

Great Barrington, MA – Town Manager



Position Statement

The Town of Great Barrington is a beautiful and vibrant community of approximately 7,200 year-round residents. It has a tradition of highly responsive government service, strong citizen engagement, and is known for its active downtown, beautiful landscapes, and abundant open space. Located in Berkshire County in the southwest corner of Massachusetts, Great Barrington is bordered by West Stockbridge, Stockbridge, Lee, Tyringham, Monterey, New Marlborough, Sheffield, Egremont, and Alford. The Town is located 20 miles south of Pittsfield, 46 miles west of Springfield, 134 miles north-northeast of New York City, and 135 miles west of Boston. It has 91 road miles, 162 streets, and 7,264 acres of state forest land.

Great Barrington is a thriving place to live, work, and visit year-round. There are a significant number of second homes and vacation homes in Great Barrington, and the population more than doubles during the busy summer and autumn months. Since the pandemic, many seasonal residents who work remotely have made Great Barrington their year-round residence, and many commute to their second homes in Town from Boston or New York City on the weekends as both cities are 2.5 hours away. Vacationers enjoy Great Barrington's beautiful landscapes, hiking trails, cultural activities, shops, and restaurants.

The community consists primarily of residential properties with small business and retail districts located along major thoroughfares. The downtown is a vibrant and charming area with locally owned restaurants and shops, professional services, and creative industry businesses including graphic designers, musicians, artists, and writers. Great Barrington supports appropriate economic development that does not detract from its historic charm and scenic vistas.

Great Barrington's goal is to remain a small town that presents a vibrant combination of rural landscapes and urban infrastructure. The Town seeks an experienced municipal management professional who can help balance this goal while effectively managing an increasing need for services along with rising costs and decreasing levy capacity. In the search for Great Barrington's next Town Manager, the Town is seeking a seasoned manager with exceptional leadership, financial, and communication skills interested in taking on challenging opportunities in a beautiful setting. The next Town Manager will face challenges related to aging infrastructure, possible acquisition of one of the privately owned water districts, an increasing number of costly priorities, and addressing workforce housing needs.

Great Barrington is seeking experienced candidates who will embrace the Town's history and cultural environment, possess financial acumen to balance priorities, and engage with residents and other stakeholders. The Town Manager will manage and lead a strong management team and balance a comprehensive list of priorities while being mindful of the financial impact on taxpayers.

Communication is key for the next Town Manager, both inside and outside town government. Employees appreciate a Town Manager who listens and provides constructive feedback, and the community wants a Town Manager who regularly shares information about current and ongoing issues and projects. The Town Manager should be actively engaged in the community and be able to articulate issues to various boards, committees, residents, and other stakeholders. The Town of Great Barrington is committed to providing quality services to the community through effective planning and targeted investments.

Annual salary: The Town Manager's current annual salary is \$162,000. Salary for the successful candidate is negotiable, commensurate with qualifications and experience. The compensation package includes health and retirement plans. Great Barrington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



Government

[Great Barrington](#) has a five-member Selectboard that serves as the governing body of the town. Selectboard members are elected to staggered three-year terms and is responsible for setting goals, developing long-range plans, adopting policies, creating special-purpose bodies, issuing licenses, and appointing the Town Manager, Town Counsel, and a variety of boards and committees. The Selectboard is also responsible for any necessary investigations and reports as well as for reviewing the annual budget proposed by the Town Manager. An [organizational chart](#) for Great Barrington and the [Town's Code](#) are posted on the Town's website. Under the [Town Charter](#), the Town Manager is the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town. The Town Manager supervises all Town departments, except the school department, and directs Town operations. The Town currently has 14 departments and approximately 125 employees, 70 of whom are full-time. The [Powers and Duties](#) of the Town Manager are specified in Section 6 of the Town Charter.

Education

Great Barrington has three school buildings with approximately 1,500 students. All three school facilities are situated on a beautiful 71-acre campus in Great Barrington. The Town is one of three members of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District which consists of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. The Town's FY25 assessment for the school district, which represents approximately 70% of the district's cost, is \$21,040,872. The district offices are housed in a newly renovated, state-of-the-art space in Stockbridge. The elementary and middle schools are both state-of-the-art facilities, while the high school was built in 1969. The district is in the process of deciding whether to pursue a rehabilitation of the existing high school, an expansion of the facility, or new construction. While the effort to invest in the high school failed twice at Town Meeting, if it is approved in 2025, it is anticipated to require a multi-million-dollar debt exclusion vote. It is imperative that the new Town Manager work well with the school superintendent on both the annual operating budget and the potential high school project.

