

Great Barrington, MA Town Manager

Community & Position Profile



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The Community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts

The Town of Great Barrington is a beautiful and vibrant community of approximately 7,000 year-round residents, swelling to 15,000 or more in the summers, located in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts. It has a tradition of highly responsive government service, has strong citizen engagement, and is known for its active downtown, beautiful landscapes, and abundant open space.



[Great Barrington](#) is a thriving place to live, work, and visit year-round. In 2012, *Smithsonian Magazine* named Great Barrington as #1 on its list of ["The 20 Best Small Towns in America"](#). In 2016, *Monocle* named Great Barrington one of the five [top villages](#) to live, work, and visit in the world.

Great Barrington's goal is to remain a small town that presents a vibrant combination of rural landscapes and urban infrastructure. The Town seeks a seasoned municipal management professional who can help balance this goal while effectively managing

an increasing need for services along with rising costs. In the search for Great Barrington's next Town Manager, the Town is seeking an experienced manager with exceptional leadership and communication skills interested in taking on challenging opportunities in a beautiful setting. While the Town is financially stable, the next Town Manager will face challenges related to increasing the number of full-time firefighters, working with a growing and changing population, a possible merger of independent water districts, and providing housing options that are more affordable.

HISTORY: The land that now comprises the Town was settled in 1726 and officially incorporated as Great Barrington in 1761. Great Barrington was named after the village of Barrington, Gloucestershire, England. Great Barrington was the site of several historic events, including in 1774 when 1,500 men shut down the Berkshire County Court in response to British oppression and, in the winter of 1776, when Henry Knox passed through the Town while transporting the cannon from Fort Ticonderoga to the Siege of Boston. Great Barrington is also the birthplace and childhood home of W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1886, William Stanley made history by lighting Great Barrington Main Street with the world's first practical demonstration of an alternating current electrical system.

In the late 19th century, Great Barrington was a resort community for people in need of relief from the heat and pollution of urban areas. During that time, wealthy families built grand and stately homes, known as Berkshire Cottages, in Great Barrington and some of its surrounding communities. Today, Great Barrington enjoys thriving restaurants and retail shops, museums and cultural events, attracting both year-round and seasonal residents as well as vacationers and day-trippers.

GEOGRAPHY: Great Barrington is about 46 square miles in size, including nearly 45 square miles of land. Located in the southwest corner of Massachusetts at the foot of Monument Mountain, Great Barrington is bordered by West Stockbridge, Stockbridge and Lee to the north, Tyringham to the northeast, Monterey to the east, New Marlborough to the southeast, Sheffield to the south, Egremont to the southwest, and Alford to the northwest. The Town is located 20 miles south of Pittsfield, 46 miles west of Springfield, 134 north-northeast of New York City, and 135 miles west of Boston. Great Barrington has 91.01 road miles, 162 streets, and 7,264 acres of state forest land.

ECONOMY: There are a significant number of second homes and vacation homes in Great Barrington, and the population can more than double during the busy summer and autumn months. Vacationers enjoy Great Barrington's beautiful landscapes, hiking trails, cultural activities, shops, and restaurants. This influx of part-time residents and seasonal visitors increases traffic but helps Great Barrington's local economy to thrive.

The community consists primarily of residential properties with small business and retail districts primarily located along major thoroughfares. The downtown is a vibrant and charming area with locally owned restaurants and shops. Great Barrington supports appropriate economic development that does not detract from its historic charm and scenic vistas. A few of the larger employers in Great Barrington are Fairview Hospital, Bard College at Simons Rock, and Iredale Mineral Cosmetics. There are also a good number of professional service businesses, such as financial advisers, attorneys, architects, web designers, etc., as well as those working in artistic fields including graphic designers, musicians, artists, and writers. Nearly 11% of workers in Great Barrington are self-employed.

CULTURE: Great Barrington is home to two [public libraries](#) – Mason Public Library and Ramsdell Public Library – both of which enjoy heavy use by residents and visitors. The [Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center](#) offers a variety of music, dance, and theatrical performances, and [The Guthrie Center](#) is a live music venue. *Vogue* magazine recently published an [article](#) focused on the many charming experiences to be had in Great Barrington and downtown is a state designated [Cultural District](#). The Berkshire region is known as a haven for artists and nature lovers, and Great Barrington, with its many cultural events, shops and restaurants, has become one of the most popular destinations in the Berkshires for vacationers, weekenders, and day-trippers. The region is home to a multitude of historic sites, cultural events, and museums, including the [Du Bois Center at Great Barrington](#), [Barrington Stage Company](#), the [Great Barrington Historical Society & Museum](#), [Berkshire Theater Group](#), [MASS MoCA](#), [Tanglewood](#), [Jacob's Pillow](#), [Shakespeare & Company](#), [Berkshire Choral](#), Edith Wharton's summer estate [The Mount](#), [Williams College Museum of Art](#), and the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#).

