

COHASSET, MA

Director of Finance/Town Accountant

Position Statement



Summary

The Town of Cohasset, Mass., (pop. 8,400) is seeking an experienced municipal finance leader to serve as its next Director of Finance/Town Accountant. The Director of Finance/Town Accountant, who reports to the Town Manager, manages, administers, supervises, and directs the programs and activities of the Finance Department, including the proper recording and maintenance of financial records, approving all payments, monitoring expenditures of all town funds, auditing financial records and transactions, and establishing and implementing fiscal policies and procedures, including short and long range projections on operating and capital budgets and related financing. The Director of Finance/Town Accountant is required to exercise considerable independent judgment in administering and managing the department and is responsible for maintaining and improving upon the efficiency and effectiveness of all areas under his/her direction and control.



COHASSET

MASSACHUSETTS

The Community

Cohasset was inhabited for thousands of years by Native Americans prior to European colonization. The area was first settled by English settlers in 1670. [Cohasset](#) became incorporated as a town, separate from Hingham, in 1770. Previously, what is today the town of Cohasset was known as Hingham's Second Parish. The town's name came from the word "Conahasset," possibly meaning "long rocky place" or "fishing promontory."

According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the Town of Cohasset has a total area of 31.4 square miles (81.4 km²), of which 9.8 square miles (25.4 km²) are land and 21.7 square miles (56.1 km²) are water. It is bordered on the west by [Hingham](#), on the northwest by [Hull](#), on the north and northeast by Massachusetts Bay, and on the east and south by [Scituate](#). Cohasset is approximately 20 miles (32 km) southeast of Boston.

Cohasset is located on the "corner" of the South Shore, where Boston Harbor ends and Massachusetts Bay begins. The shore is rocky, with many small ledges and rocks lying offshore. Cohasset Cove and The Gulf provide a long portion of the border with Scituate, while Straits Pond divides Cohasset from neighboring Hull. Near the center of the coast lies Little Harbor, a large inlet divided from the ocean by Beach Island. Several other brooks and rivers run through the town. A large portion of the southwestern part of town is occupied by [Wompatuck State Park](#) and the [Whitney and Thayer Woods Reservation](#). There is also a bird sanctuary, as well as a large park (Wheelwright Park) near Little Harbor. There are three beaches along the bay, and the Cohasset Yacht Club, Cohasset Sailing Club, and a public boat launch in Cohasset Harbor.

While the Town remains home to an active fishing fleet, it is primarily a residential community. The main highways include State routes 3A and 228, with connecting access to Route 3, the primary north-south highway on the South Shore. The MBTA provides easy access to Boston through a commuter rail station in Cohasset, which is complemented with the Town's first transit-oriented development, Old Colony Square. Cohasset plays host to more than a dozen charitable and for-profit road race events as well as an annual South Shore Arts Festival every June. The Town is currently developing a plan to enhance the Harbor area "to support the existing lobster fleet and marine-related businesses, enhance public access to the waterfront and the water, link economic development in the Harbor to the Village, and create a more vibrant Harbor," according to the [Cohasset Municipal Harbor Plan](#).

Government

Cohasset has a Select Board-Town Manager form of government with open Town Meeting. Under Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) and the [Cohasset Town Manager Act](#), the executive powers of the Town are vested in the five-member [Select Board](#). Members are elected for three-year staggered terms. The Select Board serves as the chief goal setting and policy-making body of the Town. The Board acts through the adoption of policy directives and guidelines which are implemented by the Town Manager, employees, and other officers. The Board appoints the Town Manager as the Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer of the Town.

The Town Manager is appointed by the Select Board to oversee the daily operations of the Town, advise, administer the policies and procedures of the Select Board, and enforce Town bylaws and actions passed at Town Meeting. Serving as both Chief Administrative and Chief Financial Officer, the Town Manager is responsible for the effective management of Town departments (other than schools), preparing an annual budget and capital plan, coordinating activities leading up to the annual Town Meeting, providing support to the volunteer committee system, working with other levels of government, and managing special projects for the Select Board.

