered long-term planning.

Pennsylvania law permits boroughs to contract with external firms or individuals to fulfill the duties of a Borough Manager, providing flexibility for smaller municipalities facing resource constraints. As recommended by PSAB and the SPC, a professional manager brings expertise in budgeting, personnel administration, grant management, and strategic planning. Additionally, Council may appoint the Borough Manager to also serve as the Borough Secretary and/or Treasurer, which would satisfy statutory requirements under the Pennsylvania Borough Code - filling the current void in these key administrative roles.

This structural change would immediately increase capacity, provide accountability, and establish a clear point of contact for residents, staff, and partner agencies. Whether through direct employment or contract, appointing a Borough Manager is essential to implement best practices, strengthen internal controls, and support informed policymaking - allowing Council to focus on governance rather than daily operations.

GOV 4 - Adopt a Comprehensive Code of Ethics to Guide Borough Governance

Formally adopt a Code of Ethics that sets clear and enforceable standards for the ethical operation of local government, consistent with SPC and PSAB best practices and aligned with the public's expectations for transparency and accountability. This policy should apply to all elected officials, appointed officials, and employees, and should be adopted by resolution.

At a minimum, the Code of Ethics should include provisions that address:

- **Confidentiality and Disclosure:** Prohibiting the use or release of confidential information gained through public service for personal benefit or the benefit of others.
- **Gifts:** Banning the acceptance of gifts from individuals or entities seeking financial relationships with the Borough, regulated by the Borough, involved in legal proceedings with the Borough, or whose interests may be influenced by Borough decisions.
- **Financial Disclosure:** Requiring compliance with all financial disclosure requirements established under Pennsylvania law, with timely filing of all required forms.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Prohibiting officials and employees from participating in decisions or transactions where there is a real or perceived financial or personal interest, including exerting influence over legislation or contracts from which they or close associates could benefit.
- **Nepotism and Preferential Treatment:** Prohibiting elected officials from using their influence to benefit family members in hiring decisions and barring the future

employment of family members of elected officials within the Borough or any affiliated authority.

- **Improper Use of Influence:** Barring public officials or employees from offering paid services or favors based on their position.
- **Disclosure of Interests:** Requiring public disclosure of any direct or indirect financial or personal interest in legislation or other official actions, and prohibiting officials from voting on matters where a conflict exists.

Adoption of this Code will establish a consistent ethical framework for decision-making, reduce the risk of real or perceived misconduct, and support public trust in local government. Training and public access to the policy should be part of implementation to ensure its visibility and effectiveness.

GOV 5 - Implement Official Borough Email System with Journaling and Archival Capabilities

Create and require use of standardized Borough-issued email addresses with secure journaling to ensure legal compliance and professional communication. Reynoldsville Borough must immediately transition away from the use of personal email accounts and devices for conducting municipal business. All officials and staff should be issued professional, Borough-controlled email addresses (preferably using a *.gov domain), and all correspondence should be routed through a secure email journaling and archival system. This step is essential to ensure compliance with Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law, which requires that public records - including digital communications - be accessible and retrievable upon request.

Without this infrastructure, the Borough is at risk of violating state open records and Sunshine Act laws, weakening public trust and exposing itself to potential legal liability. A centralized and secure email system will also support continuity of operations, improve communication, and promote greater professionalism across all departments.

GOV 6 - Improve Fiscal Management to Strengthen Financial Oversight and Transparency

Take decisive action as detailed in recommendations from this STMP process' Financial Conditions Assessment and Fiscal Trend Analysis. Currently, the Borough performs only the bare minimum in fiscal management, which is insufficient to meet statutory requirements and best practice standards. To rectify this, key actions must include -

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- Appointing a qualified Borough Secretary/Treasurer to assume full responsibility for all statutory fiscal duties, ensuring proper oversight and legal compliance.
- Implementing a structured chart of accounts aligned with DCED standards to standardize and improve financial reporting.
- Utilizing QuickBooks “classes” or equivalent features to segment transactions by department for enhanced transparency and management.
- Developing and adopting a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) alongside an annual capital budgeting process to strategically address asset maintenance and replacement needs.
- Instituting monthly cash flow projections and improved revenue forecasting to proactively manage liquidity and financial planning.
- Transitioning to or integrating a fund accounting platform designed for municipal operations to ensure transparency and streamline audit processes.
- Providing targeted financial training to Borough staff and Council members to support informed fiscal oversight and decision-making.

Implementing these recommendations will elevate the Borough’s financial management from minimal compliance to a best-practice standard, safeguarding public resources and enhancing operational effectiveness.

GOV 7 - Provide Targeted Council Training on Roles, Ethics, and Governance

Equip elected officials with foundational training on their legal responsibilities, ethical standards, and best practices in municipal governance. Reynoldsville Borough Council would benefit from structured training to reinforce key principles of public service, including confidentiality, duty of loyalty, and the distinction between personal interests and official responsibilities. Recent issues - such as breaches of confidentiality and actions driven by individual agendas - highlight a lack of shared understanding about the legal and ethical expectations of local officials.

Council should participate in a formal training program, such as the Local Government Academy’s Newly Elected Officials Course or relevant offerings from PSAB, to clarify roles under the Pennsylvania Borough Code, improve collaboration, and promote sound decision-making. Annual or biennial refreshers should be adopted as policy, especially given the Borough’s high turnover and history of instability.

GOV 8 - Standardize Agenda Preparation and Ensure Public Posting in Compliance with the Sunshine Act

Establish a standardized process for creating, approving, and publicly posting meeting agendas in compliance with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act. Current practices - such as overwriting prior agendas, misplacing files, and failing to post agendas on the Borough website - undermine transparency, violate legal requirements, and erode public trust. Agendas should be finalized in a consistent format, archived properly, and posted on the Borough's website at least 24 hours in advance of all public meetings. Designating a Borough Secretary to manage this process will help ensure accountability and improve public access to local government proceedings.

GOV 9 - Maintain a Consistent Meeting Schedule and Improve Committee Transparency

Ensure regular work sessions and committee meetings are held, documented, and used effectively to support informed decision-making. To improve accountability and coordination, Reynoldsville Borough should formalize its current practice of holding work sessions and committee meetings - such as those related to Code Enforcement, Police and Fire, and Budget and Finance - and ensure that these meetings are held consistently and with sufficient public notice. Each committee should be expected to maintain basic minutes that document attendance, discussion topics, and recommendations to Council. These minutes should be included in Council packets and posted online, in accordance with Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act. A consistent meeting schedule and better documentation will support clearer communication, enable more informed Council decisions, and provide residents with greater insight into Borough operations and priorities.

GOV 10 - Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Implement Regular Reporting to Council

Define measurable performance benchmarks across departments and require regular reporting to Borough Council to support transparency, oversight, and data-driven decision-making. The Borough currently lacks meaningful performance reporting, leaving elected officials with limited insight into operational effectiveness, service delivery, and departmental progress. To improve governance and accountability, each department should identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with core responsibilities and community priorities - such as response times, permit volumes, code enforcement actions, or grant applications submitted.

Department heads or a new Borough Manager should present quarterly updates to Council summarizing KPI trends, explaining variances, and highlighting areas for improvement. This practice will support informed policy decisions, allow Council to better evaluate the performance of departments and programs, and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and results for residents.

GOV 11 - Develop and Implement a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Create a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to assess, prioritize, and fund essential infrastructure, fleet, facility, and technology upgrades. Reynoldsville currently lacks any form of capital planning or reserve funding, leading to a pattern of deferred maintenance, crisis-driven repairs, and ongoing deterioration of Borough assets. Three fleet vehicles are in poor condition - two of which are inoperable - and the Borough's buildings require major repairs to ensure basic functionality and safety. Similarly, information technology systems are outdated and insufficient for effective municipal operations.

These challenges cannot be addressed without a structured plan. A CIP should include a full capital vulnerability assessment (CVA) that evaluates asset condition and replacement needs across all departments. The CIP must identify priorities, include cost estimates and timelines, and align with both operational goals and available funding strategies. Without this planning, Reynoldsville will continue to fall further behind — eroding service quality, increasing long-term costs, and undermining public confidence in local government.

GOV 12 - Codify and Publish the Borough's Ordinances

Update and digitize the Borough's Code of Ordinances to ensure accessibility, clarity, and legal compliance. Reynoldsville's ordinance book has not been updated since 2018, and current ordinances are neither codified nor available online. As a result, residents, staff, and even elected officials lack clear access to the laws and regulations that govern the Borough - creating confusion, inconsistent enforcement, and barriers to effective policymaking.

Municipalities should maintain a current and codified ordinance book, with an online version accessible to the public. The Borough should engage a legal publisher or codification service to review and update its ordinances, eliminate conflicts and redundancies, and organize them into a searchable, user-friendly format. Making the code available online will support transparency, promote legal compliance, and provide a foundation for more informed and consistent decision-making by Council and staff.

GOV 13 - Digitize Borough Records and Establish Systems to Track Right-to-Know Requests

Implement a digital records management system and formal process for tracking, responding to, and archiving Right-to-Know (RTK) requests in compliance with Pennsylvania law. Reynoldsville currently lacks basic records management practices, with no centralized digital storage, inconsistent documentation, and no tracking system for RTK requests. This disorganized approach not only undermines transparency and institutional memory but also places the Borough at risk of violating the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law, which requires timely and documented responses to public records requests.

PSAB and DCED best practices emphasize the importance of digital recordkeeping to ensure accessibility, improve responsiveness, and reduce administrative burden. The Borough should establish a secure digital filing system for all municipal records, assign clear RTK responsibilities to a designated Open Records Officer, and adopt a tracking tool (such as a spreadsheet or cloud-based platform) to log, monitor, and respond to public inquiries. Public records, including meeting minutes and budgets, should also be routinely published online to promote transparency and reduce ad hoc requests.

GOV 14 - Implement a Centralized Document Management and Agenda-Building System

Adopt a digital platform to streamline agenda preparation, centralize document storage, and improve transparency and compliance. The Borough currently does not utilize a structured system for organizing, archiving, and publishing public documents - resulting in missing or inaccessible meeting agendas, minutes, ordinances, and reports. These deficiencies not only impede public access and internal efficiency but also increase the risk of non-compliance with Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law and Sunshine Act. A cloud-based document management and agenda-building platform (such as CiviLink) would allow staff to prepare and post materials in advance of meetings, track and archive council actions, and make key public documents accessible through the Borough website. Such systems also support internal collaboration, simplify record retrieval, and reduce staff time spent on manual processes. Integrating this tool into day-to-day operations is essential to building institutional knowledge, supporting transparency, and modernizing the Borough's administrative practices.

GOV 15 - Clarify and Update Employment Classification and Benefits Policy

Establish clear policies to define full-time status across dual part-time roles and ensure compliance with FLSA, ACA, and PSAB pension eligibility standards. Reynoldsville currently lacks policies addressing employees who hold multiple part-time positions within the Borough, creating significant legal and financial risk. As illustrated by recent concerns surrounding an employee working 40 hours per week across two roles without benefits, federal labor law (FLSA) requires overtime pay for hours exceeding 40 per week, and under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), combined hours may trigger full-time status for insurance eligibility - even if the Borough is not an Applicable Large Employer. Moreover, participation in the PSAB pension system may be affected by internal definitions of full-time work, requiring further clarification.

The Borough must revise its personnel policies or adopt an employee handbook that -

- 1) Defines how combined hours across positions are treated;
- 2) Sets clear benefit and pension eligibility rules; and
- 3) Complies with state and federal law.

Consulting PSAB and the Borough solicitor will be critical to avoid future liabilities and to ensure fairness and transparency for all Borough employees.

GOV 16 - Enhance the Borough Website to Improve Communication and Community Outreach

Implement enhancements to the Borough's official website to better serve both residents and visitors by improving the accessibility, timeliness, and presentation of information. A well-designed, user-friendly website is a critical tool for transparent governance, civic engagement, and community promotion.

For residents, the website should be regularly updated with council meeting agendas and minutes, public notices, ordinances, budget information, and event announcements. Online forms, permit applications, and fee schedules should be easily accessible to streamline interactions with Borough departments. Clear contact information and a functional calendar of events will further support transparency and resident engagement.

In addition, the website should be used as a marketing tool to highlight the Borough's unique assets, local businesses, recreational opportunities, history, and community events. Creating dedicated pages or interactive features that showcase the area's strengths can help attract new

residents, visitors, and economic investment. Enhancements may include integrating GIS-based maps, adding high-quality imagery, and ensuring mobile responsiveness.

Strategic website upgrades will strengthen the Borough's communications infrastructure, support local development goals, and promote a stronger connection between the Borough and its stakeholders.

GOV 17 - Implement Personal Device and Technology Use Policy

Adopt and enforce clear policies to regulate personal device use, improve data security, and ensure compliance with public records laws. The Borough has not established a formal policy governing the use of personal devices or digital communication tools for official business. As a result, staff - particularly the Code Enforcement Officer - frequently use personal cell phones and email accounts to take inspection photos, communicate with residents, and perform core job duties. This practice exposes the Borough to serious legal and operational risks, including noncompliance with the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law, loss of public records, and potential data breaches.

The Borough should adopt a comprehensive Personal Device and Technology Use Policy that defines acceptable use, establishes confidentiality and monitoring protocols, and mandates secure storage of public records. Where appropriate, the Borough should provide official devices to employees performing fieldwork. In addition, all staff should receive basic cybersecurity training to reinforce safe practices and reduce organizational risk.

GOV 18 - Renegotiate and Modernize the AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement

Revise the Borough's current AFSCME contract to improve legal clarity, reduce financial risk, and better align with operational needs and public sector best practices. The Borough's AFSCME contract contains several outdated, conflicting, or vague provisions that expose the Borough to unnecessary liability, fiscal strain, and administrative inefficiency. As part of the next negotiation cycle—or sooner if mutually agreed—the Borough should work with legal counsel and union representatives to revise and clarify contract language in a manner consistent with current operational realities and best practices recommended by PSAB and the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board. These changes will help strengthen personnel management, reduce potential grievances, and ensure compliance with applicable labor law. Specifically, the Borough should -

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- **Recognition Clause**
 - Amend to include clerical staff and reference all applicable PERA certification numbers to ensure accurate unit recognition.
- **Non-Discrimination Language (Article IV)**
 - Remove the first paragraph to avoid exposing the Borough to grievances based on broad or subjective claims beyond standard legal protections.
- **Hours of Work and Overtime**
 - Clarify language to ensure that overtime is paid only for time worked in excess of 40 hours per week, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- **Promotions and Vacancy Filling**
 - Revise promotion provisions to allow for a longer timeline when filling vacancies, better aligning with Borough Council's public meeting schedule.
- **Sick Leave Accrual**
 - Reduce annual sick leave allotment from 15 days to 10-12 days to reflect standard municipal leave practices.
- **Sick Leave Payout at Retirement**
 - Replace the current formula (50% of employee's wage) with a fixed monetary cap to control long-term financial exposure.
- **Leaves of Absence (Article XV)**
 - Remove Sections 3 and 5; revise Section 6 to limit the one-year leave of absence for union duties to one employee at a time.
- **Health Insurance Contributions**
 - Remove Section 1 due to conflicts with Section 5; revise Section 5 to clearly specify the required employee contribution percentage.
- **Grievance Procedure and Discipline**
 - Eliminate Sections 2 and 3 of the Grievance Article.
 - Revise Article XXVII to read:
"The Employer shall take no disciplinary action without just cause. The Employer shall utilize progressive discipline for most offenses, but the parties agree that some misconduct warrants suspension for the first offense."

By implementing these updates, the Borough can improve clarity, reduce ambiguity, and ensure that the contract supports - not hinders - effective municipal governance.

GOV 19 - Renegotiate and Streamline the Teamsters Collective Bargaining Agreement

Amend the Borough's Teamsters contract to reassert managerial rights, modernize personnel provisions, and reduce legal and administrative risk. The current Teamsters contract includes multiple provisions that constrain managerial discretion, duplicate benefits provided in other contracts, and introduce unnecessary legal exposure. To modernize the agreement, promote consistent personnel practices, and better align with public sector management standards (as recommended by PSAB and the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board), the Borough should initiate targeted contract revisions. These changes will help ensure clarity, reduce cost, and support more effective oversight of public safety functions. Revisions should include the following -

- **Remove Chief of Police from Bargaining Unit**
 - Exclude the Chief of Police position from union coverage to reflect the managerial and supervisory nature of the role.
- **Eliminate Management Prerogatives from Bargaining Terms**
 - Remove Section B (Job Qualifications) as hiring standards are a managerial right not subject to bargaining.
 - Eliminate Sections E, F, and G, which address subjects outside the scope of mandatory bargaining.
- **Clarify Supervisory Authority Over Scheduling**
 - Revise **Article 3** to grant the Chief of Police full scheduling discretion.
- **Align Leave Policies with AFSCME Contract**
 - Revise time-off benefits to:
 - Eliminate personal day carryover.
 - Add language defining appropriate uses of sick leave.
 - Match accrual rates and structure with the AFSCME contract to simplify administration.
- **Rescind Compensatory Time Provisions**
 - Remove the option for compensatory time in lieu of overtime.
 - Eliminate the payout of unused compensatory time to control long-term liability.
- **Revise Call-Out Procedures**
 - Eliminate unclear definitions in the Call-Out section.
 - Retain only the first paragraph (excluding the final sentence) to simplify the policy.
- **Modernize Family Leave Policies**

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- Revise leave sections to ensure family leave provisions are gender-neutral and legally compliant.
- **Implement Health Insurance Premium Contributions**
 - Negotiate employee premium share contributions as a percentage of total plan cost to promote fiscal sustainability.
- **Revise Grievance and Arbitration Procedures**
 - Shorten the timeframe to file grievances or request arbitration from 30 days to 10 days.
 - Remove the clause that prohibits appeal of arbitration decisions to court.
 - Add a provision stating that employees may pursue disciplinary appeals either through the grievance procedure or under Borough Code - not both.

These changes will help realign the Borough's contract with managerial best practices, reduce unnecessary liabilities, and establish consistency across workforce policies.

