

# Fairhaven, MA – Town Administrator



## Position Statement

Fairhaven, MA (16,000 pop.), is a charming seaside community located on the shore of Massachusetts' Buzzards Bay, approximately one mile from New Bedford, 35 miles east of Providence, R.I., and 50 miles south of Boston. [Fairhaven](#) is a community of homes, commercial development, the marine trades, and industrial companies. The Town, settled in 1653, has a rich history dating back to the days of the Pilgrims. Fairhaven was incorporated in 1812 after separating from New Bedford and grew in prosperity during the whaling days in the 1800s. The Town's most remarkable features are the magnificent European-style public buildings built between 1885 and 1906 by Standard Oil Company executive and millionaire Henry Huttleston Rogers, a native of the Town.



Fairhaven has an S&P rating of AA+ and an FY21 operating budget of approximately \$52 million. Fairhaven's population skews slightly older than the state average with approximately 20 percent of residents in the over 65 age group compared to the state average of about 15 percent. The Town tends to be fiscally conservative. Fairhaven's current challenges include the implementation of necessary wastewater treatment plant upgrades which will be funded via the Sewer Enterprise Fund, implementing the recommendations of the Public Facilities Improvement Plan of which the first priority is a Public Safety Facility, enhancing collaboration and unifying Town staff as well as a desire for economic development that will allow the community to retain its rural charm and character. Fairhaven's local government is led by a three-member Board of Selectmen.

To serve as the second Town Administrator since this form of local government was enacted in 2014, Fairhaven is seeking a seasoned, collaborative leader with strong financial acumen, who has the ability to unify and make difficult decisions, has strategic vision, excellent communication skills, and experience with economic development and personnel management. Candidates should have a bachelor's degree (advanced degree preferred) in public administration or a related field. Preferred candidates will have a proven record of leadership, exceptional financial skills, and be able to build strong, collaborative relationships. The Town Administrator should be approachable and highly communicative. Given Fairhaven's seaside location, candidates should understand coastal resiliency issues and the importance of the blue economy.

**Annual salary: \$155K+/- DOQ.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Fairhaven is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

## Government

Fairhaven has a Board of Selectmen-Town Administrator form of government with Representative Town Meeting. The [Board of Selectmen](#) serves as the Town's principle elected executive board and, acting through the Town Administrator, are responsible for the day-to-day operations of town government. The Town Administrator position was established via a Special Act in November 2014. The first Town Administrator, who is retiring, established support for the position and instituted the shifts in power and responsibility required by the Special Act. The next [Town Administrator](#) must exhibit professionalism, superior substantive knowledge, and confidence.

Fairhaven has a number of elected positions, boards, and committees including: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Board of Public Works, Planning Board, Board of Health, Housing Authority, Commissioner of Trust Funds, Town Clerk, and Town Moderator. Fairhaven has two fire stations, a central police department, one library, and its own school department with two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The elementary schools were built within the past eight years. High school students may also attend either Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School or Bristol County Agricultural High School. The Town of Acushnet has no high school and Acushnet students are, therefore, able to choose from New Bedford High School, Fairhaven High School, Bristol Aggie, and GNBVTRHS. In recent years, Fairhaven has been successful in drawing many students from Acushnet and this has resulted in very significant financial benefit for the Town.



## Finances

Fairhaven has an FY21 operating budget of approximately \$52 million. The Town is typically conservative with its spending, but strongly supports investing in the upkeep of its historic buildings. In FY20, free cash was certified at \$4.39 million, the Town had a General Fund Stabilization Fund of \$3.09 million and General Fund Capital Stabilization Fund of \$5.66 million. The FY20 tax rate is \$11.06 for residential and \$22.04 for commercial, industrial, and personal properties. The property tax base is nearly 86% residential, about 10.7% commercial, and approximately 1% industrial. Nearly 45% of the Town's revenue comes from the tax levy, with about 17.3% from state aid. Local receipts bring in about 25% of the annual revenue. New growth in FY20 was \$229,325. The Town's non-Proposition 2½ excluded debt service ratio is currently 0.55% of the budget with projections that it will rise to 0.83% in FY22, 1.8% in FY23, 1.19% in FY24, and 1.11% in FY25. At the October Special Town Meeting, the Finance Committee noted that there was a 2021 shortfall in revenues of \$877,572. The amount has been covered through \$387,399 in cuts in the general fund operating budget and \$490,173 from free cash/surplus revenues.

Like most municipalities, Fairhaven is facing potential revenue constraints due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis as well as the overall pressure of increasing costs and infrastructure needs. Preferred Town Administrator candidates will have exceptional financial acumen with a proven record of building balanced budgets that reflect needs while adhering to the Town's financial policies and respecting its limited resources. It is important for the next Town Administrator to maintain the good working relationship with school officials that currently exists.

According to a 2017 Moody's issuer comment, Fairhaven has a robust financial position, and a strong socioeconomic profile with a sizable tax base. It has a moderate pension liability with an affordable debt burden. Commercial businesses are located primarily along Route 6. There is a desire for some economic development to help fund town services, support infrastructure needs and provide additional employment for residents, but available land is limited.

