

Robert B. & Helen S.  
**Meyner Center**  
for the Study of State & Local Government

**Eldred Township, Monroe County**

**Organizational Assessment and Administrative Staff  
Review**

**JANUARY 2025**

Lafayette College  
Robert B. & Helen S. Meyner Center  
For the Study of State & Local Government  
002 Kirby Hall of Civil Rights  
Easton, PA 18042

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For the Study of State and Local Government***

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*Preface*

This report is an Organizational Assessment and Administrative Staff Review with the goal of assisting Eldred Township, Monroe County, Pennsylvania in evaluating current staffing functions and, planning, and developing a succession plan to ensure continued smooth operations. The report was prepared by Nicole Beckett, Associate Director for Public Service of the Meyner Center, pursuant to the October 15, 2024, proposal provided by Lafayette College's Meyner Center for the Township. The Center thanks the Board of Supervisors and the staff who participated in interviews and meetings needed to complete the research for this report. Any views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Lafayette College.

John Kincaid  
Director & Professor





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## Executive Summary

The goal of this organizational assessment and administrative staff review is to evaluate current staffing functions and, planning, and develop a succession plan to ensure continued smooth operations as the township prepares for the retirements of two key appointed staff members, the Township Secretary and the Township Treasurer. The methodology for this study was to conduct personal interviews and reviews of written information available at the township and on the township's website.

Eldred Township stands at a pivotal moment. With the pending retirement of key administrative staff who have served the community for many years, the Township has both an opportunity and obligation to evaluate how it delivers services to residents in an increasingly complex municipal environment with expanding regulatory requirements, technological demands, and residents' service expectations.

While change can be challenging, particularly in a close-knit community that values its rural character and traditions, thoughtful evolution of administrative structure is essential to maintain and enhance the quality of services residents expect and deserve.

The Township's current position is one of strength - with sound fiscal management, unique community assets, and dedicated public servants. However, the imminent departure of both the Township Treasurer and Secretary, who collectively hold decades of institutional knowledge, creates urgency for thoughtful transition planning.

This analysis reveals that Eldred Township has the financial capacity and community foundation to implement strategic improvements that can serve residents well into the future. With a \$1.7 million annual budget, diverse revenue streams, and healthy reserves, the Township can make measured investments in professional management that will enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Based on our comprehensive review, Eldred Township has three distinct options for its administrative structure moving forward:

1. **Current Structure:** Maintain the existing administrative approach with direct Board oversight of department heads and administrative staff. While familiar, this option presents increasing risks in today's complex municipal environment.
2. **Enhanced Structure:** Strengthen the current model through additional administrative support and clearer reporting relationships but maintain direct Board operational oversight. This represents an incremental improvement but may not fully address long-term needs.
3. **Professional Management:** Implement a manager form of government with professional administrative leadership. This option provides comprehensive oversight, enhanced operational efficiency, and proven success in comparable communities.

After careful analysis, we recommend implementing the Professional Management option for the following reasons:

- Growing complexity of municipal operations requires specialized expertise
- Demonstrated success in peer communities with positive returns on investment
- Enhanced ability to secure grants and manage complex projects
- Improved operational efficiency and risk management
- Better support for volunteer programs and community initiatives
- Clear succession planning and knowledge transfer
- Strategic positioning for future challenges and opportunities

The recommended transition to professional management, properly implemented, would preserve Eldred Township's unique character while enhancing its capacity to serve residents effectively in an increasingly complex municipal environment. The current timing, aligned with planned staff retirements, provides an optimal opportunity for this strategic evolution in township operations.



# Community Profile

## Township Overview

Eldred Township, established in Monroe County, operates as a Second-Class Township under the Pennsylvania Municipal Code. Located in Monroe County's western region, the township maintains its rural character while facing increasing development pressures from surrounding growth areas. With a \$1.7 million annual operating budget, the township demonstrates sound fiscal management across multiple funds while providing essential services to its residents.