GOV 20 - Develop and Adopt Formal Job Descriptions for All Staff

Develop and adopt formal, written job descriptions for all staff positions to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships. The absence of job descriptions has resulted in confusion over duties, overlap and redundancy in tasks, and ongoing tension among staff regarding who is responsible for what. Clearly defined job descriptions will establish an organizational chain of command, support accountability, reduce conflict, and ensure that critical tasks do not fall through the cracks. Job descriptions should be reviewed and approved by Borough Council and updated periodically to reflect operational needs.

GOV 21 - Establish a Borough Compensation Plan and Pay Scale Table

Develop and adopt a structured compensation plan that defines job classifications, salary ranges, and advancement criteria to improve transparency, fairness, and employee retention. The Borough does not have a formal compensation framework, contributing to low employee morale, perceived inequities in pay, and limited confidence in how raises or promotions are determined. Without clear guidelines for salary ranges, job responsibilities, or performance-based increases, the Borough faces challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. A compensation plan should include defined job titles, standardized pay grades, and criteria for progression - such as certifications, tenure, or performance benchmarks. The plan should also address internal equity and be periodically reviewed against comparable municipalities. Establishing this system will enhance organizational fairness, promote transparency in personnel decisions, and support a more stable and motivated workforce.

GOV 22 - Adopt and Maintain an Employee Handbook

Create, adopt, and regularly update a comprehensive employee handbook to establish clear personnel policies and ensure legal compliance. Reynoldsville currently operates without a formal employee handbook, leaving staff without written guidance on workplace expectations, benefits, disciplinary procedures, or employment rights. This lack of structure creates risk for the Borough, undermines accountability, and makes consistent personnel management nearly impossible.

Every municipality should maintain a current handbook that aligns with applicable labor laws, Borough Code requirements, and the organization's unique operational needs. The Borough should begin by drafting a handbook that includes essential policies on conduct, leave, benefits, discipline, grievance procedures, and workplace safety. Once adopted by Council, the handbook should be reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in law, staffing, or organizational structure. This foundational document is critical for protecting the Borough, supporting employees, and ensuring consistent, professional administration.

GOV 23 - Draft and Utilize Departmental Policy & Procedure Manuals

Establish written guidance to ensure consistent operations, support accountability, and strengthen organizational culture. The Borough operates without standardized internal policies or procedural guidance, leaving staff and elected officials without clear expectations or direction. This lack of structure contributes to confusion, inconsistent service delivery, and a negative workplace culture that exacerbates turnover among both personnel and Council.

Each department should maintain a policy and procedure manual outlining core responsibilities, workflows, compliance requirements, and service standards. These manuals should be reviewed and updated regularly, especially during transitions, to ensure continuity and effective onboarding. Establishing this framework will help clarify roles, support staff performance, and promote a more stable and professional government.

GOV 24 - Implement a Formal Employee Performance Review System

Establish a structured annual evaluation process to set goals, measure progress, and support employee development and accountability. Reynoldsville currently has no performance review system in place, resulting in a workplace culture with little oversight, limited recognition, and no formal path for advancement. Employees often remain in the same roles for years without clearly defined expectations, feedback, or opportunities for growth. This contributes to low morale, inconsistent service delivery, and a lack of accountability.

Implementing an annual performance evaluation process - aligned with job descriptions and departmental goals - will allow supervisors to assess staff performance, provide constructive feedback, and identify training or professional development needs. This system should include goal-setting, self-assessment, and supervisory review components, and can also serve as the basis for merit-based compensation and promotion decisions.

GOV 25 - Conduct a Housing and Blight Study

Initiate a comprehensive Housing and Blight Study to assess the current condition of its residential housing stock, identify patterns of vacancy and property distress, and inform targeted revitalization strategies. Given the Borough's aging housing inventory and reinvestment challenges, this study would provide critical baseline data to support future planning, land use regulations, and grant-seeking efforts.

A thorough analysis would include a parcel-by-parcel review to categorize properties by condition, occupancy status, and code compliance, as well as a review of demographic, ownership, and market trends. The findings would enable the Borough to prioritize code enforcement, demolition, rehabilitation, and reuse strategies, helping to preserve stable neighborhoods while addressing blight in a strategic, data-driven manner.

This study can also serve as a foundation for collaboration with county agencies, land banks, and regional housing partners, ultimately positioning Reynoldsville to access funding streams such as PHARE (Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to implement its revitalization goals.

GOV 26 - Create a Redevelopment Authority and/or Business Improvement District

Establish a Redevelopment Authority (RDA) and / or a Business Improvement District (BID) to support reinvestment and long-term economic revitalization. A Redevelopment Authority would serve as a dedicated entity with the legal authority to acquire, manage, and dispose of vacant, blighted, or underutilized properties, while also leveraging state and federal funding for redevelopment projects. Alternatively, or in conjunction, a BID would enable downtown property and business owners to collectively invest in services and improvements, such as enhanced maintenance, marketing, façade upgrades, and streetscape enhancements, that go beyond what the Borough can provide alone.

These tools can be instrumental in creating a coordinated, community-driven approach to revitalizing Reynoldsville's downtown area, attracting new businesses, increasing property values, and enhancing quality of life. The Borough should engage stakeholders, conduct

feasibility assessments, and seek technical assistance from state agencies like the DCED to initiate this process.

GOV 27 - Adopt a (Regional or Joint) Comprehensive Plan

Develop and adopt a Comprehensive Plan, ideally as a joint or regional effort with neighboring municipalities, to establish a shared vision for long-term growth, development, and community revitalization. A comprehensive plan provides a strategic framework for guiding land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and economic development over a 10-year horizon.

Given limited capacity and shared challenges common among small, rural municipalities, a joint comprehensive planning process can create efficiencies, strengthen intermunicipal collaboration, and position the Borough and its partners to access state and federal grant funding that prioritizes regional approaches. A regional or joint plan can also help align land use policies across borders, identify common priorities, and create opportunities for shared services and infrastructure investments.

Without a comprehensive plan, Reynoldsville lacks a coordinated, data-driven basis for future land use decisions, zoning, redevelopment, and capital improvement planning. By adopting a joint or regional plan, the Borough can better anticipate future needs, coordinate with surrounding communities, and pursue sustainable growth strategies that reflect the needs and aspirations of its residents. The planning process must follow the provisions outlined by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and should be inclusive, transparent, and focused on creating actionable steps to support economic revitalization, housing reinvestment, and improved quality of life.

GOV 28 - Adopt Land Use Regulations

Prioritize the adoption of a modern Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) that align with the Borough's community development and redevelopment objectives. Currently, the Borough does not have a Zoning Ordinance or a SALDO leaving it without two of the most critical tools available to guide future growth, manage land use, and support blight mitigation and redevelopment efforts. The absence of these regulations limits the Borough's ability to promote orderly development, ensure compatibility of land uses, or leverage land use policy as a means of revitalizing distressed or underutilized areas.

A zoning ordinance can establish appropriate land uses, encourage reinvestment in the downtown area and other core areas, promote infill development, and help maintain or enhance community character. Likewise, a SALDO can regulate how land is divided and

developed, ensuring new development meets standards for infrastructure, stormwater management, pedestrian access, and overall livability.

Establishing these ordinances will enable the Borough to proactively shape its future, support strategic redevelopment, and attract private investment. It is recommended that the Borough pursue the development of these ordinances in coordination with planning professionals, and consider working jointly with nearby municipalities or through county planning resources to reduce costs and enhance regional alignment. These foundational land use regulations will be essential to advancing blight mitigation, housing revitalization, and economic development initiatives.

GOV 29 - Develop a Comprehensive Recreation Plan

Undertake the development of a Comprehensive Recreation Plan to guide the future investment, maintenance, and programming of the Boroughs parks and recreation facilities and community pool. This master planning effort would provide a strategic framework for evaluating existing assets, identifying community needs, prioritizing improvements, and aligning recreation goals with broader community development and quality of life objectives.

A well-crafted Recreation Plan can support long-term planning for capital improvements, accessibility upgrades, and the expansion of recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. The planning process should include a detailed assessment of current facilities, including the pool, play areas, green spaces, trails, and athletic fields, as well as public engagement to gather community input on priorities and desired amenities.

Developing a Recreation Plan also positions the Borough to be more competitive when applying for state and federal funding, including grants through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). By identifying short- and long-term goals, potential partnerships, and implementation strategies, the plan can serve as a roadmap for reinvesting in outdoor spaces that promote health, community engagement, and local pride.

GOV 30 - Implement a Comprehensive Stormwater Management Strategy

Develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy to address current drainage issues, prevent localized flooding, and support long-term infrastructure resilience. This strategy should include a full assessment of the existing stormwater infrastructure, identification of critical areas needing repair or improvement, and the integration of green infrastructure where feasible to reduce runoff and improve water quality.

Additionally, the Borough should ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal stormwater regulations, including MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) requirements, as required. As part of this effort, the Borough may consider adopting a stormwater ordinance, developing a maintenance and inspection schedule for stormwater facilities, and exploring funding opportunities such as grants or the establishment of a stormwater utility fee to support ongoing improvements.

Effective stormwater management not only safeguards public and private property but also contributes to environmental health and supports community revitalization efforts by improving the overall appearance and function of public spaces.

GOV 31 - Enhance Community Character

Strengthen the Borough's sense of place and improve both aesthetic appeal and functionality by prioritizing investment in sidewalk improvements, upgraded pedestrian-scale lighting, wayfinding signage, and cohesive streetscape enhancements. These elements not only support walkability and safety but also contribute to a more welcoming and connected environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Well-maintained sidewalks ensure accessibility for all users, while improved lighting enhances safety and visibility, particularly in the downtown and residential areas. Strategically placed wayfinding signage can guide visitors to key destinations such as parks, community buildings, and historic sites while encouraging exploration and supporting local businesses. Streetscape enhancements, including benches, planters, street trees, and consistent design features, help define the community's character and can serve as a catalyst for additional private investment.

The Borough should incorporate these improvements into capital planning efforts and actively pursue funding opportunities through PennDOT's Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF), DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2), and DCED's Keystone Communities Program. Prioritizing community character improvements will foster civic pride, promote walkability, and position Reynoldsville as an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

GOV 32 - Establish a Shared Regional Grant Writer Through Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)

Partner with neighboring municipalities to secure a professional grant writer who can identify, apply for, and manage competitive funding opportunities. To improve access to critical funding without overburdening existing staff, Reynoldsville Borough should pursue an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with nearby municipalities - such as Sykesville or Bell Township or even Jefferson County itself - to jointly hire or contract a professional grant writer.

This position would be responsible for identifying available federal, state, and foundation grants, preparing competitive applications, and ensuring compliance with reporting requirements.

Currently, grant writing responsibilities fall to the Police Chief, who encouraged the Borough's participation in the STMP program and wrote the application, but whose time is better dedicated to public safety. A dedicated grant writer will significantly enhance the Borough's capacity to secure external resources and ensure staff remain focused on core responsibilities.

GOV 33 - Fund Shared Services through Intergovernmental Cooperation

Actively pursue and fund shared services in collaboration with neighboring municipalities and the County to improve service delivery and create long-term cost savings. Key opportunities include -

- Creation of a Joint Planning Commission to streamline land use planning and zoning efforts.
- Explore shared police services to ensure sustainable and responsive public safety coverage.
- Implement shared equipment agreements, either through an established Council of Governments (COG) or via Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreements, to reduce capital costs and increase access to specialized tools and resources.

Formalizing these partnerships allows for the leveraging of economies of scale, the standardization of service levels across jurisdictions, and the efficient use of limited personnel and financial resources. Additionally, cooperative arrangements can open doors to targeted state and federal funding opportunities that specifically support regional collaboration.

To begin this process, the Borough should assess existing agreements, identify service areas with the highest potential for collaboration, and work with legal counsel and regional partners to develop the necessary intergovernmental frameworks. Institutionalizing shared services will position the Borough for more resilient governance and improved operational capacity.

GOV 34 - Adopt a Formal Social Media Policy to Guide Public Communication

Establish clear rules and responsibilities for Borough-managed social media to ensure professional, transparent, and legally compliant public engagement. The Borough maintains an active presence on Facebook but has not adopted a formal social media policy to govern its use. Without defined standards for content, conduct, and administrative oversight, the Borough

faces elevated risk of reputational harm, legal exposure, and inconsistent messaging. A formal policy - aligned with guidance from PSAB and other municipal best practices - should define who may post on behalf of the Borough, what types of content are appropriate, how public comments will be moderated, and how records will be retained in compliance with the Right-to-Know Law. A well-crafted policy will help the Borough use social media more strategically and responsibly while protecting the integrity of its communications.

GOV 35 - Maintain and Regularly Update a Community Ecosystem Map

Use a regularly updated ecosystem map to identify local assets, strengthen partnerships, and guide community and economic development efforts. Reynoldsville currently lacks a coordinated approach to understanding and leveraging the organizations, institutions, and stakeholders that influence its economic and civic landscape. A community ecosystem map is a valuable planning tool that visually identifies public, private, nonprofit, and regional partners - helping Borough officials recognize existing resources, spot service gaps, and prioritize new relationships that can support shared goals.

Maintaining and updating this tool fosters collaboration, avoids duplication of efforts, and reinforces the message that Reynoldsville is not alone in addressing its challenges. This map should be revisited annually and used to inform planning, grant-seeking, and outreach activities. In a resource-constrained environment, understanding who's at the table - and who's missing - is essential to building a more resilient and supported community.

GOV 36 - Provide Customer Service Training for All Staff and Frontline Officials

Implement regular customer service training for all employees and elected officials who interact with the public to ensure consistent, professional, and respectful communication. In small communities, day-to-day interactions with residents significantly shape public perception of local government. Training should focus on communication skills, conflict resolution, responsiveness, and professionalism, helping staff navigate difficult interactions and reinforce trust with the community. This investment will improve the quality of resident experiences and support a more customer-focused culture across Borough operations.

GOV 37- Bid Solicitor Services

Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to competitively bid solicitor services, ensuring transparency, cost-effectiveness, and access to qualified legal counsel. A competitive bidding process will allow Council to evaluate multiple firms or individuals based on qualifications,

hourly rates or retainer structures, municipal law expertise, and capacity to provide timely legal guidance.

By putting solicitor services out to bid, the Borough can benchmark costs against peer communities, identify opportunities for cost savings, and ensure it is receiving the best combination of service quality and affordability. The process will also enhance transparency and accountability in professional appointments, reducing the risk of perceptions of favoritism.

Once proposals are reviewed, Borough Council should adopt a formal contract with the selected solicitor outlining scope of services, compensation, performance expectations, and reporting requirements. This will provide clarity for both the Borough and its legal counsel while ensuring the community's legal interests are well protected.

GOV 38 - Conduct a Competitive Bid Process for Borough Health Insurance

Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to competitively bid employee health insurance coverage. Health insurance is often one of the largest line items in a municipal budget, and periodic rebidding ensures that the Borough is receiving the most cost-effective and comprehensive coverage available in the marketplace.

Through this process, the Borough can compare multiple providers and plans on the basis of premiums, deductibles, co-pays, provider networks, wellness programs, and administrative support. Competitive bidding also demonstrates due diligence to employees and taxpayers by balancing fiscal responsibility with the need to provide quality healthcare coverage for Borough staff.

The Borough should adopt a regular rebidding schedule (ex. every 3–5 years) to maintain competitive pressure on providers and prevent cost escalation. Council should also evaluate the potential benefits of joining a regional insurance pool or consortium, which may further reduce costs by leveraging group purchasing power.

GOV 39 - Bid General Liability Insurance

Protect Borough assets and taxpayers by competitively rebidding general liability insurance coverage. General liability insurance serves as the Borough's first line of defense against claims of property damage, bodily injury, and other liabilities that may arise from municipal operations. In a small community like Reynoldsville, even a single claim could impose severe financial strain if coverage limits are outdated or exclusions are poorly defined.

The Borough should take proactive steps to rebid its general liability coverage through a formal RFP process. This will not only test the competitiveness of current premiums but also allow Council to carefully evaluate coverage terms, policy limits, and claims-handling responsiveness. Reassessing insurance needs in light of aging infrastructure, public facility use, and risk exposures (such as parks, streets, and events) will ensure the Borough is neither underinsured nor overpaying for unnecessary coverage.

By treating liability insurance as a strategic safeguard - rather than just a recurring expense - the Borough can strengthen fiscal resilience, demonstrate due diligence to residents, and ensure municipal assets and operations are properly protected for the long term.

GOV 40 - Bid Energy Supply Contracts

Reduce costs and manage risk by competitively bidding Borough energy supply services. Energy costs represent a significant and often volatile portion of the Borough's operating expenses. Electricity, natural gas, and heating fuel are subject to market fluctuations that can dramatically impact annual budgets if left unmanaged. By issuing competitive bids for energy supply, Reynoldsville can leverage market competition to secure more favorable rates, stabilize utility expenses, and identify opportunities for long-term cost savings.

Beyond simply lowering costs, rebidding energy services also allows the Borough to evaluate contract structures (ex. fixed vs. variable rates), explore energy efficiency incentives, and ensure compliance with procurement best practices. Given the Borough's financial challenges, predictable and well-managed energy costs can provide valuable budget stability while freeing up resources for other critical services.

Regularly reviewing and bidding energy contracts - rather than relying on auto-renewals or legacy agreements - will demonstrate fiscal responsibility, strengthen transparency, and help the Borough position itself to take advantage of favorable market conditions or state-level energy aggregation programs when available.

Code Enforcement

This section dives into the Borough's code enforcement functions. The review examines the current structure, staffing, duties and responsibilities, and financial framework that support local enforcement of property maintenance and nuisance regulations. Drawing on an interview with the Borough's Code Enforcement Officer, a review of Borough operations, and guidance from relevant best practices outlined by the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the assessment aims to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

In a small, rural borough like Reynoldsville - where population decline, aging housing stock, and limited economic activity place increasing strain on community appearance and property values - code enforcement serves as a front-line strategy for maintaining livability and public safety. Effective enforcement of maintenance standards helps prevent the spread of blight, supports

With no planning and zoning capacity, code enforcement serves as the Borough's main tool for preserving community character and addressing resident concerns.

neighborhood stability, and lays the groundwork for future development or investment. In the absence of robust planning and zoning capacity, code enforcement is the Borough's primary tool for protecting community character and responding to resident concerns.

