

TOWN OF MIDDLETON, MA

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT

Invitation to Qualified Candidates

INTRODUCTION

Middleton, MA (9,800 pop.), is seeking a proactive, community leader, who is committed to organizational excellence, to serve as the next Town Administrator. The town is a quintessential New England community, located within a short drive from the north shore and just 23 miles from Boston with its world class medical, educational, and cultural assets. With a rural farming



heritage, Middleton is a bustling community with a “hometown feel” that includes a combination of residences, business, and agriculture. Middleton has an Open Town Meeting form of government and is led by a five-member Select Board and Town Administrator. This is a politically and financially stable community as evidenced by having only three Town Administrators in 45 years and the beneficiary of a AA+ bond rating by S&P Global. The Town’s operating budget, including schools (K-6 plus a regional HS) is \$43.1M, with approximately 90 Town FTEs. The successful candidate will have Bachelor’s degree in related field (Master’s preferred); at least 5 years progressive municipal management and leadership experience, or relevant combination of experience and education. Salary range \$165,000-\$195,000 commensurate with qualifications and experience. The town also offers a competitive municipal benefits package.

Middleton is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate based upon race, religion, color, national origin, gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, status as a protected veteran, status as an individual with a disability, or other applicable legally protected characteristics.

The Town provides reasonable accommodations to anyone whose specific disability prevents them from completing an application or participating in this recruitment process.

For additional information related to the search, contact Alan Gould, President, Municipal Resources Inc. at 603-279-0352, x 320.

DEADLINE: 8:00 a.m.; Monday, February 6th, 2023

Resume and cover letter, in confidence as PDF attachment 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.middletonma.gov and the MRI website www.mrigov.com/career.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

The *ideal* Candidate for the position of the Middleton Town Administrator must have the following demonstrated professional strengths and personal characteristics:



Strong preference will be given to candidates with an appropriate graduate degree or an undergraduate degree that combines work experience and education. The candidate should have a minimum of 3-5 years of direct work as a senior level public sector manager in a position such as a Town Manager or Town Administrator, Assistant TA/TM, Public Finance Director or other relevant, transferable skills and experience within the public domain. Current MCPPO certification or the ability to attain this certification is highly desired by the community.

Demonstrated skills in the management of complex public construction initiatives while also holding all stakeholders informed and accountable. Ability to guide and educate residents about the long term goals and objectives related to all community facility and infrastructure assets.

A record of thoughtful financial management and strategic capital planning, including a proven ability to accurately prepare and project sustainable municipal budgets and Capital Improvement Plans over a 5-10 year horizon, including the ability to identify potential and realistic funding sources.

Be an engaged Town Administrator who leads the community by example and promotes coordination and cooperation across the organization. Must possess the highest ethical standards both personally and professionally. Should be an Administrator who participates and is visible at community events.

Possess a good understanding of Mass General Laws, regulations and local Boards statutory authority in a complex local government structure with a long standing Town Charter.

The ability to be creative and identify innovative solutions to complex municipal issues by utilizing the talent and experience of local elected and appointed staff as well as encouraging resident involvement.

Strong public speaking and presentation skills. Proficiency in the use and management of all current platforms in social media to promote the messaging of the Executive Board within the community.

Extensive knowledge of and experience with negotiating collective bargaining matters and the MGL's associated with a union environment. Should be well versed in HR topics and personnel management.

The ability to “listen” and to provide advice and counsel in a measured, non-biased manner to elected and appointed officials. Provide prompt, accurate and unfiltered information to policy makers in the community. Ability to sustain and enhance an existing strong Town/School partnership.