## Eldred Township: Distinctive Characteristics

### Unique Asset Portfolio

- Community Center (thrift shop, food pantry, gym)  
Annual thrift shop revenue: \$195,000
- Recreation facilities and trail system
- Current and future residential property acquisitions
- Multiple revenue-generating assets

### Financial Position

- \$1.7M annual operating budget
- Multiple segregated funds
- Healthy reserve balances
- Conservative fiscal management
- Grant funding opportunities
- Limited long-term debt

### Operational Structure

- Three-member Board of Supervisors
- Key administrative positions
- Strong public works department
- Active volunteer engagement
- Multiple community programs

### Regional Context

- Part of growing Monroe County region
- Proximity to major population centers
- Development pressures from surrounding areas
- Regional economic growth influences
- Infrastructure development needs

## Current Challenges & Opportunities

The evolution of Eldred Township's current administrative structure reflects its historical roots as a rural community where dedicated individuals wore multiple hats and where personal relationships drove many interactions. This approach served the Township well for many years, creating strong community connections and fiscal stability. However, the pending retirement of key staff members brings into focus both immediate challenges and opportunities for enhancement.

Today's municipal operations face demands that would have been unimaginable even a decade ago. Digital record-keeping requirements, complex grant management, cybersecurity concerns, and online service expectations create an environment where professional expertise is increasingly valuable. While Eldred Township has managed these challenges admirably, the current administrative structure strains to keep pace with growing demands.

Similar communities across Pennsylvania have faced these same challenges. Many have found that investing in professional management reduces costs over time through improved grant acquisition, enhanced operational efficiency, and risk reduction. Comparable municipalities that have transitioned to

professional management report significant increases in grant funding, often exceeding the cost of additional staff within the first few years.

The opportunity before Eldred Township is not just about filling positions – it's about building capacity for the future. With proper planning and implementation, the Township can preserve its community character while developing the professional capabilities needed for modern governance.

## **Current Challenges**

- 1. Administrative Transitions**
  - Immediate treasurer retirement pending
  - Secretary retirement July 2026
  - Limited succession planning
  - Institutional knowledge preservation needs
  - Service continuity risks
- 2. Operational Modernization**
  - Technology infrastructure needs
  - Manual processes predominant
  - Limited online services
  - Non-codified ordinances
  - Documentation gaps

## **Current State Assessment**

### **Administrative Structure**

- 1. Leadership**
  - Three-member elected Board of Supervisors
  - Key administrative retirements pending:
    - Full Time Township Secretary (July 2026)
    - Part Time Township Treasurer (Spring 2025)
  - Full Time Public Works Superintendent (stable leadership)
- 2. Operations**
  - Multiple administrative roles combined
  - Limited technology infrastructure
  - Manual processes predominant
  - Strong volunteer engagement
  - Unique asset management needs

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Dedicated long-term staff
- Strong financial position
- Thrift shop operations (\$195K revenue)
- Active volunteer base in thrift shop
- Professional experience on board
- Healthy reserve funds (\$1.276M)
- Progressive Employee Retention and Incentive Program
- Successful Public Works modernization

### Opportunities

- Professional management structure
- Technology modernization
- Strategic planning development
- Regional cooperation potential
- Grant management enhancement
- Recreation space rental potential
- Service delivery improvement

### Weaknesses

- Outdated technology infrastructure
- Manual processes dominating operations
- Limited succession planning
- Non-codified ordinances
- Role overlap and unclear boundaries
- Limited professional development
- Absence of strategic vision
- Persistent vacancies on boards and commissions

### Threats

- Key staff retirements
- Resistance to change
- Growing service demands
- Technology gaps
- Resource constraints
- Misaligned community expectations
- Finding qualified talent

# Critical Considerations in Modern Municipal Government

## Continuity of Government Services

### Fundamental Responsibilities

The primary obligation of local government is ensuring consistent, reliable delivery of essential services to residents. This fundamental responsibility requires:

- Adequate professional staffing
- Proper succession planning
- Risk management
- Knowledge preservation
- Sustainable operations

### Operational Realities

#### 1. Workload Considerations

- Constant regulatory changes
- Increasing service demands
- Growing compliance requirements
- Continuous improvement needs
- Project management demands
- Grant/funding opportunities
- Technology evolution
- Public engagement requirements

