

Williston, Vermont

Town Manager

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE & CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Williston, Vermont - Town Manager

Williston, Vermont (9,870 est. in 2018) seeks a creative, proactive, community leader, who is committed to excellence in public service, to serve as its next Town Manager. The current Manager is retiring after serving the community for over 20 years. This fiscally stable community, with a rich history and hometown feel, is a neighboring Town to the City of Burlington with its outstanding medical, educational, and cultural assets. Williston is recognized for its high quality of life and for providing exemplary services to its residents and business community. The governance of the community is led by a five-member Selectboard who act as the legislative body, a strong Town Manager (Charter) with an annual Town Meeting followed by a general ballot vote to approve the operating budget. The Manager is the chief administrative and operating officer of the Town and oversees a municipal operating budget of approx. \$11.7 million and 64 FTEs plus 5 FTE's who are funded out of the water, sewer and stormwater enterprise funds with a combined \$3.9 million budget. The Town has full time public safety Departments in Vermont, the local school system is funded through state government appropriations. The ideal candidate will preferably have a Master's degree and demonstrated experience in public administration or relevant field. The current salary range for this position is \$81,016 to \$116,397 with a mid-range of \$98,717 and final compensation will be commensurate with qualifications and professional experience as determined by the appointing authority. Williston is an equal opportunity employer. For additional information related to the search, contact Alan Gould, President, Municipal Resources, Inc. at 603-279-0352, x320.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: www.mrigov.com/career

DEADLINE EXTENDED: Monday, May 11th at 8 AM EST

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 Manager. 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 and the MRI website www.mrigov.com/career



The Profile

The *Ideal* Candidate for the position of the Williston Town Manager will have the following demonstrated attributes.

Preference will be given to candidates with an appropriate graduate degree or an undergraduate degree that combines work experience and education with a minimum 3-5 years of direct work in public management or other relevant, transferable experience

A proven record of thoughtful financial management and strategic capital planning

The ability to be creative and identify innovative solutions to complex municipal issues

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

Extensive knowledge of, and experience with collective bargaining and overall personnel management

The ability to “listen” and to provide advice and counsel in a measured, non-biased manner to elected and appointed officials while maintaining a commitment to the highest level of customer service

A proven record of nurturing a positive culture by supporting and empowering employees to perform their jobs in an exemplary manner.

Willingness to manage Town affairs in an open and transparent manner. Be accessible to residents and the growing business community in Williston. Should have a positive view of reaching out to solicit input from all interested parties.

The ability to lead, organize, inspire and manage people while avoiding micro managing Depts.

Demonstrated skills in working collaboratively and building consensus with many disparate constituencies in the community.

A leader who can articulate a vision and work with elected and appointed officials to implement positive change in the community.

The Town

Williston is a community located in Chittenden County which is the most populous county in Vermont. The Town was originally founded as an agrarian community with numerous farms with a focus on dairy and sheep farms. Now, the Town is in the top ten communities in terms of population within Vermont albeit there are less than 10,000 residents within its 30.4 square



miles and has developed into a booming commercial destination for the entire region. It is a neighbor to the City of Burlington and serves as a desirable community to live, work and commute for people who travel to the City for employment. Its enviable location along the Interstate 89/ Route 2 corridor and the close proximity to the international airport in Burlington adds to its attractiveness for major national and international business entities seeking locations for their expansions. Family recreational opportunities abound in this region whether it's the close proximity to Lake Champlain, the ski resorts in the nearby mountains, the cultural, medical and educational assets in Burlington and the surrounding communities as well as the overall excitement of the Montreal metropolitan area of Canada being approximately 100 miles away. The Town has been rated in a recent "think tank study" from the Ethan Allen Institute as the #1 rated community out of the 30 most populous communities in Vermont for its fiscal health using complex but fairly common municipal benchmark metrics and data showing a very strong General Fund balance and a healthy unrestricted net position as reported in audits of the community balance sheets. The most recent town meeting in March of 2020 and the subsequent ballot question for the voters overwhelmingly approved the operating budget of \$11.7 million for the next fiscal year as well as a couple of minor revisions to the Town Manager Charter and a bond vote in the amount of \$900,000 to cover the costs of replacing a large culvert on a major road bordering Williston and South Burlington. To address the educational services for its school age population, the Town participates in the Champlain Valley School District consortium comprised of 5 communities. Two of the district school buildings are in Williston. In Vermont, school assessments on residents are provided via the State. The opportunity to manage this community will provide the right candidate with an outstanding quality of life, an exemplary long term career choice in public management and the ability to lead and help guide a vibrant, dynamic, stable municipality.

The Challenge

The successful candidate for the Williston Town Manager position must have a proven record of establishing positive internal, as well as external, relationships while holding her/himself and others to the highest standards of ethics, integrity and accountability. The Town Manager must also be fully committed to the concept of transparency and openness in government, ensuring those concepts are practiced throughout the organization. Nurturing positive relationships within the community, listening to the various constituencies, and working with the Town's boards and committees will be a key to success. He or she must be unbiased, having the patience to seek and value input from all sides of an issue and to respond to inquiries either written, verbal or through electronic media in a thoughtful and timely manner.

