

# MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA, MA – Town Administrator

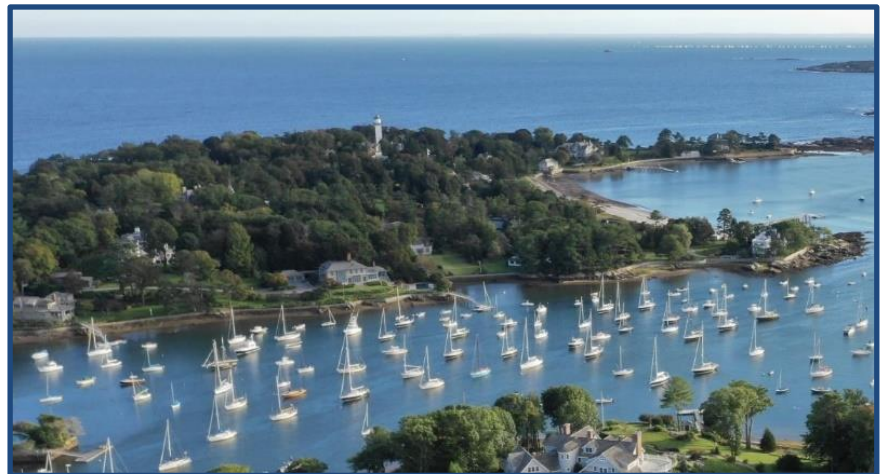


## Position Statement

Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA (pop. 5,400) is a classic New England coastal community located on Cape Ann along the North Shore. Manchester has a small but bustling harbor, a walkable downtown, and nearly 13 miles of shoreline dotted with beaches, islands, and recreational opportunities.

Situated 30 miles northeast of Boston, Manchester-by-the-Sea has two exits off Route 128. With a commuter rail station located downtown, the Newburyport/Rockport line offers easy access to and from Boston. The town is bordered by Gloucester to the east, Essex and Hamilton to the north, Wenham and Beverly to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Residents are drawn to Manchester for its picturesque landscape and coastal lifestyle – a place where they can hike, bike, birdwatch, swim, boat, fish, or stroll along the beach. Its oceanfront location also presents challenges, including an influx of summertime visitors, water safety, and impacts of climate change.



With an Aaa bond rating, Manchester is a financially stable, well-run community led by a five-member Select Board and Town Administrator who is retiring after 12 years in town.

Residents are well-informed, engaged, and enjoy taking part in civic activities and community events. The town is seeking a Town Administrator who is visible in the community, willing to embrace an active group of volunteers, and is a transparent communicator.

Manchester is part of the [Manchester Essex Regional School District](#) and takes great pride in its K-12 system. However, enrollment fluctuations and funding disparities between the two towns have created challenges for the district. One major upcoming project calls for addressing building needs at the Essex Elementary School.

The town is facing several other significant infrastructure and capital projects over the next several years, which are expected to cost more than \$100 million. Manchester needs a Town Administrator with a strong financial acumen who has experience managing building projects. The next Town Administrator should be a collaborative problem-solver who will work with Manchester's stakeholders to prioritize the town's needs and develop a financially responsible plan the community can afford and support.

**Annual Salary: \$180,000+/- DOQ.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package, including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience.

## Government

Manchester-by-the-Sea has an Open Town Meeting form of government with a Town Administrator and a five-member Select Board. The Board appoints the Town Administrator and most boards, committees, and commissions. The town has a highly energized civic-minded volunteer corps with residents who are engaged in local events and government. Manchester has a stable and responsive local government and is currently working with an outside consultant to conduct an operations audit, including a review of its organizational structure. The current Town Administrator is retiring in June after serving Manchester for 12 years. The town is seeking a visible, approachable leader who has a strong understanding of municipal government and experience in succession planning. The new Town Administrator should be an exceptional communicator with an ability to listen, encourage discussion, and bring people of varied backgrounds and opinions together. The town has a Special Act from 1999 that created a strong Town Administrator position with hiring/firing authority.

## Finances

Manchester-by-the-Sea has a fiscal year 2025 budget of \$42.3 million, about three-quarters of which is funded through its tax base. The local tax levy makes up \$33.1 million; state funding, \$309,029; local receipts, \$3.4 million; enterprise funds, \$2.8 million; free cash, \$1.1 million; and other, \$1.3 million. As a small residential community with a limited commercial base, most of the tax burden falls on homeowners. Residential taxes account for \$31.2 million, representing about 94 percent of the tax levy. Commercial taxes raise about \$1.1 million; industrial, \$59,000; and personal property, \$740,370. The average single family tax bill is \$15,649. As of July 1, 2024, free cash was certified at \$3.2 million. The town has an Aaa bond rating, signifying its longstanding financial stability. The town would like a collaborative leader who welcomes innovative solutions and regional partnerships. With several capital and infrastructure projects looming and education costs rising, Manchester-by-the-Sea is seeking a Town Administrator with a background in municipal finance who will take a common-sense approach to balancing the town's needs with the mounting financial pressure faced by homeowners.

