Building One Public Works Team in Barrington

Under Director Michael Nadeau, Barrington is bringing roads, facilities, grounds, and solid-waste services together—supported by a work-management system designed to strengthen planning, accountability, and resident service.

By Scott Kinmond, UNH T2 Center

A broader view of public service

For the Town of Barrington, the move from a traditional Highway Department to a Public Works Department represents much more than a change in name. It reflects a broader approach to municipal service—one that connects the work of highways, facilities and grounds, and the transfer station under shared leadership and a common mission.

Michael Nadeau joined Barrington as Public Works Director after building his municipal career in the City of Dover's water and wastewater operations. He began as a truck driver and advanced through positions that included water treatment plant operator, supervisor, and Utilities Superintendent. That progression—from frontline work to department leadership—continues to shape how he approaches his new role.

Beginning his career in the field, Nadeau said, gave him a deep appreciation for the work performed by frontline employees and for the responsibility leaders have to provide the equipment, training, and support employees need to succeed.

When the Barrington opportunity arose, he saw a chance to apply what he had learned in municipal utilities to a wider range of public infrastructure. The responsibilities were broader, but the central purpose was familiar: provide reliable services, protect public assets, and make thoughtful investments that benefit residents.

> *"Public Works is about far more than maintaining roads. It is about serving people, protecting infrastructure, and helping build a stronger community."*

One department, one mission

Barrington's former Highway Department had long carried responsibility for road maintenance and winter operations. As the community grew, however, so did the range and complexity of services requiring coordinated management. The Public Works model creates a structure for those services to operate as parts of one department rather than as separate functions.

That structure matters because municipal assets and operations are closely connected. Roads depend on effective drainage. Buildings depend on reliable systems and timely maintenance. Vehicles and equipment depend on preventive fleet care. Facilities, grounds, and the transfer station all require planning, staffing, and coordination. A decision in one division can affect the workload and resources of another.

For Nadeau, the transition is therefore an opportunity to strengthen collaboration, communication, accountability, and long-term planning. It is also an opportunity to reinforce a department-wide culture in which employees understand that, regardless of division, they share the same mission: serving the community.

He credits Barrington's employees with making that work possible. From his first day, he found a dedicated team whose members care about the community and take pride in their work. Town leadership has also

supported the transition by recognizing the value of a modern Public Works Department and investing in the tools needed for it to succeed.

Turning daily work into useful information

As the department's responsibilities expanded, Barrington also evaluated how it assigned, documented, and tracked work. The Town's Google-based work order process had served the organization, but the broader Public Works model called for a system that could support service requests, inspections, scheduling, asset management, reporting, and long-term recordkeeping in one place.

Barrington selected iWorQ as part of that transition. Nadeau is candid that implementation remains a work in progress. Like any organizational change, it requires patience, persistence, and consistent follow-through. The most important lesson, he said, is that successful implementation is less about the software than it is about the people using it. New habits take time, and staff need to see the practical value of documenting work consistently.

Early benefits are already emerging. Work requests are easier to organize and track, internal communication has improved, and residents have a more structured way to submit service requests and receive updates via the on-line request feature link.(https://barringtonnh.portal.iworq.net/portalhome/barringtonnh) The larger value will develop over time as each work order, inspection, and maintenance activity adds to the Town's institutional knowledge.

Those records can help Barrington identify recurring needs, plan preventive maintenance, support budget requests, develop capital improvement priorities, manage assets, and communicate more clearly with residents, Town officials, and other departments. Instead of relying primarily on individual memory or scattered records, the department can build a history that supports informed decisions long after a particular task is complete.

“Technology isn't the goal. It's simply a tool that helps us become more organized, more proactive, and better prepared to serve our community.”

A people-centered measure of success

Nadeau's experience in both utility operations and Public Works leadership has reinforced one consistent lesson: organizational charts, equipment, and software do not create success by themselves. Progress begins with people—with employees who understand the mission, leaders who listen and provide support, and a community that trusts its department to be prepared and responsive.

That perspective also shapes how Barrington measures results. Completed work orders, maintained road miles, and finished projects are important, but they tell only part of the story. Success is also reflected in residents' confidence that their Public Works Department is transparent, dependable, and committed to serving the community every day.

For other municipalities considering a similar transition, Barrington's experience offers a practical message: begin with the people who will carry out the work. Communicate the purpose of the change, involve employees in building new practices, invest in their development, and remain focused on the residents the department serves. Systems and structures can support improvement, but teamwork and shared purpose make it sustainable.

“That's what we're building in Barrington,” Nadeau said, “and I'm proud to be part of it.”