Given Williston's high expectation for quality and responsive services, the Town Manager is expected to lead, direct, mentor, and motivate a professional team that will consistently deliver these exemplary core community services. He or she must seek to identify and understand the



vision of the community for its future and provide professional, technical, and management support to the elected officials in their effort to efficiently and effectively provide for the collective needs of those who live and work in the community. The ideal candidate must be able to anticipate and recognize potential problems, and then work with staff and other officials to develop solutions. The Selectboard will depend on the Town Manager to present unbiased information on important matters in a relevant, meaningful way that provides the appropriate perspective and analysis.

Williston is served by a number of well-respected, long tenured department heads. It is important for the new Administrator to value these employees and maintain the positive working relationships that have already been established.

The community recently replaced two senior staff members in the Planning Department and the Library. The community will be replacing its long time Town Clerk (21 years), the Town Manager (22 years) as well as anticipating the retirement of the Fire Chief (25 Years). The expectations to continue the excellent services provided by the Town Depts. through these transitions will, by necessity, be a challenge for the next Town Manager. Additionally, with these changes it will be important for the Manager to develop a responsible succession plan for each department. In addition, he or she needs to have a proven record of recruiting, selecting and grooming a high-performance team as additional needs for staff may develop over time in various operational departments.

Williston is a very desirable community in which to live and raise a family. A significant part of the challenge facing the new Town Manager will be to balance the costs of providing a high level of important services within the town at a sustainable tax rate due to the expanding growth. As this growth occurs there will be increased pressure on emergency services, public works and overall town depts. In order to achieve a sustainable balance he or she will need to help guide the Town in its desire to attract economic development including “smart” commercial growth along Interstate 89 and Route 2 as well as the clearly defined growth districts as identified in the Town 2016-2024 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Selectboard in 2018. This exhaustive document presents a clear vision for the community managing its growth for the 21st century and outlines a roadmap for desirable economic development that complies with the “vision” of the community to preserve and protect its heritage and quality of life. The Town is currently experiencing a strong economic boom that has recently created some backlash from residents regarding the pace of this development and its impact on the community. There are a number of major development sites that includes construction of numerous retail structures, commercial buildings and two Hotels. In prior years, the town has led the entire state in gross retail sales! This is particularly important to Williston because the community has adopted a local option tax that returns to the town a significant portion of the operating budget for Williston. In addition, recent projects have been approved that will increase the number and availability of residential units (rentals and ownership) that some people question may overburden the town’s ability to provide adequate services in addition to the increase in the school population. A unique challenge for the new Town Manager will be to engage all sides in this



debate, provide impartial and objective data to decision makers and promote civility and respect throughout this dialogue.

An important part of maintaining the quality of life in Williston has been the Town's commitment to open space and recreational opportunities for its residents. A challenge for the next Manager will be how to best utilize, working with the recreation and conservation representatives, these important open space land assets. Since 1989 the Town has preserved 2,329 acres for open space and recreation and has a healthy Environmental Reserve Fund which is available to the community when opportunities to buy and retain important parcels in perpetuity especially in light of the natural population growth projections for the community which could expand the current population of Williston by another 1,000 residents by 2030.

As in many communities, maintaining and planning for future needs for the town's building assets will be an issue for the Town Manager to address. The Town has done an excellent job of updating and investing in its physical assets as evidenced by building modern Police, Fire and DPW facilities within the past 10 years. In the future, the new Manager will expect to have to deal with space issues at the Town Hall, possible needs at the Library and perhaps some consideration of a "community" building to potentially serve a dual purpose for the Town. Town Manager will be expected to guide these discussions while also developing a sustainable mechanism to fund needed annual maintenance requirements.

The Town Manager plays a significant role in negotiating and administering the Town's collective bargaining agreements. He or she must be an experienced and effective negotiator with demonstrated skill and success in managing and administering collective bargaining agreements while balancing the needs of the employees with the ability of the residents to pay. While negotiating contracts, the Manager needs to maintain cordial and professional relationships with employee representatives in this arena.

As mentioned previously, the town of Williston has taken a conservative approach to its fiscal management policies. The new manager should embrace this philosophy which has been the backbone of the current fiscal status of the town. The town maintains a healthy reserve, an acceptable debt level obligation and strategically plans for short and long term bond authorizations. A challenge for the manager going forward will be to prepare for an inevitable economic slowdown which could have a detrimental effect on the town's overall budget. An economic slowdown will affect the burgeoning retail sector which, because of the local option tax approved in Williston, provides about \$3,000,000 annually to support the town operating budget of \$11,700,000. Maintaining the expectation of Williston residents for excellent service delivery in an economic slowdown will be an important issue for the new manager to plan for because of the reliance on the option tax.

Finally, the ideal candidate must possess outstanding verbal and written communication skills. It is imperative that the Town Manager be able to communicate effectively with town leaders, staff, and



the public. In order to do this, he or she will need to have a high level of community engagement. It is the Manager’s responsibility to keep the public informed, so he or she must be committed to operational transparency and possess the ability to communicate clearly and use social media to present Williston’s message. The Town Manager 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.

