

Mattapoissett, MA Town Administrator

Community & Position Profile



The Community

Mattapoisett is a small, rural and coastal town in Southeastern Massachusetts “where folks take the time to enjoy the natural beauty of the woods, coastline, historical neighborhoods and local businesses. The community is rich in history, a true New England seaside port with access to the best recreational boating on Buzzards Bay.”¹

Together with neighboring towns of Marion, Rochester, Fairhaven, New Bedford, and Wareham, [Mattapoisett](#) takes stewardship of its unique heritage and geography seriously. The Town cares deeply about the education of its children, and the health and wellbeing of families and elders. The demographics are changing, with more families finding it difficult to afford living here and more retirees finding it a very attractive location for year-round or summer residence.

While the population has grown since completing the most recent (2000) Master Plan to approximately 6,300 year-round residents, the general desire of citizens remains for Town government to do “everything possible ‘to retain the Town’s character’ and ‘manage growth.’”² The specific top three priorities from the 2000 Master Plan remain true:

- 1) Townspeople want all the amenities, but they do not want the Town to change very much.
- 2) Town government is strained and under pressure to keep costs and taxes down. It is overseen by independently elected officials, volunteer boards, and full- and part-time personnel.
- 3) Town Meeting, not the Board of Selectmen, carries the ultimate authority and responsibility; unfortunately many public forums are under-attended, and there are often unfilled seats on boards and committees, creating concern that decisions are made by a minority of citizens. The fact that it works as well as it does is a credit to the excellence of officials and employees, as well as the devotion of overworked Town boards and committees.
- 4) Despite ever-increasing numbers of people being attracted to the SouthCoast, Mattapoisett has not grown as fast as its neighbors, primarily because of a large percentage of unbuildable land, wetlands or soils that will not percolate. Wetland and coastal issues impact every aspect of development and Town management.

Since the drafting of the 2000 Master Plan, the Town has worked hard improving areas that impact quality of life:

- Incremental expansion of its water and sewer system
- Planning for increased impacts of extreme and more frequent storm events

- Participation in an important regional board and cooperation with regional planners and NGO’s to protect the Buzzards Bay and the aquifer that serves our region, and which is predominantly situated in Mattapoisett
- Harbor management
- Economic development
- Affordable housing
- Consistent capital improvement planning
- Fiscal stability
- Road reconstruction
- Funding the acquisition, programming, and infrastructure for Recreation and Open Space

History. Mattapoisett’s roots go back to 1680, when the Town was first settled as a village known as the Lands of Sippican, a part of Rochester. Rochester, [Mattapoisett](#) and Sippican, widely separate villages under the domain of Rochester, gradually developed different interests and economies. These factors led to independence for the different villages and Mattapoisett was incorporated as a town in 1857. After 1800, Mattapoisett grew to be a renowned ship-building community, supplying vessels of varying size and tonnage to the shipping and whaling industries. The last vessel to be built in Mattapoisett was launched in 1878. Another early industry was the Salt Works, which produced vast quantities of salt from sea water. Following the decline of the whaling industry and the age of sail, the Town became a “summering place” for residents of New Bedford and Boston. Today, Mattapoisett has a stable year-round population which doubles with seasonal residents in the summer.

Geography. The Town contains 24.2 square miles of area, of which 17.4 square miles is land and 6.8 square miles is water. Mattapoisett is bordered by Fairhaven to the southwest, Acushnet to the northwest, and Rochester to the north, and Marion to the east. Mattapoisett is approximately nine miles east of New Bedford, 38 miles east-southeast of Providence, R.I., and 60 miles south of Boston.

Census Data. According to U.S. Census estimates for 2018, the Town of Mattapoisett’s racial makeup is approximately 97.9% white, 1.7% Hispanic or Latino, 1.1% two or more races, 0.2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.1% Asian. Mattapoisett has an older population than the average Massachusetts community. The median age in Mattapoisett is about 50 years compared to the state’s 40 years. In the 65 years and older cohort, Mattapoisett has 22.4% of its population which is above the state’s 16.5%, according to the U.S. Census. The under-18 years cohort in Mattapoisett is 17.9% of the population versus 19.8% for the state. The median annual household income is \$85,870, compared to the state median of \$74,167.