Finances

Great Barrington's FY25 [budget](#) is \$45 million, with a town operating budget of \$16.5 million and a capital budget of almost \$10.3 million. The Town's assessment for its share of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District Budget is \$21 million. Like most communities in the Commonwealth, the Town relies heavily on revenues generated by local property taxes: 82% of the FY25 budget is funded from taxation; other revenues include local receipts, state aid, certified free cash, and funding from grants. It has a Standard & Poor's bond rating of AAA and S&P cited the Town's extremely strong market values, consistent operating performance, significant reserves, and manageable debt profile. The Town established an Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) trust in FY24 to address its \$15.2 million unfunded OPEB liability, which it currently funds on a pay-as-you-go basis. The Town initially funded the trust with \$829,000 and plans to contribute \$100,000 to \$250,000 annually, but the Town has not contributed a significant amount in the annual budget due to increasing operational expenditures and debt service pressures. In December 2024, its Stabilization Fund was \$757,978 while its Special Purpose Stabilization Fund Balance was \$1,513,054. Free cash was certified at \$10,170,990. Its 2023 Unreserved Undesignated Fund Balance (UUFB) was \$10,493,886. Its FY25 single tax rate for residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property is \$13.79. Residential tax revenues represent about 83% of the tax base compared to 17% percent for commercial, industrial, and personal property. The tax levy (\$30,006,724) accounts for 76.51% of the total budget; state aid (\$1,433,081) 3.66%; local receipts (\$2,965,250) 7.56%; and other (\$4,815,882) makes up the remaining 12.28%. The average single-family tax bill in FY25 is \$8,294; the average single-family home value is \$601,443.

The levy capacity has been decreasing over the past decade as the Town has taken an aggressive approach to addressing deferred maintenance of its facilities and infrastructure. These capital projects, in addition to increasing school costs and rising debt service costs, have put a strain on the budget. The Town is seeking a manager who has a strong financial background, debt management skills, and can balance the increasing needs of the Town while keeping expectations, and thus costs, realistic and sustainable.

Important Links:

- [Town of Great Barrington](#)
- [Master Plan](#)
- [Great Barrington Public Schools](#)
- [Town Meeting](#)
- [Annual Reports](#)
- [FY25 Budget](#)
- [Great Barrington Town Charter](#)
- [Great Barrington General Bylaws/Town Code](#)
- [Priority Planning Worksheet](#)



Culture

Great Barrington is home to two public libraries – Mason Public Library and Ramsdell Public Library – both of which enjoy heavy use by residents and visitors. The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center offers a variety of music, dance, and theatrical performances, and The Guthrie Center is a live music venue. Its downtown is a state-designated Cultural District. The Berkshire region is known as a haven for artists and nature lovers, and Great Barrington, with its many cultural events, shops, and restaurants, is one of the most popular destinations in the Berkshires for vacationers, weekenders, and day-trippers. Boasting breathtaking natural beauty year-round, the Berkshire region is an internationally renowned cultural and recreational mecca. Cultural attractions and museums include Tanglewood, which is the summer home of the Boston Symphony