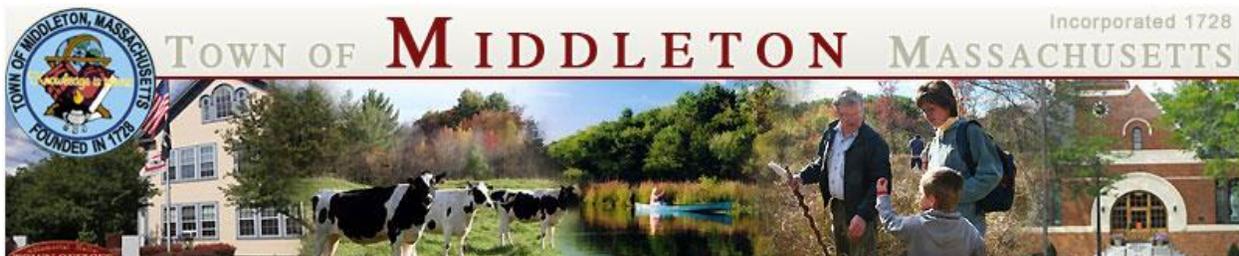
A proven record of nurturing a positive culture by supporting and empowering employees to perform their jobs in an exemplary manner while holding all staff accountable. Help facilitate and support creative individual department initiatives. Strongly promote a “team” concept involving all staff members.

Willingness to manage Town affairs in an open and transparent manner. Be accessible to all residents and show a willingness to reach out and solicit input from the community.

The ability to lead, organize, inspire and manage people while avoiding micro-managing Departments. Acknowledge and support employees for a “job well done”. Facilitate regular joint Department and Board meetings to share appropriate information with all parties. Be a leader and mentor to staff.

THE TOWN OF MIDDLETON

Middleton was originally settled by Europeans in 1659 as part of Salem, and in 1728 the area became incorporated as Middleton by the General Court. It was named Middleton because it was half way between Salem and Andover. One of the original founding families were the Wilkins and the Wilkins House built in 1693 is the oldest house in Town. It was once a tavern on the post road between Salem and Lawrence.



Long before the Europeans arrived, this bountiful land along the Ipswich River and adjoining wetlands, streams and ponds were home to Indigenous Peoples. Over three hundred and fifty years ago Middleton started as a farming and agriculture community and it still is known for that today. In the 18th century the Town had an active ironworks industry. Around 1900 Middleton became an attractive place to have a vacation home or “camp” for folks looking to escape the cities and enjoy the recreational opportunities provided by the Ipswich River, Middleton Pond and Emerson Brook Reservoir. Today the Town is home to a variety of park lands, open spaces and recreational areas: Harold Parker and Boxford State Forests, Peabody and Sanford Reservations and Middleton Conservation Land. The Town has the unique distinction of having one of the oldest trees in Massachusetts. The Curtis Oak is a White Oak and it’s believed to be approximately 400 years old.



Middleton is known as an ideal place to live and raise a family. Residents value its small town and rural character, quality of life and natural assets of the community. The Town provides the residents with excellent public services and outstanding schools. The Masconomet Regional School District provides the middle and high school for Middleton, Boxford and Topsfield students. Elementary school education is provided by the Tri-Town School Union for children from Middleton, Boxford and Topsfield as well.

MIDDLETON CHALLENGES

The next Town Administrator will be facing a number of challenges over the next few years. However, Middleton has a strong history of stability in the position of Town Administrator with excellent Department managers to help face these challenges. Clearly, the current challenge remains dealing with the continuing COVID variants and managing and guiding the community through this unprecedented pandemic. The new Administrator must exhibit leadership and have the ability and skills to work with the elected and appointed leaders to navigate Middleton and its residents through this ongoing and persistent health crisis. The next Administrator will also assist and advise the Town officials in disbursing remaining ARPA funding for the community. Middleton prides itself on being one of the first Massachusetts communities to re-open its town facilities for regular business while maintaining the safety and security of its residents, employees and business partners.

