

Marion, MA Town Administrator

Community & Position Profile



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The Community

Marion is a community of approximately 5,000 residents located in southeastern Massachusetts. . The small-town character, blended with the flavor and benefits of a seacoast community provide rare natural beauty and charm. Marion contains many historic and architecturally important buildings.

Marion's roots go back to 1679, when the Town was first settled as a village known as 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 Sippican, which was renamed Marion in honor of the Revolutionary War hero, Francis Marion, in 1852. Today, Marion has a stable year-round population with a moderate summertime increase. Over the years, the heterogeneous population has worked hard to preserve Marion's rich historic traditions. In 2017, [New England Boating](#) focused an episode on Marion.

The Town contains 26.1 square miles of area, of which 14.0 square miles is land and 12.1 square miles is water. Marion is bordered by Mattapoisett to the southwest, Rochester to the northwest, and Wareham to the north and northeast. Marion is approximately 15 miles by road west of the Cape Cod Canal, 12 miles east of New Bedford, and 50 miles south of Boston. Marion is a [Green Community](#).

Marion has businesses of various sizes in Town, the largest of these being Lockheed Martin, Countermeasure Systems, Polaris Contract Manufacturing, and Whittier Sippican Healthcare Center. Marion is home to Tabor Academy, a recognized private school drawing students from throughout the world. As with most primarily residential communities, the majority of residents in the workforce commute outside of Marion for employment.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town of Marion's racial makeup is approximately 92.7% white, 2.2% two or more races, 1.7% Black or African American, 1.1% Hispanic or Latino, 0.6% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian.

Marion has an older population than the average Massachusetts community. The median age in Marion is 46.8 years compared to the state's 39.1 years. In the 65 years and older cohort, Marion has 21.3% of its population which is above the state's 16.2%, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Interestingly, the under-18 years cohort in Marion is nearly 22.9% of the population versus 20% for the state, which illustrates that, despite having an aging population, young families are a statistically significant part of the community. The median annual household income in Marion is \$90,404, compared to the state median of \$75,167. While Marion is considered a generally affluent community, approximately 5.6% of the population live in poverty, according to 2017 U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

The Government

Marion'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 [Code](#), Annual Town Meeting is held on the second Monday of May each year. A quorum of 50 voters is the minimum required.



The Marion [Board of Selectmen](#) appoints the position of Town Administrator as the Chief Administrative and Procurement Officer of the Town. The Town Administrator is responsible for executing the policy directives of the Board of Selectmen and Bylaws, and for administering the operations and activities of the Town.

The [Town Administrator](#) acts on behalf of the Board of Selectmen to administer the Board's role in day-to-day operations. The Town Administrator's authority is derived from Chapter 41, [Section 23A](#) of the Massachusetts General Laws, which provides the authority for the Board to delegate responsibilities to a Town Administrator.

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 Town Administrator is responsible for ensuring the continued economic, social, and financial viability of the Town, and also for ensuring the delivery of quality services to the residents and taxpayers of Marion. Included in the responsibilities handled by the Town Administrator are: preparing the annual operating and capital budgets, an ongoing capital improvements program, personnel management, negotiating collective bargaining contracts, Town Meeting preparation, grant writing, economic and community development, communications with staff and citizens, and general problems and administrative actions.

Marion 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-kindergarten to grade 6 attend the [Sippican School](#), which is overseen by the elected five-member Marion 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 Marion.

Other elected positions include: Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Moderator, Planning Board, Open Space Acquisition Commission, Town Clerk, Tree Warden, and some members of the Upper Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical School Committee. The Town is fortunate to have a number of volunteer boards and commissions, to help conduct municipal operations. The Town's [2017 Annual Report](#) can be accessed via its website.

Finances

Marion's FY19 budget is approximately \$22.87 million, with about \$11.18 million dedicated to public education. The Town has three stabilization funds. Its general stabilization fund has a balance of \$2.23 million, capital stabilization fund with a balance of \$338,688, and school stabilization fund with a balance of \$291,295. Marion's OPEB Trust fund balance is approximately \$1.58 million and its total OPEB liability, as of July 1, 2017, is approximately \$7 million. The water enterprise fund is about \$1.7 million, and the sewer enterprise fund is approximately \$2.7 million. Basic financial statements and independent [auditor's report](#) for FY16 can be reviewed on the Town's website.

Marion has a rating of AAA with a stable outlook, according to a September 2018 ratings action by Standard & Poor's.

Marion is primarily a residential community, with approximately 92.3% of the Town's assessed value attributable to residential uses, 4.5% associated with commercial, 1.05% with industrial, and 2.05% with personal property. Commercial and industrial uses are primarily concentrated on Route 6 and in the Sippican Office Park. The FY19 tax rate was set at a single rate of \$11.03 per \$1,000 valuation. In FY19, the Town's total valuation is about \$1.72 billion.