The following analysis includes an overview of departmental structure, a summary of duties, a detailed budget review, consultant observations from fieldwork, and a discussion of best practices tailored to small Pennsylvania boroughs. It concludes with practical recommendations aimed at improving organizational capacity, transparency, and long-term effectiveness of Reynoldsville's code enforcement operations.

Strong code enforcement is a foundational tool in local community and economic development efforts, especially for stabilizing property values and addressing blight in rural communities.

Organization and Structure

Employees



Reynoldsville's code enforcement is handled by a part-time employee who also holds the position of Assistant Borough Secretary. This individual dedicates roughly 20 hours per week to code enforcement tasks, while also

*Code Enforcement
Officer (PT)*

managing administrative duties. The code enforcement officer reports directly to both the Mayor and the Borough Council.

Duties and Responsibilities

In rural boroughs, Code Enforcement Officers play a critical role in upholding public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring compliance with local ordinances and state property maintenance codes. Core duties include -

The focus has really been on cleaning up town and enforcing property maintenance codes.

- **Ordinance Enforcement**

Interpreting and enforcing a wide range of municipal ordinances, such as property maintenance, nuisance abatement, zoning (if applicable), building safety, signage, and vehicle storage. Reynoldsville Borough has adopted and enforces the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to address building and property conditions.

- **Inspections and Investigations**

Conducting site inspections in response to complaints or during routine patrols to identify violations related to overgrown vegetation, trash accumulation, unsafe structures, unregistered vehicles, and occupancy issues. This also includes documenting violations with photos and written reports.

- **Permitting and Registration**

Administering local permit programs, which may include issuing burning, chicken, and ATV permits; overseeing vacant property registrations; issuing certificates for games of skill; managing parking permits for public property; and enforcing parking regulations through the issuance of parking tickets.

- **Citation and Enforcement Actions**

Preparing and issuing violation notices and citations, and representing the Borough in magistrate court hearings as needed. This includes working with legal counsel to ensure enforcement procedures follow due process.

- **Recordkeeping and Administration**

Maintaining accurate records of inspections, violations, and enforcement actions. In small boroughs, the officer often performs all administrative duties independently, including filing, correspondence, and tracking deadlines.

- **Interdepartmental and External Coordination**

Collaborating with police, fire departments, third-party inspectors, and regional or county agencies to manage complex or dangerous violations, especially unsafe or blighted structures.

- **Public Engagement and Education**

Responding to resident inquiries, explaining ordinance requirements, and promoting compliance through education and outreach. Officers may participate in community meetings or workshops to address concerns and encourage voluntary compliance.

- **Policy and Planning**

In some cases, officers are involved in updating local codes and may provide data or reports to council for planning and policy development, particularly around blight remediation and neighborhood revitalization.

Training and professionalism are critical for code enforcement officers, and those involved in this role must pursue certifications and ongoing education to stay current with legal requirements and enforcement techniques.

Budget Analysis

The department's annual budget covers code enforcement salary (\$15/hour for 20 hours per week), \$353 for uniforms, and \$147 for ATV stickers. Revenue is generated through various permits and registrations, including approximately \$1,000 annually from ATV permits, approximately \$15,000 from vacant property registrations, and \$16,000 from games of skill licenses.

This makes code enforcement unique as a department in that its revenue generation exceeds in annual expenses. While room for additional revenue generation is likely limited, this makes code enforcement worthy of investment and suggests the code enforcement officer position must be carefully transitioned, if that time comes, so the Borough does not miss out on revenue opportunities.

Observations

Since July 2024, the Borough's part-time Code Enforcement Officer has managed a wide array of responsibilities focused on property maintenance and ordinance compliance. Her duties include conducting inspections, maintaining records, issuing citations and appearing before the magistrate, enforcing the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), and administering permits for activities such as ATV use, burning, parking, and keeping chickens. She also oversees vacant property registration and issues certificates for games of skill.

The most frequent complaints involve high grass, junk vehicles, rubbish, and vacant properties. Under her tenure, there has been an



Operating at only 20 hours per week, the position is significantly under-resourced and insufficient to meet the demands of effective code enforcement in the Borough.

increased focus on property maintenance enforcement. “The focus of the position has shifted to cleaning up the town,” she stated. Although she works approximately 20 hours per week, she noted that “we really need a full-time person to do the position adequately.” She currently performs all code-related administrative tasks independently and reports directly to the Mayor and Borough Council. Support from other departments is limited; she occasionally coordinates with the police chief in potentially unsafe situations, with Pennsafe Building Inspection Services for structural concerns, and receives voluntary assistance from a family member for field documentation.



Staff operate with inadequate resources, relying on outdated technology, a shared and cluttered workspace, and the employee’s personal vehicle and phone - without reimbursement - underscoring a lack of basic tools needed for effective code enforcement.

The department’s operating resources are minimal. Her workspace consists of a small desk in a shared office with limited filing and storage capacity. Filing is paper-based, and technology is outdated. She uses her personal vehicle and phone to conduct Borough

business without receiving mileage or expense reimbursement. She identified several needed tools to improve operations, including a Borough-issued phone and computer, a dedicated vehicle, a desktop scanner, and code enforcement management software. The most time-consuming task, according to her, is “tracking down property owners,” particularly those associated with blighted or absentee-owned properties.

The position generates a modest but notable amount of revenue. In addition to minor permit fees, the Borough receives approximately \$25,000–\$30,000 annually through vacant property registration and \$18,000 from games of skill certifications. Other revenue streams include ATV and burn permits, as well as monthly parking rentals. Despite these sources, budget limitations persist. She noted that planned funds for blight remediation were removed during the most recent budgeting process.

The Officer cited challenges related to interdepartmental coordination and Council dynamics. She described workplace morale as low, attributing it in part to what she sees as micromanagement and lack of trust from the Borough Council. “They frequently check on work sites and copy pay stubs,” she said, expressing concern that her family members who work for the Borough are being disproportionately scrutinized. She also noted that the police chief is currently responsible for writing major grant applications, including Multimodal, TASA, and LSA submissions.



Grant writing responsibilities currently fall to the police chief, diverting focus from core law enforcement duties and highlighting a lack of appropriate administrative capacity within the Borough.

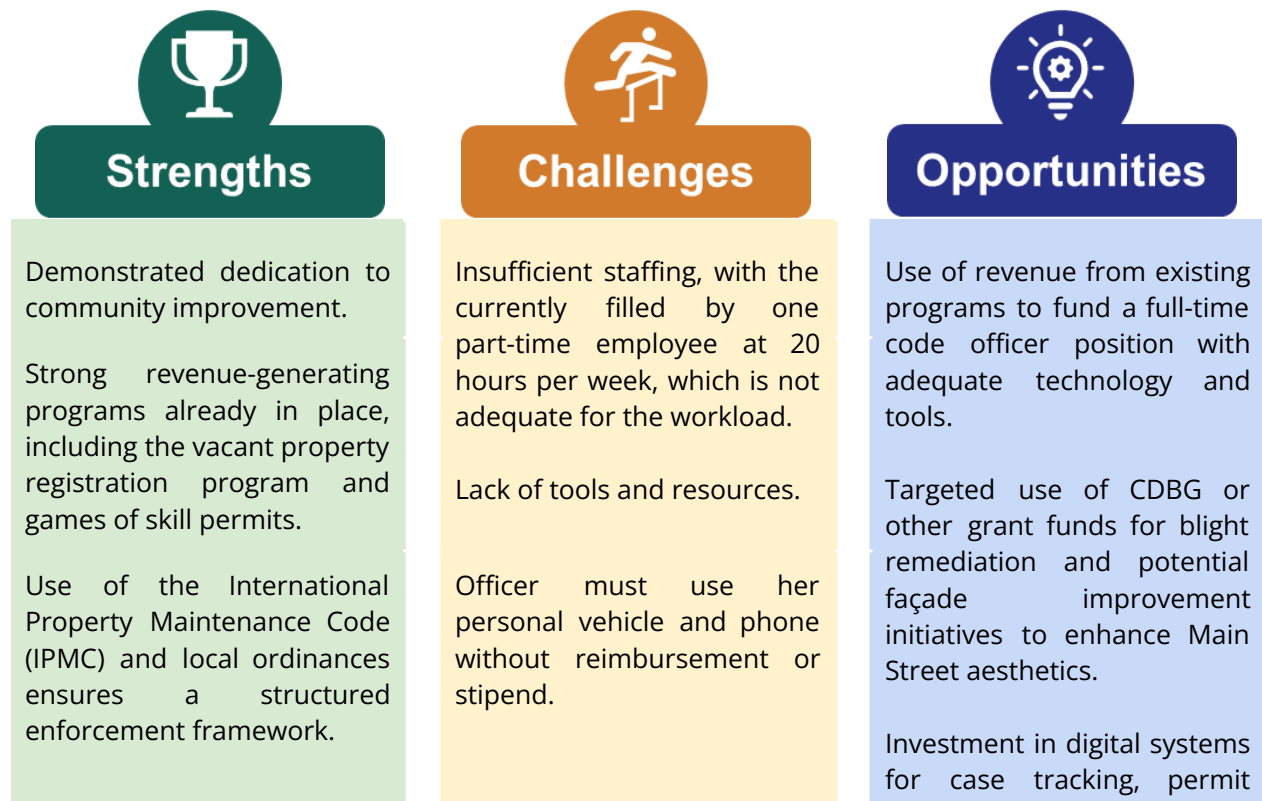
She identified several structural and operational improvements that could enhance the effectiveness of code enforcement, including updated ordinances, greater access to training, an online ordinance repository, and an SOP approved by Council to clarify procedures and mitigate conflicts. She also recommended the creation of formal job descriptions for staff, which are

The absence of updated ordinances, staff training, formal job descriptions, and clear procedural guidelines significantly limits the effectiveness and consistency of code enforcement operations.

currently lacking. While acknowledging the challenges, she also stated, “I care about this place and want it to improve,” underscoring her commitment to the role and to community revitalization efforts.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

The following section outlines key strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing the Borough’s code enforcement functions, based on the recent interview with the Code Enforcement Officer and a review of departmental activities. This analysis highlights both the department’s current capacity and areas where additional investment or policy support could significantly enhance service delivery. The insights provided reflect real-world conditions and offer a foundation for informed decision-making to improve code compliance, community appearance, and administrative effectiveness.



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Willingness to pursue ongoing training through PSAB webinars to improve professional skills.

Collaboration with Pennsafe on building permits and unsafe structure abatements adds external capacity.

Inadequate office space and outdated recordkeeping systems; all documentation is handled manually with paper files.

Low morale across staff, fueled by perceived micromanagement from Borough Council and lack of trust.

Lack of clear organizational support: No job description or SOPs exist for the position.

Limited authority and support in enforcement actions, including issues with a lenient magistrate and skepticism from Council.

processing, and communication to modernize operations.

Council-approved policies and communication protocols to foster better governance and trust between staff and elected officials.

Development of a formal SOP and job description to standardize practices and clarify expectations.

Workshop meetings already established could be leveraged more effectively for strategic planning and team alignment.

Best Practices and Standards of Operation

This section outlines a set of best practices tailored to the needs of small boroughs engaged in code enforcement. These practices are grounded in research and guidance from several key sources, including the *Standards of Effective Local Government* published by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), DCED, and PSAB. Together, these resources offer a framework for professional, efficient, and community-responsive code enforcement.

The SPC's standards emphasize clear organizational structures, transparent procedures, collaboration, and integration with broader community development goals - critical elements for small municipalities with limited staff and budgets. Supplementary guidance from DCED and PSAB reinforces the importance of accessible training, the use of modern technology, and consistent public engagement to improve compliance and service delivery.

☐ *Factor: Building, Property Maintenance, and Fire Codes*

The Borough, through ordinance, has either chosen to enforce the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) locally - except in cases where the municipality or its contracted service provider lacks the necessary certifications for reviewing plans and inspecting commercial construction - or opted to rely on the Pennsylvania

Department of Labor and Industry or its designated agents for enforcement.

The UCC, which includes building, property maintenance, and fire code regulations, is periodically reviewed and updated as needed. When the International Construction Code and Pennsylvania's UCC are revised, the Borough takes appropriate steps to integrate these updates into its code enforcement process.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville has opted to enforce the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) locally by contracting with Pennsafe for building and demolition permits as well as oversight of unsafe structures. While the Borough does not perform commercial plan reviews or inspections in-house, it relies on Pennsafe's certified personnel to fulfill these duties. The Borough's Code Enforcement Officer focuses on International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) enforcement and noted that the Borough's codes and ordinances were last codified in 2018. The Borough's adoption of the IPMC occurred in April 2017 via Ordinance 556.

The Borough does not have a regular process in place for integrating updates to the UCC or the IPMC into its code enforcement regulations and procedures. To guarantee alignment with contemporary best practices and regulations, a thorough review and update of the community's current regulations is necessary.

There are established procedures for receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints related to code violations.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not currently have formal, written procedures in place for receiving, investigating, and resolving code violation complaints. Instead, the process is largely informal and managed solely by the part-time code enforcement officer, who handles all administrative and fieldwork independently. Complaints are typically received verbally or through informal communication channels, and documentation is maintained using paper files.

There is a strong need for a case management system and a Council-approved Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to guide enforcement actions and help reduce confusion or disputes over methods.

☐ **Factor: Code Enforcement and Enforcement Personnel**

All code enforcement personnel employed by the Borough or retained under a professional services contract are certified as prescribed by Pennsylvania law to enforce building, fire and/or property maintenance codes.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's Code Enforcement Officer does not currently hold any formal state certifications, as prescribed by Pennsylvania law. However, the community relies on third-party partnerships, as with Pennsafe, for functions that require certified personnel, such as building and demolition permits or addressing unsafe structures.

While Borough enforcement staff does make use of available PSAB webinars and has expressed an interest in pursuing further training, there is no indication that the Borough has prioritized or funded certification requirements for code enforcement in accordance with state standards. Regular trainings of this nature should not only be supported by Borough leadership, it should be a required component of the position.

Borough Council receives regular reports on code enforcement activities, including the type and number of complaints and violations and how they were resolved.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Borough Council does not receive regular code enforcement reports, as there is no reporting mechanism in place to do so. The Code Enforcement Officer indicated that while she communicates with Council as needed, there is no structured process for delivering consistent updates on the number, type, or resolution of complaints and violations. This lack of routine reporting limits transparency and oversight of enforcement activities.

Code enforcement personnel, including both employees and contracted service providers, actively participate in training and development programs to maintain the state-required certifications necessary to enforce the codes recognized by the municipality.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's Code Enforcement Officer indicated she attends numerous complimentary PSAB webinars. However, a formal training program is not

currently established. Though there is no plan or budget in place, the officer expressed an interest in additional training opportunities if made available. This indicates a proactive approach by the individual, though it also highlights a need for greater institutional support and investment in ongoing certification and skill development.

☐ ***Factor: Technology and Resources***

Code enforcement staff have access to necessary technological resources, such as computers and mobile devices, to perform their duties effectively.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not currently provide code enforcement staff with adequate technological resources. The Code Enforcement Officer uses her personal phone and vehicle to perform official duties and has access only to a small, shared workspace with limited storage and outdated paper-based filing systems. She identified several technology-related needs - including a Borough-issued phone and computer, a desktop scanner, and code enforcement management software - that would significantly improve efficiency and service delivery.

Code enforcement software is utilized to streamline case management, track violations, and generate reports. Digital tools are used for scheduling inspections, communicating with property owners, and maintaining records.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no utilization of code enforcement software or digital tools to manage cases, track violations, or generate reports. All records are maintained in paper files, and no digital system is in place for scheduling inspections or communicating with property owners. The absence of management software is a key barrier to efficiency and effective enforcement operations. These tools are necessary to streamline operations and ensure accurate documentation and compliance.

☐ ***Factor: Interdepartmental and Intergovernmental Collaboration***

Strong collaboration between code enforcement and other municipal departments, such as public works and police, exists to address issues comprehensively.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Collaboration between code enforcement and other municipal departments in Reynoldsville is limited but does occur on a case-by-case basis. The Code Enforcement Officer occasionally works with the Police Chief when situations may present safety concerns and coordinates with Pennsafe on matters involving unsafe structures. However, there is no formalized or regular interdepartmental collaboration, and the lack of staffing and organizational support may limit more robust or systematic coordination.

Partnerships with neighboring municipalities or regional entities have been formalized to share resources and expertise, particularly in areas with limited staffing or funding.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not have any formal partnerships established to share resources and expertise. The Code Enforcement Officer does seek out advice from another local code enforcement officer on unique issues and problems when they occur.

☐ ***Factor: Community Engagement and Transparency***

Public education campaigns are in effect to inform residents about code requirements and the importance of compliance.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not currently have formal public engagement campaigns in place to inform residents about code requirements or the importance of compliance. Communication with residents and property owners is conducted on a case-by-case basis during enforcement actions rather than through proactive outreach or community-wide educational efforts.

Enforcement priorities and outcomes are regularly communicated to build trust and encourage community involvement.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

While the Code Enforcement Officer does maintain enforcement records and occasionally interacts with residents, there is no structured system of sharing priorities or outcomes, whether through the Borough's website, public meetings, or accessible reports. Broader community involvement should be fostered to build transparency, trust, and support of the property maintenance and code compliance goals.

☐ **Factor: Alignment with Strategic Planning and Development Goals**

Code enforcement efforts are integrated with broader municipal planning initiatives to support community revitalization and economic development.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not host planning staff or initiatives, nor has it adopted zoning or land use regulations. While code enforcement activities, as they are now, focus on blight remediation and improving property maintenance, these activities occur in isolation of broader community revitalization or economic development efforts.

For robust community progress, a comprehensive planning process should be undertaken. This would encompass implementable goals and strategies for revitalization, blight reduction, redevelopment, and economic growth. Furthermore, creating and implementing zoning and land use regulations will provide structure and direction for enhancing code enforcement strategies.

Enforcement data is used to identify trends and inform policy decisions aimed at improving neighborhood conditions.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not systematically track or use enforcement data to pinpoint trends or inform policy decisions. Complaint and violation information is completed informally through paper files, and there is no digital system to analyze patterns to generate reports.

There is a strong need for case management software to improve data organization and reporting capabilities, which would enable more strategic decision-making and better-informed policy development.