FINANCE/BUDGET



The new Town Administrator will need to continue to balance the cost of providing the high level of municipal and educational services and programs at a sustainable tax rate during this time of fiscal uncertainty. The community also has an independent Municipal Light Department established well over 100 years ago to efficiently and effectively serve the electricity needs of its residents and business community. Middleton has a long tradition of strong financial planning and fiscally conservative budgeting of both revenues and expenditures. The FY '23 budget is \$43.1M, of which

\$18M or 42% is for Town expenses and \$25.1M or 58% is for Educational expenses. The Capital Improvement Program budget for FY '23 is \$982K to address annual and long term capital needs. Approximately 83% of the tax base comes from the residential sector, 10% from commercial property taxes and 5% from industrial property taxes. The Town has two Enterprise Funds, one for water and one for sewer. The undesignated retained earnings for the Water Enterprise Fund is \$1.4M and the smaller Sewer Enterprise Fund is at \$30,000.

S&P Global Ratings assigned Middleton with its AA+ bond rating and stable outlook. This is a noteworthy achievement for a municipality of 9,800 residents which relies on the residential tax base and has a limited commercial/industrial sector. S&P recognizes the Town has a history of healthy financial positions, conservative financial management, strong reserves, manageable current and future debt-burden and manageable pension and OPEB obligations. The Town has well developed Financial Policies which provided the basis for this bond rating. These policies call for Certified Free Cash to be at least 3% of the General Fund operating appropriation. In fact, for FY '22 and FY '23 the Certified Free Cash has been \$3.6M and \$3.4M respectively, well over the 3% policy! For the last two years in a row the Town's surplus revenues have been over \$1M. The Town's financial reserves are also noteworthy. The Community Preservation Fund balance is at \$262K and the Town has five stabilization funds, for a variety of purposes, which total over \$4M.



FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Over the next five years the Town will develop an exciting new Municipal Complex on the site of the former Middleton Golf Course on South Main Street, Rt. 114. In 2019 the Town purchased the 52 acre golf course for \$3.8M for the expressed purpose of locating new Town facilities. The Town Building Committee has plans for a Municipal Complex consisting of a new Town Hall, Public Safety Building to house

both Police Station and Fire Station, Community Center including a Senior Center/Council on Aging Facility and well as recreational space for the entire community, a Town Common and green space for active and passive recreation. The Town decided to take the bold step to build a completely new Town Municipal Complex rather than renovate and repair the existing Town Hall, Police Station, Fire Station and Senior Center/Council on Aging Facility. The sum of \$61.7M was appropriated utilizing a Debt Exclusion vote via a town wide ballot question that passed by a nearly 2-1 margin for the design and construction of this new facility.



The challenge for the next Town Administrator will be to work with the Select Board, Building Committee, Department Heads and the Owners Project Manager to insure that the project is successful from start to finish. The ideal candidate will need to have experience with the public procurement process and managing public construction projects, either with schools or municipal buildings. The cost of this project will have a substantial impact on the average residential tax bill and as a result, the Town Administrator will have to be “on top” of the project and able to respond to questions in a straight forward and transparent manner. Finally, the Town Administrator will need to work with the Select Board and other parties to help determine a plan of action to deal with the issue of re-purposing or adaptive re-use of facilities and land no longer needed for day to day operations after the new municipal complex is built.

MIDDLETON MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Town recently updated its master plan document now entitled Middleton 300. The plan was completed in 2019 and reflects a vision for the community centered around 2028 which is the tri-centennial celebration for the community. The plan development was assisted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council with the Town’s Planning Board acting as stewards of the plan with the Town appointing a Master Plan Committee of interested residents and staff to seek public input, conduct numerous public meetings, assist in community outreach via the use of social media, and generally gathering suggestions and recommendations from residents and business owners. The completed document developed an action plan for positive change with a “vision for the future” that the community can use as its blueprint for the continued evolution of Middleton while also focusing on the assets and attributes that make Middleton such a highly

desirable community for people to locate and raise families. The document highlighted some major elements for analysis such as housing needs, land use and zoning recommendations, transportation, public facilities, open space and recreation, economic development, historic and cultural preservation and public health. To help guide the community, the document includes a ten year implementation schedule that will require the next Town Administrator, the Planning Board/Town Planner, the Select Board, Boards and Commissions and all other interested parties to consistently monitor the progress in attaining the goals and recommendations for the various elements of the plan. One of the overarching goals of the plan is to improve internal communications and transparency both internally between staff, Boards and Committees as well as externally to the residents and other stakeholders in the Town. The implementation schedule includes items that are short term, (1-3 years), medium (4-8 years), and long term (8+ years) to allow the community to measure success in the implementation of the recommended strategies. The Town Administrator will be required to coordinate and provide available resources, when necessary, to all interested parties to assure progress continues to be made in moving this plan forward.



