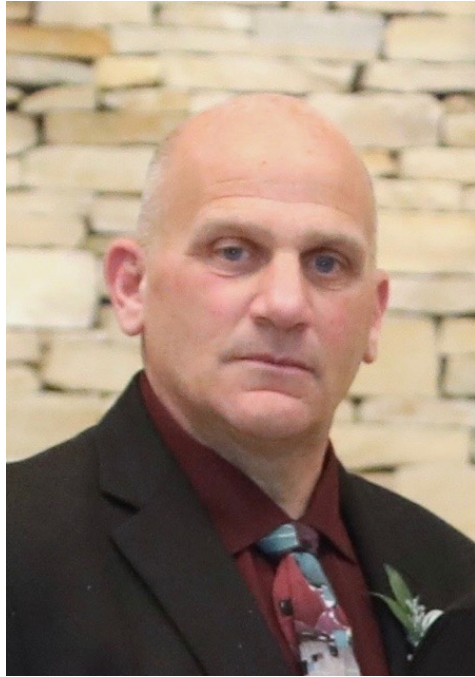


JOSEPH FORNARO

APWA
TOP TEN
PUBLIC
WORKS
LEADER OF
THE YEAR
AWARD



—
DEDICATED
PUBLIC SERVANT

—
COMPASSIONATE
MENTOR

—
ENGAGED
COMMUNITY SERVICE

MARCH 4, 2024





Date: March 4, 2024

American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, Missouri 64105-2100

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year
Joseph Fornaro, Ohio Chapter, APWA Certified Public Works Professional Manager

Dear Top Ten Selection Committee Members:

In November 2023 the Ohio chapter of APWA unanimously decided to nominate Joseph Fornaro for this year's Top Ten Public Works Award. The following pages outline several of Joe's accomplishments over his 40 years in public service, his professional qualifications and his commitment to family and community. On behalf of the Ohio Chapter, we are honored to endorse the candidacy of Joseph Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Award.

Joseph Fornaro's career and commitment to public service began in 1984 at the age of 14 as a volunteer for the Mayfield Heights Service Department. Today, Joe is the Public Works Director for the City of Kirtland, Ohio and an active member in APWA serving on the Ohio State Board as the Membership Chair. Over the past ten years, Joe served as a member of the APWA Winter Maintenance Sub Committee.

Over his tenure as a Public Works Director, Joe achieved professional certificates from the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP), Safety Trained Supervisors (STS-C) and the Construction Health and Safety Technicians. In 2015 Joe was certified by the International Society for Arboriculture as an Arborist (ISA Certification). As a certified arborist, Joe achieved National Tree City USA status for both Mayfield Heights and the City of Kirtland. In 2017, Joe completed the Arizona State Public Managers Certification.

In addition to his professional achievements, Joe was actively involved with the Chesterland Lions Club as a board member for more than 15 years while also coaching youth football and youth wrestling. Today Joe is active with the Kirtland Kiwanis and the Keep American Beautiful Committee as a long-standing member since 2016.

Joe is effective in implementing changes to better the quality of life for all citizens with his professional approach to management, his experience in project planning and development and his commitment to community engagement. It is for these reasons, the Ohio Chapter is nominating Joe Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year for 2024.

Respectfully,

Shelby Ingle,
Ohio Chapter Awards Committee Chair

Angela Weber
Ohio Chapter President

**JOE
FORNARO** is a dynamic
public works professional who embarked
on his career journey at the age of 14
with a passion for public service.



BEST TO START AT THE BEGINNING



In professional achievement, success often unfolds as a testament to resilience, dedication and strategic vision. Joseph Fornaro began his career at the age of 14 with a passion for public service. His experience stands as a testament to the transformative power of dedication, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to personal and professional growth. He seized pivotal moments and transformed them into stepping stones towards success.

Joe's commitment of lifelong learning positioned him as a leader in his field, and his strategic decisions, coupled with innovative approaches, propelled his career trajectory. Through perseverance, a strong work ethic, and a knack for building meaningful relationships, Joe has become a respected figure in his community and the public works industry.

BLIZZARD OF 1978

It was during the Blizzard of 1978 in Cleveland when Joe Fornaro was introduced to snow and ice control. The blizzard began as two systems merged and the storm rapidly intensified. These two low pressure systems caused an explosive intensification, resulting in a massive and powerful winter storm.

On January 26, 1978, some of the lowest pressure readings in the United States not associated with a hurricane were recorded in Cleveland with wind gusts up to 82 mph and wind chills of -50 to -60

degrees. This was Joe's my first memory of Public Works.

Joe's father, Andrew Fornaro, was one of the most respected, long serving Public Works Directors in Northeast Ohio for the City of Mayfield Heights. His career spanned over 50 years with the same community. Joe recalls his father leaving the house that day saying "I might be gone for a while". Local schools were closed for two weeks as snow drifts were as high as 25 feet in some places.

"The city my dad worked for allowed family members to ride along in certain cases and this was my chance to ride along", says Joe. "That day we helped residents, police and fire trying to get to calls, businesses trying to open, and clearing routes to the major hospital in our city. Snow plowing and salting was provided with manual drive trucks, no 4-wheel drives, and garbage trucks with plows on the front. After the snow was cleared, we climbed into bombardiers to clean all the sidewalks in the city". Joe relates, "This was the moment where I decided this is what I want to do".

