

TISBURY, MA – Town Administrator



Position Statement

Tisbury, MA (4,815 pop.) is a beautiful island community located on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. The Town is home to generations of families, year-round and seasonal, and has a diverse population, which includes a burgeoning population of individuals and families of Brazilian heritage. All enjoy Tisbury's seaside charm, outdoor recreation, and small-town atmosphere. Tisbury residents care deeply about their community and actively strive to sustain a resilient, forward-looking, year-round community.

Tisbury has an engaged citizenry, stunning vistas, and sound finances. The current Town Administrator, who is retiring in January, will have been in the position for nearly 12 years. A proposed Town Administrator bylaw, which is to be brought up for a vote at the next Town Meeting, is designed to strengthen and clarify the position's responsibilities and authority.



As an island community, Tisbury knows the value of collaboration and the Town Administrator will need to communicate, and work cooperatively, with the five other Martha's Vineyard communities and the Wampanoag Tribe as well as local staff, officials, and volunteers. Tisbury is facing a number of upcoming and potential capital projects, including a new/renovated Town Hall, that may require innovative financing as well as a library renovation and sewer expansion. The town is at the final punch-list phase of a major renovation of the Tisbury School and the regional high school is in the planning stages of an addition/renovation or rebuild.

Tisbury is seeking a skilled and seasoned leader with proficient municipal finance knowledge capable of navigating Tisbury through potentially challenging fiscal times and major community projects. The Town Administrator must seek opportunities to mitigate housing challenges, assist in cultivating a strong year-round economy, balance the needs of year-round and seasonal residents, and continue to build the town's climate resiliency in the face of ongoing climate change. The Town Administrator must be able to juggle those demands with a desire among residents to maintain the community's character. Communication is critical for a new Town Administrator, both internally with staff and externally to inform and engage the community, so candidates should have superior verbal and written communication skills.

Annual Salary: \$200,000+/- DOQ. The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package that is competitive with other Massachusetts towns, including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. The Town of Tisbury is willing to consider options other than fulltime residency and is also open to discussing alternative options for housing arrangements or housing assistance.

Government

Tisbury has an Open Town Meeting form of government under Massachusetts General Law, with a Select Board and Town Administrator. The [Select Board](#), which is the policy-making body of the town, consists of three members elected to three-year terms. Tisbury does not currently operate under a home-rule charter.

A recently drafted Town Administrator Bylaw is scheduled to be brought before voters at the next Town Meeting and, presuming approval, will strengthen and clarify the position's responsibilities and authority. This will be a plus for the next Town Administrator.

The Town Administrator supervises the general activities of town government and operations of all Town departments not under the supervision of other elected officials. The Town Administrator coordinates and oversees all financial activities relating to the effective administration of the town and has authority over the hiring and dismissal of all town employees except those appointed by other elected boards.



Finances

Tisbury is a fiscally sound community that is facing increasing financial pressures due to necessary infrastructure projects and increasing costs. Tisbury is seeking a Town Administrator who has superior financial acumen and can balance the needs of the town while implementing ideas that will enhance revenue streams and increase affordability for workers, young families, and seniors.

Tisbury's [Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget](#) is a little over \$40 million and the town has a Standard & Poor's bond rating of AA+. In FY24, 74.70% of revenue was from the tax levy, 13.26% from all other, 7.60% from local receipts, and 4.44% from state aid. There is approximately \$8 million in the stabilization fund. A recent borrowing for the Tisbury School renovation has engendered substantial debt, increasing the Town's debt service to 16% of its budget. The Town's fire station was built 10 years ago, and the last payment for that project is due in March 2025.

The town recently received an assessment of its capital planning process from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services, which recommends the establishment of a more formal comprehensive process to be managed by the Town Administrator.

Free cash was certified at nearly \$7.83 million for FY24. Tisbury's tax base is 91.27% residential/open space and 8.72% commercial, industrial and personal property. For FY24, the residential/open space tax rate was \$7.98 per thousand-dollar valuation; commercial, industrial and personal property was \$7.32. The average single-family tax bill for FY24 was \$11,641. New growth value for FY24 was nearly \$36.8 million with nearly \$32 million of that in residential growth value.

Tisbury's Town Accountant recently retired after 37 years of service. The duties of that position are currently being fulfilled by a consultant with the assistance of the two Assistant Town Accountants and the Finance Director. The town is actively seeking applicants for the position.

