

# Wenham, MA – Town Administrator



## Position Statement

Wenham, MA (5,100 pop.), is a vibrant, quintessential New England community located within the seacoast area of northeastern Massachusetts. Principally a residential community, Wenham has limited industry or business. The Town has a AAA rating and an FY21 budget of approximately \$21 million (including public education). Located just 22 miles north of Boston, Wenham provides easy access to the city's world-class medical, educational, and cultural assets. Wenham has an engaged public with high expectations for quality and responsive services. The Town's demographics are evolving and its residents include a mix of younger families, empty-nesters, and retired senior citizens, all of whom are well-educated, able to offer advice and expertise on Town issues, and may have differing service needs.



Wenham's current challenges involve advancing a project to redesign Main Street, developing the budget without overburdening taxpayers, exploring additional regionalization opportunities, and a desire for appropriate economic development to help offset the residential tax burden and help fund rising public education costs. Wenham's local government is led by a three-member Board of Selectmen.

To serve as its next Town Administrator, Wenham is seeking an experienced and proactive leader who is community oriented, has excellent communication skills, and is interested in at least a five-year tenure. Preferred candidates will have strong financial acumen, experience with economic development, the ability to develop plans and prioritize, an understanding of regional school districts and related funding strategies, and small-town municipal administration experience. The Town Administrator oversees general government employees. Wenham has close ties to neighboring Hamilton, sharing a school system, library, inspectional services, recreation department, commuter rail station, and newspaper. The next Town Administrator must be highly collaborative and able to work on regional solutions. The Town Administrator must strive to identify and understand the vision of the community for its future as well as provide professional, technical, and management support to the elected and appointed officials in their efforts to provide for the needs of the community. Candidates should have a bachelor's degree (master's preferred) in public administration or a related field and a minimum of five years of progressive municipal management and leadership experience. Preferred candidates will have experience in municipal government administration and strategic planning, with strong knowledge of labor relations, grant writing and administration, and community-based problem solving. The next Town Administrator should be team-oriented, innovative, approachable, and flexible.

## Government

Wenham has a Board of Selectmen-Town Administrator form of government with open Town Meeting which has a quorum of 120. The [Board of Selectmen](#) serves as the chief executive body of the Town. The Board's duties include, in part, appointing other board/committee members, developing goals and policies, preparing the Town Report, the annual budget, and presenting the warrant for Town Meeting.

The Board of Selectmen appoints the [Town Administrator](#) who carries out the policies of the Board. Wenham has an engaged public with high expectations for quality and responsive services. The next Town Administrator should support a strong ethical approach to local government and is expected to lead, direct, mentor, and motivate a professional team that will consistently deliver exemplary community services in coordination with the Board of Selectmen. The Town Administrator should develop annual goals and objectives that will be reviewed by and discussed with the Board of Selectmen. As Wenham is a small community, the Town Administrator is expected to wear many hats, including human resources, and be capable of filling organization gaps as needed. The Superintendent of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District was hired late last year and Wenham recently hired its Finance Director. The Town is fortunate to have talented, collegial, and hard-working department heads and employees who will work collaboratively with the Town Administrator to advance goals and serve the community.

Wenham has a number of elected positions, boards, and committees including: Board of Selectmen, Regional School District, Planning Board, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Health, Housing Authority, Water Commission, Moderator, Board of Assessors, and Town Clerk. The next Town Administrator must be skilled at collaboratively engaging with Wenham's various elected and appointed positions, boards, and committees as well as in gaining community input from the Town's citizens.

## Finances

Wenham has a Fiscal Year 2021 budget of approximately \$21 million and a Standard and Poor's rating of AAA with a stable outlook. In June, Wenham voters approved a \$1.08 million Proposition 2 ½ override, with 33.32% of the funds going toward municipal costs and 66.68% going toward funding the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District. In FY20, free cash was certified at \$954,005. The FY21 tax rate is \$20.60 for all properties. The property tax base is nearly 98% residential and about 1.2% commercial. Nearly 74.5% of the Town's revenue comes from the tax levy, with 19.6% from local receipts, and 2.13% from state aid. New growth in FY20 was \$225,444. The Town has often utilized free cash to balance its operating budget and in the past few years voters have approved Proposition 2½ overrides to fund increasing public education costs. Like most municipalities, Wenham is facing the potential of some additional revenue constraints due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, however, due to its limited commercial and retail tax base the impact should not be significant.

