

THE TOWN OF HUBBARDSTON, MA

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT

Invitation to Qualified Candidates

Hubbardston, MA. (pop.4,758) is seeking an enthusiastic, proactive, community oriented leader to serve as its next Town Administrator. The community adopted a strong Town Administrator position through the approval of Chapter 292 of the Acts of 2012. This quintessential, New England community, is situated in the hill country of central Massachusetts in Worcester County.

This predominantly rural community has approximately 42 square miles of land mass and is proud of its open spaces, has a strong commitment to protect and enhance its heritage, yet is located just 18 miles from Worcester which contains world class medical, educational and cultural assets while providing numerous employment opportunities for its residential population. Led by a five member Select Board, with a traditional open town meeting form of government, the Town Administrator oversees 25 FT employees with 60+/- PT staff and has approved FY2023 town/school budget of \$10,055,687 (the approved budget for the schools is less than the actual regional assessment and will need to be reconciled via a Special Town Meeting).

The successful candidate will have strong interpersonal, written, and verbal skills which are essential for success in this position with a commitment to providing excellent customer service. BA/BS required, advanced degree preferred, with a minimum of 1-3 years of municipal management and leadership experience or the equivalent in business, not-for-profit management or higher education administrative experience in a college or university. Salary of \$110,000+/-to be negotiated by the Select Board that will be dependent on the specific qualifications and experience of the candidate. Hubbardston is an equal opportunity employer.

The town is seeking to expedite this process and early submittals from interested candidates are strongly encouraged. For questions related to the search please contact Municipal Resources, Inc. at 603-279-0352 x330.

DEADLINE: September 6, 2022 at 8 AM

Please submit cover letter and resume, in confidence, as a PDF to: recruitment@mrigov.com

This document is intended for use as a resource in the search for the next Town Administrator. The candidates are encouraged to do their own research and consider their “fit” for the position. Information about this position and the Town can be found by visiting the Town’s website www.hubbardstonma.us and the MRI website www.mrigov.com/career.html



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THE PROFILE

The *Ideal* Candidate for the position of Hubbardston, MA Town Administrator will have:

BA/BS degree in Public Administration or Business Administration and at least one to three years of prior full-time compensated executive experience in public, not for profit or business administration. A Master's degree is preferred as well as being a Massachusetts Certified Public Procurement Officer.

A record of successful financial experience in budgeting, capital improvement planning, debt management, grant writing/administration, and public procurement.

The highest ethical standards both personally and professionally.

Ability to be creative leader and identify innovative solutions to complex municipal revenue and expenditure challenges. Team building and collaboration is an essential skill for the next TA.

Strong public speaking, writing and presentation skills. Proficiency in the use of electronic media.

Knowledge of and experience with collective bargaining, labor relations and personnel management. Some experience with the requirements of MGL 150E is preferred.

Appreciation of the rural nature of Hubbardston and the desire by its residents to maintain its character.

Ability to “listen” and to provide the highest level of professional recommendations and options to elected and appointed Town officials. Understand and support the essential role of volunteers in local government operations.

An administrator who leads by example and embraces nurturing a positive culture in town offices by supporting, respecting and empowering employees while avoiding “micro-managing” departments. Use and promote technology to improve efficiencies and communication.

Ability to manage Town business in an open, fair and transparent manner. Skill and ability to lead, organize, inspire and manage people at all levels of the organization.

Demonstrated skills in working collaboratively and building consensus with many and sometimes conflicting constituencies. Be accessible to all residents and be willing to reach out and solicit input from the entire community. Involve the community in the decision making process.

Some experience with creative economic development initiatives, land use and zoning, planning/transportation as well as embracing and promoting Hubbardston's existing businesses.

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THE POSITION

The next Hubbardston Town Administrator will need to be a strong municipal leader with good communication and people skills who will be able to gain the respect of and work well with elected and appointed officials, employees, volunteers, residents, business leaders and community organizations.



It will be critically important that he or she demonstrate the ability to work with diverse groups, acknowledge and respect divergent views and communicate openly while remaining transparent and apolitical. The skill and ability to facilitate honest and respectful dialogue between various factions when dealing with controversial or volatile community issues is seen as essential. Transparency and openness of government must be a priority for the next Town Administrator.

The residents of Hubbardston are proud of their Town's rural charm, open space and agricultural history. Today, Hubbardston is a "right to farm" community with many working farms of all sizes.

Hubbardston is a very desirable and affordable community in which to live and raise a family. A significant part of the challenge facing the new Town Administrator will be to balance the cost to continue providing a high level of Town and education services at a sustainable tax rate during this time of fiscal uncertainty. The largest share of real estate tax base comes from the residential sector and the remaining from very limited commercial/industrial and personal property taxes.

The Town has a long tradition of strong financial planning and fiscally conservative budgeting of both revenues and expenditures. The FY '23 budget is \$10M of which about 60% is for the Town's assessment from the Quabbin Regional School District for educational services. The approved budget for the schools is less than the actual regional assessment and will need to be reconciled via a Special Town Meeting.