Education

Tisbury belongs to the [Martha's Vineyard Public Schools](#) district, along with the communities of Aquinnah, Chilmark, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and West Tisbury. Tisbury students attend [Tisbury School](#) from grades preK-8 with high school students attending [Martha's Vineyard Regional High School](#). Tisbury is also home to the Vineyard Montessori School, which serves students from grades pre-K-3.

Tisbury School, which is the oldest school on the island and serves approximately 280 students, is in the final, punch-list, phase of an \$80 million [renovation](#). The regional high school, which serves approximately 700 students in grades 9-12, provides vocational programs, special education collaborative, mentorships, human services, and college preparation courses including Advanced Placement. The high school building was accepted into the MSBA program in 2022 for a renovation/construction of a school space that will meet the modern needs of students and staff. An Owners Project Manager and an architectural firm have been selected and it is anticipated that schematic designs will be presented to voters in 2025 or 2026. The total cost of the project is expected to be \$250 million to \$350 million with Tisbury's share being \$37 million to \$53 million. The next Town Administrator will need to work closely with Tisbury's finance team to determine the best financing options for the project.



Economic and Community Development

Tisbury is a vibrant community year-round and is particularly busy during the summer and shoulder seasons when the pier and downtown village, known as Vineyard Haven, are bustling with activity. Vineyard Haven is the heart of Tisbury, and as the Island's only year-round port, is committed to maintaining its role as the welcoming gateway to Martha's Vineyard. In addition to serving the Steamship Authority and small cruise ships, the deep harbor port also receives all bulk supplies to the island, such as fuel and construction supplies.

The creative economy is a critical part of Tisbury's current and future success. The Vineyard Haven Harbor Cultural District is home to art galleries, artists and artisans, the [Martha's Vineyard Museum](#), the recently renovated [Martha's Vineyard Playhouse](#), the Katharine Cornell Theater in Town Hall, shops and restaurants, and wooden boat repair and manufacturing. Tisbury has also greatly benefited from the short-term rental and meals taxes



given the Town's status as a popular vacation location and the growth in its restaurant base.

Tisbury, along with the whole of the Island, has a critical shortage of year-round affordable housing. The Town's small sewer plant is at capacity, increasing the difficulty of building multi-family housing.

In its Master Plan, completed in April 2024, the Town envisions a review and revision of its Zoning Bylaws along with private and public partnerships will help establish a network of open spaces connecting residential neighborhoods and open spaces with its business districts, including State Road, a vibrant town center, a diversified waterfront, and a working

harbor. Via public investment and private development, Tisbury strives to actively support a prosperous year-round economy that provides residents with year-round affordable housing, education, jobs, and services. The Town Administrator will be expected to spearhead the implementation of the Master Plan.



Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

Much of the open space in Tisbury is protected in perpetuity from future development. However, climate change, nitrogen loading, and other stressors are threatening the natural environment. The Master Plan Implementation Plan details planned mitigation efforts that must continue. Some of the Town's open spaces are privately owned and temporarily protected through limited conservation easements.

As an island community, Tisbury offers much to the outdoor enthusiast. In addition to enviable ocean access, Tisbury has sports fields, playgrounds, parks, beaches, trails, and conservations areas where residents and visitors can enjoy the outdoors via such activities as boating, swimming, walking, hiking, observing nature, picnicking, and more. Location examples include Lagoon Harbor Park, West Chop Woods, Lake Street Park and Landing, Owen Park, Veteran's Park, Tashmoo Spring Building Park, Tashmoo Town Beach, Eastville Beach, Church Street Tennis Courts, Grove Avenue Beach, and Owen Little Way Beach.

Important Links:

- [Town of Tisbury](#)
- [Tisbury Bylaws & Regulations](#)
- [Annual Town Reports & Warrants](#)
- [Vision, Core Values, & Goals](#)
- [Master Plan](#)
- [Master Plan Key Issues Report](#)
- [Master Plan Implementation Plan](#)
- [FY25 Operating Budget](#)
- [Department Reports](#)
- [Tisbury Parks, Open Space & Recreation](#)
- [Water Resources Committee](#)
- [Targeted Watershed Plan for Lake Tashmoo](#)
- [Martha's Vineyard Climate Action Plan](#)

Water and Wastewater

The protection of the town's water resources, both groundwater and surface waters, is of critical importance to Tisbury and all of Martha's Vineyard. Tisbury is home to a single major freshwater aquifer which supplies the entire Island with its drinking water.