¹https://www.mattapoisett.net/sites/mattapoisettma/files/uploads/welcome_to_mattapoisett_2019_edits_5.13.pdf
²<https://www.mattapoisett.net/sites/mattapoisettma/files/uploads/2000master.pdf>



The Government

Mattapoissett's government is comprised of a three-member [Board of Selectmen](#) that serves as the Chief Elected and Executive Officers of the Town. Selectmen are elected to staggered three-year terms and are vested with all the municipal authority not specifically retained by the Town's legislative body, Town Meeting, or other elected boards. According to the Town's [General By-Laws](#), Annual Town Meeting is held on the second Monday of May each year. A quorum of 50 voters is the minimum required.



The Mattapoissett [Board of Selectmen](#) appoints the position of Town Administrator to provide general administration of the day-to-day affairs of the Town and to forward the goals and objectives set by the Board.

The [Town Administrator](#) works under the policy direction of the Board of Selectmen and serves as the Town's chief operating officer, chief financial officer, personnel director, and chief procurement officer. The Town Administrator's office also assists citizens with general business issues.

The Town Administrator sets the strategy of the Town in accordance with Board of Selectmen directives, sets overall operating goals for the Town, and oversees the efficient and effective administration of Town government to achieve those goals. The responsibilities handled by the Town Administrator include: preparation of the annual operating and capital budgets with assistance from department heads and Town committees, personnel management, grant writing, negotiating collective bargaining contracts, Town Meeting preparation, economic and community development, communications with staff and citizens, and general problems and administrative actions.

Mattapoissett is part of the [Old Rochester Regional School District](#), which includes the [Old Rochester Regional Junior High School](#) for students in grades 7 and 8, and the [Old Rochester Regional High School](#) for those

in grades 9-12. Students from pre-school to grade 3 attend the [Center School](#) and students in grades 4-6 attend the [Old Hammondtown School](#), both of which are overseen by the elected five-member [Mattapoissett School Committee](#). Overseeing the junior high school and high school is the nine-member [Old Rochester Regional School Committee](#), of which three members reside in Mattapoissett.

Other elected positions include: Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Moderator, Planning Board, Mattapoissett Housing Authority, Constable, Town Clerk, Tree Warden, Herring Inspector, Board of Library Trustees, Community Preservation Committee, and Water/Sewer Commission. The Town is fortunate to have a number of volunteer boards and commissions, to help conduct municipal operations. The Town's [2016 Annual Report](#) can be accessed via its website. Numerous governmental meetings can be viewed [online](#) via [Old Rochester Community Television](#).

Finances

Mattapoissett's [FY20 budget](#) is \$28.8 million, funded by \$23.8 million from property taxes, \$2 million from local receipts, \$1.5 million from state aid, and \$1.5 million in fund transfers.

The Town has a very strong economic base and relies heavily on property taxes. Mattapoissett expects to experience modest commercial and residential growth including several new solar projects coming online, expansion of its limited industrial zone, and expansion of residential developments.

The Town maintains several departments which operate as "enterprise funds," such as the waterfront, water and sewer, and transfer station. It is expected that each of these department have enough revenues to offset expenses. The Town prepares a budget for each enterprise that is approved at Town Meeting. However, the Town is responsible to fund any budget shortfalls for these funds.



Mattapoissett continues to receive a [AAA bond rating](#) from Standard and Poor's Global Ratings with a stable outlook on its general obligation bonds. Standard and Poor's bases its favorable rating upon its view that the Town has strong financial management with good financial policies, strong budgetary performance, very strong liquidity, very strong debt-and-contingent-liability position, and a strong institutional framework as well as an overall view of a positive economic outlook for the Town.



Mattapoissett spends 59.3% of its revenue on education and 40.7% on general government and public safety. Debt payments amount to 3.6% of total expenses.