Standard & Poor's assigned Hubbardston with its AA+ bond rating. This is a noteworthy achievement for a municipality of less than 5,000 residents that relies on residential taxes and only has a limited commercial/industrial tax base. S&P recognizes that the Town has a history of healthy financial planning, conservative management, low debt burden and manageable pension obligations. Hubbardston engages in regular financial monitoring, both short and long term, to identify and address areas of financial weakness, underperformance or



imbalance. In fact, it's this monitoring and the Town's adopted financial policies which provides the foundation for their excellent credit worthiness and their investment grade credit rating.

The Town's financial reserves are healthy: Free Cash is certified at \$806,000, the Stabilization Fund is \$557,000. and the Capitol Stabilization Account is \$182,000. It should be noted that the Town's Stabilization Fund has run about 4.5% of the net operating expenses over the past 5 years. This is excellent for a small community. In 2006 the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act and the balance in that fund is \$360,000.

The Town Departments are well managed with seasoned Department Heads and employees. The Fire Department operates with five full-time employees and eight Call Fire Fighters out of two stations. The Department provides the community with Advance Life Support emergency medical service which they operate with two ambulances.

THE CHALLENGES

Economic Development

Measured and realistic economic development will be important for the next Administrator as the municipality looks at ways to broaden the over-all tax base and provide relief to the residential tax payers. Currently, there are two non-traditional economic development projects in the community dealing with the marijuana industry that will have impacts now and in the future on the community and will add to the tax base as well as providing some additional revenue through host community agreements. The location of a cell tower(s) in a community which lacks adequate service is an important development initiative in the Town. The fees associated with this type of project generates non tax revenues for the community. The next TA could also focus on assisting and expanding existing businesses in the community and promoting new small businesses along designated main travel routes like Route 68 and Route 140 with an emphasis on service businesses for the local residents.

Town/School Relations

The Town of Hubbardston is a member of the 5 community Quabbin Regional School District and is the second largest town in the district. The assessments over the last few years have been unsustainable for the community which has created some difficult discussions over the years between the Town Administration and the School district. The Town, at the recent Town Meeting, rejected the assessment by the District and sent the budget proposal for Hubbardston back to the School Committee



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for reconsideration. The Town has scheduled a Special Town Meeting in August to have the residents vote on a new budget assessment for Hubbardston. Two other communities are also seeking votes on their assessments at the same time. The new TA will need to take a lead role in these discussions in concert with other town leaders in the four other member communities to work on an amicable and sustainable budget for the future.

Facilities and Infrastructure

The community has had a number of initiatives over the years to attempt to deal with facility improvements revolving around Police and Fire needs, the Town Hall situation, a possible COA expansion and general infrastructure needs of the community. The town has failed in the past to get approval of an override vote to secure funding to address these needs. However, the voters did approve a debt exemption for the roof project at the Hubbardston Center School. A challenge for the new Administrator will be to keep the issue of facility improvements on both short and long term CIP plans that should include a proposal on how to fund these needs going forward. It appears the new TA will need to put together a plan that includes locally generated taxes, outside revenues such as grants or special revenue funds dedicated to a specific project to address these important town needs.



Financial Issues

The special challenge the next Town Administrator will have is to continue to balance the annual operating budget with the competing Town and School budget needs/requests. As stated previously, the Town's ability to raise taxes is limited due to the fact that the residential tax payers pay the vast majority of the property taxes and the community has a minimal commercial/industrial tax base. Over the years conservative budgeting of revenues and expenditures and constant budget monitoring has yielded good results; for example, healthy reserves and a AA+ bond rating, but this is not sustainable going forward, especially when the cost of goods and services are increasing at a faster pace than the Town's ability to pay. This is especially true with the budget assessments from the Quabbin Regional School District. The new Town Administrator will need to develop a good working relationship with the school administration to address these problems in the future. He or she will also need to have experience with economic development and be able to attract businesses to build the commercial/industrial tax base. This will take some of the burden off the residential tax base.



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Hubbardston Community Survey

In January 2021 the Town issued the Hubbardston Community Survey which reported the results of an online survey conducted in Decembers '20 and January '21.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING THE TOWN?

NOW:

1. Limited Cellular Broad Band – 75%
2. Lack of Retail Business – 51%
3. Road Conditions - 47%
4. Aging Infrastructure – 45%
5. Poor Municipal Building Conditions – 40%

IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS:

1. Limited Cellular Broad Band - 59%
2. Road Conditions - 50%
3. Aging Infrastructure – 46%
4. Lack of Retail Business – 43%
5. Tax Increases – 42%

Finally, the ideal candidate must possess outstanding verbal and written communication skills. It is imperative that the Town Administrator be able to communicate effectively with town leaders, staff, volunteers and the public. It is the Administrator's responsibility to keep the public informed. He or she must be committed to operational transparency and possess the ability to communicate clearly and use social media to present Hubbardston's message. The Town Administrator must leverage emerging technologies and other creative ways to promote community involvement. Customer service is a high priority with the Select Board, which means the successful candidate must place great value on listening and providing accurate information to all members of the community.

