

Rutland, 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 Rutland 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 its first Town Administrator. This Profile draws upon our discussions with Selectmen, department heads, elected officials, and staff. It describes our understanding of the organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate, and the professional and personal characteristics an ideal candidate will possess.

The Town of Rutland

Rutland is located 13 miles northwest of Worcester on route 122A. Rutland is a very old town with origins in the early part of the colonial period. The Town has a population of approximately 8,700. Commercial development is very limited and the general environment is rural. The population increased from approximately 6300 in 2000 to the present level largely as the consequence of subdivision development. The town is the highest town in central Massachusetts at 1100 feet above sea level and is in the exact geographic center of Massachusetts. Additional information, including the Town's annual report, is available on its web site. (www.townofrutland.org)

The median household income is approximately seventy-one thousand dollars, a number compared to the state median of sixty-five thousand dollars. Median single family home prices are in the three hundred thousand dollar range compared to the three hundred and sixty thousand dollar range for the state median. Data on the Town's demographic trends can be obtained from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (www.cmrpc.org).

Rutland is a small, but well recognized New England town which retains the small town feel and level of community social interaction that is often eroded as towns grow.

Organizational Design and Governance

The Town governance structure consists of a five member Board of Selectmen, elected for three year staggered terms, and open Town Meeting. Elected Boards include the Library Trustees, Board of Assessors, Planning Board, and Board of Health. The Town Moderator and the Town Clerk are also elected.

The Town Administrator's position was established by Town Meeting several years ago but was only funded at the 2014 Annual Town Meeting. The Town has done a good job of incrementally converting elected administrative positions to appointed status. Most recently in 2013, the Treasurer-Collector position was made an appointed position.

The position of Town Administrator is new and the first incumbent will have to "make" the job. The schools are operated by the Wachusett Regional School District, an autonomous entity that consists of five member towns. The funding of the Town Administrator position was strongly

supported by all of the currently serving Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen has recently established a job description for the position. The job description is posted on the Collins website. The Board members anticipate that a seasoned Town Administrator will guide the Board. The Board anticipates that all town personnel currently reporting to the Board of Selectmen will report through the Town Administrator. Similarly, the Board anticipates that the Town Administrator have responsibility for budget preparation and execution, procurement and human resource functions. The Board also expects that the Town Administrator will work closely with elected Boards that have operational responsibility.

While the position of Town Administrator possess relatively strong powers and defined duties, as an old New England town, Rutland retains a strong tradition of making decisions through consensus. The new Town Administrator must be attuned to this tradition and be comfortable working in an environment where political power is diffuse and citizens expect broad consultation on significant decisions.

The Town has professional Police, Fire and Public Works Departments.

Public Finance

The Town is financially conservative, but due to several challenging fiscal years, reserve funds are relatively low. Approximately \$12.9 million dollars of the Town's approximately \$17.4 million dollar budget is from property taxes. \$971 thousand dollars of revenue is in the form of state aid and \$3.6 million is in the form of local receipts. Additional information may be obtained from the Department of Revenue Division of Local Services website.

Challenges for the Town Administrator

- **Building on the Foundation.** The Selectmen, Town Meeting and the Finance Committee are incrementally building a solid public administration foundation for the Town that emphasizes professionalism among the Town's staff and administrators. Rutland has capable well-trained professional department administrators and key staff, a value the current Board wants to maintain. The job of the first Town Administrator is to lead the organization to performance at a higher level by instituting town wide systems and processes and forging a team approach to problem solving. Currently the position of Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen is double hatted as Assistant Town Accountant. This position will be subordinate to the Town Administrator.
- **Ensuring full confidence in the management of the Town.** The lack of a central focus to the administration of the Town and the recent expansion of the Board's composition from three to five members coupled with the growing complexity of municipal administration has made it difficult to strengthen citizen confidence in the Town government. The first Town Administrator needs to be able to foster a sense of stability while evaluating the

current condition in a forthright and professional way. The process of selecting the first Town Administrator, the first impression set by the new Town Administrator and the perception of the first Administrator's initial decisions need to engender confidence in the Town's decision-making processes and set the stage for enhanced public perception of the quality of town governance.

- **Establishing and Maintaining a Positive Employment Climate.** The first Town Administrator will be the Town's Human Resource officer. It will be important to evaluate the town's Human Resource policies and procedures and ensure that they are administered in an even handed way across all Town Departments including those under the purview of elected Boards.
- **Medium and Long Term Budget Planning and Service Delivery.** Rutland is facing revenue constraints and growing cost pressures. A significant amount of the Town Administrator's time will be required to forge town-wide strategies to manage within these constraints. This task must be addressed in the context of multi-year plans that consider the new normal: constrained revenue combined with explicit recognition of pension and OPEB liabilities. Service expectations are high but resources in real dollar terms will be limited.

Conservative budgeting and strict expenditure control and establishing a bona fide capital budget will be required. Rutland's own-source general fund revenue comes almost exclusively from the residential property tax base.