The Town has made a concerted effort in recent years to seek and apply for grants and has been very successful in doing so. The new Town Administrator should be willing to continue these efforts to add to Fairhaven's revenue and allow the Town to provide services that would not otherwise be attainable.

## Economic and Community Development

Fairhaven is a seaside community with a working waterfront. While retail trade is now the leading segment of the economy, fishing and ship maintenance are still important segments. Acushnet Company, a leading manufacturer of golf equipment, is located in Fairhaven, and there is a burgeoning healthcare-driven job cluster along Route 240. The Town's economic development goals include preserving the financial viability of the working waterfront, maintaining healthy commercial occupancies along Route 6 and other commercial areas, supporting mixed-use projects, support of small business incubation and growth, and collaboration with New Bedford and other area towns on workforce training and regional economic development. The Northeast Maritime Institute (NEMI), located in the Town Center, is a private college that offers training and education for careers in the maritime industry. Maritime-related business in Fairhaven represents a small but vital industry cluster and it is an important aspect of the Town's legacy and identity. The next Town Administrator should be ready to study the benefits an institution of higher education in the Maritime field provides in our community and be able to work with leadership at NEMI to support their expansion plans. As the Town is largely built-out, future development will mostly consist of redevelopment. Nearly 90% of businesses in Town can be considered "small business." Apart from the commercial and industrial areas and three working farms, Fairhaven is mainly a quiet residential community. The next Town Administrator will be expected to help advance the goals and objectives detailed in [Fairhaven 2040](#), the Town's master plan.

### Important Links:

- [Town of Fairhaven](#)
- [FY21, FY20, FY19 Operating Budgets](#)
- [FY21, FY20, FY21 Capital Improvement Budgets](#)
- [2017 Moody's Issuer Comment](#)
- [Collective Bargaining Agreements](#)
- [2020 Town Meeting Warrant](#)
- [General Town Code](#)
- [Fairhaven 2040 Master Plan](#)
- [Community Development Strategy](#)
- [FY21 Policy Goals with Objectives](#)
- [Annual Town Reports](#)
- [Information on demographic trends](#)
- [Public Safety Facility Study](#)
- [Fairhaven Public Improvement Plan](#)

## Open Space and Recreation

Fairhaven strives to preserve and protect its agricultural resources and landscapes, cultural and historic places, open space, recreational, and forest and marine resources. The Town has a total area of 14.1 square miles and 29.4 miles of shore property as well as significant rural areas, including three working farms. Fairhaven is home to a public state beach overlooking Buzzards Bay, two large public parks, several recreational marinas, commercial wharves, a yacht club, historical Fort Phoenix and the Rogers buildings, and provides free walking tours of scenic and historic sites. Candidates should understand the value of protecting open space, coastal waters, and historic structures. The Town is bordered by the Acushnet River and New Bedford to the west, Mattapoisett to the east, Buzzards Bay to the south, and Acushnet to the north. The Fairhaven Recreation Department oversees youth sports programs, a fitness room, a summer youth program, and school vacation programs as well as adult exercise, wellness, and day trip programs each year.

### Current projects

- Approximately \$30+ million for wastewater treatment plant upgrades to be funded through the Sewer Enterprise Fund via sewer user fees. This project is scheduled to begin in 2026.
- A \$1.4 million high school turf field project to be funded with surplus revenue and \$200,000 from the high school's trust fund.
- Ongoing maintenance of infrastructure.

### Potential projects

- Implementation of the \$110 million Public Facilities Improvement Plan of which the first priority is a new public safety facility, expected cost of about \$50 million, which would require a Proposition 2 ½ override.
- Work with committee to determine best use of the former Rogers School building.





## The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree (with advanced degree preferred), preferably in public administration, public policy, business administration, law, or a related field.
- Experience as a Town or City Manager/Administrator is preferred.
- Five years executive experience, managing a complex transparent organization similar in scale and complexity to the Town, preferably in a municipal setting, is preferred.
- Strong leadership, communication, and organizational skills.
- Strong financial acumen and budgeting skills.
- Economic and community development experience.
- Ability to unify; ability to break down silos.
- Ability to be fair but firm.
- Strong ability to articulate issues and achieve buy-in.
- Skilled in personnel management and collective bargaining.
- Analytical and technologically savvy.
- Forward thinking; strategic; diplomatic.
- A morale builder and creative problem-solver.
- Knowledgeable of municipal management best practices and ability to implement them.
- Team-oriented, innovative, highly ethical, and calm under pressure.
- Strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Enjoys engaging with the community.
- Ability to develop strong relationships.
- Experienced in goal setting and long-term planning.

## How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé via email, in a single PDE, by December 9, 2020, 5:00 p.m. EST to:

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

**Subject: Fairhaven  
Town Administrator Search**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Principal  
Community Paradigm Associates  
[Blynch@communityparadigm.com](mailto:Blynch@communityparadigm.com)  
978-621-6733

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