

THE TOWN OF WESTFORD, MA TOWN MANAGER RECRUITMENT

INTRODUCTION

Westford, MA (24,700 pop.) The Town of Westford seeks a proactive, seasoned community leader committed to excellence to serve as its next Town Manager. The current manager is retiring after fourteen years of dedicated service to the community. The residents of Westford take great pride in being a welcoming community that respects and honors its history and its diversity. This charming New England town is known for its outstanding public services and award winning schools.

Westford was originally settled in the 1600's and incorporated as the Town of Westford in 1729. The community has a rich history and a strong commitment to preserving its heritage, and boasts a quality of life that makes it a destination community for any public manager. The Town is ideally located on the I-495/ Route 3 highway network, just 35 miles north of Boston and near the New Hampshire border. In addition, Westford has numerous natural and recreational amenities and offers easy access to Boston, Cape Cod and New Hampshire's White Mountains.



This full-service municipality is led by a five member Select Board and Town Manager with an Open Town Meeting form of government. With the assistance of an Assistant Town Manager and an excellent department head team, the Manager oversees an operating budget for FY 2023 of \$126.6M and a capital budget of \$6.7M (School and Town) with 203 full-time and 166 part-time Town employees, not including School Department employees. The Town is financially stable, boasts substantial reserves, has an AAA bond rating by S&P Global and is recognized as a desirable community for its planning initiatives and smart growth business development that has resulted in a strong commercial, industrial and residential tax base.

The ideal candidate will have a Master's in Public Administration or related field and 7 to 10 years of senior level experience in public administration, or other related professional fields with demonstrated executive responsibilities in a quasi-public, business or government entity. The Town will consider a combination of education and professional experience to meet the minimum requirements for the position.

The Town has established a total compensation range of \$210,000 to \$230,000 with a competitive benefits package commensurate with qualifications and experience. The Town is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion hiring goals to create a diverse workforce. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. For additional information contact Alan Gould, President, Municipal Resources Inc., at 603-279-0352 x320, or mrigov.com/career

**Cover letter and resume in confidence as PDF attachment to: recruitment@mrigov.com
Deadline: 9am EST; Monday, October 24, 2022**

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE & CHALLENGE STATEMENT

The Profile

The *Ideal* Candidate for the position of Westford Town Manager will have:

A graduate degree in public administration or similarly related field is required.

At least 7-10 years of demonstrated senior level leadership in a community public management position or similar relevant, transferable experience at an executive level in a not for profit organization, higher education institution or other governmental position.

A career record of creative and innovative financial and budget management with an emphasis on short/ long term strategic capital planning.

A collaborative and deliberative style of management that allows for and promotes community involvement by an engaged, caring and diverse citizenry and understands the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in community relations and municipal operations.

Leadership by example and who empowers and trust managers and staff to run their organization. Avoids being a micromanager but someone who holds senior managers accountable.

Appreciation for the hard work municipal employees are engaged in and supports their efforts by recognizing and appreciating their professionalism. A visible manager who gets out of the office and engages with staff and the community at large.

The ability to be intellectually challenged in solving complex issues by researching and thoroughly understanding the matter before the community. Identify innovative, bold and creative solutions to build consensus while understanding and allowing for divergent opinions from all affected parties.

A demonstrated history of effective and persuasive public speaking while using the latest technology to enhance oral/visual presentations before Town officials and the general public.

Extensive knowledge and experience in negotiations in a collective bargaining environment while also maintaining the ability to establish fair, respectful and harmonious relationships with union and non-union leadership.

The ability to listen, empower and support with staff resources the various constituents in Westford's government particularly the many volunteer boards and committee members who provide the highest level of customer service and professional results to the community.

Demonstrated ability to provide professional, unbiased guidance to all elected and appointed officials as well as the community at large.

A commitment to continuous improvement and knowledgeable of the best practices and next practices in municipal management and administration.

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The willingness to manage Town affairs in an open, diplomatic and transparent manner.

Skills in working collaboratively, cooperatively and building consensus with a strong emphasis on maintaining a positive, productive relationship between the school and municipal administrations.

Demonstrated career long foundation of impeccable professional and personal ethical standards, integrity, respect, honesty and accountability.

About Westford

The Town of Westford has a population of 24,700 residents and a land area of 30 square miles. It is located in Middlesex County along Interstate 495, just 35 miles north of Boston. The Town is only 50 miles from the beaches of the North Shore of Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire and an easy 100-mile drive to the White Mountains. It is a predominantly residential community made up of attractive older New England neighborhoods and new single family and multifamily housing developments. The Town Center is classic New England complete with a beautiful and well-landscaped Common, a traditional Town Hall, the J.V. Fletcher Library, the Roudenbush Community Center, the Westford Museum and the Parish Center for the Arts.