ASSESSED VALUES: Great Barrington's total assessed value in FY2019 is approximately \$1.49 billion. Residential properties account for 77.7% of the total, commercial properties for 17.3%, industrial properties for 0.9%, and personal property for 4%. The average commercial assessment in Great Barrington for FY2019 is \$768,239 and the median commercial assessment is \$436,550. The average single family home value is \$391,055 and the median single family home value is \$305,650. While the Town's population is primarily middle-income, according to U.S. Census statistics, there are 5.4% of residents with annual incomes below the poverty level and others who find it a financial challenge to retain their Great Barrington residences. The median household income is \$56,431.



Photo: John Phelan

CENSUS DATA: According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Great Barrington's racial composition is 84.8% white, 10.7% Hispanic or Latino, 4.9% two or more races, 2.9% Black or African American, and 1.6% Asian. Like the rest of Berkshire County, Great Barrington is experiencing an aging population. The median age of Town residents is 46.9 years, while the state's is 39.1 years. However, the Town continues to attract its fair share of young families, and its under-18 years of age cohort is 20.1%, nearly mirroring the state's 20%.

Great Barrington Government and Finance

SELECTBOARD: Great Barrington's executive branch of government is a five-member [Selectboard](#) that serves as the governing body of the Town. Selectboard members are elected to staggered three-year terms to oversee all matters impacting the interest and welfare of the community, and are responsible for ensuring that Town government is responsive to and reflective of community needs and values. The Selectboard is responsible for setting goals, developing long-range plans, adopting policies, creating special-purpose bodies, issuing licenses, and appointing the Town Manager, Town Counsel, and a variety of boards and committees. The Selectboard is also responsible for any necessary investigations and reports as well as for reviewing the annual budget proposed by the Town Manager. An [organizational chart](#) for Great Barrington and the Town's [Code](#) are posted on the Town's website.



COMMITTEES: An elected 10-member School Committee, of which five are from Great Barrington, oversees the policies and budget of the [Berkshire Hills Regional School District](#) to which Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge belong. Other elected positions in Town include the Board of Health, Finance Committee, Great Barrington Housing Authority, Library Trustees, Planning Board, Prudential Committee, Representative to Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee, Town Moderator, and Zoning Board of Appeals. In addition, the Town appoints citizens to more than a dozen advisory boards and commissions to conduct municipal operations.

TOWN MEETING: Great Barrington has an Open Town Meeting form of government with a quorum requirement of 100 registered voters. Town Meeting is the legislative body of the Town and typically meets for the Annual Town Meeting in May for the transaction of all business for the Town, other than matters to be determined by ballot. Additional Special Town Meetings can be called as needed to address the transactions of business for the Town.

TOWN MANAGER: The Selectboard appoints the [Town Manager](#) to serve as the chief administrative officer of the Town. The Town Manager is responsible to the Selectboard for the effective management of all Town affairs under his/her supervision. The Town Manager is responsible for executing the policy directives of the Selectboard and for managing the operations and activities of the Town.

In accordance with the [Town Charter](#), the Town Manager is specifically responsible for budget preparation and implementation, strategic planning and operations, supervision of all Town departments excluding the school department, personnel appointment and removal, personnel management, reports, maintaining all records of the Selectboard and Town Manager's office, serving as purchasing agent, all town property, contracts, serving as the Selectboard's liaison to Town Counsel, addressing citizen complaints, recommendation of rates and fees, and various other duties.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT: Great Barrington holds a Standard & Poor's rating of AAA, with a stable outlook, as stated in an October 2017 rating action. The Town's [rating](#) was raised to AAA in May 2016 based upon the community's continued economic growth and historically strong budget performance as well as maintenance of very strong reserves.



In FY2019, the Town has a total general fund budget of \$27,527,285 that includes an \$11,371,988 municipal operating budget and school assessment of \$16,155,297. The total amount to be raised through taxation for FY2019 is \$23,500,999, an increase of 8.9% over the FY2018 levy. The total taxable value in Great Barrington for FY2019 is nearly \$1.5 billion. The approved [FY2019 municipal budget](#) can be found at the end of the 2018 Annual Town Meeting minutes on Great Barrington's website.

The Town's principal financial results from its policy of carrying a large balance of unappropriated funds, or "free cash". As of December 2018, Great Barrington had a stabilization fund balance of \$379,000. The Town's total OPEB liability is approximately \$15.74 million. Great Barrington does not have a policy to contribute to an OPEB trust and has not contributed as of June 30, 2018. Great Barrington's [budget financial policy](#) details the Town's strategic priorities, financial goals, financial management policy, budget preparation process, and budget format. The FY2019 tax rate for all properties is \$15.72 per thousand of the property's assessed value.