Tisbury's two coastal ponds, Lake Tashmoo and Lagoon Pond, which provide habitat for many of the town's valued commercial and recreational species such as clams, scallops, mussels, flounder, and striped bass, are threatened by



excessive nitrogen. Water quality in each has degraded to the point where they are experiencing algal blooms and loss of eelgrass and related habitat.

Tisbury is developing plans for managing wastewater over the next 20 years. Having these plans will allow the town to take advantage of state funding opportunities. The Targeted Watershed Management Plan for Lake Tashmoo has been submitted

to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan will be submitted within the next year. The plans involve a combination of expanded sewerage and the installation of innovative alternative septic systems by homeowners. Such future wastewater infrastructure projects are on the near-term agenda for Tisbury and are expected to be costly.

Projects and Issues

Tisbury has a number of significant projects that are either ongoing or anticipated for the near future. Included amongst the projects and issues the Town Administrator will be facing are:

- **Housing.** Housing options in Tisbury and the Island are costly and limited, making it difficult for businesses to recruit and maintain a workforce, for younger families to purchase a home, and for older adults looking to downsize to remain in town. There is a desire to increase equitable and sustainable year-round affordable housing options.
- **Town Hall renovation/addition/construction.** Town Hall staff currently work in three separate locations, which can be challenging for residents and staff. There are ongoing discussions regarding the possibility of a new or renovated Town Hall.
- **Library renovation/addition.** The [library project](#) involves repairs to the existing building and construction of a meeting room addition. A ground-breaking is anticipated in 2025 pending completion of a capital campaign and funding appropriation for building repairs at a fall/winter Special Town Meeting.
- **Martha's Vineyard Regional High School reconstruction.** The regional high school is in the early stages of planning a significant renovation/construction project that could cost a total \$250M to \$350M.
- **Water and wastewater.** Nitrogen loading is making area estuaries become less habitable and putting considerable pressure on Lake Tashmoo and Lagoon Pond. The town has implemented a number of [nitrogen mitigation strategies](#) and is in the process of completing and seeking approval from Mass. DEP for two long-term mitigation plans. The current wastewater plant is at capacity and inhibits commercial growth.
- **Hiring personnel.** It has become a challenge to hire employees in the municipal sector and being an island community adds to the complexity. Tisbury currently has positions available the water, wastewater, ambulance, building and finance departments as well as the DPW and library.
- **Finances.** Tisbury is in the very final stages of an \$80 million Tisbury School project which will impact property taxes for the next 30 years. With additional infrastructure projects proposed, the Town Administrator will need to seek creative financing solutions, revenue enhancements, and efficiencies, such as shared services, to ease the tax burden on residents.
- **Interlocal collaboration.** Relationships with other Island communities is critical and experience in negotiating potential shared services would be beneficial.
- **Climate resiliency.** Tisbury is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, and stronger storms with higher storm surges. The town, working collaboratively with the five other Island communities, the Wampanoag Tribe, and community partners, seeks to proactively address the impacts of climate change on the natural and built environment and to develop strategies, and funding sources, to mitigate and adapt to these impacts.
- **Seawall.** The Town has applied for a FEMA grant for repair/replacement of the seawall along State Road.





The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience in a related field, or any equivalent combination of education and experience, exhibiting progressive advancement as a manager, preferably in a municipal setting.
- Experience as a Town Manager/Administrator or as an Assistant Town Manager/ Administrator.
- Superior financial acumen and understanding of municipal governance.
- Effective communicator internally and externally, both verbal and written.
- Proficient operational skills.
- Active listener; morale builder; motivator.
- Adept at managing a team and skilled in appropriate delegation.
- Ability to manage multiple projects and priorities; ability to develop and implement policies and programs.
- Superior leadership and collaboration skills.
- Skilled at making good hires and ability to coach and develop employees.
- Ability to juggle competing needs and interests; superior conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.
- Ethical, high integrity, and commitment to transparency.
- Consensus builder able to work cooperatively with boards, committees, residents, and other stakeholders.

How To Apply

Position is open until filled. For a guaranteed review of application materials, send cover letter and resumé via email, in a single PDF, by November 9, 2024, 3:00 p.m., EST to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

Subject: Tisbury Town Administrator

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal
Community Paradigm Associates
BLynch@communityparadigm.com

The Town of Tisbury, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.