

Chelsea, MA

City Manager

Profile



EDWARD J. COLLINS JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
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Introduction

The City of Chelsea, Massachusetts has retained the services of the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist the City Council in the recruitment a city manager. This Profile draws upon our discussions with City Councilors, city staff and community stakeholders. It describes the Center's understanding of the municipal organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate, and the professional and personal characteristics an ideal candidate will possess.

The City of Chelsea

Chelsea is a 1.8 square mile city located across the Mystic River from downtown Boston and just over three miles from Logan International Airport. Commercial and residential development in the last twenty years has been significant. In addition to substantial growth in hotel development, a planned Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority expansion of the Silver Line, a rapid bus transit system, will significantly augment public transportation access and development activity within the City. Notably, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's regional headquarters is currently under development in the City.

According to the 2010 Census there were 35,080 people, 11,888 households, and 7,608 families residing in the City. The population density was 16,036 people per square mile. There were 12,337 housing units. The racial makeup of the City was 48% white, 62% Hispanic or Latino, 8.5% Black or African American, 3.1% Asian, 0.48% Native American, 0.09% Pacific Islander, 34% from other races, and 5.9% were multiracial. The median income for a household in the city was \$30,161. Comprehensive data on the City's demographics can be obtained from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The City has had two city managers since the position was established in 1994 following 4 years of state imposed receivership. The position of city manager is vacant as a result of the most recent city manager moving on to assume a senior level position in the administration of the recently elected Massachusetts governor. Chelsea's charter, which comprehensively restructured city governance and its ordinances are available on the City's web site.

Over the past two decades, Chelsea has earned a reputation as a well-governed municipality with a balanced budget, significant reserves and robust economic development. Chelsea boasts two National Civic League All-America City awards; the first in 1998 and the second in 2014. Chelsea is a City of notable accomplishment and much potential.

Organizational Design and Governance

Chelsea's charter establishes an eleven member City Council, eight members are elected by district and three members are elected at-large. The school committee

consists of nine members; 8 are elected by district and one is elected at-large. The terms of councilors and school committee members are for two years. There are no other elected bodies. The charter grants the city manager strong executive and appointment powers.

Public Finance

In financial terms, Chelsea is managed very conservatively. Fiscal year 2015 general fund revenues are approximately \$160 million of which \$46 million is derived from the property tax. The city has a split property tax rate; residential property generates over 48% of property tax revenue. Fiscal year 2015 state aid is approximately \$65 million. The December 2014 Moody's Bond Rating was A1; Standard and Poor's Rating was AA. Detailed financial information is available from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue/Division of Local Services and from several financial documents posted on the City and Collins Center web sites.

Challenges for the City Manager

- **Building on the Foundation.** The City Council and the first two city managers have built a solid foundation that emphasizes professionalism and integrity in the City's administration. Chelsea has well qualified department administrators and staff; a condition that the current City Council wants to maintain. The city manager needs to sustain and build upon this foundation.
- **Maintaining a Positive Management-Labor Climate.** Chelsea has sustained a positive labor relations climate by utilizing careful budgeting and good management practices at the department level. Most of the City's 350+ non-school employees are members of eight collective bargaining units. Non-school collective bargaining activities are the responsibility of the city manager. Maintaining a positive and collaborative management-labor climate will be an important task for the city manager.
- **Financial Planning and Service Delivery.** Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Chelsea is facing revenue constraints and growing cost pressures; especially in the areas of group health care and legacy costs. A significant amount of the city manager's time will be required to forge strategies to bring these into balance. This task must be addressed in the context of multi-year financial and capital planning. Conservative budgeting and strict expenditure control have been the hallmarks of the tenures of the previous city managers and these values are strongly supported by the City Council.
- **Communication Skills.** Well-developed communication skills are essential. Open, accurate and timely communication by the city manager with city, state and federal government entities, department heads, the public, and the many stakeholders needs to be integrated into the normal operational practices of the City.

The city manager must be skilled and comfortable serving as a major public spokesperson for the city. Equally important, the city manager must actively engage the many diverse constituencies within the City. Chelsea is a “gateway city” with a high proportion of the City’s population foreign born. The city manager must be able to engage a multiplicity of groups, gain an understanding of their needs and ensure that the City’s services effectively respond to those needs.

The city manager must be able to engage the members of the City Council in an on-going dialog about the critical issues that face the city. The public communication role of the city manager will be critical to sustaining the high level of confidence and trust that residents have in the city.

- **Public Safety.** Despite significant and positive efforts and results to mitigate crime, concerns about criminal activity and its impact on the quality of life in the City remain of paramount importance. The City’s police department is comprised of skilled and dedicated officers serving under a professional and well respected police chief and command staff. The city manager will need to work closely with the City Council, police chief, residents, community groups, and other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to ensure that the City remains vigilant and proactive in combatting criminal activity and continuing efforts to reduce overall crime.

The City has a proud and capable fire service. The city manager will have the opportunity to appoint a new leader for the fire service free from the constraints of the Massachusetts civil service system; an appointment of critical importance to the City and the department.

- **Public Education.** The public school system is integral to the political, social and economic well-being of any community. The Chelsea Public Schools is a highly successful education system meeting the academic, language proficiency, and social/emotional needs of a predominantly low-income, immigrant, and urban migrant student population. The Chelsea Public Schools is fortunate to have a superintendent that is a leader in urban education. The next city manager must be a strong collaborator with the superintendent and the elected school leadership to continue their successful work while they simultaneously meet the challenges of the changing student demography and the increased rigor and academic demand required to prepare students for college and career.
- **Building a Management Team, Staff Development and Morale.** Chelsea has a skilled and respected group of senior staff. Departmental operations are generally working well. A continuous effort will be required to foster an interdepartmental approach to problem-solving. Maintaining staff morale, fully utilizing the considerable talents of staff and maintaining high performance standards will be critical to the success of the city manager.