Great Barrington's Challenges and Opportunities

- **FINANCES**

The Town's goal is to manage its finances in a manner that will maintain its AAA bond rating and to prevent taxes from becoming a burden to the disproportionate number of residents with fixed and limited incomes. Great Barrington, like many communities, faces the challenge of a rapidly increasing school budget that is beyond the control of town leadership.

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Currently 77.7% of the tax base is residential, so additional businesses that are appropriate for the Town's character would be welcome. An Economic Development Committee is now being formed.

The downtown is thriving with a multitude of locally owned stores and restaurants. The Town's [Master Plan Volume I](#) and [Volume II](#), completed in 2013, details the goals of retaining the Town's unique character, supporting vibrant and affordable neighborhoods, planning for sustainability and resiliency, promoting appropriate economic development and creating skilled jobs at higher wages for young people as well as initiating



and participating in regional collaborations and planning. The Town has a number of condominium and apartment buildings that have either recently been built or are currently slated for construction. The [Berkshire Regional Transit Authority](#) has bus routes that service Great Barrington and the Town would like to see frequency and usage increase. U.S. Route 7 passes through the center of Town, Route 23 passes from west to east, combining with Route 41 in the western part of Great Barrington and with Route 183 in the eastern part of Town. Great Barrington is located just 12 miles south of Exit 2 of Interstate 90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike). The Town is cooperating with the efforts of the private sector in building out a fiber optic internet infrastructure, especially in the downtown.



- **EDUCATION**

Great Barrington highly values education. The [Berkshire Hills Regional School District](#) School Committee has jurisdiction over elementary and secondary education for Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. The District operates three schools – Muddy Brook Elementary,



Monument Valley Middle, and Monument Mountain High – on a single campus and enrollment is currently approximately 1,261. The school district employs 251 teachers, support personnel, and administrators. Personnel and benefit costs account for about 76% of the district's operating budget. Assessments to the three member towns represent 75.17% of the school district's revenue. Great Barrington's FY2019 assessment is \$16,155,297. The FY2019 assessments for Stockbridge and West Stockbridge are both approximately

\$2.9 million of the school district's [\\$22.2 million budget](#). 90.4% of Great Barrington's residents age 25 years and older have a high school diploma and nearly 43% of the population age 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher advanced degree.

- **CAPITAL NEEDS**

Great Barrington has identified strong needs for infrastructure improvements in such areas as roads, bridges, wastewater treatment facility, and pump stations. These and other deferred maintenance and upgrades present a possible economic challenge to the Town. Current projects being worked on include a \$2 million reconstruction of downtown streets including Bridge, Church, Elm, and Railroad streets, and a drainage project on Knob Hill in the [Lake Mansfield](#) watershed. A \$4 million bridge on Division Street is in the design phase as are four new sewer pump stations. A \$9 million project to redo South Main Street is in the design stages, several culverts need to be replaced and renovations are needed at the Ramsdell Public Library to meet ADA compliance requirements. The regional school district is expecting to seek support for a new or renovated high school in the near future. Renovations proposed for the high school failed on two past attempts.

- **HOUSING**

Great Barrington provides a variety of housing options; however, as a tourist and seasonal community, housing can be a challenge for year-round residents, particularly young families and citizens in search of affordable rental units. The new and growing short-term rental market, for which the Town currently has no formal policy, threatens to make the situation worse. The Town is currently nearing the state-mandated 10% subsidized housing level and more than 100 new housing units are in various stages of development. Many employees of local businesses, however, find it challenging to afford the rental prices in Great Barrington, so they commute from other towns. A number of Great Barrington businesses have difficulty securing enough workers. The [Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust Fund](#) was established in 2017 to create and preserve affordable housing. Approximately 67% of the housing units in Great Barrington are owner occupied with a median value of nearly \$328,700, according to U.S. Census data. The Planning Board continues to revise and improve the [zoning regulations](#) in order to create more housing units, including accessory dwelling units and multi-family units.



- **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

Great Barrington is either home to or in close proximity to a substantial amount of [open space](#) and arts and cultural venues. Monument Mountain Reservation, a 503-acre open space reservation, and Ski Butternut resort are located in Town. The [Lake Mansfield Recreation Area](#) features a 29-acre pond and the adjacent 29-acre Conservation Forest with a ¼ mile walking loop trail. [Beartown State Forest](#), with more than 10,000 acres and 198 acres of recreational parkland, is partially located in Great Barrington, and the Town is in close proximity to Catamount Mountain Resort. Other popular local attractions include River Walk, performances and walking paths at Bard College at Simon's Rock, and Searles Castle, which currently houses a school for teens. Area attractions include numerous performing arts centers, museums, historic locations, and outdoor amenities. There are [trails](#) for walking, hiking and mountain biking as well as areas for camping, rock climbing, cross-country and downhill skiing, and snow-shoeing. Great Barrington was named an official Appalachian Trail community in 2009. The region also has numerous lakes, ponds, and rivers for swimming, kayaking, canoeing, tubing, and fishing. The stunning vistas and area wildlife are a delight for photographers.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Great Barrington [Police Department](#) has 17 full-time and five part-time officers. Its annual budget is about \$1.3 million. The department received a total of 2,298 911 calls in FY2018. Great Barrington was the first Police Department in Berkshire County to achieve full state accreditation



