

# Westminster, MA Town Administrator

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## Community & Position Profile



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# Westminster, MA

## Town Administrator



### Summary

The Town of Westminster, Massachusetts, seeks to fill the position of Town Administrator, which is soon to be vacant as a result of the retirement of its 19-year incumbent. The position is responsible for coordinating, administering, and supervising all business and financial services and activities in all departments, including the school department, boards, commissions, agencies, offices, or other units of city government.

### The Community

Incorporated in 1759, [Westminster](#) can be characterized as a rural community of approximately 7,300 residents located in the rolling hills of north/central Massachusetts. Westminster is fifty-three miles northwest of Boston and twenty-four miles north of Worcester. Town boundaries encompass about 37.3 square miles. Westminster is bounded by the cities of Fitchburg and Leominster to the east and Gardner to the west. To the south, lie the towns of Hubbardston and Princeton. To the north, lies the rural community of Ashburnham, with whom Westminster shares a regional school system, K-12.



The center of Westminster, which has the character of a small New England village, is located along a ridge. Just over the town line to the south in Princeton, is [Wachusett Mountain](#), the largest stand-alone mountain east of the Berkshires. Its northern slope covers considerable acreage within the Town of Westminster, and the base lodge for Wachusett Mountain Ski Area is located within the bounds of town.

The Town has a rich [history](#) with various phases of development as agriculture gave way to manufacturing and then to a primarily bedroom community of the region. The region has been identified by many as the ideal location to live, work and play. Westminster has the distinction of being able to suit all these needs and still retain the flavor of a small New England village. Many of the older homes and farms of Westminster are New England vernacular architecture that is rich in historic appeal.

Westminster is connected to the larger central Massachusetts region via Route 2, which passes through the middle of the town and provides easy connection to Route 190 that connects to Worcester to the south, 20 miles to the Route 495 loop to the east, and 35 miles to the Route 128 loop further to the east. Westminster is a short drive to the Wachusett MBTA Commuter Rail Station in Fitchburg, which provides easy access to Boston.

Manufacturing represents 21.5% of the Town's private employment and thus is an important component of the Town's economy. Major manufacturers include Tyco, TRW, and Ranor Inc., who represent three of the larger taxpayers and account for 40% of the jobs in the Town. The remainder of the Town's employment base is well diversified with none of the other seven major industry types representing more than 10% of the Town's overall employment. As with most primarily residential communities, the majority of residents in the workforce commute outside of Westminster for employment.

According to the U.S. Census, the Town of Westminster's racial makeup is approximately 97.1% white, 1.14% Asian, 1.1% Hispanic or Latino, .61% two or more races, and 0.4% Black or African American.

The Town is demographically similar to the state. The under-18 years cohort in Westminster is nearly 21.8% of the population versus 20% for the state. In the 65 years and older cohort, Westminster has 16.5% of its population which is very similar to the state's 16.2%, according to the U.S. Census. The median age in Westminster is 44.7 years compared to the state's 39.4 years.

The median annual household income in Westminster is approximately \$97,000 compared to the state median of \$74,167. While Westminster is a relatively affluent community, approximately 3% of the population live in poverty, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

## The Government

Westminster's government is comprised of a three-member [Board of Selectmen](#) that serves as the Chief Executive Officers of the Town. Selectmen 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. Westminster has an Open Town Meeting form of government that serves as the legislative body of the Town.

There is also a 10-member (five from each member community) Ashburnham/Westminster Regional School District School Committee that oversees the policies and budget of the district's public K-12 elementary and secondary school system. Other elected officials include: Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Moderator, Cemetery Commission, Planning Board, Town Clerk, Hager Park Commission, Housing Authority, and Town Constable. The Town also utilizes a number of volunteer boards and commissions, with various modes of appointment, to conduct municipal operations. The appointed Public Works Commission is responsible for the oversight of the Public Works Department. Westminster's [general by-laws](#) can be located on the Town Clerk's page of the Town's website.

The Westminster Board of Selectmen appoints the position of Town Administrator as the Town's chief administrative officer with supervisory responsibilities over all departments under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, and the coordination of the activities of all Town operations.



## Town Finances

Westminster's fiscal year 2020 Budget is \$22.2 million, with about \$11.5 million dedicated to public education. Total debt service is about \$495,350. Health insurance costs for FY20 are about \$1.175 million, pension costs are slightly under \$900,000, and general insurance (workers' compensation and property and liability) is about \$325,000. A full explanation of the FY20 financial plan is contained within the [Report and Recommendations of the Advisory Board](#) for the May 4, 2019 Annual Town Meeting.

Westminster has a [bond rating](#) of AA+ with a stable outlook, according to an April 2015 ratings action by Standard & Poor's.

Westminster is primarily a residential community, with 82.3% of the Town's assessed value attributable to residential uses. The FY 2019 tax rate was set at a single rate of \$18.25 per \$1,000 valuation. In FY19, the Town's total valuation was about \$976 million.

A full picture of the Town's finances is available through its [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report](#) for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2018, for which it received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.