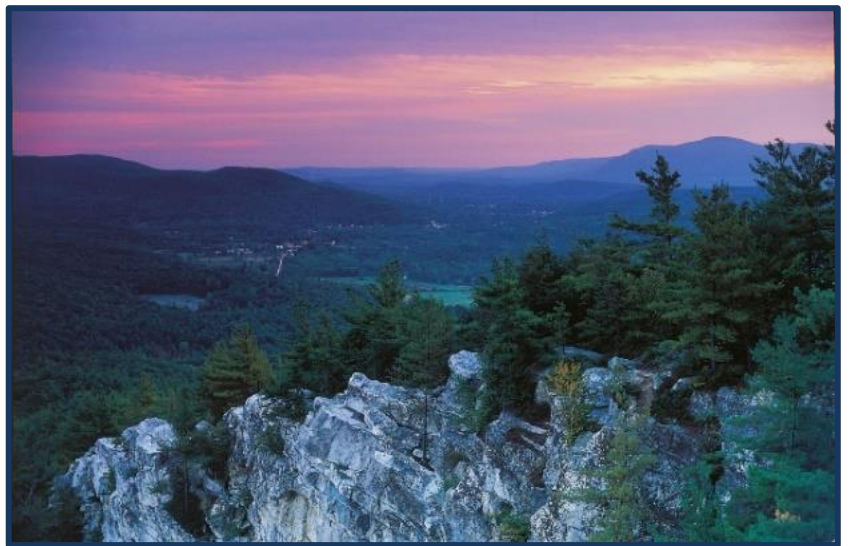


Orchestra; Jacob's Pillow Dance Theatre; Berkshire Theater Festival; Barrington Stage Company; the Norman Rockwell Museum; the Du Bois Freedom Center at Great Barrington; the Great Barrington Historical Society & Museum; MASS MoCA; Berkshire Choral; Williams College Museum of Art; the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health; Shakespeare & Company; Berkshire Botanical Gardens; and the historic homes Chesterwood, Naumkeag, and the Mount, Edith Wharton's summer estate. In addition to its many cultural attractions, access to outdoor activities in the region during all four seasons abound, including skiing, golf, hiking, rock climbing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, and cycling.

Great Barrington is a desirable community in which to live, work, and raise a family. Its historic past is celebrated and treasured.

Open Space and Recreation

Great Barrington is either home to, or in close proximity to, a substantial amount of open space and recreational venues. Monument Mountain Reservation, a 503-acre open space reservation, and Ski Butternut resort are located in Town. The [Lake Mansfield Recreation Area](#) features a 29-acre pond and the adjacent 29-acre Conservation Forest with a ¼ mile walking loop trail. [Beartown State Forest](#), with more than 10,000 acres and 198 acres of recreational parkland, is partially located in Great Barrington, and the Town is in close proximity to Catamount Mountain Resort. There are [trails](#) for walking, hiking, and mountain biking as well as areas for camping, rock climbing, cross-country and downhill skiing, and snowshoeing. Great Barrington was named an official Appalachian Trail community in 2009. The region also has numerous lakes, ponds, and rivers for swimming, kayaking, canoeing, tubing, and fishing. The stunning vistas and area wildlife are a delight for photographers.



Economic Development

The economic challenges facing the Town include aging infrastructure, an aging population, the shift in its economy from manufacturing to services, the need for a more diversified and higher paying economic base, the need for workforce housing, and the likely effects of climate change.

While over 200 units, 50% of which are affordable, have been added to the housing stock since 2014, the lack of affordable housing options remains a critical issue. Great Barrington offers a variety of housing options; however, as a tourist and seasonal community, housing can be a challenge for year-round residents, particularly young families and citizens in search of affordable rental units. While the Town has met the state-mandated 10% subsidized housing level, many employees of local businesses find it challenging to afford the purchase or rental prices in Great Barrington, so they commute from other towns. Thus, a number of Great Barrington businesses have difficulty securing enough workers. Efforts have been underway to address the lack of housing, including the creation of the [Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust Fund](#) (AHTF) in 2017 to create and preserve affordable housing, various zoning changes to encourage housing development, and the use of CPA funds. Several housing projects are proposed, although progress is moving at a slower pace than expected, including Berkshire Cottages at 100 Bridge Street, a project of the CDC of South Berkshire that will result in the development of 150 units of affordable housing, and the proposed redevelopment of Monument Mills, a National Historic Register-listed mill complex, that will produce approximately 100 mixed-income residential units, office and retail space, restaurant/café space, and a river walk reconnecting the village to the adjacent Housatonic River. The planned redevelopment of the historic 1909 former Housatonic Elementary School is underway. The Town sold the school, which had been vacant for 18 years, to a developer who will renovate the building to create eight affordable apartments. The AHTF purchased land and will be partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build 20 new homes. The project, which is supported by a state MassWorks grant, will begin in the summer of 2025.



The estimated completion date for the long-anticipated redevelopment of the former Searles School by 79 Bridge Street Realty LLC has been pushed out to 2025. In 2016, the Town sold the former Searles School to the developer, which intends to convert the building into a 60,000-square-foot luxury hotel with 88 rooms.

As in many communities, childcare is an issue in Great Barrington. To address this growing issue, the Selectboard is creating a new Child Care Committee which will be initiated in 2025.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) provide assistance to the Town of Great Barrington to promote economic development. BRPC secured Economic Development District designation on behalf of Berkshire County from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in early 2022. The [Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) 2023-2027](#) provides insight into the region's economic strengths and weaknesses and the vision for the future of the region's economy. The CEDS Plan identifies four priority economic development plans in Great Barrington: Berkshire Cottages at 100 Bridge Street; 79 Bridge Street, LLC/Searles School redevelopment; Housatonic School Redevelopment; and the Monument Mills Area Reuse.

The Town will undertake a new Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2025 and, pending funding, a new Master Plan in 2025.