Challenges and Opportunities

- **Capital Needs.** Marion strives to address its infrastructure issues in a timely manner; however, like most communities, the Town has some infrastructure needs. Future capital improvement projects include upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant, road reconstruction, sidewalk repairs, and drainage improvements. The Marion Town House, built in 1890, is also in need of approximately \$8 million in renovations. 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. Marion is interested in attracting thoughtful commercial development that will fit with the Town's character. Tabor Academy is currently constructing a new dormitory to house 25 students and four residential advisors. The private school recently completed a similar sized dormitory; however, the Town does not receive any taxes or payments in lieu of taxes from Tabor Academy.
- **Housing.** Currently, about 7.8% of Marion's housing units meet the state's affordability requirements. While most housing construction in Marion are rebuilds or renovations, there are 26 new homes currently in the final stages of construction. Homes in Marion have a median value of \$471,000, 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 as well as young families. Marion completed its [Housing Production Plan](#) in April 2015.

- **Education.** Education is a high priority in Marion. Marion belongs to the Old Rochester Regional School District, and its FY19 assessment of approximately \$4.56 million represents 28.84% of the district's total budget. The District's master plan, [Vision 2023](#), can be found on its website. Marion also dedicates about \$6.2 million to the Sippican School. Students who reside in Marion also have the opportunity to attend the [Upper Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical High School](#) in Bourne. Marion's FY19 assessment for the vocational school is approximately \$400,000. Approximately 95% of Marion residents age 25+ have a high school diploma and about 52% have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to U.S. Census statistics.



- **Land Use.** Marion approved a new [Master Plan](#) in October 2017. Marion's Master Plan provides the guiding principles to protect Marion's traditional, seaside character and natural resources while managing change. Included in the plan's vision are: protect and enhance the harbor and coastline, plan for climate change, assess the effect that sewer and water service capacity have on the type, location, and cost of future growth, zoning reform should allow desired development in the right locations, decisions should be driven by demographic, market, and data trends, and increase organization and collaboration within the town and between partners. Village-style mixed-use development is preferred in key areas. Marion is also interested in continuing its efforts to preserve open space. Protected land in Marion accounts for about 49% (4,477 acres) of the Town's 9,105 acres. The Town also owns the one-acre [Bird Island](#), a critical seabird nesting area and home to the historic [Bird Island Lighthouse](#).
- **Water Resources.** Preserving and protecting coastal resources are important goals in Marion. Climate change, coastal erosion, and beach protection are critical issues for the Town.

- **Harbor.** The [Harbormaster](#) oversees more than 1,500 moorings with three full-time, one part-time, and six to seven seasonal employees. The department is entirely funded through fees. Approximately 60% of the moorings are leased to Marion residents with the remaining 40% leased to nonresidents.
- **Department of Public Works.** The DPW consists of the Highway Division, the Water Division, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Division. It has an annual budget of about \$1.4 million. There is a total of 20 full-time employees responsible for roads, cemeteries, parks, trash and recycling, tree work, water and sewer. An [organizational study](#) of the DPW was completed in October 2018 to support the current search for a new DPW Superintendent.
- **Police Department.** The [Police Department](#) has an annual budget of approximately \$1.9 million, including salaries and operations. There is a full-time police chief and 21 full-time officers, plus five part-time officers. The department earned full accreditation status from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission in June 2015. The Police Station, located on Mill Street, is eight years old. The department is a non-Civil Service agency. Officers responded to approximately 13,000 calls (including building checks) in 2018. The Animal Control Division is also under the Police Department's jurisdiction with one full-time and one part-time animal control officer.
- **Fire Department/EMS.** The [Fire Department](#) currently has two full-time positions and approximately 42 part-time on-call positions. Its annual budget is about \$1.06 million. The Fire Department operates out of two stations – the headquarters on Spring Street and a station on Point Road. The department also operates EMS services with approximately 26 per-diem EMTs and paramedics to staff the ambulance 24/7 365 days a year. Fire/EMS responded to 1,546 calls in 2018.
- **Recreation.** Recreational opportunities are plentiful in Marion with Sippican Harbor hosting a variety of waterfront programs, including swimming at the town beaches, pleasure boating, and fishing. Marion offers youth and adult recreational programs, including soccer, yoga, kayaking, art, 5K runs, and sailing lessons. There are golf courses and indoor and outdoor tennis courts, hiking trails, and Tabor Academy periodically opens its hockey rink for public skating.

The Ideal Candidate

The Board of Selectmen seeks a strategic and proactive Town Administrator with municipal managerial experience who can work collaboratively with the Board. 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 administration, strategic planning, grant writing, municipal procurement, economic development and community planning, and intergovernmental relations.

The Town Administrator must be a decisive administrator and leader who can 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. The Town Administrator should be Procurement certified by the state or able to attain certification within the first six months of employment in Marion.

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 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, collaborative, and a consensus-builder. He or she must lead by example, and be strategic, motivated, innovative, organized, and goal-oriented.

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 and should foster a team approach to problem solving. He or she should be adept at working with different personality types, exhibit patience focus on the positive, be respectful, and embrace becoming actively engaged with the community.

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/ Administrator, or Assistant

Town/City Manager/Administrator, or education and experience that is equivalent. The successful candidate should know and seek to implement municipal management best practices.

Compensation

The Town of Marion will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable Massachusetts' communities, with an annual salary of \$125,000+/-, 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 February 22, 2019, to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Marion Town Administrator

Submission via a single PDF is preferred

Following the closing date, résumés will be reviewed according to the outlined qualifications. The Marion 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 Marion 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 Marion is an Equal Opportunity Employer.