The more time Joe spent with his dad over the next 4 years it became clear to him that public works, in his words, "was in my blood". **The opportunity to improve the quality of life for people was something Joe felt called to do.**

EMPLOYMENT RECORD



CITY OF MAYFIELD HEIGHTS, OHIO

1984-1986 – SEASONAL INTERN

Joe's public service career began when he was 14 and began volunteering with the City of Mayfield Heights in the recreation department, painting fire hydrants, working in the concession stand, and cutting grass. When he turned 16 he joined their seasonal help team and remained with them until he was 18.

1986-1992 – FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE

At 18 years old he joined the City as a full-time associate (\$3.35/hour) providing solid waste, road repairs, traffic light maintenance, sewer maintenance, and fleet service maintenance for the fire, police, building maintenance, recreation, and public works departments. He also led maintenance for city baseball fields, parks and swimming pools. While he started on the back of a garbage truck pulling trash, his department promoted cross training so he was quickly able to learn all aspects of public works.

1992-2014 – NIGHT FOREMAN & ASSISTANT PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

In 1992 Joe was promoted to the Night Foremen position and held that position until 2008 when he was again promoted and became the Assistant Director of Public Works. This new assignment included budgeting, capitol planning, and fleet maintenance supervision responsibilities. In this role he implemented the city's first ever snow and ice plan, 10-year equipment replacement program, and implemented safety training for the Department.

2014-2020 – PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

In 2014 Joe was hired as Public Works Director for the City of Mayfield Heights.

Member of Heavy Highway Operators Local 860

During a difficult family situation, Joe was a member of Heavy Highway Operators Local 860 working with two area contractors as a second job. Responsibilities included ensuring project safety, reading blueprints, and services on GIS systems. Specific projects included:

- Building of Footers, Building Pads and site work for five new Cleveland Schools
- Site work and sewer and waterline layout and installation for two new schools in Madison, Ohio
- Concrete, pavers installation and drainage work for the Euclid Avenue Corridor project in Cleveland, Ohio
- Heritage Park Improvements at Progressive Field (Home of the Cleveland Guardians Baseball Team)
- Centrifuge Operator for the largest Micro-Tunnel project in the United States that provides a fresh water supply from Lake Erie for the City of Painesville, Ohio - depth of 75' and one mile into Lake Erie inside a 5' diameter pipe

Joe continues providing assistance to Local 860 on weekends and as time permits, mostly addressing safety matters.





CITY OF KIRTLAND, OHIO

2020-PRESENT - THE CITY'S FIRST FULL-TIME PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

The newly elected Mayor of neighboring City of Kirtland, Ohio approached Joe about joining the city in a newly created full-time Public Works Director position. Joe accepted the position, committed to building a family atmosphere at the city, providing careers not jobs, and making Kirtland a better place. This was the first time in Kirtland's history that the Mayor would not be City's Public Works Director. Council voted unanimously to confirm Joe Fornaro as the City's Public Works Director.



Joe on Leaf Pick Up Duty in the Early 1980s



Living in the "Snow Belt" - Mayfield Team Plowing

JOB-RELATED TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Joe established a record of community "firsts"

1ST TIME TREE CITY USA



The City of Mayfield Heights was approved as a Tree City USA for the first time in 2016 in large part due to Joe becoming a certified arborist through the International Society of Arborists (ISA). Joe also led the City of Kirtland to achieve Tree City USA status and become a tree city in 2020 for the first time.

1ST TIME 'KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL' AND 'KEEP OHIO BEAUTIFUL' AFFILIATE

Joe's training and willingness to engage volunteers made this achievement possible. Under Joe's leadership the City of Mayfield Heights was recognized as an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful and Keep Ohio Beautiful. The goals of this organization are to reduce, recycle and beautify communities. Joe led the training required and found and encouraged volunteers into the program that made this achievement possible. Beautification projects included pole painting, veterans memorial mulching, and litter pick up.



1ST ADA (AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT) PLAYGROUND FOR CITY OF KIRTLAND

Joe led the first ADA playground for Kirtland. While on the City's wish list for a long time, funding had not been available for this project. Joe researched grant funding and other possible sources as well as developing a close relationship with the Kirtland Kiwanis Club. Joe found grant funding for \$15,000 and the local Kiwanis Club donated another \$10,000, along with private sector donation of \$5,000 so the project was able to proceed.



1ST TIME DIRECTOR CERTIFICATIONS

Joe Fornaro is the first Director in City of Mayfield Heights history to be certified in Public Management, Arboriculture, Safety, Traffic Signal Management, Pavement Markings, Signs, Storm Water, and the Ohio Department of Transportation Local Public Agency (LPA) requirements.

1ST SNOW & ICE CONTROL PLAN

Under Joe's leadership as Director of Public Works he led the development of the City of Mayfield Heights' first Snow & Ice Control Plan which was approved and adopted by City Council.

1ST AQUATIC CENTER IN MAYFIELD HEIGHTS, OHIO

"Right from the start, I have been impressed with Joe's commitment to the City. This was not just a job for Joe, but a way to make a difference in the lives of the residents of Mayfield Heights. Joe always went above and beyond what was required. I saw this countless times over the years, especially when we started the process of developing a Park Master Plan for the Recreation Department. He truly understood the impact this process would have on the city for years to come."

*- Sean Ward, City of Mayfield Heights,
Director of Recreation*

Joe had a significant part in the planning, design, and selected site location for the City of Mayfield Heights. The original city pool had been built in the late 1950's and hadn't received any upgrades. In 2017 Joe began the process of working with the City's Recreation Director to help redesign the city parks and community center. They secured a CDBG grant from Cuyahoga County to completely redesign Oakville Park, adding drainage, baseball fields, bocce courts, new pavilion, stone walls with reclaimed curbs from the road program, ADA accessibility, and a site large enough for a future Aquatic Center.