### Important Links:

- [Select Board Newsletters](#)
- [Town Website](#)
- [Town Meetings and elections](#)
- [Bylaws & Regulations](#)
- [Budget Information](#)
- [Current Projects](#)
- [Business Guide](#)
- [About Manchester-by-the-Sea](#)



## Education

Manchester-by-the-Sea is part of the Manchester Essex Regional School District comprising the Essex Elementary School, Manchester Memorial Elementary School, and Manchester Essex Regional Middle High School in Manchester. The two communities joined forces in 2000, but the high-achieving district is struggling with enrollment and funding challenges with a recent override request turned down by Essex voters. The Middle-High School is 13 years old. Manchester Memorial Elementary was built in 2021 for \$52.2 million, to house up to 335 pupils and now plans are in the works to address building needs at the Essex Elementary School. In January 2023, the Massachusetts School Building Authority approved the Essex Elementary School into the eligibility phase of its grant process. The towns are now reviewing options, which may include a new building and/or combining students in Manchester. Manchester is also part of the [Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School](#). The town is seeking a Town Administrator who understands working with a regional school district and will work closely with local and state officials to address funding concerns and disparities.



## Economic and Community Development

Manchester has a walkable downtown where residents can shop and dine but also conduct daily business at a hardware store, barber, pharmacy, or florist. Residents support the local businesses and are eager to maintain the quaint character and viability of this commercial area. As the first major new commercial project in decades, Cell Signaling Technology is building a laboratory on Atwater Avenue on the north side of Route 128. About 500 scientists, administrators, and staff will work at the new complex, which will boost the town's commercial tax revenue.

The town also understands the need for more affordable housing, particularly for longtime residents looking to downsize but remain in Manchester. The town is fighting a proposed 136-unit apartment complex that would be constructed under the state's 40B law and provide 34 affordable units. Town officials prefer to attract a "friendly" project that would produce more affordable options within the core village area and help the town meet its affordable housing target. Manchester is seeking a Town Administrator with experience in community planning who will work to address affordable housing in a way that fits the needs and character of the town.

## Open Space and Recreation

Manchester-by-the-Sea is an active coastal community with a variety of open space and recreational resources for those who enjoy the outdoors. Manchester Harbor is the geographic center of the town and its defining feature. There are two yacht clubs, several public and private piers, boat yards, a public boat-launching ramp, public kayak storage racks, a sailing school, and a bike shop. The Harbormaster is responsible for the use and safety of the town's harbor and oversees the placing and management of more than 600 moorings. Residents and visitors are drawn to its harbor and beaches, but the town is also home to tidal land, fresh water, and wildlife habitats. Key attractions are Singing Beach, Dexter Pond Conservation Area, Powder House Reservation, and Coolidge Reservation.

While its coastal location has significant benefits, it also creates unique challenges such as maintaining, protecting and monitoring the harbor and beaches, and planning for and addressing the impacts associated with climate change, rising seas and flooding.

Manchester-by-the-Sea needs a Town Administrator who understands the challenges associated with being an oceanfront community and will bring stakeholders together to protect the town's cherished natural assets and advance its resiliency.



## Current Issues/Projects

Manchester-by-the-Sea has several large-scale and costly infrastructure and capital projects in the works or looming that are expected to total well over \$100 million. Large facility needs include:

- Senior/Community Center.
- PFAS filtration systems to remove contaminants from the water system.
- A new DPW facility to replace the 60-year-old garage.
- New space for police and fire outside the flood zone.
- A school construction project to address needs at the Essex Elementary School.

Other needs include harbor dredging and large stretches of water and sewer pipe replacement.

The next Town Administrator will play a key role in prioritizing, planning, budgeting, and managing these projects. The candidate should have a strong financial background, an ability to think outside the box for innovative solutions, and experience managing building projects.





## The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree required (with a master's preferred), preferably in public administration or a related field.
- Experience as a Town Administrator/Manager or head of a significant department in a complex municipal organization, or professional equivalent.
- Team player who fosters a cohesive working environment among staff, boards, and residents.
- Principled, honest, and ethical.
- Visible and approachable.
- Eager to engage, interact and listen to the community.
- Project management experience.
- Practical, common-sense approach.
- Familiarity with unique issues facing coastal communities.
- Clear, concise communicator internally and externally.
- Strong grasp of municipal government and finance.
- Understands working with a regional school system.
- Ability to delegate and hold staff to high standards
- Understanding of small-town government and ability to multi-task.
- Experience with succession planning.
- Seeks out innovative and creative solutions.
- Calm under pressure.
- Ability to pivot or change course when needed.
- Future thinking.
- Ability to identify and prioritize needs.
- High energy and enthusiastic.

## How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé via email, in a single PDF, by February 14, 2025, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

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

**Subject: Manchester-by-the-Sea  
Town Administrator**

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 Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass., is an  
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