- **Public Role.** The city manager is expected to play a public role in the community. Participation in civic functions and representing the City to other governmental entities, and serving as a public voice for the City will be critical. The city manager must play an active role in managing the City’s relationships with the key municipal, regional, state and federal government officials that drive key social, economic and transportation policy decisions.

The Ideal Candidate

The City Council seeks a city manager who is a seasoned administrator in an environment of similar complexity to Chelsea’s. The individual must possess solid organizational, communication and leadership skills. This is not a learning position.

Chelsea seeks a city manager with the skill, energy, creativity and experience to achieve the City’s goals that include continuously innovating service delivery methods, fostering economic development, prudent financial stewardship, and maintaining the City’s positive civic attitude toward the future. The city manager will need to embrace Chelsea’s diverse cultures as an asset in shaping the City’s future.

Chelsea seeks a city manager willing to commit to a tenure long enough to build a multi-year approach to ensure the sustainability of the City’s finances and service levels. The city manager must support regional solutions when that is in the City’s best interest. Chelsea needs a city manager who can help set the stage for community-wide approaches to addressing the City’s needs; approaches that produce sound collaborative outcomes that circumvent polarization.

The following attributes are important in Chelsea’s city manager.

Personal

The City Manager needs to be:

- Able to demonstrate undisputed integrity.
- Able to communicate effectively with all segments of the community including the non-English speaking and economically disadvantaged population. The city manager must have direct engagement with the civic community so that he/she can gain a thorough understanding of the fabric of the community. Through formal and informal interaction the city manager’s concern for residents, businesses and community-based organizations must be evident.
- Able to play a highly visible role in the community. The ideal candidate must participate broadly across the leadership spectrum of the community, the region and the Commonwealth. The city manager is expected to be an effective champion for the City.
- Able to work openly with employees in an environment that is highly unionized. A direct, collegial, facilitative style that fosters joint problem solving is important.

The city manager can have no agenda beyond being professional and ensuring that service delivery and customer services meet high standards.

- Able to be a vocal and positive spokesperson for the City's agenda at City Council meetings, public forums, state, regional and federal agencies and with the media. The successful candidate must be able to use the status inherent in the city manager's position to continually advance the City's agenda.
- Able to assume a strong organizational management role. The city manager cannot be a micromanager. He/she needs to delegate, while maintaining strict accountability. As the City's chief executive officer, the city manager must be direct, facilitative, and unambiguous.
- Able to create and sustain a goal-oriented environment by establishing, maintaining and promoting effective policies and initiatives. The city manager will be a genuinely inclusive leader who is capable of exerting influence and direction in a manner that shares successes with elected officials, employees and other stakeholders.

Professional

The City Manager must be:

- An experienced leader of a comparable organization with extensive experience in financial management, capital and operational planning, labor relations, public facilitation, and staff development. Excellent public and interpersonal communication skills are essential, as is proficiency in forging a productive and motivated management team.
- A professional that will work cooperatively with the City Council on the establishment of annual goals and objectives and update the City Council, staff and residents on progress and enthusiastically participate in the annual review of accomplishments and the highlighting areas in need of improvement.
- A professionally stable person with a proven record of career growth. The City seeks a professional willing to commit a reasonable period of time working for the City.
- An individual that has a background in guiding the development of a shared strategic vision for an organization. The ideal candidate must be a coalition builder, equally comfortable with private, public and not for profit leaders.
- Both strategic and tactical. He/she must be experienced in working effectively in a political environment providing seasoned and impartial guidance to elected officials to identify and address the long-term strategic needs of the City and the short-term tactical steps necessary to meet those needs.
- Capable of keeping elected officials comprehensively informed, while staying detached from the political

process and ensuring that staff maintains a similar detachment.

- Familiar with urban environments with dynamics similar to Chelsea's.
- Comfortable working with and managing an organization in a political context often characterized by vigorous public debate.
- Able to adhere to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) tenets as a job requirement. Membership in the ICMA is desirable.

Qualifications

The successful candidate will possess a Bachelor's Degree; a Master's Degree is preferred. The successful candidate will have at least five years prior experience as a city or town manager or an assistant city or town manager or the equivalent public or private sector level experience. Experience as a highly visible leader in a public sector organization governed by an elected body is desirable.

The Hiring Process

The City will utilize a Screening Committee to conduct confidential preliminary interviews. The Screening Committee is expected to review the applications of candidates provided by the Collins Center in March 2015 and complete preliminary interviews in April 2015. Public interviews of finalists by the City Council and a final appointment are expected in May.

Salary and Schedule

Applications should be received by **March 31, 2015**. The salary for the previous city manager, a fourteen year incumbent, was in the upper hundreds. The City is willing to negotiate a competitive compensation package and an employment contract with the selected candidate.

How to Apply

Applications are preferred electronically. Please send a resume with a cover letter addressing the job requirements to: recruitment.umb@gmail.com Please combine all of your documents in a single file and include **Chelsea CM** in the subject line. Kindly use PDF format, if possible.

Should you have any questions regarding this opportunity, or a recommendation of a colleague, please contact: Dick Kobayashi, Senior Associate 617-489-8812, or Mary Flanders Aicardi, Associate 508-215-8992.

To learn more about the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston and to view relevant Chelsea documents, please visit: www.umb.edu/cpm.