After a hard year and a half process involving numerous meetings with city council, the public, the contractor, COVID, and increasing construction costs, the new aquatic center was built in 2023.



1ST OSHA TRAINING CITYWIDE

Joe led the implementation of OSHA training for all employees citywide. While the City of Mayfield Heights is not governed by OSHA, the City recognized the positive impacts of the best practices through OSHA. Joe was responsible for bringing an OSHA trainer to perform safety audits for all departments and contractors working for the City of Mayfield Heights. Joe was certified with the Board of Safety Professionals and the American Society of Safety Engineers and was the driving force behind creating a safe working environment. This training resulted in a significant decrease in workers compensation claims within one year of implementation.

1ST SAFETY TOWN FOR CHESTER TOWNSHIP, OHIO



As part of his involvement in the local Lions Club, Joe was tasked to help the local police department build the first safety town for kids entering 1st grade to learn and get acquainted with the Township.

Having accomplished tradesmen in the group, Joe and his team constructed the building to look mimic the Township Building and include concrete walks, landscaping, brick archway, and a functioning traffic light.

VARIOUS SUCCESSFUL COST SAVING PROGRAMS

- The City of Mayfield Height's initial recycling program was ended in 2010. Joe's innovative thinking enabled a revival of the recycling program by employing every other week collection which cut costs from the previous weekly program.
- Joe provided oversight and inspection on \$1.2 million LED and energy efficiency improvement program in Mayfield Height's City Hall, funded through a grant from NOPEC (an energy supplier in Ohio). Improvements are estimated to have a payback period of 14.4 years.
- Joe managed a \$250,000 Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) grant to rebuild Oakville Park for the City of Mayfield Heights.
- Joe assisted in applying for and receiving \$1.2 million dollar funding from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) to install a roundabout at Lander Road and Parkland for the City of Mayfield Heights. This was an offset intersection at the community's industrial park and traffic would back up for a half hour or more during rush hours and school times. The previous intersection was rated as a level of service category "F" (failed). The improvement improved the intersection traffic flow to a level of service category "B" (stable).
- Joe was instrumental in finding a \$3,500 grant from the local Walmart to start the City's Hometown Hero project. This involve adding banners to pole in the city to recognize "hometown heroes". To date, 50 banners are in place.
- City of Kirtland received \$1.25 million dollars in funding to provide 132 residents to abandon their failing septic wastewater systems and connect to the city sewer system. Joe secured funding under the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) at a low interest rate and \$1 million dollars from the Lake County Commissioners for this necessary improvement.

INITIAL AND LIFELONG EDUCATION



After high school Joe was accepted to Mount Union College (not yet the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio) and was offered a scholarship to play football. Unfortunately, his career at Mount Union was cut short due to family issues and caring for his family became Joe's priority. Joe began work with Local 860 (Heavy Highway Operators) once he took on the Night Shift Foreman (and Assistant Public Works Director) responsibilities leaving him free to also handle his second job with Local 860. His typical day began at 7:00

AM and sometimes lasted until 3:00 AM, especially during the winter months - living in the "Snow Belt" area along Lake Erie in Cleveland's eastern suburbs the snow response is long and difficult.

Always thinking about how to improve his abilities and to support others, Joe continued to complete "on the job" training and honed his knowledge in areas to enhance his Public Works and Local 860 duties. Safety training and involvement with APWA and with the professional associations noted subsequently in this nomination packet helped Joe improve his knowledge dealing with the several roles he has held.

While not the normal career path, out of necessity Joe has found a way to enhance his continuing improvement and knowledge while fulfilling his family responsibilities and his service to his community.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS



AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION

As Public Works Director, Joe is regularly involved in presenting information about his Department for the American Public Works Association. Joe has served for many years with the Snow & Ice Committee and has been involved in class presentations relating to various topics of interest to participants regarding snow & ice control.

Joe was a presenter in Chicago (August 2022) at the Winter Maintenance Round Table and with the Winter maintenance Certificate Programs in Omaha, Nebraska and Grand Fork, Nebraska.

Joe was also a presenter on a recent Click Listen & Learn program that addressed COVID and "The New Normal".

NORTHEAST OHIO SERVICE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

As a member and President of the Northeast Ohio Service Directors Association, Joe has been called upon to provide periodic presentations regarding local topics. He also conducts an annual presentation as a leader in winter training for staff members of local communities in Northeast Ohio.

ARBOR DAY EDUCATION

Every year on Arbor Day Joe speaks to elementary age children at the local library to explain the importance of trees in our communities. The interest and questions from these children is wide and varied, and Joe always enjoys the opportunity to share his passion with the children in his community.

KIWANIS GROUP

Two times a year Joe speaks on local topics of current important to the community Kiwanis group.

LOCAL 860 CONTRACTORS

Joe continues to address safety related topics locally as a leader for his staff and community and Local 860 contractors in Northeast Ohio.

2022 Public Works Panel Presenter – Retaining Employees



2022 Public Works USING GOOD PRACTICES IN WINTER MAINTENANCE



Dates

Tuesday, August 16, 2022 // 7:00AM – 3:30PM
Wednesday, August 17, 2022 // 7:30AM – 4:00PM (Supervisors)
7:30AM – 1:00PM (Operators)



Location

Medinah Shriners Banquet Facility
550 N Shriners Drive, Addison, IL 60101



Accommodations

Contact Kathrine Nixon at 319-400-5316 or by email at
kathrine@psassoc.org.