#### 2. Staffing Risks

- Single-point dependencies
- Limited backup capacity
- Knowledge concentration
- Succession gaps
- Service interruption potential
- Burnout risk
- Limited cross-training
- Institutional knowledge loss

#### 3. Modern Workplace Requirements

- Professional management
- Adequate staffing levels
- Clear career paths
- Development opportunities
- Work-life balance
- Competitive environment
- Technology support
- Innovation culture



## Leadership Structure and Professional Practices

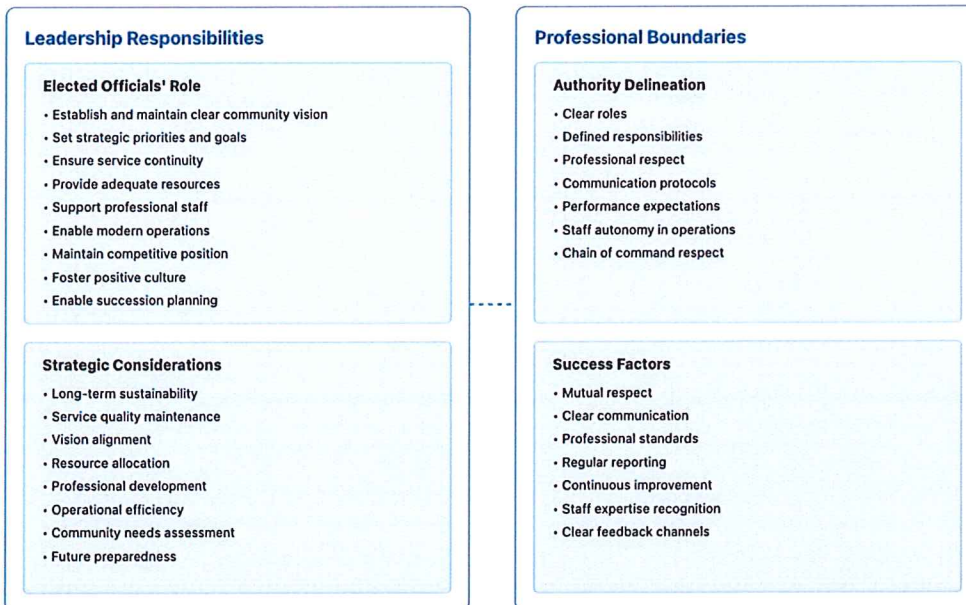
Effective local governance balances established best practices with a community's unique characteristics and needs. This framework outlines proven approaches to leadership and professional relationships that support successful township operations. While each municipality determines its own governing style, these guidelines offer insights into structures and practices that have demonstrated success in local government management.

The following sections present organizational leadership elements that promote effective governance while respecting the authority of elected officials to determine how best to serve their community. These recommendations draw from municipal management experience and can be adapted to align with local preferences and circumstances. The goal is to support informed decision-making while recognizing that each township's leadership will ultimately shape its own approach to governance.

The following components work together to create an effective governance structure that can be adapted to local needs while maintaining professional standards:

1. **Leadership Responsibilities Framework** serves as the foundation for effective governance by:
  - Defining core roles of elected leadership
  - Identifying key strategic considerations
  - Establishing clear areas of focus
  - Supporting informed decision-making
2. **Professional Boundaries Guidelines** build upon these responsibilities by:
  - Clarifying roles between elected officials and staff
  - Establishing effective working relationships
  - Promoting organizational success
  - Supporting service delivery excellence

### Township Leadership Framework



## **Building on Success: Strategic Organizational Development**

Eldred Township has demonstrated proactive leadership through successful organizational initiatives. Recent actions highlight the Board's commitment to thoughtful improvement and operational excellence:

1. Implementation of the Employee Retention and Incentive Program
  - Prioritizes workforce development
  - Shows foresight in talent retention
  - Demonstrates investment in staff success
2. Strategic Modernization of Public Works Operations
  - Established competitive compensation structure
  - Enhanced operational leadership
  - Achieved measurable performance improvements
  - Created model for departmental excellence

These achievements provide a foundation for future organizational development. The Public Works transformation particularly illustrates how strategic investments in leadership and competitive compensation can enhance operational effectiveness while maintaining fiscal responsibility. This experience offers valuable insights as the township considers additional organizational improvements.