Cohasset has an open Town Meeting. The articles are presented to the Town Meeting in the form of a warrant prepared by the Town Manager and by the Select Board. The Town Meeting is run by the Moderator who is elected and is responsible for declaring the votes which are then recorded by the Town Clerk. The Clerk is also responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting and sending the voted general and zoning bylaws to the attorney general for approval. Past [Town of Cohasset Annual Reports](#) can be located on the Town's website.

Finance

The mission of the Finance and Accounting Department is to protect the fiduciary interests of the Town of Cohasset by providing independent, timely oversight of the Town's finances and by ensuring that financial transactions are executed legally, efficiently, and effectively.

The Finance and Accounting Department provides the controllership and audit functions for the Town of Cohasset and its departments. Accounting assures that financial transactions are undertaken in accordance with federal, state, and local law, regulation, contract, and policy as well as adherence to generally acceptable accounting principles (GAAP). The Department serves as a barrier to potential fraud or misuse of Cohasset's resources.

The Finance and Accounting Department is responsible for maintaining and administering a financial account and management information system that provides accurate, complete, and timely information pertaining to all financial activities of Cohasset's town departments, boards, and commissions. Accounting provides financial information to a wide variety of stakeholders including the Select Board, Town Manager, Town departments, federal, state, and other levels of government along with the citizens of Cohasset.

In June 2021, Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC (S&P) Global Ratings affirmed the Town of Cohasset's strong AAA bond rating. In a summary on Cohasset's general obligation bond performance, S&P stated that Cohasset has shown "very strong socioeconomic demographics, a strong management environment, a growing property tax base and balanced operations during the past few fiscal years that have boosted reserves to very strong levels," also stating that "because of Cohasset's conservative budgeting practices and history of positive operating performance, it expects the Town to maintain strong budgetary performance over the next several years." The [S&P report](#) details several areas in which Cohasset has shown strong financial stability, including its economic outlook, management and financial policies, budgetary performance and flexibility, liquidity and more.

For FY22, Cohasset has an overall spending plan of approximately \$50.46 million, including \$21.68 million for schools. Cohasset's past financial reports and budget documents can be viewed on the [Finance Department's](#) webpage. The [2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant](#) can provide additional insight into Cohasset's finances for the upcoming FY23.

The town has a ten-year Capital Improvement Plan that is updated annually. Requests for FY23 total \$2.15 million for general fund projects and \$3.5 million for water and sewer enterprise funds projects.

Position Responsibilities

Reporting to the Town Manager, the Director of Finance/Town Accountant provides fiscal leadership and performs professional, administrative, supervisory, and technical work in ensuring the proper recording and maintenance of financial records, approving all payments, monitoring expenditures of all town funds, auditing financial records and transactions, and establishing and implementing fiscal policies and procedures, including short- and long-range projections on operating and capital budgets and related financing.

The Director of Finance/Town Accountant performs all duties and functions as specified by MGL c41, §§50-61, by the [Town Bylaws](#), Article IV, Section 3, and Article VI, Sections 1-8, and by the applicable rules and regulations of the Town.

Specific position functions, among others, include:

Fiscal Leadership

- Provide strategic financial leadership to the Town, including participation in fiscal planning activities, development of short- and long-range revenue and expenditure projections, debt modeling and management, and development of presentations and reports for a variety of audiences.

Staff & Program Management (25%)

- Supervise the Assistant to Town Accountant, and provide leadership and support for the Assessor's Office and the Treasurer/Collector's Office.
- Manage staff hiring, training, and performance management.
- Recommend, develop and implement strategic goals, policies, and procedures to best manage the Town's finances.
- Provide support on a wide range of fiscal issues to the Advisory Committee, Select Board, and other Town boards, committees and departments.

- Stays abreast of changing environment, technologies, laws, etc. Plan and implement strategies to adjust to and take advantage of the same.