Funding opportunities, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), are sought and acquired to support code enforcement activities that align with community development objectives.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Though funding assistance for blight mitigation is available, the Borough has not formally pursued these opportunities. Further, during the most recent budget process, previously earmarked funds for the removal of blighted structures were cut, suggesting a gap between available funding sources and their strategic use

to support community development objectives. Finally, the Police Chief has become the de facto grant writer for Borough applications, dovetailing those critical efforts with her regular work duties.

To improve its chances of securing grant funding, the Borough must prioritize its grant applications. Exploring the possibility of a joint grant writer program with nearby municipalities could be beneficial.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to strengthen and professionalize code enforcement operations in the Borough. In Reynoldsville, the current part-time enforcement model lacks the capacity and tools necessary to meet the scale of community needs. These recommendations present a path forward by emphasizing sustainable funding strategies, improved transparency and reporting, interdepartmental coordination, and a stronger focus on education and accountability.

CODES 1 - Transition to a Full-Time Code Enforcement Officer Supported by Existing Revenue Sources

Transition the current part-time Code Enforcement Officer role into a full-time position, supported by existing revenue streams such as vacant property registrations, games of skill licenses, and permitting fees. These sources generate enough consistent income to sustainably fund a full-time role, including investment in necessary technology, equipment, and training.

Operating at only 20 hours per week, the position is significantly under-resourced, limiting the Borough's ability to proactively address ongoing challenges - especially widespread blight, which was cited as one of the community's most pressing issues. Expanding the position to full time would allow for more thorough enforcement, improved administrative follow-through, and greater availability for public engagement, inspections, and coordination with other departments.

A full-time officer, properly equipped and trained, would be far more effective in advancing the Borough's goals for property maintenance, public safety, and neighborhood revitalization.

CODES 2 - Provide a Dedicated Borough Vehicle for the Code Enforcement Officer

Assign a Borough-owned vehicle to the Code Enforcement Officer to ensure professional representation, reduce liability, and support efficient field operations. The Code Enforcement Officer is currently using her personal vehicle to perform Borough duties - a practice that raises concerns about liability, reimbursement, professionalism, and operational efficiency. Providing a dedicated, clearly marked Borough vehicle will improve the visibility and legitimacy of enforcement activities, ensure compliance with insurance and risk management standards, and allow the Borough to properly track usage and costs. This investment also reinforces the importance of the code function and supports the Officer's ability to respond promptly and effectively to complaints, inspections, and follow-ups across the community.

CODES 3 - Establish Formal Procedures and Tools for Complaint Intake and Case Management

Develop and adopt a standardized, Council-approved Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for receiving, investigating, documenting, and resolving code enforcement complaints. This SOP should outline clear steps for intake (including acceptable formats for complaints such as written forms, email, or phone calls), investigation protocols, timelines for follow-up, and documentation requirements. In conjunction with the SOP, the Borough should implement a digital case management system to track complaints, log inspection results, generate correspondence, and monitor case outcomes. This would improve transparency, consistency, and accountability, while also reducing reliance on verbal communication and paper records.

Formalizing these processes will help mitigate misunderstandings, clarify expectations for both staff and the public, and strengthen the Borough's ability to address property maintenance and code compliance efficiently and fairly.

CODES 4 - Prioritize Grant Funding Strategies to Support Code Enforcement and Blight Remediation

Take a more strategic and proactive approach to securing external funding, particularly through programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), to support code enforcement activities and broader community development goals. Despite the availability of such funding, the Borough has not formally pursued these opportunities and recently eliminated previously earmarked funds for blight remediation during the budget process - an indication of misalignment between needs and resource allocation.

To enhance grant competitiveness and reduce reliance on overburdened staff - such as the Police Chief, who currently leads major grant writing efforts - the Borough should consider designating or contracting a qualified grant writer. Exploring a shared grant writing arrangement with neighboring municipalities could be a cost-effective solution. Formalizing this function and aligning it with identified priorities such as blight reduction, technology upgrades, and training support would significantly improve the Borough's ability to secure and manage external funding.

CODES 5 - Require and Support State Certification for Code Enforcement Personnel

Adopt a policy requiring all code enforcement personnel - whether employees or contracted service providers - to obtain and maintain the certifications necessary to enforce applicable building, fire, and property maintenance codes as prescribed by Pennsylvania law. While current reliance on third-party entities like Pennsafe provides coverage for certain enforcement areas, certification of in-house staff is essential for ensuring legal compliance, building public trust, and improving the Borough's capacity to address local code issues directly.

To support this objective, Borough Council should allocate funding for training and certification programs and formally integrate ongoing professional development into the position's responsibilities. Participation in programs through organizations such as the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry should be encouraged and tracked. Making certification a condition of employment and investing in regular, structured training will strengthen the professionalism and credibility of the Borough's code enforcement program.

CODES 6 - Implement Routine Reporting of Code Enforcement Activities to Borough Council

Establish a formal reporting process requiring the Code Enforcement Officer to provide regular updates to Borough Council - ideally on a monthly or quarterly basis - regarding enforcement activities. These reports should include key metrics such as the number and type of complaints received, status of ongoing cases, enforcement actions taken, and resolution outcomes.

A standardized reporting format will enhance transparency, oversight, and accountability, enabling Council to monitor trends, allocate resources more effectively, and respond to resident concerns with greater insight. Implementing a consistent reporting mechanism also supports better coordination between Council and enforcement personnel, while reinforcing public confidence in the Borough's responsiveness and commitment to maintaining community standards.

CODES 7 - Equip Code Enforcement Staff with Modern Technology and Dedicated Resources

Prioritize providing the Code Enforcement Officer with essential municipal equipment and technological tools to support effective and professional operations. This includes issuing a dedicated vehicle and mobile phone with camera capabilities, alongside a Borough-issued computer, desktop scanner, and access to code enforcement management software to replace the current paper-based system. Additionally, the Borough should establish a formal mileage and expense reimbursement policy for any necessary use of personal resources.

Moreover, the Borough must ensure the officer has access to a dedicated, organized workspace that supports both fieldwork and administrative duties. Investing in these foundational resources will enhance operational efficiency, professionalism, data security, and employee support, while improving documentation, communication, and case management, and reducing reliance on personal equipment and risks related to record-keeping errors or data loss.

CODES 8 - Strengthen and Formalize Interdepartmental Collaboration on Code Enforcement

Establish formal channels of collaboration between code enforcement and other municipal departments - particularly public works and police - to promote a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing property maintenance, public safety, and blight.

This could include regular coordination meetings, shared documentation practices, and clearly defined protocols for joint responses to complex cases involving safety hazards or structural concerns. While informal cooperation currently occurs on a limited basis, institutionalizing these partnerships will improve efficiency, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure that all relevant departments are aligned in supporting community standards. Enhanced collaboration can also help maximize limited resources and reinforce a more unified municipal response to resident concerns.

CODES 9 - Establish a Formal Training and Professional Development Program for Code Enforcement

Implement a structured training and professional development program for all code enforcement personnel - both employees and contracted providers - to ensure continued compliance with state certification requirements and to enhance overall enforcement

effectiveness. While the current officer demonstrates initiative by attending PSAB webinars, the lack of a formalized training plan or budget reflects a gap in institutional support.

Borough Council should develop a professional development policy that includes regular training benchmarks, funding for relevant certification courses, and time allowances for participation. Partnerships with training providers such as PSAB, DCED, and the PA Department of Labor & Industry should be leveraged to deliver accessible and cost-effective learning opportunities. By investing in consistent, ongoing training, the Borough will strengthen the capacity, legal compliance, and professionalism of its code enforcement function.

CODES 10 - Develop a Public Education and Outreach Program to Promote Code Compliance

Initiate a proactive public education campaign to inform residents about local code requirements, the purpose of enforcement, and the shared benefits of community-wide compliance. Educational efforts could include flyers, social media posts, website updates, public service announcements, and community workshops, as well as partnerships with local schools or civic organizations.

In addition, the Borough should regularly communicate enforcement priorities and outcomes - such as the number of violations resolved or improvements made - to build public trust, demonstrate accountability, and encourage voluntary compliance. Transparent and consistent communication helps residents better understand the role of code enforcement and fosters a more collaborative approach to improving neighborhood conditions. These efforts will ultimately enhance community support, reduce violations, and increase the effectiveness of enforcement operations.

CODES 11 - Implement Code Enforcement Management Software to Streamline Operations and Support Data-Driven Decision-Making

Invest in a code enforcement management software system to modernize enforcement operations and enable data-driven decision-making. A digital platform would allow the Code Enforcement Officer to efficiently track violations, manage cases, schedule inspections, communicate with property owners, and generate reports for Borough Council.

Moving away from a paper-based system would significantly improve record retention, accuracy, and responsiveness, while also reducing administrative burden. Importantly, such software would also allow the Borough to systematically collect and analyze enforcement data

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to identify trends, target recurring issues, and shape local policy decisions aimed at improving neighborhood conditions.

Software solutions tailored for small municipalities are widely available and cost-effective, offering scalable features to match the Borough's needs. Implementing this tool would increase operational efficiency, transparency, and strategic capacity within the Borough's code enforcement program.

Fire and Emergency Medical Services

The Reynoldsville Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD) and the Reynoldsville Area Ambulance Service (RAAS) play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of residents in Reynoldsville Borough, Winslow Township, and surrounding areas. Both agencies are community-based,

The RVFD and the RAAS are community-based, large volunteer organizations that play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Borough residents.

largely volunteer-driven, and deeply embedded in the fabric of local emergency response. This assessment provides a comprehensive overview of their operations, covering key areas such as organizational structure, duties and responsibilities, budget and financial management, operational performance, and findings from a recent in-depth interview with the fire chief and officers.

Within this section, we examine the everyday functions and scope of services provided by RVFD and RAAS, highlighting their capabilities and the evolving nature of their work. Special attention is given to the agencies' funding models, staffing dynamics, inter-municipal partnerships, and

community engagement efforts. Direct insights from department leadership help illuminate both the strengths and systemic challenges faced in today's environment. As the chief candidly noted, "We rely on fundraising for about 70% of our revenue - that's not easy to sustain." Despite this, both agencies demonstrate resilience and adaptability through innovative strategies, mutual aid cooperation, and a strong service ethic.

"We rely on fundraising for about 70% of our revenue - that's not easy to sustain."

Additionally, this section identifies practical strengths, persistent obstacles, and emerging opportunities for growth, sustainability, and modernization. We conclude with a review of best practices and potential models that could support long-term improvement. From the trucks they maintain to the lives they protect, RVFD and RAAS reflect the spirit of service that defines many rural emergency response agencies - volunteer-led, resourceful, and committed to community.

Organization and Structure

The RVFD is an all-volunteer fire service operating out of a single station located within the Borough. In addition to Reynoldsville itself, the department also serves Winslow Township and parts of Washington Township. All leadership positions, including the Fire Chief and officers,

are elected annually by the department's membership. The department comprises approximately 56 volunteer firefighters. There are no paid staff members.

The RAAS is a separate entity from RVFD, providing Basic Life Support (BLS) emergency medical services to the Borough, Winslow Township, and surrounding areas. The service employs two part-time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), with the remainder of the staff being volunteers. The total staffing includes 14 EMTs, some of whom hold Advanced Life Support (ALS) certifications, though the service operates at the BLS level. All EMTs are certified, and the service experiences a high turnover rate, with 271 turnovers out of 550 in 2024.

Duties and Responsibilities

The RVFD and RAAS serve as critical components of the public safety infrastructure in Reynoldsville and surrounding communities.

Though independently operated and governed, both organizations fulfill essential emergency response functions through a combination of volunteer commitment, part-time staffing, and community support. The following outlines their respective roles, core responsibilities, and contributions to local public health and safety.

We're doing a lot with what we've got, but we know things will need to change.

Reynoldsville Volunteer Fire Department

The RVFD is responsible for providing fire protection, rescue services, and related emergency response functions.

- **Fire Suppression:** Responding to and extinguishing structural, vehicular, wildland, and other types of fires.
- **Rescue Operations:** Conducting vehicle extrication, search and rescue, and technical rescue efforts.
- **Incident Command:** Implementing the Incident Command System (ICS) during emergency responses to ensure organized and effective scene management.
- **Fire Prevention and Education:** Engaging in community outreach activities, such as Fire Prevention Week programs with local schools, to promote fire safety awareness.
- **Mutual Aid Support:** Providing and receiving aid from neighboring fire departments through formal mutual aid agreements.

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- **Maintenance of Apparatus and Equipment:** Conducting regular inspections and upkeep of firefighting vehicles, tools, air packs, hoses, and ladders to ensure operational readiness.
- **Training and Certification:** Ensuring that all members complete required training, including Fire Essentials (Modules 1–4 for interior firefighters), hazmat awareness, and vehicle rescue certification. The department also maintains training records through the state's PennFIRS system.
- **Fundraising and Financial Stewardship:** Coordinating fundraising events such as bingo, raffles, and food sales to support operations, and managing a limited budget responsibly.
- **Community Support:** Maintaining and managing public resources as part of their broader community service efforts.

Reynoldsville Area Ambulance Service

The RAAS provides pre-hospital emergency medical care and transport to residents including -

- **Emergency Medical Response:** Providing timely, BLS-level pre-hospital care and transportation to individuals experiencing medical emergencies, trauma, or accidents.
- **Medical Transport:** Safely transporting patients to appropriate medical facilities while ensuring continuous care en route.
- **EMS Staffing and Coverage:** Maintaining adequate staffing levels through part-time employees and volunteers
- **Patient Care Documentation and Billing:** Accurately documenting care provided and managing billing for services, which constitutes a significant portion of the service's revenue.
- **Training and Certification:** Ensuring all EMTs meet state certification standards and receive ongoing training. The service currently includes certified EMTs and healthcare professionals, some of whom hold ALS certifications (though they operate in a BLS capacity).
- **Community Engagement:** Conducting membership drives and participating in local events to build support and maintain visibility in the community.
- **Interagency Coordination:** Working closely with fire departments and regional EMS services to ensure coordinated response to emergencies and large-scale incidents.
- **Operational Planning:** Exploring regional cooperation to enhance service capacity and sustainability.

Budget Analysis

The RVFD and RAAS operate on modest but seemingly carefully managed budgets, combining public support, grants, and community-driven fundraising to sustain essential emergency services. Both agencies rely on non-tax revenue, a common financial model for rural and volunteer emergency service organizations.

Reynoldsville Volunteer Fire Department

- **Annual Budget** → Approximately \$175,000
- **Revenue Sources**
 - **Municipal Contributions**
 - Reynoldsville Borough → \$20,000
 - Winslow Township → \$6,000
 - **State Support**
 - Grants → \$15,000
 - **Community-Based Fundraising**
 - Bingo, Food Sales, Gun Raffles → Net of Approximately \$150,000
 - Annual Mail Campaign → Approximately \$20,000
 - **Additional**
 - Game Usage Fee for Athletic Fields → \$50 / game *(Note - this was recently implemented and minimal income is anticipated)*
- **Debt Obligations**

The department carries an estimated \$500,000 in outstanding loans, attributed to the purchase of two fire trucks and a commercial-grade mower.

RVFD's fiscal model underscores a strong reliance on community generosity and volunteer-led events. However, the high debt load presents long-term financial risk, especially in the absence of large or recurring capital funding.

RVFD relies heavily on community support and volunteer fundraising, but its substantial debt poses a long-term financial risk without consistent capital funding.

Reynoldsville Area Ambulance Service

- **Annual Budget** → Approximately \$160,000
- **Revenue Sources**
 - **Municipal Contributions**

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- Reynoldsville Borough → \$10,000
- Winslow Township → \$5,000
- **Service Billing**
 - A majority of revenue is generated through billing for emergency medical services. Exact amount was not disclosed.
- **Membership Drive**
 - Community members contribute voluntarily through annual membership campaigns. The amount generated was not disclosed.
- **Fundraising**
 - Fundraising efforts supplement the budget in unspecified amounts

RAAS benefits from a more service-based revenue stream than RVFD, with EMS billing and memberships forming a significant portion of operational funding. However, increasing service demands - particularly in light of a potential regional partnership - could strain the current budget without added municipal or regional support.



RAAS relies more on service-based revenue through EMS billing and memberships, but rising demands may strain the budget without additional municipal or regional support.

Observations

Kafferlin Strategies interviewed Fire Chief Darren Scolese in May 2025 to discuss Reynoldsville's emergency services. Fire and EMS services in the Borough are structured as two distinct entities, each operating under its own leadership but serving overlapping jurisdictions. All leadership positions, including chiefs and officers, are elected annually, a tradition that underscores the departments' strong volunteer roots and community governance.

The Fire Department primarily covers Reynoldsville Borough, Winslow Township, and a portion of Washington Township. In contrast, the EMS service, which is entirely BLS (Basic Life Support), is working toward a regional partnership with Sykesville Borough. This partnership, once finalized, is expected to bring significant operational changes - most notably, the need to staff EMS units for 16 hours per day, which will require the hiring of additional part-time personnel.



RAAS is in the process of forming a regional partnership with Sykesville Borough, a move that could significantly impact operations by requiring 16-hour daily staffing - an obligation that may strain current resources and necessitate the hiring of additional part-time personnel.

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At present, the Fire Department is fully volunteer-run, while EMS operates with two part-time EMTs, supplemented by a dedicated volunteer team. However, staffing remains an ongoing challenge. "We're seeing the same thing that's happening everywhere - fewer young people

Staffing remains an ongoing challenge, largely due to a decline in younger individuals volunteering, a trend consistent with broader regional and national patterns.

signing up to volunteer," the Chief acknowledged. Despite these hurdles, the EMS service currently maintains a team of 14 EMTs, including some healthcare professionals certified at the ALS level (though they operate at BLS).

Training and professional development are taken seriously. Fire personnel are required to complete at least Module 3 of Fire Essentials, with Module 4 required for interior firefighting. All members must also complete annual hazmat awareness training. The Chief noted that five firefighters are already certified at Firefighter 1 level, with as many as 25 more eligible to test. For EMS, every member is EMT-certified, though retention is difficult - 271 shifts were turned over out of 550 in 2024 alone, a number the Chief called "yikes."

Training and professional development are strong, with required certifications in place and a significant number of firefighters already certified or eligible for Firefighter 1.