Registration/Payment

Day 1 – \$95.00
Day 2 – \$80.00/Supervisors; \$50.00/Operators
Certificates for six Professional Development Hours will be
awarded for program attendance.



How to Register

Please register ONLINE using the following link: <https://professionalsnowfighterassociation.org/events/>



New this Year

APWA Winter Maintenance Certificates to be offered in Chicago
area for first time ever!

Eleven years ago, APWA developed and started to offer their
one-day Winter Maintenance Supervisor's Certificate. Since
that time, more than 5,000 people have taken the course,
and a second course, the Winter Maintenance Operator's
Certificate, has been developed in conjunction with the first
course. Now, for the first time ever these are being offered in-
person in the Chicago area. This is an excellent way to ensure
all your winter maintenance teams are on board with good
practice in winter maintenance, and how to implement that
good practice effectively. Don't miss this opportunity!

AGENDA

Tuesday, August 16

7:00AM Registration and Light Breakfast
7:30AM Welcome!
7:45AM Midwest Weather Forecasting
Jon Tarleton / Baron Weather
8:45AM Fairbanks Christmas 2021 Extreme Weather
Event Response
Dan Schacher / Alaska DOT
9:45AM BREAK
10:00AM Why Snow and Ice Programs need to be a
12-Month-a-Year Job
Scott Fontanez / Street Section Manager for the
Village of Buffalo Grove
10:45AM Making Road Weather Data Accessible
Jason Weinberger / Vaisala
11:15AM Talk Show Panel Discussion – Hiring and
Retaining Employees
Dan Schacher, Kevin Hensley, Jason Pauling,
Joe Dragovich, Joe Fornaro

12:00PM LUNCH – Vendor Talks

1:00PM Scratching the Surface with All Liquid
Application and our efforts in Salt Conservation
Jason Pauling / Village of Carol Stream

1:30PM Illinois Tollway Update
Joe Dragovich / Roadway District 1 Manager

2:00PM BREAK

2:15PM New Technologies in Winter Maintenance
Mark DeVries / Vaisala, Dan Schacher / Alaska DOT

3:00PM Closing Thoughts and Comments

3:30PM Wrap-Up and Door Prize

Wednesday, August 17

7:30AM Registration and Light Breakfast
7:45AM Welcome!
8:00AM SUPERVISORS
Intro and MC
Mark DeVries / Vaisala
8:00AM OPERATORS
Intro and MC
Wilf Nixon / PSA
Policy and Planning
Dan Schacher / Alaska DOT,
Kevin Hensley / City of
Grimes, IA
Materials
Wilf Nixon / PSA
Equipment
Dave McDermott / City
of Council Bluffs, IA
(retired)
Operations
Scott Fontanez /
Village of Buffalo
Grove, Mark DeVries /
Vaisala

Weather
Jon Tarleton / Baron
Weather

Materials
Wilf Nixon / Professional
Snowfighters Assn.
(PSA), Joe Fornaro / City
of Kirtland, OH

LUNCH

Equipment
Dave McDermott / City
of Council Bluffs, IA (retired)

Snow and Ice Control
Dan Schacher /
Alaska DOT, Kevin
Hensley / City of Grimes, IA

Wrap-Up
Wilf Nixon / PSA,
Mark DeVries / Vaisala



COVID Training



NOSDA Winter Training



Arbor Day Event with 3rd Graders

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT



FORMER TOP 10 RECIPIENTS ENDORSE JOE

"It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to provide my support and recommendation for the selection of Mr. Joseph Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Leader award for 2024. Having known Joe for many years and worked with him as fellow members of the Ohio Chapter I can attest to his high standards and excellence in the field of Public Works."

- David H. Barber (Retired)

"Joe is one of the most dedicated public works professionals you will ever have the opportunity to meet. His passion for excellence, his dedication and his superb leadership are significant contributing reasons as to why APWA is where it is today."

- Bret Hodne, Public Services Director, City of Buckeye, Arizona

"Joe is a professional, a natural leader and one of the nicest individuals I have ever met in my life. His 40 years of experience has elevated him and his agency to one of the highly respected agencies in the industry."

- Mark DeVries, Business Application Manager, Vaisala Inc.

AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION

Joe Fornaro has been a dedicated member of the American Public Works Association for 20 years. He served on the State of Ohio Chapter Board for 4 years and has been a member of the Northeast Ohio Branch since its founding over 15 years ago. He has served as President of the Branch for two years during one of the most difficult periods as the Country address COVID.

Joe has also served in the following roles:

- Member of the Winter Maintenance Subcommittee for 10 years
- Chair and member of the PWX Review Committee for 2 years

- Certification Team for Certified Public Works Professional exams
- Accreditation Council for 4 years
- Local Steering Committee (Volunteer Coordinator) for the 2020 North American Snow Conference (canceled event due to COVID)
- Steering committee for establishing Ohio Public Service institute and current committee member.
- Scholarship committee for Northeast Ohio branch
- Equipment expo committee for over 10 years for Northeast Ohio branch
- Education and membership for Northeast Ohio branch

NORTHERN OHIO SERVICE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Joe has been a member of the Northeast Ohio Service Director's Association (NEOSDA) for over 20 years and served as President for 4 years. He chaired the annual equipment expo and training for NOSDA, which for the past 15 years has been able to put on this event provide free of charge, providing growth and development to over 30 member communities. Joe also chairs the annual sold out holiday lunch that typically raises more than \$15, 000 for local charities. Over the past 20 years, this lunch has raised over \$100,000 for coats for kids, Cleveland Food Bank, Achievement Centers for Children, Friendship Circle of Cleveland, Hospice of the Western Reserve, NEOPAT, University Settlement, and Ronald McDonald House.