Typically, the Town creates a primary budget in the spring prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, subject to the approval of Town Meeting. The financial team, led by the Town Administrator, prepares a conservative budget for revenue and expenses based on trend analysis, an examination of each department's needs, and targeted stabilization reserves of 10%. The goal of the finance team is to leave 3% to 5% of projected net revenues "on the table" until the prior year's free cash is certified by the state in the fall of each year.

In most years, the Town adjusts the budget in the fall, once the prior year's free cash is certified. At that time, additional funds may be allocated from free cash to fund necessary budget adjustments, additions to the various stabilization funds, and to fund one-time, non-recurring expenses. In the fall of 2019, free cash of \$1 million (3.6% of the 2020 budget) was allocated at the fall Town Meeting with nearly half allocated to increase stabilization reserves. Free cash of \$4 million was also generated by the enterprise funds and those amounts were retained in the reserves of each enterprise fund.

Town debt payments absorb 3.63% of annual expenses, exclusive of debt in the enterprise funds. The finance team maintains a goal of limiting new debt to no more than the debt reductions as older debt is paid down. In recent times, the debt incurred for the school buildings and the library building have been significantly reduced.

As those debts have been extinguished, the Town has authorized new debt to fund infrastructure improvements, such as roads and bridges, and to fund a new fire station.

Mattapoissett has a 10-year capital plan that will likely require additional debt funding in the coming years, including replacement of the Town Hall, protection of its aquifer, reconstruction of the historic town wharfs, expansion of the limited industrial zone, and other infrastructure improvements to roads and bridges. The finance team plans to pursue as much funding as possible from government and private grants. In addition, the Town is continuing to allocate revenues from new growth, both residential and commercial, to a debt stabilization fund in order to have enough funds to service any new debt required to fund capital projects.

The Town maintains several reserves and specific stabilization funds, in addition to the debt stabilization fund. Mattapoissett has specific stabilization funds for special education, capital improvements, and the school district assessment. The goal of the finance team is to maintain reserves at 10% of budgeted expenses. As of the end of 2019, reserves and stabilization funds amounted to \$2,636,473.

The Town has established an Other Post-retirement Employee Benefit (OPEB) trust fund to fund its liability for future payments for retirement medical obligations for its employees. As of 2019, Mattapoissett's OPEB liability amounted to \$9,865,625 and its OPEB Trust fund balance was approximately \$2,918,722, which is 29.58% funded.

Mattapoissett is primarily a residential community, with approximately 93.27% of the Town's assessed value attributable to residential uses, 3.45% associated with commercial, 0.88% with industrial, and 2.4% with personal property. Commercial and industrial uses are primarily concentrated on Route 195, Route 6, and in the Mattapoissett Industrial Park. The FY19 tax rate was set at a single rate of \$13.21 per \$1,000 valuation. In FY19, the Town's total valuation was about \$1.76 billion.



Challenges and Opportunities

- **Capital Needs.** Mattapoissett strives to address its infrastructure issues in a timely manner; however, like most communities, the Town has some infrastructure needs. A new \$9.2 million fire station is in the design process and expected to break ground in the spring; granite piers and small harbor buildings require repair; a segment of the bike path is under construction; and roads and sidewalks need repair work. Expected future projects include a new Town Hall, reconstruction of Town wharfs, and protection of the aquifer. The [Capital Planning Committee's 10-year Forecast](#) is available on the Town's website.

New and creative sources of revenue and grants and/or the sharing of resources are needed to deliver expected services without overburdening taxpayers

- **Economic Development.** The vast majority of the tax base is residential. Accordingly, additional revenues needed to fund expenditures can make the Town less affordable for residents unless creative revenue opportunities are explored. Mattapoissett is interested in attracting thoughtful commercial development that will fit with the Town's character. Approximately 30% of the land around the waterfront has access to the sewer system.



- **Harbor.** The Harbormaster, who joined the Town's staff in October 2019, oversees local moorings with a staff of seven. The department is operated via a waterfront enterprise fund. Its budget is approximately \$221,500 for FY20. The [Waterfront Management Plan](#) can be reviewed on the Town's website. The harbor, waterfront, and Town Wharf area functions as the cultural center of the community. The waterfront is a bustling area as it is a popular location for fishing, shellfishing, recreational boating, and relaxing on Town beaches. Touring Ned's Point Light House is also a popular summer activity. An episode of [New England Boating](#) was filmed in Mattapoissett in 2013.