## **Administrative Structure Assessment**

Drawing from extensive Pennsylvania local government experience and current market analysis, three options exist for Eldred Township's administrative organization:

### **Current Structure**

**Key Benefits:** ✓ Familiar operational model and established relationships ✓ Lower direct operational costs ✓ Traditional approach with proven track record

#### **Key Challenges:**

- Growing operational complexity with limited administrative capacity
- Part-time positions limiting effectiveness
- Recruitment challenges for specialized roles, especially Treasury
- Regulatory compliance and succession planning concerns
- Restricted growth opportunities

### **Enhanced Structure**

**Key Benefits:** ✓ Lower initial investment than full management ✓ Maintains operational familiarity while adding full-time presence ✓ Flexible role definition with growth potential ✓ Gradual transition path for staff and community

#### **Key Challenges:**

- Regional recruitment difficulties for experienced candidates
- Retention risks without clear advancement path
- Limited authority may impact effectiveness
- May require future structural changes
- Ongoing specialized staffing challenges, particularly in Treasury

### **Professional Management**

**Key Benefits:** ✓ Clear authority and responsibility structure ✓ Professional operations management with comprehensive oversight ✓ Enhanced project and grant management capabilities ✓ Proven success in peer communities ✓ Clear succession planning and future readiness

#### **Key Challenges:**

- Higher initial investment and community buy-in needed
- Competitive recruitment environment
- Cultural transition and change management requirements
- Market competition for specialized finance professionals
- Unique challenges for inaugural manager

Based on our assessment of Pennsylvania's local government landscape, market conditions for professional staff, and increasing municipal management complexities, we recommend pursuing the Professional Management option. This recommendation considers:

- Growing competition for qualified municipal professionals
- Increasing complexity of local government operations
- Rising demands for grant management and compliance
- Need for dedicated project oversight and implementation

However, the ultimate decision rests with the Board of Supervisors, who best understand:

- Community needs and preferences
- Available resources
- Local service demands
- Strategic priorities
- Implementation timing

The Board's knowledge of these local factors will guide the most appropriate choice and implementation approach for Eldred Township.

### **Professional Management Recommendation**

The recommendation to consider professional management stems from careful analysis of both Eldred Township's needs and broader trends in municipal governance. Professional management brings specialized expertise in areas critical to modern township operations: financial management, grant writing, project management, and regulatory compliance. This expertise typically pays for itself through enhanced revenue opportunities, improved operational efficiency, and risk mitigation.

In practice, professional management in a community like Eldred Township doesn't mean dramatic change – it means enhanced support for existing operations. A professional manager or administrator would:

- Support and enhance volunteer programs like the successful thrift shop
- Pursue grant opportunities that currently go untapped
- Ensure regulatory compliance to protect the Township
- Implement efficiency improvements that save money
- Provide consistent resident service

Communities similar to Eldred that have implemented professional management report:

- Increased grant revenue (often \$100,000+ annually)
- Improved resident satisfaction with services
- Better project management and completion
- Enhanced emergency preparedness
- Stronger volunteer program support

As documented in Appendix A, recent transitions to professional management in comparable Pennsylvania municipalities demonstrate that such changes can be implemented while maintaining local

character and improving operational efficiency. Particularly noteworthy are the experiences of Lower Mt. Bethel Township, Newtown Borough, and Pocopson Township, where similar transitions were catalyzed by administrative staffing changes. These cases provide concrete evidence that smaller Pennsylvania municipalities can navigate such organizational evolution while enhancing service delivery and operational effectiveness.

The investment in professional management is best viewed through the lens of risk management and opportunity cost. Without proper administrative succession planning, municipalities often face increased costs through inefficiency, missed opportunities, and potential compliance issues. Professional management helps avoid these pitfalls while positioning the Township for future success.