The department operates on modest financial support from local governments. The Fire Department receives roughly \$20,000 annually from the Borough (and \$6,000 from Winslow Township), which is a fraction of its approximately \$175,000 budget. EMS receives \$10,000 from the Borough and \$5,000 from Winslow, but relies heavily on billing for services and an annual membership drive to make up its \$160,000 operating budget.

To bridge funding gaps, the department engages in a wide range of fundraising activities - weekly bingo nights, food sales, raffles, and a mail campaign that alone brings in about \$20,000 each year. "We probably rely on fundraising for about 70% of our budget," the Chief admitted. While this grassroots approach has sustained the department for years, its long-term viability is

The Fire Department currently carries approximately \$500,000 in debt, primarily from loans for two fire trucks and a mower.

uncertain. Still, the department remains fiscally responsible. "If the Borough ever gave us more, the first thing we'd do is pay off our debt," which currently stands at roughly \$500,000, primarily due to loans for fire trucks and a mower.

In terms of equipment and infrastructure, the department is in good shape. All buildings and apparatus are owned outright. Major equipment includes a 2011 tanker and a 2020 mini-pumper - both in excellent condition - a 2000 brush truck, a 1981 ladder truck (refitted in

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2007), and a 1997 rescue truck that is currently undergoing refurbishment. Routine maintenance is taken seriously, with annual inspections conducted on airpacks, hoses, ladders, and other essential gear. However, there's no formal capital improvement plan at this time.

Call volume has been increasing. The Fire Department responded to 138 calls in 2024, and as of May 28, 2025, they had already logged 122 calls for the current year. Notably, they missed their first call in years recently, a reflection of how stretched the volunteer model can become.

Call volume is rising steadily, with 122 calls logged by May 2025 - nearly matching 2024's total of 138 - and the department recently missed its first call in years, highlighting the strain on the volunteer model.

While the Fire Department maintains strong mutual aid relationships, its interactions with the Borough are strained, marked by limited engagement, tension with staff, and a lack of transparency in financial reporting.

The Fire Department adheres to the Incident Command System (ICS) during emergency responses and participates in mutual aid agreements with all neighboring municipalities. However, internal and

interdepartmental dynamics can be strained. The relationship with local public works and police services is described as challenging. While a few department members sit on the Borough council, overall engagement is limited. "They don't really give us an annual update or anything," the Chief said, referencing a recent request from the council for a full income statement which the department declined to provide.

Despite these tensions, the department remains actively involved in the community. Fire Prevention Week is celebrated with local students at CG Johnson Elementary School, and several members regularly attend council meetings. While there aren't currently targeted outreach programs for vulnerable populations, the department acknowledges this as an area for future growth.

When asked about long-term goals, the Chief mentioned facility upgrades like new offices, truck room improvements, and a walk-in cooler. There is also interest in exploring technological upgrades and regional service models. The department recognizes the challenges ahead - changing demographics, evolving weather patterns, and the decline of volunteerism - but is committed to adapting. "We're doing a lot with what we've got, but we know things will need to change."

The department appears well-managed and resourceful, with solid infrastructure, proactive leadership, and a deep commitment to community service. Still, its reliance on fundraising and

volunteer labor presents sustainability concerns, especially as regional pressures mount. Strengthening relationships with local government and pursuing strategic partnerships, like the one underway with Sykesville, may be key to ensuring long-term stability and effectiveness.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

An assessment of the RVFD and the RAAS reveals a combination of strong community-driven service delivery, resourceful management, and operational dedication. At the same time, both organizations face notable constraints related to staffing, funding, and infrastructure. The following summary outlines key strengths that support ongoing service, current challenges that impact efficiency and sustainability, and opportunities that may help improve long-term capacity, accountability, and collaboration.

 Strengths	 Challenges	 Opportunities
Well-maintained equipment and facilities.	Limited municipal funding support.	Increase access to external funding with help from a newly hired grant writer.
All buildings and equipment are owned outright by the departments.	Heavy reliance on fundraising, which may not be sustainable in the long term.	Formalize and expand regional partnerships to stabilize staffing and service delivery.
Strong call volume and reliability.	Significant outstanding debt for apparatus and equipment.	Pursue ordinances to allow billing for incidents (ex. hazmat, vehicle accidents) to generate additional revenue.
Dedicated and experienced volunteer base, with active membership and leadership elected annually.	High volunteer turnover, especially in EMS. Shortage of younger volunteers and general difficulty in recruitment and retention.	Develop structured recruitment and retention programs, particularly targeting younger volunteers.
Consistent community fundraising activities that generate significant revenue.	No current capital improvement or long-term infrastructure upgrade plans in place.	Invest in infrastructure upgrades (truck bays, offices, walk-in cooler) to support operational needs.

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Active mutual aid agreements with surrounding municipalities and departments.	Lack of formal governance structure.	Consider developing a formal governance structure or advisory board to improve transparency and municipal relations.
Good ISO rating (4 within the borough), indicating effective fire protection services.	Resistance to providing financial transparency to local government, which may impact trust and funding.	Explore cost-sharing models and joint services with nearby municipalities to optimize resource use.
Ongoing fire prevention outreach in schools and attendance at council meetings by department members.	Some strained relationships with local municipal departments and officials, creating friction.	Expand public outreach and education programs to increase community engagement and support.
RAAS operates with certified EMTs and has a mix of healthcare professionals on staff.	Incomplete staffing for EMS - only two part-time EMTs with the remainder volunteers.	Leverage ALS-trained volunteers in broader roles if legally and financially feasible.
RAAS generates a majority of its revenue independently through service billing.		
Developing a regional EMS partnership with Sykesville to improve coverage and sustainability.		

Best Practices and Standards of Operation

The following section outlines best practices for rural fire and emergency medical services, drawn from a review of guidance and research published by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, DCED, and PSAB. These practices represent key strategies for enhancing sustainability, improving service quality, and strengthening community engagement among largely volunteer-based agencies like RVFD and RAAS.

Where applicable, examples from current RVFD and RAAS operations are provided to highlight alignment with or opportunities for adopting these statewide recommendations.

☐ *Factor: Recruitment and Retention*

Youth engagement programs, such as junior firefighter or EMT, are hosted to

cultivate early interest and commitment among young community members.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

The RVFD operates a Junior Firefighter Program. This program is designed to involve local youth, fostering their interest in emergency services and preparing them for potential future roles within the department. Further, the department engages local youth through annual Fire Prevention Week activities at C.G. Johnson Elementary School. During these events, members of the department provide age-appropriate fire safety education, equipment demonstrations, and interactive learning experiences designed to build awareness and spark interest in emergency services. These efforts not only promote public safety but also serve as an early introduction to volunteer opportunities within the department.

These outreach events should continue, and collaboration between the RVFD and RAAS to increase awareness and outreach is encouraged to bring greater attention to community needs and emergency services, particularly EMS needs and opportunities.

Flexible training opportunities, including modular and accessible training schedules, are offered to accommodate volunteers' varied availability, enhancing participation.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The RVFD offers weekend training opportunities for their members approximately 10-12 times per year. The training includes fire related drills, vehicle rescue, equipment familiarization, Hazmat awareness, and several others. They conduct training in-house and with other mutual aid fire companies. The RAAS follows a similar training model as the RVFD. They have trained instructors and conduct continuing education courses in-house.

Volunteer contributions are acknowledged through awards, stipends, or tax incentives to boost morale and retention.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met**

☐ **Observations:**

Volunteers are recognized through an annual awards banquet for all members.

Although the Borough does not currently have tax incentives in effect, Pennsylvania law provides municipalities with the option to offer these incentives to active members of volunteer fire companies and nonprofit

emergency medical service agencies. Under Act 172 of 2016, municipalities can grant real estate or earned income tax credits to qualifying volunteers. For instance, some municipalities offer up to a 100% real estate tax credit for active volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel who meet certain service criteria.

☐ ***Factor: Training and Professional Development***

All personnel meet baseline certifications, such as Firefighter I or EMT-Basic, to maintain service quality and safety.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The RVFD emphasizes the importance of baseline certifications to maintain service quality and safety. Fire personnel are required to complete at least Module 3 of Fire Essentials, with Module 4 necessary for those involved in interior firefighting. Additionally, all members must complete annual hazardous materials awareness training. The Chief noted that five firefighters are already certified at the Firefighter I level, with as many as 25 more eligible to test, indicating a structured approach to ensuring that personnel meet standardized qualifications. All RAAS personnel are required to have Emergency Medical Responder certification or higher. Additionally, drivers are required to complete the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course through the Department of Health.

Continuing education is supported and skills are regularly updated through workshops and courses to keep volunteers adept with evolving protocols and technologies.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The RVFD regularly conducts training for their members to keep up to date on protocols and technologies. Members also attend annual courses offered through Butler County Community College. The RAAS ensures that members have the required continuing education hours to maintain their certifications. They have trained instructors that provide continuing education courses to meet these requirements.

☐ ***Factor: Financial Management and Sustainability***

Diverse funding streams are utilized, combining municipal support, grants, fundraising, and billing for services to create a more stable financial foundation.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met**

☐ **Observations:**

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The RVFD relies on a diverse array of funding sources to support its operations and maintain its equipment. While municipal support remains limited - approximately \$20,000 annually, including \$6,000 from Winslow Township - the department supplements its budget through state grants, such as the Pennsylvania Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grant Program, which contributes around \$15,000 per year. Community fundraising plays a significant role in sustaining the department, with weekly bingo nights, gun raffles, and food sales generating a net profit of approximately \$150,000 annually. A mail campaign raises an additional \$20,000 per year, and newly introduced field usage fees contribute modestly to the overall revenue. RVFD has also successfully pursued federal funding opportunities in the past and has hired a grant writer to expand access to these resources in the future.

RAAS similarly combined public and private revenue streams to meet its approximately \$160,000 annual budget. The Borough and Winslow Township contribute a combined \$10,000, while the majority of funding is derived from billing for EMS services. RAAS also conducts a membership drive to bolster its financial base. As noted, a potential partnership with Sykesville Borough is currently in the works, which may bring operational and financial changes - including the need for expanded staffing - if formalized. This regional collaboration could enhance sustainability but will also require careful financial planning and additional resources.

Together, RVFD and RAAS demonstrate a proactive approach to financial management, leveraging a blend of local, state, federal, and community-based funding sources to support their critical public safety missions. While this diversified model has sustained both agencies thus far, continued innovation and community engagement will be essential to ensure long-term stability.

Clear and open financial records are maintained and shared to foster transparent budgeting and trust with stakeholders.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Clear and open financial records are not consistently maintained or shared publicly by either agency. The interview with the Chief revealed a strained relationship with Borough Council, particularly regarding financial transparency. When asked to provide a full income statement or budget in response to a council request, the department declined to do so, and no formal annual financial update is routinely provided to municipal officials. Despite having two

fire department members serving on council, broader engagement remains limited, and there appears to be no structured process for regular fiscal reporting to external stakeholders.

No financial information or reports are published on the RVFD or RAAS websites, further indicating a lack of publicly available documentation. While both agencies appear to manage their funds responsibly and are leveraging diverse revenue sources effectively, greater transparency in financial reporting could help build trust and support from the community and local government.

☐ ***Factor: Regional Collaboration***

Mutual Aid Agreements and partnerships are formalized with neighboring departments and agencies to ensure sharing and coordinated response during large-scale incidents.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

Mutual Aid Agreements and partnerships with neighboring communities and departments / agencies are in place and actively utilized, though the extent to which they are formalized was not detailed or explored as a part of this process. The Chief noted that RVFD participated in mutual aid with all neighboring municipalities, ensuring support and coordinated response as needed. This network strengthens operational capacity and reliability, which is especially critical for rural, volunteer-based services. As previously noted, RAAS is in the process of finalizing a regional partnership with Sykesville and already works with Winslow Township, suggesting an effort toward regional EMS coordination.

While these partnerships appear functional and effective, it is unclear whether formal agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) are in place for all arrangements. Still, the agencies clearly value collaboration, which aids in sustaining emergency response services in resource-constrained rural communities.

Resources are pooled for training, equipment, or administrative functions, reducing costs and improving efficiency.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

There is some evidence that RVFD and RAAS are pooling resources through regional partnerships, particularly in EMS operations. If and when the regional

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agreement with Sykesville is finalized, shared staffing, resources, equipment, and duties is anticipated.

For RVFD, while there is no formal mention of shared training or equipment purchasing agreements, the department does actively engage in mutual aid with neighboring fire departments, which can indirectly contribute to cost and resource sharing during joint operations. Additionally, the hiring of a grant writer to support both agencies suggests a strategic effort to centralize and professionalize aspects of administrative funding functions.

Although these steps are positive, broader or more structured resource pooling - such as joint training programs, shared procurement, or consolidated administration - does not yet appear to be widely implemented. As demands increase and staffing remains a challenge, expanding these collaborative efforts could help both agencies enhance efficiency and sustainability.

☐ ***Factor: Community Engagement***

Agency(ies) host open houses, safety workshops, and school programs to raise awareness and foster community support.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

The RVFD and RAAS maintain a consistent presence in the community through public education and outreach. Notably, they participate in Fire Prevention Week at the local elementary school, helping to educate young students on fire safety and emergency response.

Although not investigated or shared in detail, both agencies also engage with the public through representation at Council meetings and involvement in community functions. These efforts, while informal, reflect an ongoing commitment to fostering community support and raising awareness about their services. Expanding outreach efforts to include more formal, regular events like open houses, car seat checks, safety education sessions, or other topics could further strengthen local engagement and visibility.

Community feedback is encouraged through surveys or town hall meetings to help align services with public needs.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is little indication that formal feedback mechanisms are used by either agency to assess community needs. While some RVFD members serve on Borough Council and attend public meetings, this involvement is more representational than structured engagement for public input on behalf of either RVFD or RAAS.

The relationship between the agencies and municipal leadership was described as limited, and transparency in financial or operational matters has been a point of tension, suggesting that formal avenues for two-way communication with the public may be underutilized. Establishing regular feedback channels - such as surveys, listening sessions, or annual public reports - would help the departments better align their services with resident expectations and strengthen public trust.

Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on strengthening the Reynoldsville Volunteer Fire Department and the Reynoldsville Area Ambulance Service by improving operational efficiency, financial transparency, community engagement, and organizational sustainability. Based on interview insights, observations, and established best practices for rural emergency services, these proposals address key challenges such as volunteer recruitment, capital planning, and municipal relations, while leveraging existing strengths to enhance the delivery of critical emergency response services.

FD-EMS 1 - Enhance Financial Transparency and Reporting Practices

Both the RVFD and RAAS should implement clear, consistent, and open financial reporting protocols to foster transparency and build trust with the Borough Council, community stakeholders, and the public. This includes regularly preparing and sharing comprehensive financial statements - such as annual budgets, income statements, and expenditure reports - with municipal officials and making such information accessible via agency websites or public meetings.

Establishing a formal process for routine fiscal updates will improve accountability, encourage broader engagement with municipal leadership, and strengthen community confidence in the agencies' stewardship of resources. Transparent financial practices are critical for sustaining positive relationships with funding partners and supporting long-term operational and capital planning.

FD-EMS 2 - Develop a Formal Capital Improvement Plan for Fire and EMS Assets

While the (RVFD maintains its equipment and facilities in good condition - with all buildings and apparatus owned outright and regular maintenance performed - there is currently no formal capital improvement plan guiding future investments.

The Borough and fire department leadership should prioritize creating a comprehensive, multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP) that identifies the lifecycle, replacement schedules, and funding needs for all major apparatus, vehicles, and facilities. A formal CIP will enable proactive budgeting, ensure continued operational readiness, and help secure grant funding by demonstrating strategic asset management. This planning is essential to sustain service quality and avoid unexpected equipment failures or costly emergency repairs.

FD-EMS 3 - Develop Structured Recruitment and Retention Programs Focused on Engaging Younger Volunteers

Address ongoing staffing challenges and the noticeable shortage of younger volunteers by implementing formal recruitment and retention strategies targeted specifically at attracting and sustaining youth involvement.

These programs could include outreach to local schools and community organizations, mentorship opportunities, and flexible participation options designed to accommodate varying schedules. Emphasizing the value of volunteerism and providing clear pathways for skill development may help reverse current trends of high turnover - particularly in EMS - and build a sustainable pipeline of committed personnel to support the departments' vital emergency response roles.

FD-EMS 4 - Create a Formal Governance or Advisory Board to Enhance Transparency and Strengthen Municipal Relations

Consider creating a formal governance or advisory board to improve communication, transparency, and collaboration between the RVFD, RAAS, and Borough leadership. This body would include representatives from the departments, Borough Council, and key municipal stakeholders such as public works and police services.

Such a structure can facilitate regular, transparent financial and operational reporting, foster mutual understanding, and provide a dedicated forum to address concerns and coordinate resources. By institutionalizing engagement, the departments can build stronger partnerships with municipal entities, improve trust, and better align their services with community and government expectations.

FD-EMS 5 - Adopt a Fire and EMS Cost Recovery Ordinance

Establish an ordinance authorizing billing for emergency response services to recover costs and strengthen sustainability, particularly when services are rendered to non-residents, businesses, or insurance-covered incidents. Many municipalities in Pennsylvania have implemented Emergency Response Cost Recovery Ordinances to ensure that taxpayers are not solely burdened with the expense of specialized responses such as hazardous material incidents, motor vehicle accidents, or technical rescues.

Under this framework, the Borough can bill insurance companies, responsible parties, or other applicable entities for eligible costs, including personnel time, equipment usage, and materials expended. This approach ensures fairness by assigning costs to those who directly benefit from emergency response, while providing a supplemental funding stream to support operations, capital needs, and readiness.

FD-EMS 6 - Implement EMS Billing and Dedicated Fund

While EMS agencies commonly bill patients and insurers for transport services, Reynoldsville should expand this practice by establishing standardized billing procedures for EMS response, coupled with a Borough-administered dedicated EMS/Fire fund. Currently, EMS and Fire expenditures are absorbed within the general fund, making it difficult to track true service costs.

By moving EMS and Fire revenues and expenditures into a separate fund, the Borough will improve transparency, demonstrate fiscal responsibility, and ensure that emergency service providers have a reliable funding source. Combined with the proposed cost recovery ordinance, this structure creates a sustainable financial model for essential services, while giving residents and elected officials greater clarity into how funds are collected and spent.