Westford has an abundance of natural resources and beautiful recreational facilities for the whole family to enjoy. The Recreation Department operates two public Town Beaches in the summer as well as a host of activities and programs all year long. The Town has over 4,500 acres of protected open space under the care and custody of the Conservation Commission, School Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission and Water Department and many with trails, play fields and forests for active and passive recreation. In addition, there are over thirty trails managed by the Westford Land Trust for year around enjoyment and in the winter the Nashoba Valley Ski area is very busy place to enjoy winter sports. Westford's public safety departments are noteworthy; the Police Department is an accredited department and the Fire Department provides those in need with Advance Life Support emergency medical services.



Because of its ideal location along I-495, close to Route 3 and in the Greater Boston technology belt, Westford is home to numerous larger businesses and employers, including, but not limited to: Red Hat, NETSCOUT, Juniper Networks, UTC Aerospace Systems, Kadant, Mack Technologies—Sonus Networks, Seagate Technology, Synacor, Inc., Iris Associates, M.I.T. Lincoln Laboratory/Haystack Observatory, Cynosure, Abbott Medical, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise, Kimball Farm, and Nashoba Valley Ski Area.

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The Westford Public Schools are amongst the best in the Commonwealth with an enrollment of 4,668 students. Westford Academy, founded in 1792, is the oldest coeducational high school in the state and one of the oldest in the country. *U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked Westford Academy as the 25th best high school in Massachusetts. Westford Public Schools also has eight other schools, two middle schools and six neighborhood elementary schools.

Westford, a Peaceable Community



Westford has a fascinating history. Originally founded as the Village of West Chelmsford, it was settled in 1664, just 44 years after the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth. The Town continued to grow and eventually split off from Chelmsford and was incorporated as the Town of Westford in 1729. The Town is made up of five distinct villages, each with its own unique character and personality, which are still visible today. Forge Village is known as a factory village because it was the site of ore bogs and the home of iron and textile manufacturing. Graniteville is the location of many stone quarries, some still active today. Nabnasset is another manufacturing village, known for worsted wool. Westford Center and Parker Village are in the farming district with soils that yield abundant crops of apples, peaches and berries. In fact the Town honors its agricultural heritage annually with the Apple Blossom Festival and the Strawberry Festival every spring; these events are not to be missed! No discussion of Westford's history would be complete without mention of the Westford Knight. On a slab of granite, not far from the Town Center, is the carving of what looks to be a 14th century knight. Some say it's the work of unknown origin, others theorize its evidence of the Scottish Templar Knights when they were thought to have been exploring North America. No one knows, but that's what legends are made of.

Westford's Finances and Budget

The Annual Town Meeting approved the FY 2023 Operating Budget of \$126.6M, \$61.3M for Town operating expenses and \$65.3M for educational operating expenses. In addition, Town Meeting approved \$6.7M for the FY 2023 Capital Budget. The Town's financial reserves are very strong. New growth is certified at \$892K; the unassigned, undesignated fund balance, the Town's "Free Cash," is certified at \$6.2M; the Stabilization Fund has \$5.4M, the Community Preservation Fund has a balance of \$4.2M, the Capital Stabilization Fund has a balance of nearly \$500K; and the OPEB Fund is at \$11.7M. In addition there are several enterprise funds. The Water

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Department is run on an enterprise basis and the retained earnings are \$4.4M. The newly created Stormwater Enterprise Fund has retained earnings of \$1.5M. These reserves show the community has a long history of conservative budgeting of both revenues and expenditures. The Town recently created a Health Insurance Trust to address the increases in health insurance costs by self-funding the employee health insurance program. S & P Global recognizes that Westford has excellent financial management and follows financial policies and practices in a manner expected of municipalities with strong debt/credit capacity and, as a result, for the last eight years, it has awarded the Town its highest possible, investment grade rating AAA/Stable.

The Town FY 23 Budget can be viewed at: <https://westfordma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/4227>



The Challenges Ahead

The new Town Manager will be entering a community where the residents are highly engaged in their local community. They care deeply about their Town, its schools and its government. The Town Manager will need to be aware that “good enough” is not good enough for Westford. The residents have come to expect exceptional public services from their elected and appointed officials. One of the reasons the retiring Town Manager was so successful was that she worked hard to develop a culture of cooperation and collaboration between and among the members of the Select Board, School Committee, Finance Committee and the other

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boards, committees and commissions that make up the Town family. The following are some of the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead for the next Manager.