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY LEVIN MENTORING PROGRAM: THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT'S MENTORING PROGRAM

In collaboration with the Ohio Center for the Advancement of Women in Public Service, Joe is involved with this organization where he is paired with junior and senior undergraduate and graduate students each academic year. It begins with a fall introductory event to connect students with mentors, offers a variety of networking opportunities throughout the academic year, and concludes with a celebratory dinner. As a mentor, Joe provides guidance and career advice as students examine career choices during the academic year and plan future goals and objectives.



ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

- Member of the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) - Exam Writing Committee
- Member of the FEMA BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) - Grant Review Committee
- Member of the National Certified Public Manager Consortium (NCPMC) - Accreditation Committee, responsible for reviewing and amending CPM programs initial accreditation (can be a lengthy 6-month process)

- Member of the Ohio Chapter of International Arboriculture (OCISA) - Marketing Committee Member, responsible for publishing tree of the month article, radio, and website topics, and volunteers at the annual trade show
- Member of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)
- Member of the International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA)
- Proctors exams for Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT) Certification three times a year in Kirtland and Reynoldsburg, Ohio (200 exams proctored a year)

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND OUTREACH



ANNUAL STAFF HOLIDAY PARTY

Joe and his family host an annual Holiday party for all city staff, departments, engineering, community center, neighboring city staff, council members, and the Mayor. The Fornaro family prepares all the cooking and desserts without using any tax dollars - in the spirit of creating a family atmosphere where they work, and not just jobs.



COACHING YOUTH SPORTS

During the time in Joe's life while working two jobs and his children were growing, he still found time in the evenings to take a role that also kept his love of sports active. Joe coached his boys in wrestling and football and giving back to the community. It is important that wrestlers stay within their weight class so nutrition was always a focus the Fornaro household. *It was a standing joke that even the dog had to diet during this time.* A favorite quote of Joe's is by Dan Gable, an American professional wrestler and coach who said "once you wrestle everything else in life is easier". Joe and his family live by that sentiment at home. In addition to wrestling, Joe was supportive of his daughter's interest in cheerleading. While he was out painting the lines on the grass field, Joe was also showing her how to do cartwheels and somersaults in a straight line. Hard work paid off. Joe's oldest son went on to play football at the University of Mount Union and his team won a National Championship. His younger son played football at Baldwin Wallace College. And his daughter cheered at Youngstown State. Through all this, Joe's wife has recovered and they are celebrating 30 years of marriage.

PUBLIC WORKS OPEN HOUSE

Community engagement and participation have been important aspects of Joe's leadership. He started a Public Works Open House in Mayfield Heights to align with National Public Works Week. The community is invited to meet with Public Works Staff members, tour facilities, slide down a 12' inflatable dump truck for kids, and display police, fire, public works trucks and equipment for viewing - Touch-A-Truck. In addition, they have a truck rodeo where Public Works drivers compete with City council members and the Mayor. Joe's wife provides homemade "dirt sundaes" complete with small shovels as spoons. This event has grown into one of the most attended events in the city and is fully sponsored by the Fornaro family - no tax dollars spent. Joe has continued this event since becoming Public Works Director in Kirtland.



CHESTERLAND TOWNSHIP PARK BOARD MEMBER

Joe has been a Chesterland Park Board member for the past five years. This is a volunteer appointed position responsible for all park property in Chester Township.

KIRTLAND KIWANIS STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER

Joe and his family volunteer at this event every year. Family members work six-hour shifts making strawberry shortcakes, sundaes, and hand dipped chocolate covered strawberries. They stopped counting customers served after 200 because it was too many. This is consistently one of Joe's favorite days to give back to the community.



Joe and his daughter volunteering at the Strawberry Festival

AWARDS



Joe has been involved with the Northeast Ohio Service Directors Association and the Northeast Branch of the Ohio Chapter of the American Public Works Association. **In 2019 Joe was awarded the Northeast Ohio Service Directors Association "Presidents Plaque" for his outstanding devotion to duty to the people of Ohio.** His service and leadership in both of these professional groups have pushed him to the forefront and he was selected to serve as leader of these groups for multiple years. Joe led the Northeast Branch through the 2020-2022 period as we all addressed issues with COVID.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT JOE HAS MADE ON THE CAREERS AND LIVES OF HIS PEERS AND EMPLOYEES IS IMMENSE. Mentor, encourager, fair, steadfast, genuineare descriptors his staff has used to describe Joe, and therefore, they work respectfully and diligently under his leadership. Growing up on the heels of his father, also a dedicated public works servant,

Joe has been immersed in public works since he was a young 10-year old boy. Over his career, Joe has humbly served others whether it be in public works, community service or giving of himself to his family.

Joe embodies what the Top Ten Public Works award represents. The Ohio Chapter is grateful to have Joe and strongly supports him as a candidate for this prestigious award.