- **Water Resources.** Preserving and protecting coastal resources are important goals in Mattapoissett. Climate change, coastal erosion, drinking water security, watershed protection, and beach protection are critical issues for the Town. The Town's [Coastal Resilience Report](#) can be viewed online.

- **Land Use.** The Mattapoissett Planning Board is working on updating the Town's [Master Plan](#), which was finalized in 2000. Mattapoissett's Master Plan provides a comprehensive plan to help guide Mattapoissett's growth and development. Areas of focus include: land use goals and policies, housing goals and policy, economic development needs, affordable housing needs, open space and recreation, and historic and cultural assets. Mattapoissett is also interested in continuing its efforts to preserve open space. The next Town Administrator will be a key contributor in the development of the updated Master Plan.

Mattapoissett updated its Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2016. It focuses on four unique resources that define the Town's quality of life: the Mattapoissett River Aquifer Public Water Supply; its coastal water resources; its small-town character; and the Town's rural atmosphere and mixed landscape.

- **Housing.** The need for affordable housing and for senior housing is an emerging issue. While per capita income in Mattapoissett is 15% above the state, housing costs are also 10% above the state average. Homes in Mattapoissett have a median value of \$419,800, according to U.S. Census data. Mattapoissett completed its [Housing Production Plan](#) in June 2010.

- **Education.** Education is a high priority in Mattapoissett. Mattapoissett belongs to the Old Rochester Regional School District and has an FY20 assessment of approximately \$6.64 million. The District's master plan, [Vision 2023](#), can be found on its website. Mattapoissett also dedicates about \$7.48 million in FY20 to the Mattapoissett Public Schools for students in grades Preschool-6. Students who reside in Mattapoissett also have the opportunity to attend the [Old Colony Vocational High School](#) in Rochester. Mattapoissett's FY20 assessment for the vocational school is approximately \$630,000.

The next Town Administrator should work with the Town and regional school districts to review short- and long-term plans for the schools. With the Town's aging population, student enrollment has been declining. Approximately 97.4% of Mattapoissett residents age 25+ have a high school diploma and about 46.8% have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to U.S. Census statistics

- **Highway Department.** The [Highway Department](#) has five full-time employees, plus the Highway Surveyor. The Highway Surveyor, which runs the Highway Department, is an elected position with a three-year term. The department has an annual budget of about \$800,000 and is responsible for roads, beaches, parks and buildings, storm water drainage system, sidewalks, street and traffic signs, public parking lots and driveways, town guardrails, and general upkeep of Highway Department vehicles and equipment.
- **Police Department.** The [Police Department](#) has an annual budget of approximately \$2.26 million, including salaries and operations. There is a full-time police chief, 16 sworn officers in the patrol division, three detectives, and one school resource officer. The Police Station is located on County Road. The Police Department is responsible for providing emergency medical services for the Town and has 10 paramedics (four of whom are also full-time police officers) and two ambulances. Additionally, 17 of the department's police officers are trained to the level of basic EMT and paramedic assist. The Ambulance/Paramedic annual budget is approximately \$420,000. Police Department divisions include: Patrol, Detective, Marine, Motorcycle Unit, EMS, and Bike.
- **Fire Department.** The [Fire Department](#) currently has 26 firefighters and two dispatchers. In the past five years, the Town hired two full-time firefighters, in addition to the chief, to work daytime shifts. Its annual budget is about \$681,000. The Fire Department currently operates out of its 66-year-old headquarters on County Road and Barstow Street. A new 16,000-square-foot two-story fire station, approved with a \$9.27 million debt exclusion override, is scheduled to break ground in March 2020 on County Road, adjacent to the police station.
- **Recreation.** Recreational opportunities are plentiful in Mattapoisett, from swimming at the public beaches, to boating and fishing, playing tennis or pickleball, or simply having a picnic in Shipyard Park. There are three public beaches in Town. Nasketucket Bay State Reservation, located in Mattapoisett and Fairhaven, offers 209 acres of wooded trails, open fields, and rocky shoreline. The 1.5-mile Mattapoisett Rail Trail is part of the South Coast Bikeway and connects to the Phoenix Bike Trail in Fairhaven. The Mattapoisett Land Trust holds more than 650 acres of land that include hiking trails. [Mattapoisett Recreation](#) offers youth and adult recreational programs, including basketball, flag football, field hockey, softball, soccer, fencing, yoga, gymnastics, golf, robotics, drama, art, and crafting.

