

# NORTHFIELD, MA

## TOWN

## ADMINISTRATOR

### Position Profile



### The Community

The Town of Northfield is a charming rural community of approximately 3,000 residents located in Franklin County in northwestern Massachusetts. It enjoys a tradition of open government with a high level of service, passionate citizen engagement, and respect for its proud history. There is a strong sense of community in Town.

[Northfield](#) was settled in 1673 and incorporated in 1723. The Town is 35.37 square miles in size, including 34.42 square miles of land area. Northfield is bordered by Vernon, Vermont, and Hinsdale and Winchester, New Hampshire, on the north; Warwick on the east; Erving on the south; and Gill and Bernardston on the west. It is the only Town in Massachusetts situated on both sides of the Connecticut River. Northfield is about 12 miles from Greenfield and 25 miles from Amherst. The Town also has easy access to Northampton, Mass., Brattleboro, Vermont, and Keene, N.H.

There are numerous cultural, educational, historical, and recreational [amenities](#) located within and in close proximity to Northfield, including colleges and universities; museums and artist galleries; historic sites; trails and conservation areas for skiing, hiking, walking; and lakes and rivers for fishing and paddling.

Northfield is a rural community with a substantial amount of open space. It is a town of farmland, forested hills, streams, wetlands, and abundant wildlife. There is interest in increasing thoughtful commercial development to bring additional commercial revenue to Northfield, to reduce the tax burden on residents and provide job opportunities. Northfield has been a designated Green Community since 2011.

The top employers in the Town are [Pioneer Valley Regional School District](#), which includes the [Northfield Elementary School](#), and [FirstLight Power Resources/Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage](#). The majority of residents in the workforce commute outside of Northfield for employment.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town of Northfield's racial makeup is approximately 97.1% white, 1.8% Hispanic or Latino, 1.4% two or more races, 0.4% Black or African American, and 0.3% Asian.

The Town is demographically older than the state as a whole with the major difference being with the median age of Northfield residents being 45.7 years while the state median is 39.2 years. The under-18 year cohort in Northfield is nearly 23.1% of the population versus 18% for the state. In the 65 years and older cohort, Northfield has 14.8% of its population which is very similar to the state's 14%, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The median annual household income in Northfield is \$63,963, compared to the state median of \$75,297.

The Town is covered by local media through the *Greenfield Recorder* and the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, in addition to Northfield's municipal website at [www.northfieldma.gov](http://www.northfieldma.gov) and a bimonthly local newsletter.

### The Government

Northfield's government is comprised of a three-member Selectboard that serves as the Chief Executive Officers of the Town. Selectboard members are elected to staggered three-year terms and oversee all matters affecting the interest and welfare of the community and are responsible to ensure that Town government is responsive to and reflective of community needs and values. Northfield has an Open Town Meeting form of government that serves as the legislative body of the Town.

There is also a 12-member [Pioneer Valley Regional School District](#) School Committee that oversees the policies and budget of the four-Town district's public K-12 elementary and secondary school system, a five-member elected Planning Board, and an elected Town Clerk. Other elected officials include: Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Recreation Commission, Moderator, Sewer Commission, and Board of Trustees of Veterans Memorials. The Town also utilizes a number of volunteer boards and

commissions, with various modes of appointment, to conduct municipal operations. The Town's [by-laws & regulations](#) are located on its website.

The Northfield [Selectboard](#) appoints the position of Town Administrator as the chief administrative officer of all Town agencies, other than the Schools. The Town Administrator is responsible for executing the policy directives of the Selectboard and for managing the operations and activities of the Town.

The Town Administrator is specifically responsible, via [by-law](#), for supervision of all Town employees hired by the Selectboard and coordinating with all other departments and employees of the Town; producing an estimate of revenues available for the ensuing fiscal year, calling for all department budgets, preparing a draft budget for the Finance Committee recommendations to voters; reviewing all departmental budgets during the course of the fiscal year; serving as Chief Procurement Officer; serving as personnel officer; administering the Town's insurance program; and serving as liaison between the Town and other local, state and federal officials. The Town Administrator is also responsible for communications with residents, employees, and Town boards, commissions, and volunteers. The Town Administrator is expected to promote and support projects and plans via consensus building as well as to foster a strong team atmosphere.