FD-EMS 7 - Establish Formal Community Feedback Mechanisms

Implement structured and regular channels for gathering community input to better align their services with public needs. This could include conducting periodic surveys, hosting town hall or listening sessions, and issuing annual public reports that summarize operations, challenges, and future plans.

By creating formal opportunities for two-way communication, both agencies can enhance transparency, build stronger relationships with residents, and foster greater public trust and support. Regularly soliciting and integrating community feedback will enable the departments to respond more effectively to evolving expectations and improve service delivery.

Police Department

Rural police departments in Pennsylvania play a vital role in maintaining public safety, fostering community trust, and addressing unique local challenges often marked by limited resources, staffing shortages, and infrastructure constraints.

The Reynoldsville Police Department is operating under severe constraints that jeopardize both officer safety and effective law enforcement.

These departments frequently operate under difficult conditions that require adaptability, strong leadership, and close community partnerships to effectively serve their populations. The Reynoldsville Borough Police Department exemplifies many of these challenges, working within a small, rural community with a declining population and a nearby technical school campus. Despite constrained resources and operational hurdles, the department strives to fulfill its public safety mission.

This assessment provides a comprehensive review of the Reynoldsville Police Department, examining key aspects of its operations and organizational framework. Included is an overview of officer duties and responsibilities, an analysis of staffing levels and organizational structure, and a detailed budget review. The report also presents observations from an in-depth interview with the Chief of Police, followed by a summary of the department's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Finally, the assessment evaluates the department and Borough's alignment with established best practices, offering a clear perspective on current performance and areas for improvement.

Organization and Structure

Employees



Chief of Police
School Resource Officer
Officer (PT)

Reynoldsville's police department operates with a simple, centralized organizational structure. The Chief of Police oversees all departmental functions and directly supervises both a full-time officer assigned as a school resource officer (SRO) and a part-time officer who provides supplemental coverage. The SRO is contracted through the local technical school and primarily serves that institution during the academic year, limiting their availability for Borough patrol duties. All personnel report directly to the Chief, who manages scheduling, operations, and administrative responsibilities. The small size of the department necessitates that the Chief also serves in an active patrol role when needed.

Duties and Responsibilities

The police department operates with a small team of officers, each playing a distinct role in maintaining public safety both within the community and in support of regional educational institutions. Given the department's limited staffing, personnel often serve in multiple capacities to ensure continuity of service.

We only have coverage during the day. PSP Dubois handles everything at night, and their response time is 25 minutes.

- **Chief of Police** - Oversees all departmental operations, supervises personnel, manages budgetary and administrative matters, and serves as the Borough's primary law enforcement representative. The Chief is also responsible for grant writing, policy implementation, and filling in as a patrol officer when needed.
- **Full-Time Officer (School Resource Officer)** - Assigned full-time to Jefferson TECH during the school year, responsible for law enforcement and student safety on campus. During summer months and school breaks, the officer patrols the Borough on evening shifts.
- **Part-Time Officer** - Provides supplemental patrol coverage as scheduling allows. The position is currently held by a certified officer employed full-time elsewhere.

Together, this structure allows the department to maintain a baseline level of coverage, though the reliance on a minimal roster places strain on operations - particularly during off-hours or when officers are unavailable - underscoring the need for additional staffing support.

Budget Analysis

Reynoldsville's police department operates on a lean budget that, while sufficient to maintain basic services, is inadequate for modern policing needs and vulnerable to inconsistent oversight. The department's financial management is tightly linked to Borough decisions, which have at times reallocated earmarked funds or denied critical purchases. While the Chief has successfully leveraged grants and community donations to fill gaps, the department lacks the financial autonomy or internal advocacy needed to plan for sustainable improvements.

Personnel Costs

The department's payroll is modest, consisting of:

- **Chief of Police** - Contracted through 2030 at an hourly rate of \$29.50.

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- **Full-Time SRO (School Resource Officer)** - Paid entirely by Jefferson TECH, with the Borough receiving coverage during summer breaks and non-instructional days.
- **Part-Time Officer** - Funded by the Borough as the result of a prior lawsuit settlement.

Despite the limited personnel roster, the department receives no dedicated administrative support. The Chief assumes responsibility for scheduling, coverage, and filling in during SRO absences. The elimination of the Chief's previously contracted uniform allowance (\$800 annually) further reflects cost-cutting decisions that violate contractual terms and erode morale.

Operational and Capital Costs

The department is constrained by minimal investment in infrastructure, vehicles, and technology. Critical needs include -

- **Police Vehicle Replacement** - The Borough has refused repeated requests for a new patrol vehicle. The existing vehicle was found to be in unsafe condition despite being described as serviceable. A replacement vehicle was only obtained through a donation from Elk Run Fire Department, with necessary repairs funded by community contributions.
- **Technology Replacement** - The department's laptops run on Windows 10, which will be obsolete by October 2025. Replacing two units is estimated to cost \$5,000.
- **Security and Surveillance** - The internal camera system, which retains footage for only four days, is outdated and lacks external coverage. A proposal for a downtown surveillance system to support investigations was quoted at approximately \$30,000, but remains unfunded.

Grants and Donations

Despite the lack of internal capital investment, the Chief has demonstrated initiative in securing outside support -

- **Building Grants:** Two grants totaling approximately \$650,000 have been awarded to fund a building addition that would improve security and operational space.
- **Community Donations:** Local civic groups and businesses have donated equipment, technology, and repair funds, including approximately \$2,400 for a radio system and thousands more for printers and gear.

Budgetary Practices and Concerns

The Chief shared significant concerns regarding Borough financial practices -

- **Reallocation of Funds:** An estimated \$20,000–\$22,000 in unspent police department funds from 2024 was removed from the 2025 budget without consultation, allegedly to offset overages in the public works department.
- **Opaque Accounting:** The Chief cited six accounts not listed in the Borough's QuickBooks system and raised concerns about payroll oversight, nepotism, and potential misuse of funds.
- **Lack of Fiscal Transparency:** Budget decisions - such as removing line items, denying capital requests, and reallocating funds - are not clearly documented or justified to department leadership.

The police department's fiscal landscape is defined by insufficient baseline funding, dependence on external support, and internal financial practices that lack transparency. While short-term gaps have been bridged through grant writing and community goodwill, long-term operational stability will require structural reforms, clearer budgetary processes, and equitable treatment in resource allocation.

Observations

Kafferlin Strategies interviewed Chief Tammy Murray in May 2025 to gain a more detailed understanding of Reynoldsville's police department. The operational environment for the department is strained, under-resourced, and, in many respects, insecure - physically, technologically, and administratively. The department operates out of a cramped, shared municipal building that houses the Borough administration and the public library. The Chief's office - a small, windowless space with only a desk and two chairs - doubles as a command post, interview space, and detention monitoring area. A small metal prisoner bench is awkwardly placed in the hallway, blocking ingress/egress from the office. "There's no safe way to exit if something goes bad," Chief Murray said, describing the serious risks of prisoner handling in the current configuration.



The department operates in a severely under-resourced and unsafe environment, with cramped, inadequate facilities that compromise officer safety, prisoner handling, and effective operations.

Security vulnerabilities are evident both inside and outside the facility. The Chief has access to eight internal security cameras via a small office monitor, but this system only retains footage for four days and is long overdue for replacement. Access to the video feed is restricted to the

Chief alone, a decision that has previously prompted conflict with Borough Council. A past attempt by a councilman to gain access to the camera system “was fought all the way through union representation and denied,” according to the Chief.

Significant security vulnerabilities persist due to outdated camera systems with limited footage retention, restricted access causing internal conflict, and ineffective oversight exemplified by cameras being intentionally disabled or misused by staff.

Ironically, despite these access disputes, internal camera coverage is functionally ineffective. A key example is a camera in the administration office that was deliberately turned toward the ceiling by staff. When asked, the Chief explained, “I didn’t waste a camera feed on it—workers always turn it up

to the ceiling anyway.” This reflects a breakdown in internal policy, workplace professionalism, and security oversight.

External conditions are even more concerning. A walkthrough of the building's exterior revealed that the rear lot - where the patrol vehicle is parked - is isolated, overgrown, and littered with debris and construction waste. Accessed by a narrow alley, the lot is concealed from public view, making it, in the Chief's words, “a security risk to say the least.” She continued, “A person wishing to ambush a police officer would have a plethora of opportunities in the rear of this building.” This area lacks lighting and surveillance and is bordered by a dilapidated garage used for storage.

The building's rear exterior is a serious security hazard - overgrown, cluttered, poorly lit, and surveilled - creating an isolated ambush risk for officers and compromising the safety of parked patrol vehicles.

The department faces critical technology shortfalls with outdated equipment and severely limited staffing, resulting in daytime-only coverage and reliance on distant state police with lengthy response times during nights and school-year absences.

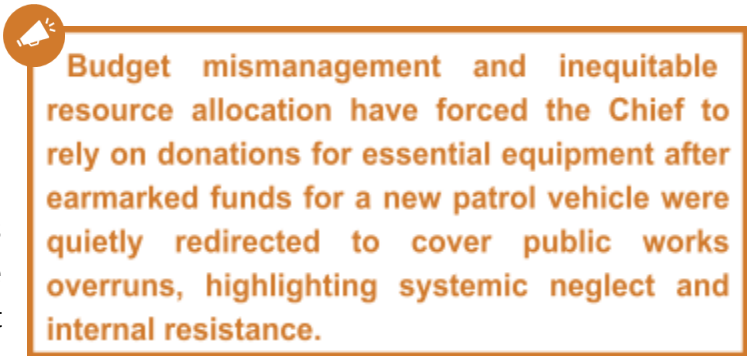
Beyond infrastructure, the department's technological capacity is equally dire. Patrol laptops still run on Windows 10, which will be obsolete by late 2025. A quote for two new systems totaled \$5,000 - funds that are currently unavailable. Staffing also remains

severely constrained. Aside from the Chief, the department employs only one full-time officer - who is contracted to serve as the school resource officer (SRO) for Jefferson TECH - and one part-time officer. The SRO is unavailable to the Borough during the academic year, and the Chief must cover his absences. “We only have coverage during the day. PSP Dubois handles everything at night, and their response time is 25 minutes,” she explained. Summer months offer some relief, with the SRO assigned to 3-11 shifts, but year-round coverage is inconsistent.

Evidence handling is hampered by insufficient space. The evidence room is located on the second floor of the municipal building and is only accessible through a public hallway. While the room itself is locked and secured, it is not sized for the volume or type of materials the department handles. "Getting large items up there just doesn't work," the Chief said, noting the inconvenience and lack of proper chain-of-custody design.

Internal administrative protocols raise additional concerns. Personnel files are stored in an unsecured location within the borough office and are accessible to non-police staff. The Chief cited an example of misconduct - where an employee's unauthorized guest was discovered hiding in the office after being observed on camera by the Mayor - as a symptom of broader ethical and security lapses. "Nothing was done. No discipline. That's just how it is here," she noted with frustration.

Budgetary inequities further complicate operations. The Chief recounted several denied requests for basic resources, including a new patrol vehicle, despite having \$20,000-\$22,000 in leftover funds earmarked in the 2024 budget. Those funds were quietly reallocated without notice to cover overruns in the public



Budget mismanagement and inequitable resource allocation have forced the Chief to rely on donations for essential equipment after earmarked funds for a new patrol vehicle were quietly redirected to cover public works overruns, highlighting systemic neglect and internal resistance.

works department. "They just took it. [The Administrative Assistant] told me it was gone - because public works was \$150,000 over," she said. The Chief eventually secured a fully equipped 2021 Dodge Charger through a donation from the local fire department, which provoked resentment from Borough officials. "I had to get it donated just to get a working car," she explained. Even then, a needed \$2,400 radio repair was initially denied - until the Chief secured additional donations from community partners.

The Chief described a history of interpersonal conflict, gender discrimination, and alleged retaliatory actions by Borough officials dating back to her initial appointment. From being demoted to 10 hours per week, to being returned to an empty office after winning a union-backed EEOC suit, the Chief detailed a persistent climate of animosity and obstruction. "They stripped everything - furniture, phone lines. I had to start from zero," she recalled.

Despite the challenges, the department has remained operational in large part due to the Chief's resilience, creative problem-solving, and strong ties with the community. Numerous local businesses, civic groups, and residents have provided donations and in-kind support. The

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Chief has also successfully authored grants totaling approximately \$650,000 for a potential building expansion that could resolve many infrastructure challenges.



Despite significant challenges, the department continues to function effectively thanks to the Chief's resilience, innovative leadership, strong community partnerships, and successful grant acquisition efforts.

In sum, the Reynoldsville Police Department is operating under highly adverse conditions. While community support and grant funding offer some hope, fundamental deficiencies in staffing, facilities, security, and administrative accountability pose significant risks to the

safety and effectiveness of law enforcement operations.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

The Reynoldsville Borough Police Department operates under complex and often difficult conditions. Despite its limited resources, the department has demonstrated resilience and a commitment to public service through creative problem-solving, community engagement, and tenacious leadership. However, it also faces deeply rooted operational, political, and infrastructural challenges that limit its effectiveness and compromise safety. The following outlines the department's key strengths, persistent challenges, and potential opportunities for improvement, growth, and reform.

 Strengths	 Challenges	 Opportunities
Strong leadership and administrative initiative by the Chief.	Lack of secure, sufficient facilities and outdated equipment.	Pursue regionalization or intermunicipal policing partnerships.
Successful grant writing securing over \$650,000.	Inadequate camera systems and building security vulnerabilities.	Replace and modernize technology and surveillance systems.
Positive community relationships and private support.	Insufficient staffing limiting police coverage to daylight hours.	Expand staffing to include an additional full-time officer to provide extended patrol coverage.
Reliable coverage of	Apparent internal conflict	Enhance internal policies for

Jefferson TECH through
contracted SRO.

and political obstruction
from Borough officials.

Suspected mismanagement
and lack of financial
transparency.

Unsecured personnel files
and lack of HR protocols.

data security and
chain-of-custody standards.

Leverage community support
and grant-writing capabilities
for capital improvements.

Conduct a forensic audit to
address longstanding
administrative concerns and
rebuild trust.

Best Practices and Standards of Operation

Best practices for rural police departments have been developed using resources from PSAB, the SPC's *Essentials of Effective Local Governance*, and Pennsylvania state policing standards such as PLEAC and MPOETC requirements. These guidelines provide a framework to enhance transparency, accountability, and operational effectiveness, addressing the specific challenges faced by small, rural law enforcement agencies.

☐ ***Factor: Governance and Oversight***

A clear organizational authority and reporting structure has been established, ensuring a defined chain of command and clear reporting relationships between the Chief of Police, Borough Council, and any oversight bodies.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough lacks a clearly defined organizational authority and reporting structure. While the Chief of Police oversees departmental operations, communication with Borough Council appears informal and strained, with no evidence of regular reporting or collaborative oversight. Conflicts with council members and inconsistent support suggest a breakdown in professional governance and accountability.

Regular Council briefings and operational reporting have been implemented, providing monthly activity reports and annual summaries to elected officials, fostering transparency and informed decision-making.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no indication that regular Council briefings or operational reporting are in place. The Chief noted a lack of engagement from Council and stated, "They

don't really give us an annual update or anything," suggesting minimal two-way communication and limited transparency in departmental operations.

Police Department policies and procedures have been formalized and an updated policy manual consistent with Pennsylvania accreditation standards and U.S. DOJ model policies is maintained.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

A policy manual is not maintained by the department.

The department pursues regionalization or intermunicipal cooperation where appropriate and evaluates shared service models to reduce costs, increase coverage hours, and promote officer safety.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Chief expressed support for regionalization and intermunicipal cooperation, stating she would favor such a model if guaranteed a role in the structure. However, no formal efforts appear to be underway. The idea has been discussed conceptually, but progress is stalled due to lack of political support from Borough leadership.

☐ ***Factor: Staffing and Human Resources***

The department maintains appropriate staffing levels based on call volume and coverage gaps. Staffing assessments are conducted to ensure minimum coverage that includes evenings and weekends as feasible.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department does not maintain adequate staffing levels to meet community needs, particularly during evening and overnight hours. The Chief indicated that police coverage ends before 11:00 p.m., with PSP Dubois handling calls overnight and a 25-minute response time. While the Chief believes at least one additional full-time officer is needed, no formal staffing assessment has been conducted to support coverage planning.

The Borough has established a fair and transparent compensation plan and created salary scales, benefit summaries, and promotion criteria to address morale, recruitment, and retention.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough lacks a fair and transparent compensation plan, contributing to low employee morale and perceptions of inequity. The Chief reported the removal of an \$800 uniform allowance despite contractual provisions and noted pay disparities, such as a recent hire receiving higher wages without a formal posting or vote. No clear salary scales, benefit summaries, or promotion criteria appear to be in place.

The Borough enforces secure and confidential personnel file management, storing all HR-related documents in secure, access-controlled environments in compliance with state HR laws and collective bargaining agreements.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not enforce secure or confidential personnel file management. The Chief reported that personnel files are kept in an unsecured location accessible to multiple employees, leading to privacy breaches such as unauthorized visitors in the office. This lack of security violates best practices and compromises employee confidentiality.

Ongoing officer training and certifications are provided. The department meets or exceeds Act 180 training mandates (annual updates under Act 120) and ensures documentation of all continuing education and use-of-force instruction.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no indication that trainings are provided to the Borough's police officers.

☐ ***Factor: Facilities and Equipment***

Police facilities are designed to meet basic standards for officer safety, evidence handling, and prisoner detention, including secured ingress/egress and surveillance coverage.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The police facilities fall short of basic standards for safety and functionality. The Chief's office is cramped with no safe egress when handling prisoners, and the evidence room is small, inconveniently located on the second floor, and difficult to access for large items. Surveillance coverage is outdated and incomplete, with several blind spots and security risks, especially around the building's rear.