Potential Projects/Challenges

In 2019, the Town Manager and the Selectboard initiated a prioritization process in which the Town Manager and the Board meet twice a year to review the priority projects and initiatives. Called the [Priority Planning Worksheet](#), this “living document” guides Town administration in its budgeting and operations to ensure that the collective priorities of the Town are being addressed and enables Town administration to focus its resources on achieving these priorities. The Town would like to continue this collaborative planning process with the new Town Manager to ensure continuity of the process and continued achievement of collective goals. The Priority Planning document emphasizes that the # 1 priority, and perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the next Town Manager, is to address water issues including the Housatonic Water Works, a privately owned utility that serves over 800 homes in the Housatonic area of Town. Residents in this water district are seeking action from the Town to address poor water quality issues, poor infrastructure, and various system management issues. The next Town Manager will have to develop a plan to acquire the private utility and create an enterprise fund to manage it as a municipal utility.

Affordable and workforce housing is another top priority. While the Town has met the state’s 10% affordable housing threshold, the rising cost of housing and lack of inventory is a detriment to those seeking to live and work in the Town. As the hub of the regional tourist and seasonal destination, Great Barrington would benefit from a Town Manager who has experience working in a community with a seasonal tourism industry and population.

As more housing is developed, call volumes for police and fire will continue to increase. The fire department is predominantly a call department. Similar to fire departments across the state, it is very challenging to recruit and retain call firefighters. The next Town Manager may have to evaluate the staffing needs of the fire department and develop a sustainable staffing plan. The Town is seeking to be removed from Civil Service in order to be able to fill positions in the police department. The police department has restructured its command staff and implemented several new community programs. While the department has been successful securing grants and funding for equipment and programs, upcoming budgets will be difficult. The Town may need to explore regional opportunities to collaborate on services.

Transportation options in this rural community are limited. The regional TriTown Connector microtransit program, funded in part by MassDOT grants, has been successful. The program began operations in May 2023 as an expansion of the senior transportation program, and serves older adults and people with disabilities, as well as the area workforce and employers, in six towns in Southern Berkshire.

Other identified priorities for which work is underway include the continued need to maintain and repair aging infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, and bridges (two are closed and one is a modular structure that needs to be replaced). The Town’s capital needs remain high, and many of the needs identified in previous five-year CIP plans have been deferred. Aging bridges, buildings, fleets, roads, and systems are constantly in need of restoration, repair, and replacement. The needed sewer plant upgrades will also be costly.

One of the Town’s largest employers, Bard College, announced in November that it plans to sell its 275-acre property. The college employs over 200 people; the loss of these employees in Town will have a significant impact on downtown businesses and local economic activity. The next Town Manager may need to work with the stakeholders to evaluate the highest and best potential re-use options.

The increasing demand for services, the need for critical infrastructure improvements, the proposed high school project, and numerous other capital priorities, combined with the decreasing levy capacity and rising operational and borrowing costs, will pose a major challenge to the next Town Manager. The Town Manager will have to work with the stakeholders in the community to prioritize upcoming projects and expenditures and set a realistic and sustainable budget and capital plan for the future.

Great Barrington’s location as a hub in the Berkshire region will continue to put a strain on the budget and staff. The next Town Manager will need to balance the needs of municipal departments with the demands placed on them from the community and the region. The management team is excellent although there may be some turnover in the near future in department head positions due to retirements or attrition. Succession planning needs to continue in order to prepare for such turnover and maintain smooth operations.



Great Barrington MASSACHUSETTS

The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree in public administration or a similar discipline.
- Minimum 5 years of full-time paid experience in a supervisory administrative position in municipal government.
- A master's degree may be substituted for not more than 2 years of paid experience.
- Strong experience as a Town Manager/Administrator or as an Assistant Town Manager/Administrator.
- Strong leadership and team-building skills.
- Skilled in financial management, capital planning, and budgeting.
- Collaborative, active listener, team builder.
- Innovative, forward-thinking, and strategic.
- Strong diplomatic and negotiating skills.
- Experience working with Town Counsel on litigation matters.
- Engage and communicate with community groups, businesses, residents, and other stakeholders.
- Community oriented and visible at Town functions and events.
- Ability to juggle the competing needs and interests of the community within realistic financial parameters.
- Supportive of Town staff while balancing the needs of the community and fiscal constraints.
- Residency required within 1 year of appointment, unless waived by the Selectboard.

How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé, in confidence, via email, in a single PDF, by May 22, 2025, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

Apply@CommunityParadigm.com

Subject: Great Barrington Town Manager

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

Bernard Lynch, Managing Principal
Community Paradigm Associates
BLynch@CommunityParadigm.com

The Town of Great Barrington, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