## Finances

Northfield is traditionally a financially conservative community. The FY19 operating budget is \$8.47 million, which is a 4% increase over the FY18 operating budget of \$8.14 million. Interest to be paid on short-term notes is about \$2,000 for FY19, and county retirement and insurance and employee benefits costs total about \$589,000 for FY19. Currently, the Town's General Stabilization Fund is estimated at approximately \$1 million and its recently established OPEB trust fund is about \$131,400. In May, Town Meeting voters approved funding an update of the Town's OPEB study for fiscal year 2019 to remain in compliance with GASB 75.

The Town is seeking an Administrator who will actively search out new and creative sources of revenue and grants and/or the sharing of resources to deliver expected services without overburdening taxpayers.

Northfield is primarily a residential community, with 63.2343% of the Town's assessed value attributable to residential uses and 4.0568% associated with commercial, 21.3573% with industrial, and 11.3516% with personal property. The FY 2018 tax rate was set at a single rate of \$17.86 per \$1,000 valuation. This was a \$1.41 increase over the previous year's tax rate. The average single family style home has a value of \$207,000 with a respective average annual tax bill of \$3,695.



## Challenges and Opportunities

- **Capital Needs.** Like many communities, the Town has infrastructure issues as programmatic needs have changed and facilities have aged. For example, in May, Town Meeting voters approved spending \$146,000 on repairs and replacements at Northfield Elementary School, approved taking ownership of land at the intersection of Main and School streets where the fire station now sits and where an emergency services facility is planned, approved making appropriations to begin phase II of design work for a new Emergency Services facility, and approved the purchase of a ladder truck for the Fire Department. The Town also does not have a Senior Center building. The Senior Center uses space on the first floor of Town Hall.
- **Economic Development.** The Town is facing fiscal pressures of funding capital needs as well as ongoing demands for services. Currently, the majority of the tax base is residential. Accordingly, additional revenues needed to fund expenditures related to these financial pressures can make the Town less affordable for residents unless creative revenue opportunities are explored. Northfield is interested in attracting thoughtful commercial development that will fit with the Town's character. The Town has two independent water districts. There are some sections of Town that lack Internet and cell service. Northfield has no interstate highways; the closest is Interstate 91 in neighboring Bernardston.
- **Housing.** There are approximately 1,400 housing units in town, most of which are owner occupied, with a median value of \$234,500, according to U.S. Census data. The Town's population is aging, so there is concern regarding a need for additional housing that is appropriate for older residents.
- **Education.** Education is a high priority in Northfield. Northfield is one of four communities, including Leyden, Bernardston, and Warwick, that belong to the Pioneer Valley Regional School

District. The Northfield Elementary School, which serves students preK-6, and the Pioneer Valley Regional School, are both located in Northfield. The Town is also served by a regional vocational technical school located in nearby Turners Falls. Operating assessments for the two schools total approximately 61% of the Town's annual operating budget. Approximately 94.2% of Northfield residents have a high school diploma and about 38.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the U.S. Census.

- **Finances.** The FY19 budget is approximately \$8.4 million. The budget process faces challenges via a need for increased services without significantly increasing residents' taxes. Northfield, like many communities, is facing revenue constraints. When the portion of the Northfield Mount Hermon School campus, which had been located in Northfield, was sold to a taxable entity, the town was able to realize about \$400,000.00 in taxes annually. The property was gifted to two tax exempt organizations which ended that payment. The Town wisely had considered these funds (received between 2011 and 2017) as a one-time revenue source and used them for capital items or one-time expenses, thus the loss did not impact the operating budget, although it does make it more challenging to earmark funds for capital items.



- **Former Northfield Mount Hermon Campus.** The campus is now owned by the Moody Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promoting the legacy of Dwight Moody, a 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelist, and Thomas Aquinas College. The Moody Center intends to become a destination for persons interested in Moody and his teachings. Thomas Aquinas plans a small (400 student) satellite from its main campus in California. Both organizations appear willing to collaborate with the town on their developments, which will obviously impact the community.
- **Land Use.** Northfield's [Master Plan](#), which was completed in 2014, details the Town's historic, cultural and natural resources, land use and zoning, economic development resources, transportation

resources, demographics, and public facilities and services. Protection of natural resources is highly important; however, the Town is interested in thoughtful development to diversify its tax base as long as such development is consistent with Northfield's values.