LABOR RELATIONS/PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The Town Administrator plays a significant role in negotiating and administering the Town's four collective bargaining agreements which will all expire in June of 2023. Negotiations on successor collective bargaining agreements has been initiated by the current Administration. The next Town Administrator will need to have the ability to join in these negotiations upon assuming the role of Town Administrator. She or he must be experienced in all aspects of municipal labor relations, grievance and arbitration while adeptly balancing the needs of the employees with the community's ability to fund contracts. In addition, he or she is fortunate to have a management team of well-respected department heads to rely upon. The Town has a long history of responsive, respectful and positive labor negotiations with its union leadership and the new Administrator is expected to continue to promote and foster this positive relationship. The issue of staff retention and recruitment will continue to be a challenge for the new Town Administrator.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As identified in the Master Plan, economic development has taken a priority place in discussions about the future of Middleton. The Town has approximately 83% of all its revenues generated from its residential sector and to continue to mitigate the rising cost of local government on the residents of the community, stakeholders in developing the Master Plan 300 understood the importance of balanced commercial/industrial growth to the overall sustainability and growth of Middleton's budget to continue to provide excellent services to residents and business. The Town has limited options for certain types of growth because of a limited access to municipal water and nominal municipal sewer. In fact a very recent "mixed use" development in the center of town on five acres which would have consisted of 200 residential housing units along with ground floor retail/restaurant uses with improved streetscapes and sidewalks for greater pedestrian participation has recently been withdrawn after the developer could not satisfy the regulatory requirements for on-site sewer disposal. This site was previously the home of a very popular local restaurant and is one of the areas in Town designated for commercial development. The Town has discussed zoning to allow for more health related businesses such as assisted living facilities to serve its population and increase commercial taxes.



The town has designated four significant areas for potential mixed use developments mostly located along state Route 114 and geared towards a "village center concept" to help promote sustainable and pedestrian friendly experiences. To help spur new managed development, the Town has also produced a Housing Production Plan to guide the community in addressing the need of affordability while also adhering to the new DHCD housing regulations which can be an enhancement for economic development by providing grants from the State to promote reasonable housing production in Middleton. Finally, the Town has a very active Rail Trail Committee that helped develop a 2017 "Rail Trail Plan" with a goal of completing a 4.5 mile pedestrian and bike trail from the Danvers town line through Middleton to connect with an active trail network in North Andover. The path is currently about half way complete and the Town believes this



is a sustainable tool to help increase economic activity in the community. The challenge for the new Town Administrator will be to determine the "correct" balance of economic development and the additional tax dollars it brings with preserving the unique character and charm of Middleton.

Finally, Middleton is a wonderful community that exhibits all the characteristics of a traditional New England town. The next Administrator must bring his or her passion, energy, and commitment, as well as excellence, integrity and the confidence to guide the community in the years ahead.

The ideal candidate must possess outstanding verbal and written communication skills. It is imperative that she or he is able to communicate effectively with Town leaders, staff, and the public. In order to do

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this, the Administrator will need to have a high level of community engagement. It is the Administrator's responsibility to keep the public informed, so he or she must be committed to operational transparency and possess the ability to synthesize and communicate clear program/project level progress on initiatives and activities. The Administrator must leverage emerging technologies and other creative ways to promote community involvement. "Customer service" is a high priority for this community, which means the successful candidate must place great value on listening and providing accurate information to all members of the community.



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