## **1. Administrative Leadership**

### **Option A: Professional Manager**

- Formal adoption of Manager form of government
- Full-time professional manager position
- Clear statutory authority
- Professional administration
- Comprehensive oversight

### **Option B: Township Administrator**

- Professional administrator position
- Board-delegated authority
- Potential evolution to manager
- Flexible implementation
- Gradual transition

## **2. Full-Time Administrative Support**

Modern municipal operations demand consistent administrative presence and support. The complexity of local government operations, resident service expectations, and compliance requirements make part-time staffing increasingly risky and potentially more costly in the long run. Elected officials in some municipalities also have investigated the possibility of employing a part-time manager. However, it is very hard to find a skilled individual with municipal government experience who is willing to work on a part-time basis.

Eldred Township has been fortunate since 2018 to have secured the services of a retired borough manager and experienced local government official who has served part-time as Treasurer. This arrangement, while beneficial, represents an increasingly rare opportunity in today's municipal labor market. Most of the individuals working in this capacity are retired and looking for part-time work, creating a very small pool of potential applicants. The township's experience mirrors broader regional trends, where municipalities struggle to replicate such arrangements when their part-time professional staff depart. The scarcity of experienced municipal professionals seeking part-time roles, combined with increasing competition from other municipalities, makes succession planning for such positions particularly challenging.

Full-time administrative support provides:

1. **Operational Continuity** \* Consistent office coverage \* Timely response to resident needs \* Backup for critical functions \* Regular communication channels \* Emergency response support
2. **Risk Management** \* Proper record keeping \* Compliance monitoring \* Process consistency \* Documentation maintenance \* Cross-training capability
3. **Service Enhancement** \* Improved response times \* Better resident support \* Program assistance \* Project coordination \* volunteer support

A full-time administrative support position, properly structured and implemented, is not an operational luxury but a strategic necessity for modern municipal operations. By phasing implementation to align with current staff retirement plans and the establishment of professional management, Eldred Township can build a sustainable administrative structure that serves the community efficiently and effectively while managing operational risks and costs.

### **Financial Considerations**

While the township maintains healthy reserves (\$1.276M), any structural changes should be evaluated against:

- Long-term sustainability
- Return on investment
- Community priorities
- Risk management
- Operational efficiency

### **Next Steps for Consideration**

1. Review Options
  - Examine successful models from neighboring communities
  - Consider what elements would work best for Eldred Township
  - Build on existing successes like the Public Works transformation
2. Evaluate Township Needs
  - Current and future operational demands
  - Administrative support requirements
  - Project management capacity
3. Consider Implementation
  - Phase changes if desired
  - Build on existing strengths
  - Maintain operational continuity



## **Strategic Timing**

The planned retirement of the current secretary in July 2026 provides an optimal timeline for implementing the professional management and full-time administrative support staffing strategy. This allows:

1. **Proper Planning**
  - Manager orientation and assessment
  - Needs evaluation
  - Role definition
  - Process documentation
  - Budget alignment
2. **Knowledge Transfer**
  - Systematic documentation
  - Process mapping
  - Cross-training
  - Relationship transition
  - Institutional knowledge preservation
3. **Smooth Transition**
  - Phased implementation
  - Staff development
  - Community adjustment
  - Service continuity
  - Risk management

## **Implementation Impact**

The transition to enhanced administrative capabilities through professional management would be carefully managed to minimize disruption while maximizing benefits. Day-to-day operations would continue seamlessly, with improvements implemented strategically over time.

Residents would notice enhanced service delivery through:

- More responsive communication
- Improved online access to information
- Improved and organized permit processing
- Better project management
- Enhanced program opportunities
- Improved accountability and transparency

The Township's traditional character and values would be preserved and enhanced:

- Volunteer programs would receive professional support
- Community events would benefit from improved coordination
- Traditional services would be maintained and enhanced
- Personal connections would remain important
- Local decision-making would be better informed

Success metrics would be clearly defined and monitored:

- Resident satisfaction measures
- Project completion rates
- Grant funding secured
- Service delivery times
- Program participation rates

The implementation experience of peer communities, detailed in Appendix A, confirms that while such transitions require careful planning and systematic execution, they typically yield significant operational improvements within 12-18 months. These case studies demonstrate how comparable municipalities have successfully managed similar transitions while maintaining community character and improving service delivery.

### **Financial Investment Context of Professional Management**

The financial implications of professional management must be viewed in both short and long-term contexts. While there are immediate costs associated with professional staffing, experience shows these investments typically generate positive returns through multiple channels.