- **Work Climate.** The next Town Administrator should strive to foster and maintain a positive working climate in which the Town's policies and procedures are administered in an equitable manner and the office/work atmosphere is encouraging and supportive of all staff members and volunteers.
- **Communications.** Open, accurate, and timely communications are important to Northfield citizens. Strong communication skills, both verbal and written, are necessary in order for the Town Administrator to effectively engage and manage relationships with the various members of boards and commissions as well as with employees and residents. Various forms of communications, such as email, Code Red alerts, social media, newsletters, and open office hours, should be strongly considered to share information with as many citizens as possible.
- **Police Department.** The [Police Department](#) has an annual budget of about \$400,000, including salaries and operations. There is a full-time (strong) police chief and three full-time officers, including the School Resource Officer, plus 11 reserve officers. There is no separate police station; the department maintains an office in Town Hall as well as an evidence room and storage cabinets. There is ongoing discussion regarding building an emergency services facility to house police, fire and EMS.
- **Fire and EMS Departments.** The Town's Fire and EMS Departments are volunteer, call departments, including the EMS Chief, Fire Chief, and Assistant Fire Chief. The [EMS Department](#) responds to approximately 400 calls per year. There are 31 volunteer members of the [Fire Department](#) and an active Junior Firefighter program for teens ages 13-18. The Fire Department's annual budget is about \$117,000 and it averages 165 calls annually, typically including one major and three to five minor structure fires. The current station house was constructed in 1953.
- **Highway Department.** The [Highway Department](#) has an annual budget of about \$750,000. There are six full-time and two part-time employees responsible for roads, cemeteries, tree work, and maintenance of town buildings. There are approximately 90 miles of roadway in Town.

- **Citizen Engagement.** The Town embraces strong civic engagement and would seek to encourage even higher levels of political participation and discourse.

## The Ideal Candidate

The Selectboard seeks a personable, proactive, and visionary Town Administrator with municipal managerial experience who can work collaboratively with the Board on a strategic vision for the Town. The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate prior success in managing or as an assistant managing a complex municipal organization. The candidate should be competent in all areas of municipal management and operations, but especially in finance, personnel management, strategic planning, and economic development.

The Town Administrator must be a decisive administrator and leader who can work collaboratively with the various interests of the Town. He or she is expected to work cooperatively with all constituencies within the Town, including residents, elected and appointed officials, and volunteers. The Town Administrator should be Procurement certified by the state or able to attain certification within the first six months of employment in Northfield.

The Town Administrator must be able to work collaboratively, delegate effectively, and provide support and motivation to all municipal employees. 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, including social media, are important for this position.

The Town Administrator must also possess and demonstrate successful experience in personnel management. He or she 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 accessible, transparent, trustworthy, collaborative, and a consensus-builder. He or she must lead by example, and be motivated, innovative, organized, and have a sense of humor.

The Town Administrator should be able to build morale and trust within municipal government and throughout the Town as well as be an energetic ambassador for the community. The Administrator should enjoy working in a team-oriented organization, have a personality that focuses on the positive, and embrace becoming actively engaged with the community by attending local events and meeting with residents.

The successful candidate should possess a Bachelor's degree and/or Master's degree in a field related to municipal management. Preferred candidates should have experience as a Town/City Manager/ Administrator, or Assistant Town/City Manager/Administrator, or education and experience that is equivalent. The successful candidate must possess demonstrated skills, abilities and knowledge in municipal finance, personnel administration, strategic planning, grant writing, municipal procurement, economic development and community planning, and intergovernmental relations.

## Compensation

The Town of Northfield will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities, with an annual salary of \$90,000+/-, depending on qualifications. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Administrator's total compensation. Northfield Town Hall is open Monday through Thursday. Residency is not required.

## How To Apply

Interested applicants should provide résumés and cover letters, in confidence, by 5:00 p.m. on October 15, 2018, to:

Northfield Town Administrator Search  
Community Paradigm Associates, LLC  
One Saddleback, Plymouth, MA 02360

Electronic submission, via a single PDF, preferred.

[Apply@communityparadigm.com](mailto:Apply@communityparadigm.com).

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

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

The Town of Northfield is an EOE/AA employer.