APPENDIX - LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



David H Barber (Retired)
Lexington, Ohio 44904

February 2024

Awards Committee
American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100

Re: Top Ten Public Works Leader Nomination
Mr. Joseph Fornaro

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to provide my support and recommendation for the selection of Mr. Joseph Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Leader award for 2024. As a Top Ten awardee myself (1995) and a member of the Top Ten Selection Committee several times, I have continued to look for potential candidates that meet the criteria for this very high honor. Having known Joe for many years and worked with him as fellow members of the Ohio Chapter, I can attest to his high standards and excellence in the field of Public Works.

Mr. Fornaro and I have participated in many of our local Chapter tasks and I have come to recognize his leadership and dedication to passing along his knowledge to others. His ongoing participation with the Snow & Ice Committee and his dedication to the communities he has served in northeast Ohio (in our Ohio "Snow Belt") provides him with the experience and leadership necessary in this area of his interest. He has been a strong supporter of passing along knowledge to others through local Chapter activities and serving on the National Committees.

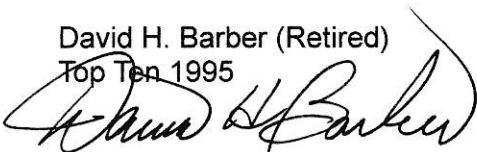
I served as Local Committee Chair for the 2020 North American Snow Conference (cancelled due to Covid a few weeks before the event was scheduled) and Joe was a reliable and active participant of the Committee. He had the role to fill all of the volunteer positions for this national event and he had completed all that was expected with all positions filled and in place for the event. He has also been active participant as a member of recently implemented Ohio Chapter Public Service Institute Committee and continues to serve as a leader to provide training for future public works leaders.

In addition to his professional leadership, I believe you will see clearly in this nomination that Joe is also a very strong family man and a leader in his community. All traits expected of a Top Ten Leader.

I want to strongly add my support of this nomination and encourage you to give very high consideration of this nomination for Top Ten Leader for 2024.

Sincerely,

David H. Barber (Retired)
Top Ten 1995

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David H. Barber", written over the printed name and title.

February 2, 2024

**American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64105-2100**

**RE: Leader of the Year Application for Joseph Fornaro,
APWA Certified Public Works Professional Manager**

Dear APWA Awards Committee:

Joseph Fornaro has asked that I write a letter of recommendation based on our professional association over the past ten years. I've found Mr. Fornaro to be honest and straightforward in his approach to his work, business and family. He has demonstrated a high degree of loyalty and trustworthiness to his career and to his associates and has carried out his obligations with vigor and resolve. He believes in giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. He will certainly be an asset to any group with which he associates and works.

Mr. Fornaro earned this candidate honor with a long history of community involvement while being a strong advocate for neighborhoods during his employment at Mayfield Heights Service Department. As a public works professional with several safety certifications, he has served with commitment and held positions of responsibility. Adding to his understanding of service to the public and the land, he engaged resident awareness for the National Tree City USA, Keep America Beautiful Committee and the Chagrin River Watershed Partnership.

I would like to acknowledge Mr. Fornaro's dedication to his field. His wide range of skills and his ability to continue putting forth his many fine qualities to the service industry.

I would recommend him without reservation for the Top Ten Public Leaders of the Year Award 2024.

Respectfully,



**Susan A. Sabetta
Mayfield Heights Council Member**

**Council Representative Board of Zoning Appeals
Chair of Legislative Committee
Chagrin River Watershed Partnership Director**

ADMINISTRATION

Anthony DiCicco
Mayor/Safety Director

January 31, 2024

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION

Sean Ward, CPRP
Director

Awards Committee American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100
RE: Top Ten Public Works Leader Nomination – Joe Fornaro

Dear APWA Awards Committee:

This letter is a personal recommendation for Joe Fornaro. I have known and worked with Joe at the City of Mayfield Heights for 20+ years. Right from the start, I was impressed with Joe's commitment to the City. Although we worked in different departments, I saw Joe's leadership through his involvement in the city outside of his current job responsibilities. This was not just a job for Joe, but a way to make a difference in the lives of the residents of Mayfield Heights. Joe always went above and beyond what was required. I saw this countless times over the years, especially when we started the process of developing a Park Master Plan for the Recreation Department. He helped successfully guide this process by drawing on his previous experiences and truly understood the impact this process would have on the city for years to come. Joe was the one asking the hard questions, while also working diligently to develop the concept for the betterment of our community.

Another example of Joe's commitment to our city was the development of staff and City employees. Joe invited me to join him and some Service Department staff in attending the Tree Commission Academy, which was a two-year commitment. Joe understood the importance of educating his staff, and me in the Recreation Department, on the importance of trees for a community. Attending these classes gave us all the knowledge and skills to help make Mayfield Heights a better place to live, work, and play.

Joe's dependability, commitment, and passion to make a positive difference to the community were unmatched. He was always the first one in and always going above and beyond to help the city in any way, regardless of department. An example of this was his presence at our Recreation Department-sponsored Pancake Breakfasts that took place on Sundays. This was not Joe's responsibility, yet he was there in the back of the kitchen helping cook or clean whatever was needed.

If there was a way to help Mayfield Heights, Joe was there, regardless of which department the matter pertained to. Both in his private and professional life, Joe reliably and faithfully served the City of Mayfield Heights.



Sean Ward
Director of Recreation
City of Mayfield Heights

February 20, 2024

Dear APWA Awards Committee:

If anyone would describe to me the candidate qualifications for this prestigious award, Mr. Joe Fornaro would qualify hands down. I have known Mr. Fornaro for over 20 years. I had the opportunity to work with him for several years when he worked for the service department and then was promoted to Director of Public Works and Services for the City of Mayfield Heights.

