

BUCKLAND, MA

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Position Profile



The Community

The Town of [Buckland](#) is a small, rural community of approximately 2,000 residents located in Franklin County in northwestern Massachusetts. It enjoys a tradition of open government with a high level of service, good citizen engagement, and respect for its proud history. There is a strong sense of community in Town.

The Town of Buckland was incorporated on April 14, 1779. It is approximately 20 square miles in size. Buckland is bordered on the north by Charlemont, on the

south by Ashfield and Conway, on the west by Hawley, and on the east by Shelburne. Buckland is about 10 miles west of Greenfield, 42 miles northeast of Pittsfield, 40 miles northwest of Springfield, and 105 miles west/northwest of Boston. The Route 112 corridor bisects the Town and is a scenic highway consisting of a number of small farms and open space. A short section of Route 2, known as the Mohawk Trail, passes through the northeast corner of Buckland. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority schedules a regular bus route with four buses each weekday between Greenfield, Shelburne, Buckland, and Charlemont.

Buckland lies along the banks of the Deerfield River. It shares the village of Shelburne Falls with the neighboring Town of Shelburne. In 2018 Shelburne Falls was designated one of 5 Great Neighborhoods in America by the American Planning Association. The Buckland Town Hall is located in (as has the post office address of) Shelburne Falls. The downtown area of Buckland is located next to the [Bridge of Flowers](#), a well-known tourist attraction that connects Buckland with Shelburne.

Buckland has a substantial amount of open space. It is a town of farmland, forested hills, brooks, wetlands, vernal pools, and abundant wildlife. There is interest in increasing thoughtful commercial development, in a limited way, to bring additional commercial tax revenue to Buckland to reduce the tax burden on residents and provide job opportunities. Buckland is a designated Green Community.

The main employer in Buckland is the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. Many residents in the workforce commute outside of Buckland for employment, many to Greenfield or Amherst, or are self-employed.

The Town is demographically older than the state as a whole with the major difference being the median age of Buckland residents, which is 46.7 years, while the state median is 39.2 years. The under-18 years cohort in Buckland is 18.5% of the population, which is very similar to the state's 18%. In the 65 years and older cohort, Buckland has 16.8% of its population, which is higher than the state's 14%, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

The estimated median annual household income in Buckland is \$50,899, compared to the state median of \$75,297. The estimated median income for married couples in Buckland is \$76,591. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town of Buckland's racial makeup is approximately 97.1% white, 1.5% two or more races, 1.3% Hispanic or Latino, 0.7% Asian, and 0.3% Black or African American.

The Government

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

There is also a 16-member (two from each member town) [Mohawk Trail Regional School District](#). School Committee that oversees the policies and budget of the eight-Town district's public preK-12 elementary and secondary school system. Other elected officials include: Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Board of Library Trustees, Finance Committee, Moderator, Tree Warden, Town Clerk, and Constables. The Town also utilizes a number of volunteer boards and commissions, with various modes of appointment, to conduct municipal operations, such as the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. Buckland's [General Bylaws](#) can be located on the Select Board's page of the Town's website.

The Buckland [Select Board](#) appoints the 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 Select Board and for managing the operations and activities of the Town.

The [Town Administrator](#) is specifically responsible for preparing the annual budget; supervising all Town employees (with the exception of the Police Chief, Director of Assessing, Library Director, and Town Clerk); writing and administering grants; 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

Buckland's [FY19 operating budget](#) is approximately \$4.6 million, which was an increase of about 4.7% from the prior year. The FY19 budget can be accessed on the Town's website. Approximately \$2.4 million of the budget is used to fund public education. The FY19 capital budget is approximately \$475,000 and the general

stabilization fund is about \$450,000. Wastewater, which is a separate enterprise fund, has an operating budget of about \$253,000. Certified free cash is a bit over \$125,000.

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

Buckland is primarily a residential community, with large tracts of farmland and open space. The FY19 tax rate was set at a single rate of \$18.63 per \$1,000 valuation. This was a decrease of 22 cents over the previous year's tax rate. The average single-family style home has a median value of \$230,100, according to U.S. Census data. The FY19 average single family property tax bill is \$3,997, according to the Mass. Division of Local Services.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Capital Needs.** Like many communities, the Town has infrastructure issues, as programmatic needs have changed, and facilities have aged. For example, a new highway garage is currently under construction, there is a need for a new Senior Center (the current facility is too small and is in rented space), and the Buckland community pool had to be closed due to age-related system malfunctions. The Town is working to raise money to fund a new pool and recreation areas. An anonymous donor kicked off the fundraising effort by contributing \$500,000 toward a new pool.
- **Regional Collaboration.** The use of shared services and regional collaboration are important in Buckland. The Town belongs to a regional school system and shares one of the three libraries with the Town of Shelburne, with each community also having its own library outside the village of Shelburne Falls. The Senior Center is shared by Buckland, Shelburne, and Ashfield. Buckland makes use of the [Franklin Regional Council of Governments](#) for accounting services.
- **Economic Development.** The Town is facing fiscal pressures of funding capital needs as well as ongoing and increasing demands for services. The great majority of the Town's tax base is residential. Accordingly, additional revenues must be explored to fund expenditures related to these financial pressures to avoid making the Town less affordable for residents. Buckland is interested in attracting thoughtful commercial development that will fit with the Town's character. Interstate 91, the nearest interstate, passes through nearby Greenfield, where there is also an Amtrak station.