**Immediate Cost Considerations:** The proposed annual investment of approximately \$120,000-\$130,000 (including salary and benefits) for professional management represents roughly 7% of the Township's current budget. However, this investment should be viewed against potential returns:

1. Enhanced Revenue Generation:
  - Grant funding opportunities
  - Improved fee collection
  - Strategic program development
  - Asset optimization
2. Cost Savings Through:
  - Improved project management
  - Enhanced operational efficiency
  - Better risk management
  - Strategic planning
  - Preventive maintenance
3. Long-term Benefits:
  - Sustainable operations
  - Improved bond ratings
  - Better capital planning
  - Enhanced service delivery
  - Protected property values

Looking at peer communities, professional management typically generates returns exceeding its costs within 2-3 years through:

- Successful grant applications
- Improved operational efficiency
- Better project management
- Risk reduction
- Enhanced programs



The current budget structure, with its multiple funds and revenue streams, provides flexibility in allocating these costs while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The investment can be structured to minimize impact on any single fund while maximizing potential returns across all operations.

*Note: This analysis considers both quantitative financial measures and qualitative benefits to the community, recognizing that good governance creates value beyond direct financial returns.*

## **Budget Framework for Professional Management**

### **Initial Investment Options**

#### **Professional Manager Option Annual Investment**

- Manager Salary: \$95,000 - \$115,000
- Benefits Package (35%): \$33,250 - \$40,250
- Professional Development: \$5,000
- **Total Range: \$133,250 - \$160,250**

#### **Administrator Option Annual Investment**

- Administrator Salary: \$85,000 - \$95,000
- Benefits Package (35%): \$29,750 - \$33,250
- Professional Development: \$5,000
- **Total Range: \$119,750 - \$133,250**

### **Potential Funding Sources**

- General Fund allocation
- Multiple fund distributions based on service delivery
- Implementation flexibility supported by healthy reserves (\$1.276M)

### **Cost Offset Opportunities**

- Enhanced grant acquisition capabilities
- Operational efficiency improvements
- Risk management and mitigation
- Project management cost savings
- Strategic planning benefits

**Important Considerations:** The figures presented represent estimated ranges based on market research of similar-sized Pennsylvania municipalities. Actual costs may vary significantly based on candidate qualifications, market conditions, and final structure implementation. The Administrator role, being less common in Pennsylvania local government, presents additional uncertainty in compensation benchmarking. These projections should be viewed as preliminary planning figures subject to adjustment during the recruitment and implementation process.

## **Simplified Phasing Approach**

### Phase 1: Preparation (Winter/Spring 2025)

- Board discussion and decision
- Budget planning
- Position development
- Community communication
- Determine recruitment approach
- Proceed with recruitment (A professionally managed recruitment process will take 3-4 months from start to the time the new official is in the office if this option is considered.)

### Phase 2: Initial Implementation (Summer 2025)

- Hire Manager/Administrator
- Establish roles and expectations
- Begin knowledge transfer from current staff
- Focus on immediate operational needs

### Phase 3: Transition Management (2026)

- Secretary retirement transition
- Administrative structure adjustments
- Process documentation
- Systems modernization

This simplified approach provides:

- Clear investment understanding
- Manageable implementation steps
- Alignment with retirement timelines
- Flexibility for Board adjustments

## **Return on Investment**

- Enhanced efficiency
- Improved service delivery
- Risk reduction
- Resource optimization
- Strategic development
- Grant acquisition potential
- Project management improvements
- Quality of life enhancement

## **Conclusion**

Eldred Township could transform its operations while preserving its unique character and strong community involvement. Through careful implementation of these recommendations, the Township can build a more resilient, efficient, and professional operation capable of meeting current and future community needs.

The success of this transformation depends on:

- Clear communication
- Consistent implementation
- Community engagement
- Professional respect
- Continuous assessment

*Note: This analysis reflects current conditions and best practices in Pennsylvania local government while recognizing Eldred Township's unique characteristics and needs. All recommendations are subject to Board of Supervisors direction and policy decisions.*

## Acknowledgments

The Meyner Center extends its sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to this organizational assessment and administrative staff review. Their insights, time, and cooperation were essential to developing a comprehensive understanding of Eldred Township's current operations and future needs.