from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission. The Police Department operates the 911 communications center for police, fire, and ambulance service. The Great Barrington [Fire Department](#) has a full-time chief and fire inspector and 25 on-call firefighters operating out of two stations. It responds to approximately 600 incidents annually. The Fire Department has an annual budget of approximately

\$480,000, with about \$110,000 going toward hydrant rentals. Ambulance service is operated by a private non-profit entity. An [operational study](#) of the Fire Department was completed in FY2018 and can be located on the Town's website. Police, Fire and other departments form Great Barrington's emergency management structure.

- **CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

Great Barrington embraces civic engagement and appreciates the high levels of participation and discourse residents provide. Citizens serve on numerous elected and appointed boards and committees as well as in other volunteer capacities. Maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship between residents, employees, and volunteers is vital to the success of the community. Ideas and recommendations regarding improved methods of communicating with and engaging citizens, including new technologies and social media, is welcomed. The next Town Manager must be a skilled communicator with a strong belief in transparency. The Town Manager should become integrated into the community, including serving as a community volunteer and attending events.



Candidate Qualifications

COMPETENCIES: The Great Barrington Selectboard seeks a Town Manager with strong leadership abilities, municipal management experience, excellent communication skills, and an interest in a tenure of at least five years in Great Barrington. The successful candidate will:

- demonstrate prior success in leading a complex municipal organization.
- possess demonstrated skills, abilities, and knowledge in all areas of municipal management and operations, but especially in finance and budgeting, economic development and community planning, project management, and personnel administration.
- be knowledgeable about municipal management best practices.
- be inclusive, collaborative, ethical, fair, and committed to transparency in government.
- be an innovative and decisive leader who can work well with various Town stakeholders.
- be expected to work cooperatively and collaboratively with staff, citizens, volunteers, and the business community.
- understand and appreciate a local economy based, in part, on tourism and seasonal visitors while also encouraging diversification of the economy.
- understand and embrace the benefits of regionalization.
- be diplomatic, highly approachable, a skilled and effective communicator, and have an open-door management style.
- be able to delegate effectively, mentor department heads, and provide support and motivation to ensure continued high performance and professional growth for employees.
- be a strategic and dynamic leader who employs a teamwork approach.
- have an understanding of and experience with collective bargaining, procurement, and grant writing and administration.
- be enthusiastic and strive to build morale.
- be skilled in developing relationships and team building.
- be dedicated, organized and patient, have a strong work ethic, and inspire trust and confidence.
- have the ability to effectively and confidently explain complex issues to individuals, committees, and citizens.
- have strong finance skills and be a strategic thinker, particularly in regard to budgeting, project management, and economic development and community planning.
- be able to develop and sustain credible relations with residents, staff, and union representatives.
- be a creative problem-solver and active listener who is accessible, open to new ideas, and a consensus-builder.
- lead by example, have effective conflict resolution skills, and be motivated and respectful.
- be a community unifier who manages projects in a participatory manner.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- The successful candidate will possess a bachelor's degree in public administration or a similar discipline, with a master's degree in public administration or similar discipline preferred.
- A minimum of five years of full-time paid experience in a supervisory administrative position in municipal government is required. A master's degree may be substituted for not more than two years of paid experience.
- U.S. citizenship is required.
- New England, and particularly Massachusetts, experience is preferred.



Compensation Package

The Town of Great Barrington will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable area communities, with a salary of \$120,000+/-, commensurate with qualifications. An attractive benefits package, including health and retirement plans, is part of the Town Manager's total compensation. If not already a resident of the Town or Commonwealth at the time of appointment, the Town Manager shall become a resident of the Town within one year after the appointment, unless excused by the Selectboard.

How To Apply

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and résumé, in confidence, by February 20, 2019, 5:00 p.m., via email to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Great Barrington Town Manager Search

Please submit a single PDF containing both cover letter and résumé.

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. The Great Barrington Town Manager Search 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 Selectboard. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is advanced to the Selectboard. The Great Barrington Selectboard will select the Town Manager.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal
Community Paradigm Associates
Blynch@communityparadigm.com
978-621-6733

The Town of Great Barrington, Mass., is an EEO employer.

