

# Fairhaven, Massachusetts

## Town Administrator

# *Profile*



**EDWARD J. COLLINS JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**  
JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
GLOBAL AND POLICY STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

## Introduction

The Town of Fairhaven has retained the services of the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist in the Town's recruitment of a new Town Administrator. This Profile draws upon our discussions with selectmen and department heads, officials and citizens. For more information about the Town of Fairhaven please consult Fairhaven's web site ([www.fairhaven-ma.gov](http://www.fairhaven-ma.gov))

## The Town of Fairhaven

Fairhaven, approximately 60 road miles from Boston, is adjacent to New Bedford, with which it shares a harbor. Fairhaven is a town of homes, commercial development (adjacent to I-195), the marine trades and industrial companies like Acushnet Company, a leading manufacturer of golf equipment. The Town has 29.4 miles of shore front. The population is approximately 16,000. As the Town is considered largely built-out, future development will be largely redevelopment. Approximately 19.5% of the population is over 65 compared to the state average of 15%.

Fairhaven's median income for a family is estimated at \$55,126, significantly lower than the statewide average of \$66,768. Data on the Town's demographic trends can be obtained from the Southeastern Regional Planning and Development District web site (<http://www.srpedd.org/>).

Away from the commercial and industrial areas the Town is perceived as a quiet residential community. Its land area is 14 square miles and it has an extensive and varied shoreline. Citizen participation in governance is a long standing tradition.

## Organizational Design and Governance

The Town governance structure consists of a three member Board of Selectmen elected for three year staggered terms and a Representative Town Meeting. The Town Moderator, Town Clerk, Planning Board, Board of Health, Board of Public Works, are elected. The Town Meeting is the legislative body and exercises the functions of appropriating funds and enacting by-laws. Town Meeting is advised by a Finance Committee on the budget and on the full range of financial matters presented to the Town Meeting. The Town's legal base consists of a series of special acts that are available on the Town's web site. The formal powers and duties of the Town Administrator are established through Chapter 381 of the Acts of 2014 which is posted on the Collins Center web site. This special legislation supported by a Town Government Study Committee and Town Meeting is intended to place most day-to-day operations, significant budget and personnel authority, and labor relations under the authority of the Town

Administrator, leaving the Board of Selectmen free to set town wide policy and concentrate on its statutory functions.

The position of Town Administrator is new and replaces the position of Executive Secretary. The long serving current Executive Secretary will retire in late 2015.

## Public Finance

The Town has earned an AA2 rating from Moody's credit rating agency. Fairhaven's total General Fund revenues are approximately \$42 million. \$23 million of this amount is from property taxes, with 74% of this amount from residential property. A recent bond offering statement is posted on the Collins Center web site and detailed financial information may be obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue web site.

## Challenges for the Town Administrator

- **Leadership.** As Chief Administrative Officer for the Town, the Town Administrator must approach the position in a way that establishes wide spread support for this new position while instituting the shifts in administrative power and responsibility that the special act requires. The first Town Administrator must manage a successful transition to the new administrative structure. The status of the Town Administrator position will derive, not only from the law that created the position and formal and informal delegation of responsibility by the Board of Selectmen, but from his/her professionalism, demeanor, and superior substantive knowledge.
- **Management.** The public expectation is that while the Town Administrator will have high familiarity with municipal operations, he/she will not be a micro-manager. The Town Administrator must be comfortable engaging with front line workers where that is appropriate while being fully supportive of department managers.
- **Professionalism, Staff Development and Morale.** The Town has well-regarded, highly skilled and professional department heads and key staff, however there is a tendency for departments to function in a silo-like manner. Providing organizational leadership, developing a management team with a shared vision, and assuming the powers and duties of the Town Administrator will require a combination of knowledge, vigor and diplomacy. The Town has benefited from having a blend of professionals who have served the community for many years. Fully utilizing the considerable talents of staff, establishing high performance standards and maintaining staff morale will be critical to the success of the new Town Administrator. The Town



Administrator will need to provide top-level support for key programs, initiatives and projects.

- **Communication.** Well-developed communication skills in Fairhaven are essential. Open, accurate and timely communication by the Town Administrator with all Town government entities, with the public, the many volunteers and employees needs to be integrated into the normal operational practices of the Town. In addition, the Town Administrator must be able to engage the members of the Board of Selectmen in an on-going dialogue about the critical issues that face the Town.
- **Human Resources and Labor Relations.** The Special Act places responsibility for collective bargaining for all non-school contracts with the Town Administrator with the proviso that all collective bargaining contracts are to be executed by the Board of Selectmen, which is a departure from the historical practice. The members of the Board of Selectmen have indicated a desire to support the Town Administrator in this role by appointing labor counsel. An early task will be to assist the Board in appointing labor counsel. In addition, the Town Administrator will have all of the responsibilities of the Personnel Board which is abolished by the special act. Implementation of a performance evaluation system will be an early task.
- **Financial Management, Budget Planning and Preparation.** Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Fairhaven is facing revenue constraints and growing cost pressures. The Town Administrator must build and direct a strategic planning process that strikes an appropriate balance between long term goals and short-term budget requirements. A significant amount of the Town Administrator's time will be required to help forge town-wide strategies to bring these into balance. This task must be addressed in the context of multi-year plans that consider the conservative fiscal values of the community, the demographic trends affecting the Town and unmet capital requirements.
- **Sustaining a High Level of Public Services.** The sixteen thousand residents expect a high level of public service, which must be sustained largely through the local property tax base.
- **Economic Development.** Significant economic development will require the redevelopment of land along the major arterial corridors, principally Route 6 and adjacent areas. A new Town Administrator will need to manage the processes that address economic development.
- **Education.** Education is a strongly held value among the citizens of Fairhaven. In the current environment, which produces only modest incremental revenue from year to year, stresses occur in the School-Town fiscal relationship. The education budgets, including

regional schools, comprise approximately 52% of the Town's expenditure budget. While not responsible for the school budget or financial operations, the Town Administrator will need to contribute to an on-going dialog on balancing the relative needs of the Schools and Town. This is a role that needs to be played with high technical knowledge of finance, integrity and genuinely collaborative engagement with the Schools.