- **Land Use.** The Town does not have a Planner and the Planning Board contracts for assistance from professional planners and engineers on a project basis. The Town Administrator will need to assess Rutland's longer term planning needs and work with town officials and citizens to strengthen the regulatory system, where appropriate, and foster a comprehensive approach to managing growth. Preservation of the Town's almost pristine natural environment is a paramount value, but where it is consistent with the Town's values unlocking development to diversify the tax base is a longer-term town goal.
- **Communication.** Well-developed communication skills are essential. Open, accurate and timely communication by the first Town Administrator with the board members, other Town government entities, department heads, the public, the many volunteers and employees, need to be integrated into the normal operational practices of the Town. The first Town Administrator must be skilled and comfortable serving as a major public spokesperson for the Town and actively participate in shaping a strategic message to citizens, stakeholders and the business and development communities.

The first Town Administrator must be able to engage the members of the Board and committees/boards/commissions in an on-going dialogue about the critical issues that face the Town. The public communication role of the Town Administrator will be critical to sustaining a high level of confidence and trust by residents in Town government.

- **Building a Management Team, Staff Development & Morale.** Rutland has a well-regarded group of department heads. Efforts by the first Town Administrator will be required to establish comprehensive interdepartmental approaches to problem solving and governance. Maintaining staff morale, fully utilizing the considerable talents of staff and establishing and then maintaining high performance standards will be critical to the success of the new Town Administrator.
- **Managing relationships with Boards and Commissions.** Rutland has a number of elected and appointed boards, commissions and committees that are integral to the governance of the Town. Many of the boards, commissions and committees possess defined statutory powers. All need support and collaboration from the Town Administrator.
- **Strategic Planning.** Given the Town's limited revenue options careful and thoughtful strategic planning for the maximization of the town's revenue potential, service delivery system and land use regulatory system will be a priority. It is noteworthy that the Town has recently taken the steps to develop a Master Plan.

The Ideal Candidate

The Rutland Board seeks a Town Administrator who is a seasoned manager in an environment of similar complexity and sophistication who possesses strong organizational, communication and community leadership skills.

Rutland seeks a Town Administrator willing to commit to a tenure long enough to build a multi-year approach to ensuring the sustainability of the Town's service levels. Rutland 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.

The first Town Administrator must be comfortable working in an organization as small as Rutland's where relationships are always on a face-to-face basis, quarters are cramped and there are only minimal buffers between staff and management and between town employees and citizens.

The first Town Administrator must understand that he/she must establish the Town Administrator position as an integral part of the public administration infrastructure of the Town, if he/she is to be considered successful.

The following attributes have been determined important in Rutland's new Town Administrator.

Personal

The first Town Administrator needs to be:

- Able to demonstrate unquestioned integrity in interactions with officials and citizens.
- Able to communicate effectively and build consensus among all elements of the community. A diplomatic approach to communication is required.
- Able to work cooperatively with the Board on the

establishment of annual goals and objectives for the Town and its departments and incorporate these as an integral part of the annual budget, update the Board on progress and actively participate in the annual review of results and operations.

- Able and willing to play a highly visible role in the community. The ideal candidate must participate broadly across the leadership structure of the community and region and be a champion of the community.
- Comfortable engaging directly with residents. The Town Administrator must have sufficient direct engagement with the civic community so that he/she can gain thorough understanding of the Town's culture. Through formal and informal interaction the Town Administrator's concern for the Town's residents needs to become evident.
- 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 can have no agenda beyond being professional and ensuring that service delivery meets the community's standard for customer service.
- Able to be a vocal and positive spokesperson for the Town in all public forums. The successful candidate must be able to use the status inherent in the Town Administrator's position to advance the Town's interests.
- Able to assume a strong organizational management role. He/she needs to establish the position and delegate where appropriate, while maintaining strict accountability. The successful candidate must be direct, facilitative, and clear.
- Able to create and sustain a goal-oriented 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.

Professional

The Town Administrator must be:

- An experienced leader of a comparable organization with extensive professional experience in finance, capital and operational planning, expenditure management, labor relations, public facilitation, and staff development. Excellent public and interpersonal communication skills are essential, as is skill in forging a management team.
- A committed and creative management professional with a record of tenure and consistent career growth.
- 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 within the community.
- In possession of the skills and interest to identify and promote opportunities for diversified tax base expansion.
- Able to delegate to a highly competent cadre of Department

Heads while maintaining strict accountability.

- Both strategic and tactical. He/she must be experienced in working effectively in a political environment providing seasoned and 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 sustain service delivery.
- 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 Rutland'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 are sometimes 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.
- 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 November 7, 2014. Direct salary is anticipated to be consistent with TA salaries in similar towns in the region, but will also depend on qualifications and experience. 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. Please combine all of your documents in a single pdf file, if possible. **Rutland 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.umb.edu/cpm.

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