**Board of Supervisors** We thank the Eldred Township Board of Supervisors for their leadership in commissioning this study and their commitment to thoughtful organizational planning. Their forward-thinking approach to addressing succession planning demonstrates commendable public service.

**Township Staff** Special recognition goes to the township staff who participated in interviews and provided valuable insights into daily operations:

- Township Secretary
- Township Treasurer
- Public Works Superintendent

Their candid discussions and willingness to share their experiences were instrumental in understanding the township's operational needs and opportunities.

**Research Team** We acknowledge the contribution of Lafayette College's Meyner Center staff in supporting the research and preparation of this report:

- John Kincaid, Director and Professor
- Nicole Beckett, Associate Director for Public Service
- Terry A. Cooper, Administrative Assistant

**Technical Support** The analysis and presentation of this report were enhanced through the use of Anthropic's Claude 3.5 Sonnet (2024), an artificial intelligence system that assisted with data analysis and content organization. All substantive research, interviews, and recommendations were developed by the Meyner Center team based on direct research and professional experience.

Case studies referenced in this report were produced by the Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government at Lafayette College. These public documents provide valuable insights into municipal management transitions in Pennsylvania communities.

*Note: The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Lafayette College.*

## APPENDIX “A”

### Peer Community Experience: Lower Mt. Bethel Township

To understand the practical implications of transitioning to professional management, Eldred Township can learn valuable lessons from Lower Mt. Bethel Township's experience. As a comparable Second-Class Township with similar budget size and operational scope, Lower Mt. Bethel's journey provides important insights for Eldred's consideration.

#### Transition Experience

Lower Mt. Bethel Township underwent a similar administrative evolution, moving from a manager model to a secretary/treasurer with elected official oversight, and then back to professional management in 2018. Their experience highlights several key considerations:

##### 1. Organizational Impact

- Initial period of administrative disorder without professional management
- Elected officials became overwhelmed with day-to-day operations
- Need for comprehensive organizational restructuring
- Importance of clear roles and responsibilities

##### 2. Implementation Timeline

- 6-12 months required for full operational stabilization
- Initial focus on establishing basic administrative systems
- Gradual transition of responsibilities from elected officials
- Development of sustainable operational procedures

##### 3. Professional Staffing Results

- Successfully recruited experienced Manager/Treasurer and Secretary
- Created documented procedures and systems
- Established clear division of responsibilities
- Reduced burden on elected officials
- Improved operational efficiency

##### 4. Financial Investment

- Current Manager/Treasurer compensation: \$112,000 (2024)
- Current Secretary/Planning Coordinator/Recreation Liaison compensation: \$65,000 (2024)
- Investment yielded improved operations and reduced elected official workload



## **Key Lessons**

Lower Mt. Bethel's experience reinforces several key points relevant to Eldred Township's transition:

1. The importance of proactive transition planning
2. Value of experienced professional leadership
3. Need for clear role definition between elected officials and administration
4. Importance of documented procedures and systems
5. Reality of market compensation requirements
6. Long-term benefits of professional management investment

This case study demonstrates both the challenges and benefits of transitioning to professional management, while providing real-world context for implementation considerations.

## **Recent Peer Experience: Newtown Borough's Transition to Professional Management**

Newtown Borough's recent transition to professional management provides particularly relevant insights for Eldred Township, as it demonstrates how a small Pennsylvania municipality successfully navigated a similar administrative transition triggered by key staff changes.