The Ideal Candidate

The Board of Selectmen seeks a strategic Town Administrator with municipal managerial experience as well as strong finance, personnel, and project management skills. The successful candidate should be able to demonstrate prior success as a manager, an assistant manager, or head of a significant department in a complex municipal organization. The candidate should possess demonstrated skills, abilities and knowledge in all areas of municipal management and operations, in municipal finance, personnel management and administration, strategic planning, grant writing, municipal procurement, economic development and community planning, and intergovernmental relations. An understanding of and experience with waterfront and environmental issues is preferred.

The Town Administrator must be a decisive administrator and collaborative leader who can think outside of the box and is willing to take on innovative challenges. He or she should be able to manage up and down the organization. He or she should be highly professional, responsive, and empathetic. The Town Administrator should work collaboratively, delegate effectively, and provide guidance, support and motivation to all municipal employees. He or she is expected to work cooperatively with all constituencies within the Town, including elected and appointed officials and volunteers, and should have excellent follow-through. The Town Administrator relies heavily on volunteer citizen committees and should seek to draw in volunteers with specific skills and strengths to assist in the operations of the Town. The Town Administrator should be Procurement certified by the state or able to attain certification within the first six months.

The Town Administrator must possess good listening skills and be open to input from all constituencies. He or she should have strong grant-writing skills and the ability to accurately and effectively explain complex issues to individuals, committees, and the citizenry. Strong written and verbal communication skills are important for this position. He or she should embrace technology and modern communication tools.

The successful candidate should seek to understand the community's values and how he or she can support those values. The Town Administrator should have an appreciation for: conservation, open space, and healthy waterways; the Town's historic assets; a high level of accountability; and an engaged citizenry.

The Town Administrator must be able to develop and sustain strong and credible relations with employees, volunteers, and residents. The Town Administrator must be a creative problem-solver who is approachable, accessible, transparent, trustworthy, and a consensus-builder. He or she must lead by example, and be innovative, organized, and goal oriented.

The Town Administrator should be able to build morale and trust within municipal government and throughout the Town. The Administrator should enjoy working in a team-oriented organization and should foster a team approach to problem solving. He or she should treat staff and citizens equitably, exhibit patience, have a positive attitude, be respectful, and embrace becoming actively engaged with the community. The successful candidate should know and seek to implement municipal management best practices.

Education. Preferred candidates should possess a bachelor's degree and/or master's degree in a field related to municipal management. Preferred candidates will have experience as a Town/City Manager or Administrator, or as an Assistant Town/City Manager or Administrator, or education and experience that is equivalent.



Compensation

The Town of Mattapoisett will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities, with an annual salary of \$135,000+/-, depending on qualifications and experience. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Administrator's total compensation. Residency is not required.



Town of
Mattapoisett
Massachusetts



How To Apply

Interested applicants should provide résumés and cover letters, in confidence, by 5:00 p.m. EST on January 3, 2020, to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Mattapoisett Town Administrator

Submission via a single PDF is preferred

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. The Mattapoisett Town Administrator Screening Committee will interview the most qualified candidates in confidence. Based upon these interviews, finalists will be chosen for further evaluation and reference checks, and will then be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is publicly advanced to the Board of Selectmen. The Mattapoisett Board of Selectmen will interview finalists and select the Town Administrator.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to Bernard Lynch, Principal, Community Paradigm Associates, at: blynch@communityparadigm.com or 978-621-6733.

The Town of Mattapoisett is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

