

# Walpole, MA

## Town Administrator

*Profile*



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

## Introduction

The Town of Walpole 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, department heads and elected officials. It describes our understanding of the organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate, and the professional and personal attributes an ideal candidate will possess. For more information about the Town of Walpole please consult Walpole's web site ([www.walpole-ma.gov](http://www.walpole-ma.gov)).

## The Town of Walpole

Walpole is located 13 miles South of Boston on the Boston to Providence road corridor.

Walpole is a town of homes, many built in the post World War Two era as the town blossomed as a middle class suburb of Boston.

Walpole has many multi-generational families but because of its location and community attributes has attracted people resident from throughout the region. In 2010, the median income for a family was \$91,785, significantly higher than the statewide average of \$65,339. Data on the Town's demographic trends can be obtained from the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission web site ([www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org)).

Walpole is perceived as a quiet residential community, but it is under significant growth pressures. The Town's population is just under twenty-five thousand and its land area is 22 square miles. Land preservation has been a prominent community value and significant portions of the Town provide stunning pastoral vistas. Citizen participation in governance is embraced and adds to the flavor and the culture of the community.

## Organizational Design and Governance

The Town governance structure consists of a five member Board of Selectmen elected for three year staggered terms and a representative town meeting. Assessors are elected, as are the Library Trustees, Planning Board, and Sewer and Water Commissioners. The Representative 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 appointed by the Town Moderator, an elected official, to advise on the budget, appropriations and on a full range of financial matters presented to the Town Meeting. The Town's charter is a special act of the legislature and may be found on the Town's web site. The powers and duties of the Town Administrator are established by the Charter.

The position of Town Administrator has become well established and respected. The Town Administrator is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations to achieve the Town's goals. There is no active discussion focusing on changes to the current government structure. The job description is posted on the Collins web site.

The position of Town Administrator is vacant as a result of a decision by the long serving (thirteen years) Town Administrator to take a similar position in another Town. The Assistant Town Administrator is serving as Interim Town Administrator.

The Office of Town Administrator includes an Assistant Town Administrator as well as clerical and support staff.

## Public Finance

The town has earned an Aa2 rating from Moody's credit rating agency.

Walpole had total General Fund revenues for FY2014 of approximately 76 million, almost 56 million of which was from property taxes. The Town has a dual tax rate. A recent bond offering statement is posted on the Collins Center web site. In addition, 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 sustain and enhance the respect for the position that has emerged over recent decades. The Town Administrator serves as the Director of the Office of the Board of Selectmen and directs and manages the delivery of municipal services under the authority of the Board of Selectmen, as well as coordinating the work of entities not directly under the authority of the Board of Selectmen. The status of the Town Administrator derives not only from the charter and delegation of formal powers by the Board of Selectmen, but from his/her professionalism, demeanor, and superior substantive knowledge.
- **Hands On Management.** While the Town is nearing twenty-five thousand in population the public expectation is that the TA will be a hands on manager, familiar with the details of the municipal operations. The Town Administrator must be comfortable engaging with front line workers where that is appropriate.
- **Professionalism, Staff Development and Morale.** The Town has well-regarded, highly skilled and professional department heads and key staff. 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 work with department heads to establish performance measures for staff and operations as well as providing top-level support for departmental programs, initiatives and projects.

- **Communication.** Well-developed communication skills in Walpole are essential. The next Town Administrator is expected to play a leadership role within the civic community. 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.
- **Budget Planning and Preparation.** Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Walpole 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 twenty-five thousand residents expect a high level of public service, which must be sustained largely through the local property tax base.
- **Maintaining a Positive Labor-Management Climate.** Walpole has been fortunate in its ability to keep up with service demands and labor costs. The labor relations climate has been generally positive. Maintaining a positive climate will require careful attention in the coming years as the Town navigates through an environment characterized by uncertain demographic, economic and financial trends.
- **Capital Program Management.** A referendum to exempt debt service from the limitations of Proposition 2½ for a Police Station, Senior Center, Fire Station, and Public Works building was on the November 4th ballot. It was not approved. As a consequence the Town Administrator will need to work closely with elected officials to fashion a more incremental approach. The Town has reserved approximately 10 million dollars for capital project expenditures.

At the October Town Meeting, the Town through the Water & Sewer Commissioners, sought Town Meeting's approval to allow borrowing to finance the purchase (\$4,500,000) of the former Sharon Country Day

Camp property for water supply protection purposes. Town Meeting approved. As a secondary benefit, this property and its pond, fields, day cabins, tennis & basketball courts will be able to be used for town recreational uses.

## The Ideal Candidate

The Walpole 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.

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

Walpole 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. Walpole 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, while recognizing, respecting and involving citizens as individuals and committees.

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

### *Personal*

The first 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. The Town Administrator cannot be a micromanager and can have no agenda beyond being a professional.

### **Professional**

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 many employees are members of collective bargaining units and management and administration is, to a significant extent, shared by the Board and Town Administrator. Being able to navigate in such a complex environment will take tenacity and skill.
- Familiar with a highly participative local government, with highly educated and passionate citizens, extremely active boards, committees and commissions.
- Comfortable working with and managing an organization in a political environment often characterized by vigorous debate among well-informed citizens who are active in local decision-making processes.

- Capable of keeping elected officials comprehensively informed, while staying detached from the political process and ensuring that staff maintains a similar detachment.
- Familiar with highly participative local government environments with dynamics similar to Walpole'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, law is preferred. Ten 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 December 22, 2014. Cash compensation of the previous Town Administrator was approximately one hundred and sixty thousand dollars. The Town is willing to negotiate a competitive compensation and an 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. **Walpole\_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.collinscenter.umb.edu](http://www.collinscenter.umb.edu)*