- **Finances.** The FY19 budget is approximately \$4.6 million. The budget process challenge is to fund services without significantly increasing residents' taxes. Buckland, like many communities, is facing revenue constraints. The State's formula for determining the Town's assessment for the regional school district creates a level of unpredictability that is difficult to plan for. The Town's capital needs must be addressed. The use of state and federal grants is very important to this community.



Photo: Erika Crocker

- **Housing.** There are approximately 935 housing units in town, most of which are owner occupied, with an estimated median value of \$230,100, according to U.S. Census data. Roughly 40% of households in Buckland are family households with no children at home. The Town's population is aging, so there is concern regarding a need for additional housing that is appropriate and affordable for older residents as well as for young families. The [Buckland Housing Plan](#) was completed in 2016.
- **Education.** Education is a high priority in Buckland. Buckland is one of eight towns that belong to the [Mohawk Trail Regional School District](#), including Ashfield, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne. The [Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School](#) serves approximately 305 students preK-6, while the [Mohawk Trail Regional School](#) serves approximately 365 students in grades 7-12. The Town is also served by the [Franklin County Technical School](#) located in nearby Turners Falls. Approximately 90% of Buckland residents age 18 and over have a high school diploma, and about 38.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the U.S. Census.
- **Land Use.** Buckland's [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#), which was completed in 2010 and is currently being updated, contains an analysis of the Town's open space and recreation needs as well as the goals and objectives that guide decisions related to the use, conservation, and development of land and resources. A significant amount of agricultural land and forest in Town is enrolled in the Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs in which private property owners continue to maintain their land in farms and forest and practice good stewardship. Protection of natural resources is highly important. The Town is interested in thoughtful development to diversify its tax base, as long as such development is consistent with Buckland's character and values.
- **Work Climate.** The Town Administrator must be team-oriented and must strive to 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. All residents, business owners and committee members should feel welcome at Town Hall.
- **Communications.** Accurate and timely communications are important to Buckland citizens. Strong communication skills, verbal, written, and technological are necessary 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. The Town's new website is an important factor in this communication.
- **Police Department.** The [Police Department](#) has an annual budget of about \$230,000, including salaries and operations. There is a full-time police chief and full-time sergeant as well as 10 part-time officers.
- **Fire and EMS Departments.** The Town is part of two fire districts: the [Buckland Fire District](#), which is a separate, call department that responds to fire and emergency medical calls, and the [Shelburne Falls Fire District](#), which responds to fire and emergency medical calls primarily in the village of Shelburne Falls. The same individual is the chief of both districts.
- **Highway & Refuse Department.** The Highway and Refuse Department has an annual budget of about \$600,000. A new highway garage is currently under construction. There are six full-time employees at full staff, plus one seasonal worker, responsible for roads, tree work, and the transfer station. There are approximately 50.5 miles of roadway in the 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 Select Board seeks a personable, proactive, and energetic Town Administrator with municipal managerial experience, preferably in a small rural community, who can work collaboratively on a strategic vision for the Town. The successful candidate should be able to demonstrate prior success as a town manager or administrator, an assistant town manager or administrator, or as the head of a major department, in a complex municipal organization. The candidate should be competent in all areas of municipal management and operations, but especially in finance, grant writing and administration, municipal procurement, economic development, personnel management, and strategic planning. Prior experience working with regional or shared services would be beneficial.

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 year of employment in Buckland.

The successful candidate must have strong grant-writing and grant administration 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. The Town Administrator must be comfortable working with budgets and have common sense.

The Town Administrator must be able to work collaboratively, delegate effectively, and provide support and motivation to all municipal employees. He or she must possess good listening skills and be open to input from all constituencies.

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, be confident, motivated, innovative, organized, efficient, and have a sense of humor.

The Town Administrator must be able to maintain morale and trust within municipal government and throughout the Town as well as be an energetic ambassador for the community. The Administrator must enjoy working in a team-oriented organization, have a personality that focuses on the positive, and embrace becoming actively engaged with the community and the region.

The successful candidate will have earned 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/ Administrator, or Assistant Town/City Manager/Administrator, or education and experience that is equivalent.

Compensation

The Town of Buckland will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities, with an annual salary of \$70,000+/-, depending on qualifications. Schedule and salary are negotiable. 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 March 25, 2019, to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com.

Subject: Buckland Town Administrator

Electronic submission via a single PDF is preferred.

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 Select Board. Finalists will be contacted for references and approval of background reviews before their selection is publicly advanced to the Select Board.

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 Buckland is an equal opportunity employer.