COVID 19 and its Aftermath: As the community approaches the advent of 2023, it finally appears that the sense of normalcy is returning to the Town and the workplace. A challenge for the new Manager will be to plan for that return and to implement a workable transition for the community to whatever variation of the new normal is appropriate for elected and appointed officials, staff and residents. There is no established model for this challenge and the new Manager will be operating in an unknown environment with no script on how to lead the community

thru the next phase of this pandemic. Clearly a key component will be looking at the best practices and next practices in municipal operations.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The Town Manager will enter into a community that recognizes, values and celebrates its ethnic and cultural diversity. The 2020 Federal Census reports that nearly 30% of the community is either Asian, African American or Hispanic, and 18% are foreign born. The School Department supports children from families that speak thirty-seven different languages. The Manager will be charged with providing visible leadership to improve diversity, equity and inclusionary practices in Town policies, processes and procedures and specifically in the recruitment and selection of municipal employees to better reflect the demographics of Westford.

Project Management: The next Town Manager will need to possess the necessary building construction and project management skills and experience to guide two significant building projects. The projects are a proposed \$32M expansion/renovation project of the J.V. Fletcher Library and a proposed \$12M New Center Building construction project at 51 Main Street, the site of the Old Center Fire Station, which will add much needed space for Town operations. Both projects have been well vetted in the community.

Clean Energy and Sustainability: Westford is a leader in municipal clean energy, environmental sustainability and climate change. The Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee produced a report that outlines how the community can reduce its greenhouse gases by 2050. The committee was instrumental in the hiring of a Sustainability Coordinator whose job it is to drive this effort. The incoming Manager's challenge will be to build on this momentum and ensure the Town Meeting's and the Select Board's goals and policy directives are carried out in municipal planning, purchasing and administration.

Westford Climate Roadmap, A plan to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050:

<https://westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10654/Westford-Climate-Roadmap-v1>

Succession Planning: The Manager will be tasked with filling a number of major department head and key staff positions over the next 1-3 years. The Town has a strong organizational structure in place, however replacing skilled managers in important municipal positions is always challenging in today's recruitment and selection

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environment. The new Manager will need to extensively vet eligible candidates and manage the transition and on-boarding process within the various departments.

Health and Wellness: The Select Board and School Committee are deeply committed to the social and emotional wellbeing and safety of the entire community, students, staff and elders alike. Over the last two years, the Town and School Safety Task Force reviewed Town and School safety issues and practices and provided a report and recommendations to address its findings. The Manager will have the benefit of a Community Wellness Coordinator to implement these recommendations and address the unmet health and safety needs of the greater community. This isn't as much as a challenge as it is an opportunity for the next Town Manager to champion and lead these community safety, health and wellness initiatives.

Infrastructure/Roadway Improvements: The Town has recently been informed that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation has approved state funding for the largest roadway construction project in the Town's history. The Boston Road Project is estimated to cost in excess of \$12M and is tentatively scheduled for advertisement in 2024 with construction in 2025. Boston Road is the primary access from Interstate 495 to the Town Center. The project will include full depth reconstruction of the roadway, sidewalk installation, two 5 foot wide bike lanes, water main replacement and storm water management improvements. The design process has already started, including community involvement and comment. It is anticipated that this project will entail significant pedestrian and commuter disruptions, delays and detours through the Town. To be successful, the Manager will need to be cognizant of the policies and practices of working with Mass DOT on major construction projects as well as the input and participation of the community in this process.

Cybersecurity: It is important that the new Town Manager understands the magnitude and proximity of the cybersecurity threat that exists in the municipal world. This risk has been a major focus for the two IT Departments (Town and Schools) particularly with the focus on phishing/ransomware and other attacks designed to exploit human weaknesses, rather than technical weaknesses. The Town and Schools have a cybersecurity-awareness training program for all employees and track performance on that and on various phishing test programs. The new Town Manager will need to have a level of understanding and knowledge of the problems that threaten the internet based technology and security of municipal hardware and software.

Westford is a charming New England community that celebrates its rich history, and cultural and ethnic diversity. This Town has great public services, award winning schools and an ideal location, all of which makes it a desirable community to live, raise a family, recreate and work. The next Town Manager will be an approachable leader, who brings passion, energy, and a commitment to excellence to this outstanding Massachusetts community.

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For More Information

MRI provides information about Westford in this document, however candidates are encouraged to learn more about the Town and the position by visiting Municipal Resources' website www.mrigov.com and the Town's website www.westfordma.gov. Candidates can also contact Alan Gould at agould@mrigov.com or by phone at 603-279-0352 ext. 320.