## The Ideal Candidate

The Fairhaven Board of Selectmen seeks a Town Administrator who is a seasoned manager in an environment of similar complexity who possesses strong leadership, communication and organizational skills.

Fairhaven seeks a Town Administrator with the energy, skill, creativity and experience to serve the community as the Chief Administrative Officer; direct and manage the delivery of municipal services; provide leadership and support to the Board of Selectmen in strategic and policy planning; and provide leadership to departments.

Fairhaven seeks a Town Administrator willing to commit to a tenure long enough to build a multi-year approach to strategic planning and ensuring the sustainability of the Town's service levels. The new Town Administrator must support regional solutions when that is in the Town's interest. Fairhaven needs a Town Administrator who can help set the stage for community-wide approaches to addressing the Town's needs, approaches that produce sound outcomes and avoid polarization within the Town.

The following attributes have been determined important in Fairhaven's next Town Administrator.

### *Personal Attributes*

The next Town Administrator needs to be:

- Able to demonstrate leadership internally and externally.
- Able to demonstrate unquestioned integrity in interactions with officials and citizens.
- Able to communicate effectively in all aspects of the position and with all constituencies in the community. The successful candidate must be direct, facilitative, and clear.
- Able to direct a budget process that develops a sound comprehensive budget for consideration.
- Able to use the status inherent in the Town Administrator's position to advance the Town's agenda.
- Able to delegate many of the routine administrative and communication tasks to subordinates, so that time is available for longer range project and strategic planning.

- Able to create and sustain a goal-oriented and performance based environment by establishing, maintaining and promoting effective policies and initiatives. The Town Administrator will be a genuinely inclusive leader who is capable of exerting influence and direction in a manner that shares successes with elected officials, professionals and volunteers.
- Able and willing to work openly with community groups and employees. A direct, collegial, facilitative style that fosters joint problem solving is needed.

### **Professional Attributes**

The Town Administrator must be:

- A seasoned leader of a comparable organization with extensive personal experience in finance, budgeting, capital and operational planning, expenditure management, labor relations, public facilitation, and staff development. Excellent public and interpersonal communication skills are essential.
- A professionally stable person with a record of tenure and consistent career growth. The Town seeks a committed management professional willing to stay for a significant period but who is also willing to take risks to improve the organization.
- Able to demonstrate a background in guiding the development of a shared strategic vision for the community. The ideal candidate must be a coalition builder, equally at home with private sector and community leaders. The ideal candidate must be able to exercise leadership within the organization and the community.
- Both strategic and tactical. He/she must be experienced in working effectively in a political environment providing impartial guidance to elected officials to identify and address the long-term strategic needs of the community and the short-term tactical steps necessary to deliver services.
- Capable of keeping elected officials comprehensively informed, while staying detached from the political process and ensuring that staff maintains a similar detachment.
- Comfortable managing in an environment where most employees are members of collective bargaining units. Being able to navigate in such a complex environment will require a sophisticated understanding of the diffuse nature of political power in a New England town.
- Familiar with partnering arrangements with non-profit land preservation and cultural institutions which have been key to carrying out Fairhaven's natural resource and cultural preservation agenda.
- Familiar with highly participative local government environments with dynamics similar to Fairhaven's.

- Comfortable working with and managing an organization in a political context often characterized by vigorous debate among well-informed citizens who are active in local decision-making. Key decisions made by the Board and Town Meeting can be closely decided.
- In possession of a Bachelor's Degree and significant experience as a Town or City Manager/Administrator. A person who has served as an Assistant Town Administrator/Manager or similar position in a complex environment may be considered. The knowledge typically gained by obtaining a graduate degree in Public Administration, Public Policy, Business Administration, or law is preferred. Five years executive experience, managing a complex transparent organization similar in scale and complexity to the Town, preferably in a municipal setting is preferred. Experience working for an elected Board and having worked in a Town Meeting environment is preferred.
- Possess a track record of professional behavior consistent with the ethical tenets of the International City Management Association.

### **Salary and Schedule**

Applications should be received by September 23, 2015. Anticipated salary in the one twenties to the mid one hundreds, DOQ. The Town is willing to negotiate competitive compensation and employment contract with the selected candidate.

### **How to Apply**

Applications are preferred electronically. Please send your resume with a cover letter addressing the job requirements to this email address: [recruitment.umb@gmail.com](mailto:recruitment.umb@gmail.com). Please combine all of your documents in a single pdf file, if possible. **Fairhaven\_TA** and the applicant's **Last Name** must be included in the subject line.

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, please visit: [www.umb.edu/cpm](http://www.umb.edu/cpm)*