Mr. Fornaro comes from a family of hard-working individuals which he has shown throughout his career. I have never witnessed someone who works day and night, providing for his family, as well as providing impeccable services for residents of the community that he works in.

During the years that we worked together, I would reach out to Mr. Fornaro for issues within the community whether it be road program-related issues, city service questions, or simply aiding a stranded resident in need of snow removal for being stuck in their driveway, only to name a few, Joe was always willing to help.

Many times, a director, may reach out to their city servicemen to take care of the issue, but not Mr. Fornaro, he would typically go out and do it himself, there was never a job too detailed that he wouldn't attempt and after completion, you would never see him boast about his work ethic or accomplishments.

Mr. Fornaro is a problem solver. He offers solutions to issues that may take another individual quite a bit of time to figure out. These are key values of an employee who truly cares.

His impeccable work efforts and dedication to his family and job are of no other, making Mr. Fornaro, in my mind, a top candidate for this award.

As a council member, I feel that more awards should go to the people who are there for our residents every day. All too many times we take in complaints instead of awarding those individuals who are working diligently to make their community better.

Unfortunately, I no longer work with Mr. Fornaro but will say that the city of Kirtland should be proud to have an employee who is as qualified and dedicated as Mr. Fornaro.

When casting a vote for this prestigious award, please consider this so deserving Public Works Director, Mr. Joe Fornaro, as this year's APWA Leader of the Year Award.

Sincerely,

Diane Marzano Snider

President
Mayfield Heights City Council

February 2, 2024

To the American Public Works Association Awards Review Committee:

It is my understanding that Mr. Joe Fornaro has been nominated for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award. I am very pleased to offer my support for Joe's nomination; he is a very worthy candidate.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Joe for some time now. I met Joe at an APWA snow and ice conference. At the time I met Joe I was a member of the winter maintenance committee. Joe and I made an immediate connection and a strong friendship ensued. Joe is a professional, a natural leader and one of the nicest individuals I have ever met in my life. His 40 years of experience has elevated him and his agency to one of the highly respected agencies in the industry. Joe is a member of our APWA winter maintenance subcommittee, and it is a privilege and honor to serve and work with him on that committee. He brings so much to the committee with his vast knowledge of winter maintenance operations but also his overall perspective of public works.

I have had the privilege of watching Joe's participation grow with the committee throughout the years. I have seen him take on new roles in the committee. Always willing to volunteer and help with presenting our programs. He is someone you can count on.

Joe is far more than just a snow and ice expert. What makes Joe a worthy candidate for this award is his promotion of Public Works 365 days a year. Joe leads the City of Kirtland Ohio as its Director and is a member of the Ohio Chapter.

To be a Top Ten Leader in Public works I feel you should also be respected by your community. Again, Joe is held in the highest regard. Joe is active in his community and in coaching. Joe has done many things to promote his community, his State and his Chapter.

Joe is certainly a model by which all Top Ten Candidates could be judged. He is a kind, loving person who represents the best that Public Works has to offer. I am proud to call him my friend.

For these reasons I feel you should give strong consideration to Mr. Joe Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year award.

Sincerely,

R. Mark DeVries
Business application manager
Vaisala Inc



Professional Snowfighters Association, 308 E. Burlington St., Ste 211
Iowa City, IA 52240-1602

February 16, 2024

American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street
Suite 1400
Kansas City, Missouri 64105-2100

Re: Top Ten Leader of the Year Award Application for
Joseph Fornaro, APWA Certified Public Works Professional Manager

Dear Top Ten Committee Selection Members:

It gives me great pleasure to share with you my enthusiastic endorsement of Joe Fornaro for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award. I have come to know Joe through his involvement in the Winter Maintenance sub-committee, where he has been an enthusiastic, diligent, and very committed member. We are only able to achieve the things we do in the sub-committee because of the very real efforts and gifts of time and talent that Joe has given to our works.

But beyond his excellent committee work, Joe has become a valuable member of the team that presents the Winter Maintenance Supervisors and Operators certificate programs. At this time, these two programs have been given to about 10,000 public works professionals, and the success of the program is critically dependent on the excellence of our presenters. And Joe is without doubt one of our excellent presenters! He brings his experience as a Director of Public Works into the presentation, but also shares important information on topics such as the impact of winter maintenance chemicals on vegetation and trees. It is precisely this infusion of real world experience and insight that has made the program so successful, and Joe is a critical part of that success.

There is another important aspect that Joe brings to the certificates. A major part of their emphasis is on bringing about change in an organization – the certificates address the “we’ve always done it this way” mindset directly. Joe’s experience and effectiveness in change implementation is very important for some of the certificate attendees, and is a key factor in many who attend being able to take the new information home and turn it into new operational practices. Change is not easy, and Joe’s experience with change management is truly helpful in making the certificate programs more than just training but rather an actual opportunity for new practice in winter maintenance operations.

Given this, I am delighted and have absolutely no hesitation in nominating Joe as a Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year. He exemplifies the best of public works professionals, and as such is very deserving of this award. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Wilfrid A. Nixon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name 'Nixon' being particularly prominent.

Wilfrid A. Nixon, Ph. D., P.E.
President
Professional Snowfighters Association
Email: wilf@psassoc.org
Tel.: 319-594-4447

City of Kirtland

9301 Chillicothe Road
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

City of Faith and Beauty

(440) 256-3332
Fax (440) 256-9301
www.kirtlandohio.com

2/16/2024

To: American Public Works Association

Re: APWA Top Ten Leaders of the Year Nomination

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of the City of Kirtland, Ohio to nominate and ask that the American Public Works Association strongly consider Joseph Fornaro for the distinguished Top Ten Leaders of the Year award.