According to a 2013 S&P report, Wenham has a very strong economy. The community has strong budgetary flexibility and good management practices. Wenham's proximity to Boston provides access to Boston's deep and diverse employment base.

### Important Links:

- [Town of Wenham](#)
- [Town By-Laws](#)
- [Annual Town Reports](#)
- [Financial Documents](#)
- [FY21 Budget Document & CIP](#)
- [Audit Reports](#)
- [Annual Town Meeting Warrants and Minutes](#)
- [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#)



## Economic and Community Development

Wenham is a small community with a limited commercial and retail base and limited available space. An increase in commercial and retail development that would be appropriate for the community is desired to help fund the rising costs of public education and various fixed costs. Gordon College, a private higher education institution with approximately 1,500 undergraduate students, is located in Wenham. The Town provides public safety services to the college. Wenham is also host to the Wenham Museum and a number of other significant historic places and environmental assets that the community enjoys.

The next Town Administrator must be adept in attracting economic development projects and businesses that are appropriate for Wenham and in finding ways to develop creative revenue streams and cost savings. Candidates should be skilled in communicating the benefits of economic development projects and know how to achieve community buy-in.

## Open Space and Recreation

Wenham, which covers 8.09 square miles, has retained much of its unique historic character and tranquil rural scenery. Residents are proud of the Town's preserved open spaces and have a strong commitment to preserve, protect, and enhance its heritage and rural character. Wenham has numerous scenic vistas that include farmlands, lakes, woodlands, and old stone walls that accompany its winding tree-lined roads. It has nearly 300 acres of parks, playgrounds, and recreational lands. A trail mapping project was undertaken in 2019 to help residents better navigate the Town's open spaces.

## Current projects/challenges

- A redesign of Main Street (Route 1A) has been ongoing for approximately 1½ years. The next Town Administrator will need to facilitate a community forum to gather input followed by navigating and completing the design phase.
- Costs related to the regional school district continue to increase, exacerbating financial strains on the municipal budget. Wenham has approved Proposition 2½ overrides in recent years to fund escalating costs.
- There is a need to explore additional opportunities for regionalization to reduce costs and improve services.
- Staff turnover is a challenge as personnel can be attracted by, and recruited to, similar higher-paying positions in larger communities.
- Anticipated retirement(s) will require the hiring of at least one new department head in the near future.
- Serving as a Town Administrator in small community means staffing is limited and the Town Administrator not only wears a lot of hats but is expected to be a team player and pitch in to accomplish goals and provide services for residents.

## Potential projects

- The development of a community-wide Master Plan.
- There is discussion of the need for a new elementary school and a new turf field and roof at the high school.
- A new roof is needed for the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library.
- The fire station will need a new roof in two to five years.

The next Town Administrator should be adept at working with regional entities and have the skills of a municipal administration generalist with the ability to fill in for various operational functions as the organization's needs shift. The Town Administrator must be personable and enjoy working in a team-centered environment. Candidates must be skilled at building collaborative teams, have the ability to coach and motivate others, and be able to build consensus. Applicants should be dynamic, forward thinking, and capable of moving the Town to greater levels of achievement in a 21<sup>st</sup> century municipal organization.

**Annual salary: \$135K+/- DOQ.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Wenham is an Equal Opportunity Employer.







## The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree required (with a master's preferred), preferably in public administration or a related field.
- Minimum of 5 years of progressive municipal management and leadership experience, or as a senior manager in a not-for-profit, governmental, or business organization.
- Skilled in financial management, personnel administration, economic development, project management, and collective bargaining.
- A strong communicator, both internally and externally; active listener.
- Adept as using 21<sup>st</sup> century methods of communication.
- Knowledge of, and ability to implement, municipal best practices.
- Strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Ability to build strong teams; proactive.
- Calm demeanor; approachable; collegial.
- Team-oriented; flexible; professional.
- Forward thinking; strategic; able to multi-task.
- Excellent writing and presentation skills.
- Analytical and technologically savvy.
- Strong work ethic; excellent follow-through.
- Knowledgeable of municipal best practices.
- Confident; energetic; ethical.
- Proficient knowledge of municipal law.
- Exhibit excellent attention to detail.
- Diplomatic; strong conflict resolution skills.
- Enjoy engaging with the community.

## How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé via email, in a single PDF, by February 8, 2021, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

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

**Subject: Wenham  
Town Administrator Search**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

John Petrin, Senior Associate  
Community Paradigm Associates  
[JPetrin@communityparadigm.com](mailto:JPetrin@communityparadigm.com)  
781-552-1074

*The Town of Wenham, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*