The Borough maintains a modern fleet and an equipment inventory. The Borough has implemented a capital improvement plan for police vehicles, radios, and body-worn cameras with replacement schedules aligned to manufacturer and safety recommendations.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not maintain a capital improvement plan or a formal fleet replacement and maintenance schedule for police vehicles and equipment. The Chief reported repeated difficulties obtaining a reliable police vehicle, receiving a used car in poor condition and relying on donations for repairs and replacements. Radios and other equipment are similarly outdated, with no systematic plan for upgrades or replacement.

The department has invested in technology and evidence management systems, using digital records systems, evidence-tracking software, and secure evidence storage facilities that meet chain-of-custody standards.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department has not adequately invested in modern technology or evidence management systems. The Chief indicated that police computers are still operating on Windows 10, which will soon be obsolete, and there is no mention of digital records or evidence-tracking software. The evidence room is small, inconveniently located, and lacking the capacity and infrastructure needed to meet best practices for secure storage and chain-of-custody compliance.

☐ ***Factor: Community Engagement and Transparency***

The department conducts regular community outreach and visibility efforts, building trust through school visits, foot patrols, public safety events, and social media communication.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Though community support for the police department appears to be strong, the police force does not regularly engage in any type of community outreach, SRO duties at JeffTECH aside.

Complaint and commendation processes have been established to provide accessible channels for the public to file complaints or compliments, with formal tracking and follow-up procedures.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Neither the department nor the Borough has established formal complaint or commendation processes. The Chief expressed frustration over not being properly recognized for her successes in achieving grant funding, indicating that a system is needed.

Use-of-Force and arrest data are publicly reported and de-identified summaries of use-of-force, citations, and other enforcement data are published to improve community transparency.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department does not publicly report use-of-force or arrest data, nor does it publish any de-identified summaries or enforcement statistics. The Borough has implemented minimal transparency practices, with no mention of data sharing or public reporting to inform the community or build trust.

☐ ***Factor: Financial and Administrative Practices***

A separate police department budget has been created and is maintained separate from General Fund overages, allocating funds based on operational needs and restricting unauthorized reallocation of surplus dollars without Council action.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough does not maintain a separate or protected police department budget. The budgeting process is largely reactive, with no long-term financial planning or structured reporting procedures. Surplus funds from the police budget have been unilaterally reallocated - most notably when over \$20,000 earmarked for a police vehicle was removed to offset a public works budget overage - without formal Council action or departmental input.

Grant funds are pursued, utilizing state and federal law enforcement grants (ex. PCCD, JAG, COPS), and ensuring transparent handling and acknowledgment of successful awards.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

The Chief actively pursues grant funding and has successfully secured approximately \$650,000 for building improvements, with a third grant prepared for submission. However, the Borough has not established a transparent process for handling or acknowledging these awards. The Chief reported that previous

staff received bonuses for grant work, while her efforts were met with minimal recognition, highlighting a lack of consistency and fairness in how grant contributions are managed and valued.

The Borough maintains accurate payroll, purchasing, and overtime documentation. Third-party or forensic audits are encouraged when warranted to rebuild public trust.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's fiscal practices are neither accurate nor transparent. Overtime is reportedly undocumented and does not appear in the General Ledger, raising serious concerns about financial accountability. While annual third-party audits are said to occur, they are unclear and ineffective, offering no real insight into financial irregularities or misuse of funds.

☐ ***Factor: Risk Management and Officer Safety***

The department conducts regular facility and threat assessments to address blind spots, unsafe parking areas, poor lighting, and maintenance issues that could endanger staff or residents.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department has not implemented a formal facility or threat assessment process. However, the Chief personally identified numerous safety hazards, including blind spots, inadequate lighting, overgrown lots, and unsecured rear access points that pose ambush risks. Despite these concerns, no comprehensive assessments or corrective actions have been initiated by the Borough.

The department has implemented use-of-force, pursuit, and de-escalation policies that align with national best practices and insurance provider recommendations to reduce liability and promote ethical policing.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no indication that the department has implemented formal use-of-force, pursuit, or de-escalation policies aligned with national best practices or insurance provider guidelines.

Officers are provided with proper equipment and physical protections. The department maintains up-to-date ballistic vests, radios, and uniforms per federal

and state safety standards. Enforce vest replacement cycles under NIJ guidelines.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department makes some efforts to provide officers with essential protective equipment, but resources are limited and inconsistent. The Chief participates in a federal vest grant program, and contract language requires vest replacement per safety standards. However, radios and uniforms are outdated, the uniform allowance was removed despite being contractually required, and replacement cycles for equipment are not systematically enforced.

Recommendations

Rural police departments serve as the frontline of public safety in many Pennsylvania communities, providing essential services under often challenging and resource-constrained conditions. In Reynoldsville, the local police department faces significant operational, financial, and structural hurdles that compromise its ability to deliver consistent, professional law enforcement coverage. From staffing shortages and outdated equipment to unclear governance and a lack of long-term planning, the department operates with limited support despite widespread community need and strong public backing.

The following recommendations are designed to address these critical issues and chart a path toward greater stability, accountability, and service delivery. They reflect the realities described by department leadership and noted through consultant observations and highlight the urgent need for coordinated action by Borough officials to restore capacity, enhance safety, and rebuild trust.

PD 1 - Enhance Building Security Through Comprehensive Assessment and Upgrades

Conduct a thorough security assessment of the police facility focusing on physical vulnerabilities, including camera coverage, lighting, perimeter control, and safe prisoner handling areas. Address critical gaps by installing additional security cameras - particularly at the building's front entrance and vulnerable rear areas - to improve surveillance and deter criminal activity. Clean and secure the overgrown rear lot by removing debris and trash, improving lighting, and considering physical barriers such as gating or fencing to eliminate ambush risks and protect officers, equipment, and the community. Additionally, reconfigure or relocate the prisoner holding area to ensure safe and secure ingress and egress, preventing officer exposure to risk during detainee processing.

PD 2 - Upgrade Computer System to Ensure Operational Continuity

Replace outdated police department laptops and computer systems currently running Windows 10, which will become unsupported after October 2025. Invest in purchasing at least two updated computers to maintain uninterrupted access to essential law enforcement software and databases. Allocating approximately \$5,000 for this upgrade is critical to sustaining daily operations, meeting technological standards, and supporting officer efficiency and public safety responsibilities.

PD 3 - Pursue Regionalization and Shared Service Models to Improve Coverage and Reduce Costs

Initiate formal discussions with neighboring municipalities to explore regional policing or shared service agreements that can expand coverage hours, enhance officer safety, and reduce operational costs. While the Chief has expressed openness to regionalization - stating support for such a model if guaranteed a role - progress has been stalled by a lack of political will. Borough leadership should take an active role in evaluating cooperative frameworks, including feasibility studies, grant opportunities (ex. DCED or PCCD shared services funding), and intermunicipal agreements. Though the process would be complex and lengthy, it may present a viable long-term solution for Reynoldsville and nearby boroughs facing similar staffing and resource challenges. Departments to consider in early-stage discussions include DuBois / Sandy Township (32 officers), Brockway (2 officers), Brookville (7-8 officers), and Sykesville (currently without a police force).

PD 4 - Increase Staffing to Expand Police Coverage and Improve Public Safety

Hire two additional full-time police officers - or a combination of full-time and part-time personnel - to expand law enforcement coverage into evening hours and reduce reliance on state police for overnight calls. This staffing increase would allow the department to provide consistent service until at least 11:00 PM, addressing current gaps in patrol availability and significantly improving response times, officer safety, and community presence. Adequate staffing is essential for maintaining public trust and fulfilling core public safety responsibilities.

PD 5 - Improve Evidence Storage Security and Organization

Secure the evidence storage area by ensuring all doors are properly locked and access is strictly controlled to maintain chain-of-custody integrity. Implement systematic organization and regular cleaning protocols to prevent accumulation of dust and clutter, enhancing evidence preservation and facilitating efficient case management. These steps are essential to uphold legal standards and strengthen the department's investigative credibility.

PD 6 - Develop and Implement Comprehensive Departmental Policies Aligned with State and Federal Standards

Establish a complete and up-to-date police department policy manual consistent with Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (PLEAC) standards and U.S. Department of Justice model policies. This should include formal policies on use-of-force, vehicle pursuits, de-escalation, and complaint and commendation procedures to ensure ethical policing, reduce liability, and promote transparency. A structured policy framework will strengthen internal accountability, clarify expectations for officers, and provide the public with confidence in the department's professionalism and responsiveness.

PD 7 - Implement a Capital Improvement Plan and Equipment Replacement Schedule for Police Operations

Develop and adopt a formal Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes scheduled replacement and maintenance of police vehicles, radios, uniforms, and officer safety equipment in accordance with federal and manufacturer guidelines. Current operations rely heavily on outdated and donated equipment, with no structured plan in place to ensure officer readiness and safety. The Borough should reinstate the uniform allowance as required by contract, ensure compliance with NIJ vest replacement standards, and prioritize stable funding for essential tools and protective gear to support effective and professional policing.

PD 8 - Establish Clear Governance Structure and Strengthen Reporting Relationships

Define a formal organizational structure that includes consistent oversight, routine reporting, and professional communication between the Police Department and Borough leadership. Appointing a qualified Borough Manager - with the Chief of Police reporting directly to that role - would provide necessary administrative support, reduce political interference, and create a clearer chain of command. Regular operational briefings, activity reports, and annual performance summaries should be institutionalized to foster transparency, rebuild trust, and support informed decision-making by elected officials.

PD 9 - Adopt a Transparent Compensation Plan and Strengthen Fiscal Accountability

Develop and implement a formal compensation plan that includes clearly defined salary scales, benefit summaries, promotion criteria, and uniform allowances to support employee morale, recruitment, and retention. The absence of structured compensation practices - along with undocumented overtime, unposted hires, and reported pay inequities - undermines both

financial integrity and organizational trust. This recommendation should be pursued alongside broader fiscal management reforms, including the adoption of a General Ledger-based tracking system, routine third-party audits, and a formal process for salary adjustments to ensure compliance with contracts, transparency standards, and public expectations.

PD 10 - Establish a Training Program to Meet Act 180 Requirements and Maintain Officer Certification

Implement a structured training and certification program to ensure all officers meet annual Act 180 (Act 120 update) mandates, including instruction in use-of-force, legal updates, and de-escalation tactics. Regular, documented training is critical for officer safety, legal compliance, and liability reduction. The Borough should prioritize funding and scheduling for continuing education to support professional development and maintain minimum standards required by Pennsylvania law.

PD 11 - Strengthen Community Outreach and Transparency Through Public Engagement and Data Reporting

Establish a structured community outreach program that includes regular public safety events, school visits, foot patrols, and digital engagement to build relationships and trust with residents. In addition, implement transparency measures such as the public reporting of de-identified use-of-force incidents, arrests, and enforcement statistics. These efforts will enhance accountability, improve public perception, and align the department with statewide best practices for rural law enforcement agencies.

PD 12 - Clarify and Align Enforcement Responsibilities for Parking and Code Violations

Review and update municipal ordinances to clearly define enforcement authority for parking and minor code violations, ensuring consistency between the police department and the code enforcement office. Determine whether a parking ordinance exists and designate the police department as the primary enforcement body where appropriate, especially for traffic-related infractions. Clarifying roles will reduce duplication, improve accountability, and ensure violations are addressed uniformly and lawfully.

Public Works

In small rural communities like Reynoldsville, the Public Works Department plays a central role in delivering visible, essential services that directly impact quality of life - from winter maintenance and stormwater management to road repairs, mowing, and equipment upkeep.

Reynoldsville's Public Works Department maintains approximately 11 miles of roadway and manages key seasonal operations, including the application of an average 182 tons of salt and 158 tons of anti-skid material each winter.

These services are often delivered with limited staffing and aging infrastructure, placing significant demands on a small workforce. In the absence of a professional manager or long-range capital planning framework, much of the department's success relies on institutional knowledge, informal systems, and the adaptability of its crew. Water and wastewater systems are run by the Reynoldsville Water and Sewer Authority, with members appointed by Council. As the Borough continues to navigate financial constraints, infrastructure needs, and increasing service expectations, strengthening the capacity and oversight of public works operations will be critical to long-term sustainability.

The following analysis includes an overview of departmental responsibilities, internal structure, budget considerations, key findings from the staff interview, and a review of operational strengths and weaknesses. It concludes with a best practices evaluation and targeted recommendations to improve efficiency, transparency, and the overall effectiveness of Reynoldsville's public works function.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Public Works Department is responsible for a broad array of essential municipal services that support public safety and infrastructure reliability. In addition to core functions like winter maintenance, road repairs, mowing, and vehicle upkeep, the department manages stormwater infrastructure through the cleaning and repair of catch basins, ditches, and storm drains. While this work is largely reactive, it is critical for preventing flooding and maintaining road conditions. The department also plays an active role in preparing for and inspecting contracted paving projects, working closely with PennDOT to estimate costs and set annual priorities.

We pretty much do everything in-house except paving.

Mowing and vegetation control are major time commitments during warmer months, particularly along the flood control project and around Borough athletic fields. Street sweeping is performed as conditions allow, though equipment limitations restrict effectiveness. Despite the aging fleet, the department performs its own equipment maintenance whenever possible to reduce costs and extend the life of its assets. This hands-on, resourceful approach reflects the department's commitment to delivering reliable service with limited staffing and funding.

Organization and Structure

Employees



*Foreman
Laborers (2)*

The Reynoldsville Borough Public Works Department operates with a lean organizational structure consisting of three full-time employees: a Foreman, an Operator, and a Laborer. All three positions are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. The department's small size requires that each employee be capable of performing a wide range of tasks, and staff members routinely rotate duties depending on operational needs and

seasonal demands.

Oversight of the department is provided by an appointed member of Borough Council who serves as the head of the Street Committee. This Council representative acts as the primary liaison between the department and the elected body, addressing issues as they arise and helping to guide departmental priorities. A second Council member also engages regularly with the Foreman, reflecting a high level of involvement in day-to-day matters. While this hands-on approach fosters close communication, it can blur lines between operational management and policy oversight. In the absence of a professional Borough Manager, strategic direction, administrative consistency, and long-term planning may be more difficult to maintain.

Budget Analysis

The Public Works operating budget stands at approximately \$300,000 annually. The department does not generate revenue and budget usage varies by year, depending on maintenance needs, project scope, and equipment demands. About 50% of the Public Works annual budget is spent on employee wages and benefits. Approximately \$100,000 annually is utilized for materials for road maintenance and stormwater infrastructure repair operations. Additionally, \$50,000 is directed to the repair of vehicles and winter maintenance operations each year.

Observations

Kafferlin Strategies interviewed Streets Foreman Gary Troutman and Council Members Joy Hartzell* and Jeff Siple in May 2025. The Reynoldsville Borough Public Works Department is a small but capable team responsible for a broad range of core municipal services. Led by the foreman, the three-person crew handles essential operations including winter maintenance (snow and ice removal), mowing and weed control along the flood control project and around athletic fields, storm drain cleaning and repairs, road maintenance (pothole repair, grading, ditching), stormwater pipe replacement, street sweeping, and vehicle maintenance. (* - Ms. Hartzell resigned from Borough Council at its June 25, 2025 meeting.)



The Public Works Department is a small, capable team that efficiently delivers a wide range of essential municipal services year-round.

"We pretty much do everything in-house except paving," Mr. Troutman explained. Paving is contracted out, typically to Hager Paving, though the department plays a key role in preparing, coordinating, and inspecting those projects. Recent discussions around issuing a mowing RFP had not yet reached the department; Council members clarified during the interview that they were "just gathering pricing to evaluate options."

The department maintains a modest fleet of vehicles and equipment essential to operations, including:

- Three plow/dump trucks
- A grader (1990s, fair condition)
- A backhoe (2016, fair condition)
- An excavator (reported in good condition)
- A tractor/mower (2006, poor condition)
- A 1995 street sweeper (poor condition; no longer sprays water)



Much of the department's equipment is aging or in poor condition, with several critical vehicles - such as the inoperable 2003 plow truck and failing street sweeper - urgently needing replacement to maintain reliable operations.

Two vehicles are in urgent need of replacement: a 2003 Ford 550 plow truck (inoperable) and the street sweeper, which can only be used when it rains due to its broken water system. The 2013 GMC 3500 plow truck is in fair condition but nearing the end of its service life. The

department also expressed concerns about the aging mower, citing it as another high-priority replacement need.

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One of the department's most time-intensive tasks is mowing and weed control along the flood control project, which is essential but labor-intensive given the size of the crew. In terms of recurring challenges, winter plowing is often complicated by residents who fail to move their vehicles from plow routes, making snow removal inefficient and frustrating.

Despite being cross-trained, the department is understaffed, lacks a formal succession or training plan, and relies heavily on a small team to meet growing operational demands.

While the team is cross-trained and each member can perform most tasks, current staffing levels are stretched thin. "It would be nice to have more help," Mr. Troutman noted candidly. There is no formal succession or cross-training strategy in place, but all

employees are generally familiar with the range of responsibilities. Mr. Troutman recently earned certification through the Jefferson County Conservation District for Dirt and Gravel Road maintenance, which now enables the Borough to apply for related grant funding.

The department operates out of an older garage facility. While it meets most operational needs, the coal/wood-fired heating system is outdated and not ideal for the workspace.

The department's aging garage meets basic needs but relies on an outdated coal/wood heating system that is poorly suited for a modern work environment.

The department currently lacks written standard operating procedures or safety manuals. Additionally, not all staff hold current certifications; notably, no one currently has flagger certification. However, Mr. Troutman's dirt and gravel road certification is a step forward in expanding the Borough's grant eligibility and technical capacity.

The department lacks written procedures and up-to-date safety certifications, limiting operational consistency and compliance despite recent progress in grant-related training.



Wood-Burning Furnace in Public Works Facility

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Reynoldsville's Public Works crew actively supports neighboring communities, including providing street sweeping assistance in Bell Township and Sykesville. The department also works closely with PennDOT on road condition assessments. Each year, Mr. Troutman surveys Borough streets, estimates project costs in coordination with PennDOT, and provides paving recommendations to Council. Council members then review and prioritize projects. Mr. Troutman also inspects contracted paving work to ensure quality control.



Reynoldsville's Public Works team demonstrates strong regional collaboration and proactive oversight by assisting neighboring communities, coordinating with PennDOT, and carefully managing paving projects to ensure quality and prioritize needs.