As is the case with so many in the field of public service, Mr. Fornaro's more than thirty-year commitment to Public Works and public service is commendable. But in Joe Fornaro, unlike anyone I have ever known, there is an ethic and pride in work that very few can lay claim. The leadership characteristics and more importantly, the personal and ethical values Joe possesses are second to none and without doubt cannot be articulated in a simple letter. But I will try as it is owed to the hardest working and most dedicated employee in the long history of the City of Kirtland.

In his four short years of service to the city of Kirtland, Joe has infused integrity, honor, accountability and action into a department that was long lacking and devoid of direction and leadership. Joe has lifted and righted a ship that by nearly all accounts was sunk. Aside from tight budgets, a history of public distrust in the department, as well as antiquated equipment, Joe inherited a tired and disaffected workforce. Without complaint or hardly a sign of weariness, to get the job done, Joe works harder, longer and smarter than anyone else. By example, encouragement, steadiness and compassion, Joe leads and teaches.

City of Kirtland

9301 Chillicothe Road
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

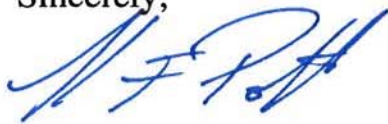
City of Faith and Beauty

(440) 256-3332
Fax (440) 256-9301
www.kirtlandohio.com

Today, as a result of Joe Fornaro's tireless commitment, the City of Kirtland Public Works Department is considered by our residents to be efficient, skilled, hardworking and trustworthy. Within the department, there is now a sense of pride, comradery, and trust. Inside every other city department, employees know who to go when something needs done. Joe's motto of "how can I help" has transcended department lines and become pervasive throughout our city government.

It is my privilege to know Joe Fornaro. And it is now my honor to humbly request, that Joseph Fornaro be distinguished with the American Public Works Association's Top Ten Leaders award .

Sincerely,



Kevin Potter, Mayor



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities

Northern Region Maintenance & Operations

2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
Main: 907.451.2254
Fax: 907.451.5131

February 15, 2024

Re: APWA Top Ten Public Works Leader

APWA Awards Review Committee:

I am pleased to learn that Joseph (Joe) Fornaro was nominated for the Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award and am honored to offer my support for the Awards Committee to consider.

As current Chair of the APWA Winter Maintenance subcommittee, I have collaborated with Joe on several projects and observed his commitment to the advancement of the Public Works industry. I have firsthand knowledge of Joe's willing spirit as he has given of his time and energy supporting the Winter Maintenance subcommittee's mission to deliver quality education to APWA members. Joe's participation in delivering our Winter Maintenance Supervisor Certificate Program has steadily increased through the years. He is always an enthusiastic volunteer no matter the task asked of him.

Joe has been a lifelong public servant and volunteer. Joe's current role is Public Works Director for the City of Kirtland, Ohio. He is an active member of APWA Ohio Chapter, currently serving as the Membership Chair in addition to serving on the APWA Winter Maintenance subcommittee on the national level. Throughout his career Joe has received certifications and commendations too numerous to mention, which attests to his commitment to sustained excellence.

Joe is an active member of his community working with groups such as the Lion Club and Kiwanis in addition to coaching youth sports.

Joe is a model of what standards a leader should aspire to. He is a kind and considerate person who displays the qualities that should be desired in Public Works Leadership. For these reasons, please give strong consideration to Joseph Fornaro as a Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Schacher".

Daniel Schacher
Northern Region Maintenance & Operations Manager
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Chair- APWA Winter Maintenance subcommittee



February 15, 2024

APWA Top Ten Public Works Leaders Nomination Committee
American Public Works Association
1200 Main Street, Suite 1400
Kansas City, MO 64105-2100

Dear Nomination Committee,

On occasion, one is asked to present a letter of recommendation for a person to recognize their knowledge, experience, and contributions to others. Upon being asked to submit this letter for Joseph Fornaro, I am honored to share my thoughts and do so without hesitation as a way of thanking him for the leadership and assistance he has provided to his community, APWA and countless other entities and individuals that have had the privilege of being able to work with him.

Joe has dedicated his entire career to public service and the public works profession. As you read through his resume and his list of lifetime accomplishments, you will quickly realize that Joe is one of the most dedicated public works professionals you will ever have the opportunity to meet.

I have personally known Joe for several years. During that time, I've had the opportunity to work with Joe as a member of the APWA Winter Sub-Committee and at various educational events. His passion for excellence, his dedication and his superb leadership are significant contributing reasons as to why APWA is where it is today. Throughout his career, Joe has played a critical role in both educating and mentoring countless Public Works professionals, especially in the areas winter road maintenance and employee safety.

Joe sets a tremendous example for all APWA members in the area of leadership. He has spent countless hours working with agencies from other cities, states, and provinces to educate their staff, move technology forward and promote the APWA. His consideration and respect for others, his selfless advocacy of best outcomes and his embrace of change truly make him a leader in our profession. With the number of tremendous individuals that I have had the opportunity to work with over the years, it is clear that I hold Joe in high regard. I feel that our Association would be remiss to overlook this tremendous opportunity to honor one of our best.

Sincerely,

Bret Hodne PWLF, MPA, CPM
Public Services Director/Past Top Ten Recipient
Buckeye, Arizona