### **Comparable Context**

- Small municipality (2,248 residents)
- Previously operated without professional management
- Transition catalyzed by retirement of key financial staff
- A professional CPA firm was hired to serve in the role of Treasurer
- Elected officials initially managing day-to-day operations
- Limited administrative capacity

### **Key Challenges Addressed**

#### **1. Administrative Burden on Elected Officials**

- Council members spending significant time on daily operations
- Multiple committees managing routine functions
- Lack of centralized oversight and coordination
- Inefficient decision-making processes

#### **2. Operational Inefficiencies**

- Multiple reporting lines creating confusion
- Inconsistent direction to contractors and staff
- Time-consuming council meetings
- Limited capacity for strategic planning



## **Transition Outcomes**

After implementing professional management in 2024:

- Relieved elected officials of operational responsibilities
- Created clear organizational structure
- Improved operational efficiency
- Enhanced service delivery
- Established consistent administrative oversight
- Streamlined decision-making processes

## **Key Success Factors**

### **1. Leadership Buy-in**

- Council recognition of operational challenges
- Understanding of role separation between policy and administration
- Commitment to professional management principles

### **2. Strategic Implementation**

- Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities
- Systematic transfer of operational oversight
- Focus on organizational structure development
- Emphasis on communication and coordination

## **Key Lessons**

Newtown Borough's experience offers several valuable insights:

1. Staff retirement, while challenging, provides an opportune moment for structural change
2. Professional management can successfully address common small-municipality challenges
3. Clear role definition between elected officials and administration is crucial
4. Investment in professional management yields tangible operational improvements
5. Transition success depends on council support and strategic implementation

After one year of professional management, Newtown Borough reports improved organizational efficiency and council effectiveness, with elected officials able to focus on governance and policy rather than daily operations. This recent success story demonstrates how similar-sized Pennsylvania municipalities can successfully transition to professional management while maintaining community character and improving service delivery.

## **Case Study: Pocopson Township's Evolution to Professional Management (2015-2024)**

Pocopson Township's journey toward professional management offers valuable insights for municipalities considering structural changes, particularly those facing key staff transitions. Their experience demonstrates both the risks of delaying organizational change and the opportunities that strategic transitions can present.

### **Background Context**

- Second Class Township in Chester County
- Population: 4,455 (2020 Census)
- Annual Budget: \$3.89M (2024)
- Administrative Staff: 1 full-time, 3 part-time
- Geographic Location: Chester County, PA
- 8.4 square miles

**Initial Assessment (2015)** In 2015, the Meyner Center's organizational analysis found:

- Basic operations functioned adequately
- Multiple staff reported directly to Board of Supervisors
- Limited interest in professional management
- No significant operational issues identified
- Elected officials comfortable with existing structure

**Key Changes 2015-2024** Several significant shifts occurred during this period:

1. Personnel Changes
  - Board turnover (only one member remained from 2015)
  - Key staff retirement (Treasurer) and hiring of a CPA firm to serve in role of Treasurer
  - Loss of institutional knowledge
  - Multiple temporary bookkeepers through a contracted CPA firm (5-6 in three years)
2. Operational Challenges
  - Fragmented reporting structure
  - Communication breakdowns
  - Workplace culture deterioration
  - Lack of professional standards
  - Growing administrative demands
3. Leadership Gaps
  - Aging elected officials
  - Board contentions
  - Inconsistent decision-making
  - Limited strategic planning

**2024 Assessment Findings** The updated analysis revealed:

- Need for professional leadership
- Interpersonal challenges affecting operations
- Lack of clear organizational structure
- Communication and collaboration issues
- Staff morale concerns
- Growing support for professional management

**Transition Catalyst** The impending retirement of the long-term Township Secretary prompted:

- Recognition of succession planning needs
- Evaluation of organizational structure
- Assessment of professional management benefits
- Consideration of workplace culture improvements

### **Key Lessons**

1. Proactive Planning
  - Addressing succession needs before crisis
  - Importance of institutional knowledge preservation
  - Value of professional structure
2. Organizational Culture
  - Impact of leadership on workplace environment
  - Need for clear roles and responsibilities
  - Importance of professional standards
3. Transition Timing
  - Value of strategic timing for change
  - Benefits of external assessment
  - Opportunity in key staff transitions

**Implementation Outcomes** Pocopson Township successfully:

- Transitioned to professional management
- Recruited first Township Manager
- Created clear organizational structure
- Established professional standards
- Improved operational efficiency

This case study demonstrates how delayed organizational changes can compound challenges over time, while proactive transitions during key staff changes can provide opportunities for positive transformation. The experience underscores the importance of addressing structural needs before they become critical issues affecting operations and workplace culture.