The department lacks a formal long-term capital plan, relying instead on ad hoc grant applications without a clear roadmap for future infrastructure investments.

Though there is no formal long-term capital plan, the department has submitted and is planning several grant applications aimed at stormwater and road improvement projects. "We don't have any concrete plans for the next few years," he said, "but we've

been working on some grants to help move projects forward."

In addition, stormwater management remains a major infrastructure concern, as flooding has impacted properties throughout the Borough. While the Army Corps of Engineers could assist with mapping and planning solutions, regulatory restrictions on dredging present a barrier that must be addressed at the state level.

Despite the limited size and resources, the Public Works team is seen as highly productive. They maintain roughly 11 miles of roadway and use approximately 182 tons of salt and 158 tons of anti-skid annually. The salt shed was found to be in fair condition and sufficient for current storage needs.



Despite limited resources, the Public Works team is regarded as highly productive, maintaining 11 miles of roadway and managing winter operations with over 300 tons of salt and anti-skid annually.

The department's key strengths lie in its adaptability, interdepartmental collaboration, and cost-saving maintenance efforts. "We do a lot with just three people," Mr. Troutman remarked. Their ability to maintain equipment in-house helps stretch limited funds and ensures that essential services are consistently delivered.

In the years ahead, equipment replacement and stormwater infrastructure upgrades remain pressing needs. With grant support and continued collaboration with Borough Council and

outside agencies, the department is committed to sustaining and enhancing public works services for the community.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

The Public Works Department is a small, cross-trained team that effectively manages a broad range of essential services despite limited resources. This section highlights the department's operational strengths, such as its strong interdepartmental collaboration, in-house equipment maintenance, and proactive planning. It also identifies key challenges, including staffing shortages, aging equipment, and the absence of formal safety procedures. Finally, it outlines several opportunities to enhance service delivery through targeted equipment replacement, grant funding, shared services, and improved public communication.

 Strengths	 Challenges	 Opportunities
All three staff are cross-trained and capable of performing most tasks, allowing for flexibility in daily operations. The department works closely with the local water authority and neighboring municipalities enhancing service delivery and mutual aid. Performing maintenance on their own equipment saves the Borough money and increases operational readiness. The small crew manages a broad range of responsibilities and maintains 11 miles of roadway effectively.	A three-person crew is not adequate to meet service demands year-round, especially during peak seasons. Several critical pieces of equipment are in poor or inoperable condition limiting operational efficiency. The department does not have written standard operating procedures or safety manuals in place. The coal/wood-fired heat system in the garage is not ideal for a modern work environment. Staff are not up to date on certain required certifications, including flagger training.	The new dirt and gravel road certification opens doors for applying to the Jefferson County Conservation District for infrastructure support. Identifying priority replacements can inform future capital improvement planning and grant applications. Implementing written procedures and training programs could improve safety, compliance, and readiness for insurance or regulatory reviews. Continued and formalized collaboration with neighboring municipalities could help offset staffing and equipment limitations.

There is proactive project planning, with the Foreman annually surveying road conditions, coordinating with PennDOT, and providing recommendations to Council for paving projects.

The Foreman's certification through the Jefferson County Conservation District positions the Borough to apply for Dirt & Gravel Road grant funding.

The department maintains regular interaction with Council representatives involved in street and infrastructure decisions.

Vehicles left on the road during snow events hinder effective plowing operations.

There are no documented strategies for workforce continuity or future hiring.

Introducing basic tracking or scheduling systems could improve efficiency and recordkeeping (maintenance logs, stormwater inspections).

A targeted education campaign or signage initiative could improve snow removal outcomes by encouraging resident compliance.

Recent discussions around RFPs for mowing indicate interest in exploring contracted support to supplement the crew.

Best Practices and Standards of Operation

The following evaluation outlines how Reynoldsville Borough's Public Works Department aligns with established best practices in municipal public works operations. These standards are drawn from the SPC's *Standards of Effective Local Government*, DCED, and PSAB. Each factor below reflects industry benchmarks for sound management, effective oversight, infrastructure planning, and personnel development. The assessment identifies where current practices are meeting expectations, where improvements are needed, and where opportunities exist to strengthen service delivery and operational resilience.

☐ ***Factor: Management and Oversight***

Responsibility for the public works function is placed with an individual trained and experienced in the major areas of public works and management.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met, but...**

☐ **Observations:**

Day to day operations are managed by an experienced public works foreman. An appointed Council representative handles oversight of the public works department. This type of management structure is less than ideal and has the

potential to cause conflict. A professional Borough manager could oversee this department to ensure Council's goals for the department are met.

Following the adoption of the annual budget, an implementation plan encompassing all public works operations including a system for monitoring goals and objectives is developed by the public works administrator in consultation with the municipal manager/administration.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There are no systems in place to monitor goals and objectives. The foreman focuses on completion of routine tasks.

A comprehensive vehicle and equipment maintenance records system is used as a basis for the replacement schedule for public works equipment and vehicles.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The department is not utilizing any maintenance record systems. They rely on vehicle mileage thresholds for routine maintenance work. Vehicles are operated as long as possible until the cost of repairing them becomes too large of a burden to pay for.

There is a system for monitoring all projects in all phases of implementation by appropriate management personnel.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no defined system in place for monitoring projects by management personnel. The appointed Borough Council member periodically reviews project implementation progress at undefined intervals.

Regular progress reports on the implementation of public works projects are provided to the manager/secretary and elected officials.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The public works foreman does not deliver reports or updates to Borough Council or the secretary. The foreman reports issues and problems to the appointed Borough Council representative.

Municipal facilities are maintained in accordance with policies and procedures designed to preserve these assets and to reduce injury and liability claims.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There were no policies or procedures in place for maintenance of facilities. Maintenance was only conducted on an as needed basis when an issue arises.

The responsibilities of the public works department in the event of a natural or man-made disaster have been identified as part of the borough emergency management plan.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The public works department does not have a defined role during emergency events. They are occasionally asked to provide street closure materials as needed during flood emergencies.

☐ ***Factor: Personnel***

Training is provided for all public works personnel on a regular basis. The training agenda is comprehensive in scope. It includes programs in the technical aspects of public works, employee safety policies, procedures and safety equipment, and management and supervision.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There are no training opportunities provided for employee and equipment safety or management. The only training provided is for the dirt and gravel road program to allow the Borough to apply for grant funding to repair and improve roads within the Borough.

☐ ***Factor: Municipal Streets***

All borough streets and appurtenances are well maintained and supported by a systematic, multi-year pavement management program which focuses on the maintenance, restoration and reconstruction of municipal streets and roads.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

A multi-year pavement management program was not in place. Streets and appurtenances are reviewed annually to identify projects for the upcoming year.

The borough has a multi-year plan which presents an assessment of the current condition of all borough streets and a schedule for resurfacing, restoration, or reconstruction projects.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

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The foreman drives around annually to review roads. He then works closely with PennDOT to establish costs and priorities. He then makes the recommendation to Council, and Council reviews the roads and ultimately decides what paving projects to complete.

State standards and mandates governing procedures, materials and specifications guide street and road construction, repair, and resurfacing.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The foreman works closely with PennDOT to ensure that the state standards are met. PennDOT assists with writing specifications and project inspections.

Berms, catch basins, and storm sewers associated with municipal streets and roads are cleaned on a regular basis. Catch basins and storm sewers are maintained in accordance with an adopted work schedule.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There were no routine maintenance schedules for the storm sewer system. These systems were maintained when a problem existed.

Street signs are inventoried, regularly replaced, and are installed, maintained, and supported by the appropriate ordinances.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

There is no indication that the Borough currently maintains a formal inventory or regular maintenance schedule for street signage, nor has the Borough adopted regulations around signage installation or maintenance.

Planning street maintenance for the winter months include three major program components:

- 1) Snow and ice control equipment is in good working condition in advance of the ice and snow season;**
- 2) A current snow and ice control plan exists. It includes procedures for crew call out, route coverage and priorities, salt/cinder stockpiles and access to additional resources in emergencies; and**
- 3) A preseason snow and ice control training program for all public works personnel.**

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough has three trucks that are utilized for snow and ice control. One of the trucks was inoperable and needed to be replaced. The department did not calibrate equipment or provide training to personnel for snow and ice control. They did have procedures for call-outs and route coverage. Their salt and anti-skid stockpile was adequate for routine winters.

☐ **Factor: Solid Waste Management**

Whether done by municipal employees, by contracting out, or by other arrangements, refuse collection is mandated for each household and business in the community, and such waste is properly collected, transported, and disposed of in accordance with state law.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met**

☐ **Observations:**

Hugill Sanitation provides contracted refuse collection services for residential households in the Borough, and all such households are required to use their services. The Borough also requires businesses to have refuse collection but allows them to contract with any individual refuse contractor they choose.

Garbage, rubbish, and trash are collected at least weekly to assure the public's health, safety, and welfare. This includes arrangements for pick-up of bulk wastes, yard wastes and leaves, and authorized recyclable materials.

☐ **Met or Unmet** → **Unmet**

☐ **Observations:**

Refuse is collected weekly from each resident's household, but the contracted services do not include the collection of recyclable materials. A bulk waste collection is offered to the residents annually.

The Borough has written standards which require that routes be completed as scheduled, that households are not missed and that pickups are thorough, and the areas left clean of solid wastes. The municipality has a system in place for monitoring the quality of the refuse collection service.

☒ **Met or Unmet** → **Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough's contract for refuse collection services requires routes to be completed as scheduled and ensure households are not missed.

By municipal ordinance or through contract, policy is set which, among other things, stipulates the type of container, and limits the time when garbage/trash can be placed at the curb, and when emptied containers must be removed from the curb. Compliance is monitored.

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☒ **Met or Unmet → Met**

☐ **Observations:**

Reynoldsville has ordinances in place to regulate solid waste through their Code Enforcement Officer.

Regardless of the current means which the municipality uses to collect refuse, management periodically makes an analysis of the system to determine whether it is the most cost-effective means to provide refuse service.

☒ **Met or Unmet → Met**

☐ **Observations:**

The Borough periodically advertises requests for proposals for refuse collection services to ensure they are getting the best pricing for residents.

Recommendations

Targeted recommendations are provided below to enhance the operational capacity and efficiency of the Borough's Public Works Department. Informed by staff interviews, facility and equipment evaluations, and recognized best practices, these proposals focus on critical areas such as staffing, equipment replacement, facility improvements, and process enhancements. Implementing these measures will strengthen service delivery, improve safety and reliability, and support the Borough's long-term infrastructure goals.

PW 1 - Establish a Fleet Replacement Plan

Develop and implement a formal vehicle and equipment replacement plan to address the aging and increasingly unreliable Public Works fleet. Currently, two critical pieces of equipment - the 2003 Ford F-550 plow truck and the 1995 street sweeper - are in poor condition and inoperable, directly limiting the department's ability to deliver core services such as winter maintenance and street cleaning. Several other assets, including the mower and older dump trucks, are nearing the end of their service life. Without a structured replacement schedule, the Borough is left reacting to equipment failures rather than planning for sustainable upkeep.

A documented plan will not only support budgeting and capital planning but also strengthen future grant applications by clearly identifying replacement priorities and demonstrating long-term asset management.

PW 2 - Implement Written Procedures and Safety Training

Create and adopt written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and safety manuals for all core functions of the Public Works Department. Currently, the department operates without

formal guidance documents or consistent safety protocols, and key certifications - such as flagger training - are not up to date. Establishing clear procedures and conducting regular training will enhance workplace safety, improve operational consistency, and ensure compliance with regulatory standards. These practices will also strengthen the Borough's position in insurance reviews, reduce liability exposure, and build institutional knowledge that supports cross-training and succession planning.

PW 3 - Upgrade Heating System in Public Works Garage

Replace the outdated coal/wood-fired heating system in the Public Works garage with a modern, energy-efficient alternative. While the facility generally meets the department's operational needs, the current heating setup is inefficient, difficult to maintain, and unsuitable for a safe, modern work environment. Upgrading the system will improve employee comfort, reduce fire and health risks, and lower long-term utility and maintenance costs - aligning facility operations with current workplace standards.

PW 4 - Develop a Succession and Cross-Training Plan

Establish a formal succession and cross-training strategy to ensure continuity of operations and reduce risk associated with employee absences or turnover. While current staff are generally familiar with a broad range of duties, the lack of structured cross-training or documented backup procedures leaves the department vulnerable to service disruptions. A clear plan will support knowledge transfer, build internal capacity, and strengthen long-term operational resilience.

PW 5 - Institutionalize a Preventative Maintenance Plan

Establish a structured preventative maintenance schedule for municipal vehicles and stormwater infrastructure. A formal maintenance plan - paired with easy-to-use checklists and timelines - would help ensure routine tasks such as oil changes, storm basin cleaning, and equipment inspections are completed consistently. For example, setting benchmarks like oil changes every three months or storm basin cleaning every six months would promote long-term asset reliability, extend vehicle lifespan, and reduce the likelihood of costly repairs or operational downtime. Proactive maintenance of stormwater infrastructure is especially important for preventing blockages, minimizing flood risks, and protecting roadway integrity.

PW 6 - Establish a Formal Reporting Process for Public Works Projects

Require regular, written progress reports from the Public Works Foreman to the Borough Secretary and full Borough Council to improve transparency, accountability, and coordination. Currently, project updates are shared informally with a single Council representative, limiting

broader oversight and institutional awareness. A standardized reporting process - such as monthly summaries outlining project status, timelines, issues, and upcoming needs - will support better decision-making, enhance communication, and ensure that all elected officials remain informed about departmental operations.

PW 7 - Develop a Multi-Year Street and Signage Management Plan

Create a formal, multi-year street improvement plan that includes an assessment of roadway conditions, a prioritized schedule for resurfacing and reconstruction, and an inventory and maintenance schedule for all street signage. While the Public Works Foreman currently conducts informal road reviews and consults with PennDOT, the absence of a documented plan limits long-term planning and funding readiness. Likewise, the lack of a signage inventory and supporting ordinances creates inconsistencies in maintenance and regulatory compliance. Implementing a structured, data-driven approach will enhance transparency, improve infrastructure conditions over time, and strengthen the Borough's ability to apply for transportation and infrastructure grants.

PW 8 - Pursue Intergovernmental Service Partnerships

Formalize and expand cooperative agreements with PennDOT, the Water and Sewer Authority, and neighboring municipalities to share and exchange public works services. Strengthening intergovernmental partnerships can improve service delivery while reducing costs and duplication of effort. Programs like PennDOT's Agility Program offer a framework for mutual benefit - for example, the Borough could provide snow plowing on state roads in exchange for PennDOT assistance with stormwater infrastructure. Similar models have proven successful in other communities across the Commonwealth. Establishing or formalizing these arrangements can increase operational flexibility, fill service gaps, and help the Borough make the most of limited staff and equipment resources.

PW 9 - Design and Implement a Comprehensive Public Works Training Program

Design and deliver a structured training program for Public Works personnel that includes technical instruction, equipment safety, employee safety protocols, and supervisory skills. Currently, the only formal training provided is related to the Dirt and Gravel Road Program, limiting staff development and increasing operational risk. A broader, ongoing training agenda will improve workforce safety, boost job performance, reduce liability, and ensure compliance with industry standards. Partnering with PennDOT, regional councils of government, or professional associations can help provide cost-effective training opportunities tailored to municipal operations.

PW 10 - Enhance Winter Maintenance Preparedness and Training

Ensure all snow and ice control equipment is fully operational and properly calibrated before the winter season, and implement a preseason training program for Public Works personnel focused on winter operations. Currently, one of the three trucks used for snow and ice control is inoperable and requires replacement, and no formal training or equipment calibration is conducted, limiting the department's effectiveness during winter weather. Maintaining adequate salt and anti-skid supplies and established call-out procedures is a strength; however, improving equipment readiness and staff training will enhance safety, efficiency, and responsiveness during winter maintenance operations.

PW 11 - Expand Waste Collection Services to Include Recycling

Enhance the Borough's refuse collection contract by incorporating regular curbside recycling services alongside existing weekly waste and annual bulk waste pickups. Currently, recycling is not included in the contracted collection services, limiting residents' access to convenient recycling options and potentially increasing landfill waste. Introducing routine recycling collection will promote environmental sustainability, support community health goals, and align Reynoldsville with best practices in municipal waste management.

PW 12 - Increase Public Works Staffing Levels

Expand the Public Works crew beyond the current three-person team to adequately meet year-round service demands, particularly during peak periods such as winter maintenance and seasonal mowing. According to the Foreman, staffing is currently stretched thin, with "it would be nice to have more help" reflecting the ongoing challenges faced by the small crew. The limited number of employees constrains the department's ability to efficiently complete core tasks, including snow and ice control, storm drain cleaning, road maintenance, and other critical services. Increasing staffing levels will help distribute workloads more evenly, reduce employee burnout, improve operational efficiency, and enhance the Borough's capacity to respond to maintenance needs promptly throughout the year.

Facing the Crisis, Planning the Recovery

Reynoldsville Borough faces a critical inflection point. This Management Audit has laid bare the deep structural, operational, and fiscal challenges that have accumulated over time due to chronic underinvestment, fragmented leadership, and a lack of adherence to best practices. Of the 103 foundational standards and best practices evaluated in this review, the Borough meets only 19, with nine of those belonging to the Fire and EMS operations that are not directly under the Borough's purview - an alarming indicator of institutional breakdown and organizational fragility.

Of the 103 best practices evaluated, Reynoldsville Borough meets only 19 - and just 10 within its own operations - highlighting a severe breakdown in governance and organizational stability.

Yet, participation in the Strategic Management Planning Program reflects a willingness to confront these realities. While this report provides clear and actionable recommendations, it is only one step in a multi-phase recovery process. Forthcoming Steps 5 and 6 of the STMP - Multi-Year Financial Planning and Multi-Year Plan Implementation - will be critical in charting a viable path forward. These next steps will translate this audit's findings into a structured, fiscally responsible roadmap that aligns operational improvements with available resources, timelines, and strategic priorities.

Reynoldsville's success hinges on a commitment to professionalizing its operations, restoring administrative capacity, strengthening fiscal oversight, and reestablishing resident trust. The work ahead is substantial - but with disciplined execution, transparent leadership, and sustained external support, meaningful progress is possible.