Accounting (50%)

- Maintain the comprehensive financial records of the Town.
- Maintain the chart of accounts.
- Develop, implement, and manage the Town's accounting system and procedures and ensure its financial integrity, including the establishment of internal controls for revenue and expenditures.
- Review all revenue postings and monitor expenditures of all Town funds: examines vouchers, department bills, and payrolls for appropriateness of expenditure, and for accuracy and availability of funds before payment.
- Reconcile Treasurer/Collector cash balance with the GL cash balance.
- Provide timely and accurate financial information, and ensure the integrity of such data by instituting proper internal controls.
- Oversee weekly warrant processing, including accounts payable, payroll, and processing of cash receipts.
- Ensure Town compliance with municipal finance laws; keeps updated knowledge of MGL and DOR accounting policies and procedures.
- Ensure that no claim or payable against the Town is fraudulent, unlawful, or excessive.
- Controls the expenditures of Town subsidiary and control accounts, school and Town grants and revolving accounts, ensuring compliance with the authority to spend.

Reporting (10%)

- Develop and prepare monthly reports to track all the Town's financial activity; ensure the funds are reconciled on a monthly basis.
- Develop and prepare year-end financial reports to include the balance sheet, and revenue and expense statements for the audit process and for the DOR as required.
- Compile and submit required state and federal reports during and at close of fiscal year.
- Oversee the preparation of the annual GFOA CAFR document.

Audit (5%)

- Coordinate the annual Town financial audit, and serve as liaison with independent auditors.
- Oversee the implementation of audit requirements and recommendations.
- Review audit reports and monitor and report on progress on compliance with auditors' recommendations.

Communication (5%)

- Interact with other Finance office staff, Town Manager, and other departments to ensure smooth operation of the office and organization.
- Provide up-to-date information to departments and financial committees about revenue forecasts, budgets, expenditures, and other financial information as required.
- Work with Town Manager's office to address inquiries from committees and the public on financial and accounting issue.

Other related duties as assigned (5%)

Education and Experience

Must have a bachelor's degree in accounting, or related degree from an accredited college or program. A minimum of 5-7 years of experience, preferably in a municipal accounting office or a private audit firm with direct responsibility for municipal audits, with a solid working knowledge of municipal accounting functions is required. A Certified Public Accounting (CPA) is preferred.

Required Qualifications

- Comprehensive knowledge of governmental accounting; thorough knowledge of computerized financial systems and spreadsheet applications in municipal finance; thorough knowledge of practices and principles of generally accepted government accounting principles.
- Thorough knowledge of state and federal laws and regulations related to municipal finance operations; thorough knowledge of Massachusetts General Laws relating to municipal accounting.
- Thorough knowledge of municipal budget procedures, cash management, pensions, treasury functions, assessing functions, debt management, insurance and health benefits; working knowledge of overall municipal operations.
- Ability to develop short-term and long-range comprehensive financial plans and analysis; ability to oversee and maintain detailed and accurate records using data processing; ability to learn new computer technology.
- Ability to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret complex financial data.
- Knowledge of budgeting, revenue forecasting, debt issuance and management, capital improvement planning, payroll tax laws and retirement laws is helpful.
- Experience with SoftRight municipal software and Harper's payroll and HR system is preferred.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with town staff, officials, department heads, state agencies, financial advisors and banks, etc.
- Ability to make presentations to elected officials and the public; ability to manage multiple priorities.
- Ability to plan and prioritize department operations to meet established statutory deadlines.
- Ability to assign, train, and supervise staff; ability to prepare and administer an operating budget for the department and town.
- Aptitude for working with and explaining policies and procedures to people.
- High level of customer service skills to engender trust and confidence.
- Excellent verbal and written communication, customer service, and organization skills required.
- Average or better Microsoft Outlook, Word, Excel skills are required.



Compensation Package

The Town of Cohasset will offer an employment agreement and compensation package that is competitive with comparable area communities, with an annual salary of \$127,500. Additional compensation may be available for the successful candidate whose experience exceeds the minimum.

An attractive [benefits package](#), including health and retirement plans, is part of the Director of Finance/Town Accountant's total compensation.

How To Apply

Interested applicants should send cover letter and résumé, in confidence, via email to:

Apply@CommunityParadigm.com

Subject: Cohasset Director of Finance/Town Accountant

Submit a single PDF containing both cover letter and résumé.

Position is open until filled. Application materials will be reviewed as they are received and in accordance with the outlined qualifications. A selection of finalists will be chosen for further evaluation, reference checks, and background reviews before being advanced to the Town Manager for consideration.

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

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

The Town of Cohasset is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.