## Challenges and Opportunities

- **Westminster Landfill.** One of the Town's largest concerns is the eventual closing of the landfill and the resultant of the elimination of land host fees, which currently provide nearly \$3.7 million per year to the Town. The site is scheduled to close as a landfill in 2023/2024, which will have a serious impact upon the Town's revenues and ability to maintain current service levels. The Town is seeking to extend the useful life of the landfill through the state permitting process.
- **Economic Development.** Westminster is interested in attracting thoughtful commercial development that will fit with the Town's character and support a robust and diverse local economy that provides tax revenues for the town and living wage jobs for local residents in accordance with the [2014 Master Plan](#). The study identified economic development opportunities based upon the following characteristics:
  1. Geographic location,
  2. Easily accessible Town Center and plans for physical improvements,
  3. Large industrial zones available for development,
  4. Bio ready "gold" rating received from the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council,
  5. Priority development sites and streamlined permitting,
  6. Technical review board,
  7. Eco-tourism opportunities,
  8. Right to farm by law.
- **Community Character/Growth Management.** The attractive character that gives Westminster its charm also brings pressure for changes in land use of its pastoral acreage. As new homes and support services develop, measures need to be taken that will preserve this rustic appeal and allow for careful management of service levels and infrastructure.



- **Communications.** Enhanced communication is necessary to effectively engage and manage relationships with internal and external constituencies. Methods of communication include enhanced visibility of local government within the community, increased information distributed publicly to the Board of Selectmen and other boards and committees, utilization of traditional and technology-driven communication tools, such as social media, and regular in-person interaction with Town staff and volunteers.
- **Public Safety Facility.** The Police and Fire Departments share a facility that was built in 1956 and substantially renovated 25 years ago, in 1994. Since its original construction, the population of the Town has more than doubled and the two public safety agencies have changed dramatically in terms of calls for service, types of calls, resident expectations, operations and equipment. The public safety building needs were specifically cited in the [2014 Master Plan Chapter on Government Facilities and Services](#). The Town has recently restarted the work of the Public Building Committee to develop a proposal for addressing these facility needs with a new building.



## Town Administrator Responsibilities

The [Town Administrator](#) is specifically responsible for: attending all meetings of the Board of Selectmen; supervising all departments under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen and coordinating with all other Town agencies; administering all provisions of General Laws and special acts applicable to the Town and all Town [by-laws](#) and regulations; compiling the annual operating and capital budgets; the development and annual revision of the capital improvements program; the day-to-day administration of the personnel system and negotiating collective bargaining contracts unless the Board designates another negotiator; serving as Chief Procurement Officer; keeping a complete inventory of all property of the Town; administering the Town's insurance program; and serving as liaison between the Town and other local, state and federal officials; writing and administering grants; distributing the warrant for the annual Town Meeting; and keeping the Board fully informed of operations, fiscal affairs, general problems and administrative actions.

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.

# The Ideal Candidate

**Competencies:** The Board of Selectmen seeks a dynamic and proactive Town Administrator with municipal managerial experience who can work collaboratively with the Board on a strategic vision for the Town.

The successful candidate:

- should be able to demonstrate prior success in leading a complex municipal and/or business organization or department.
- must be competent in all areas of municipal management and operations, but especially in finance and budgeting, personnel management, procurement, strategic planning, and economic development.
- must be a strong administrator and leader who can work collaboratively with the various interests and stakeholders of the Town.
- should possess an understanding of municipal finance and have the ability to construct financial documents including an annual budget, fiscal forecast and financial analyses.
- must work cooperatively with all constituencies within the Town, including elected and appointed officials and volunteers.
- should be Procurement certified by the state or able to attain certification within the first six months of employment in Westminster.
- must be organized and able to manage multiple projects and priorities on an ongoing basis.
- must be a creative problem-solver who is approachable, accessible, transparent, trustworthy, collaborative, and a consensus-builder.
- must lead by example, and be strategic, motivated, innovative, organized, and goal-oriented.
- must be able to work collaboratively, delegate effectively, and provide guidance, support and motivation to all municipal employees.
- must possess good listening skills and be open to input from all constituencies.
- should have strong grant-writing skills and the ability to accurately and effectively explain complex issues to individuals, committees, and the citizenry.
- must have strong written and verbal communication skills.
- must also possess and demonstrate successful experience in personnel management and adhere to a firm but fair management style.
- must be able to develop and sustain strong and credible relations with employees, volunteers, and residents.
- 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.
- should foster a team approach to problem solving.
- should be adept at working with different personality types and keep an open-door policy.
- should focus on the positive, and embrace becoming actively engaged with the community by attending local events.
- should know and seek to implement municipal management best practices.

## **Education and Experience:**

Preferred candidates 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.

## Compensation

The Town of Westminster will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities, with an annual salary of \$100,000+/-, depending on qualifications. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Administrator's total compensation. Residency is not required.



### How To Apply

Interested applicants should provide résumés and cover letters, in confidence, by 5:00 p.m. on August 2, 2019, to:

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

**Subject: Westminster Town Administrator**

**Submission via a single PDF is preferred**

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. A selection of finalists will be chosen for further evaluation and reference checks and then 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.

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 Westminster is an Equal Opportunity Employer.