

# Grafton, MA – Town Administrator



## Position Statement

Grafton, MA (19,000 pop.), is a community in an upward transition that seeks a talented Town Administrator to provide the leadership necessary for the town to achieve its ambitious goals. It is a semi-rural community located along the Massachusetts Turnpike in east central Massachusetts that is growing into more of a suburban community while also striving to maintain its character. The Town's manufacturing history and land development have been heavily influenced by its location and proximity to major waterways. [Grafton](#) has an AA+ rating and an FY21 budget of approximately \$67.6 million. The Town's finances are relatively healthy. There have been two Proposition 2 ½ overrides in the past decade to help resolve structural budgetary deficits. As with most communities, the ongoing pandemic is impacting Grafton's tax, fee, and permit revenues; however, in June, voters approved an override which will make up for the lower than originally expected revenue. Grafton's current challenges involve implementing the recommendations from a recent Fire Department organizational analysis, enhancing communications and collaboration, and maintaining its financial stability. Grafton's local government is led by a five-member Select Board. The Board is currently developing its FY21 goals and objectives.



Photo: Elizabeth Spinney

To serve as its next [Town Administrator](#), Grafton is seeking an experienced and collaborative leader with strong financial acumen, excellent communication skills, and economic development experience. Community engagement is an essential part of this position. The next Town Administrator should be innovative, strategic, approachable, and value transparency in government. Candidates with a master's degree in public administration or a related field from an accredited college or university are preferred; a bachelor's degree is required. Candidates must have served full-time as the Chief Administrative Officer of a city or town for not less than one year, or as an Assistant Chief Administrative Officer of a city or town for not less than three years, or served full-time as an agent of the Select Board for not less than three years, or any combination of the above for not less than three years. Preferred candidates will have a proven record of leadership, be proactive, strategic, and able to build collaborative relationships. The next Town Administrator should have a democratic management style, be approachable and responsive, and recognize the value of Continuous Quality Improvement.

**Annual salary: \$160K+/- DOQ.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Grafton is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity and inclusiveness in the community and workplace.

## Government

Grafton has a Select Board-Town Administrator form of government with open Town Meeting. The five-member [Select Board](#) is deemed the Chief Executive Office of the Town and serves as the chief policy making agency of Grafton. The Select Board appoints certain personnel and citizens to serve on various Town boards, issues a variety of licenses, and is responsible for preparing the Annual Town Report. The Select Board appoints the Town Administrator who serves as the chief administrative and fiscal officer for the Town. Residents want a Town government that is communicative and transparent.

Grafton has several elected positions, boards, and committees including: Select Board, School Committee, Board of Library Trustees, Black Stone Valley Regional Vocational District School Committee, and Town Moderator. The next Town Administrator must be skilled at collaboratively engaging with Grafton's various elected and appointed positions, boards, and committees. The Assistant Town Administrator recently accepted a position in another community and the position, which may be redefined, may be filled on a temporary basis prior to hiring the next Town Administrator. The former Town Accountant recently accepted a position as director of finance for the Grafton Public Schools and this key position may also be filled on a temporary basis prior to a new Town Administrator coming on board.

## Finances

Grafton's financial condition is relatively healthy. The Town has an FY21 budget of approximately \$67.6 million and a Standard and Poor's rating of AA+ with a stable outlook. In June, voters narrowly approved a \$4 million Proposition 2 ½ override to add \$3.2 million in funding to the municipal and school operating budgets as well as \$800,000 to the capital stabilization fund. The override will be incrementally added to property tax bills over five years. This was the second override approved during the past 10 years. In FY20, free cash was certified at \$1.96 million. The FY20 tax rate is \$16.50 for residential, commercial, and industrial properties. The property tax base is approximately 91% residential and about 4% commercial. Approximately 62% of the Town's revenue comes from the tax levy, with about 18.6% from state aid. Local receipts bring in about 14.2% of the annual revenue. New growth in FY20 was \$893,293. Maintaining or even improving Grafton's financial strength and bond rating while keeping tax increases to a minimum are priorities. Candidates should have a demonstrable skill in building balanced budgets that reflect the community's needs but respect its policies and resources.

According to a 2013 S&P report, Grafton has a very strong economy. The community has strong budgetary flexibility and good financial policies. Grafton is located within commuting distance of Worcester and Providence, R.I., which provides employment opportunities for residents. There is a desire for economic development, that fits the character of the community, to help fund town services, support infrastructure needs, and provide additional local employment for residents.



Photo: Elizabeth Spinney

### Important Links:

- [Town of Grafton](#)
- [Grafton Home Rule Charter](#)
- [Grafton General By-Laws](#)
- [Annual Town Reports](#)
- [Audit Reports](#)
- [FY21 Operating & Capital Budget](#)
- [Capital Summit Report](#)
- [Fire Department Study](#)
- [Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)
- [Various Completed Studies & Reports](#)

## Economic and Community Development

Grafton began as a farming community but, given the ability for waterpower from the Blackstone River, manufacturing mills became prominent. Grafton was the site of the nation's first shoe factory. Today, manufacturing, now mostly in machine tools and castings, still provides the highest percentage of jobs in Town. Grafton has grown rapidly over the past few decades, growing from a population of 11,000 in 1980 to more than 18,000 today, with more than 2,100 acres of new development in former farms and forests since 1971. Approximately one-third of residents in the labor force work in Worcester and nearly 40 percent commute east to the I-495 area or to Boston. Grafton is easily accessible by car, bus, and rail. An MBTA commuter rail station is located at Route 30 and Pine Street. Both bus and rail service are available in nearby Worcester. UPS has plans to construct a \$200 million, 800,000-square-foot regional facility on land off Route 30, next to Centech Park, but construction has yet to begin.

The next Town Administrator must be adept in attracting economic development projects and businesses that are appropriate for Grafton. Preferred candidates must be skilled in explaining the benefits of such projects and able to achieve community buy-in.

## Open Space and Recreation

Grafton is largely comprised of forest cover (nearly 48 percent of the Town's total 14,528 acres of land area) and residential development which, combined, make up more than two-thirds of the Town's total land use. Additionally, the Town is home to Lake Ripple and Silver Lake, Flint Pond, Hovey Pond, and Fisherville Pond as well as several other ponds and extensive amounts of frontage along the Quinsigamond and Blackstone Rivers. Lake Ripple has areas for canoe access and a boat launch and Silver Lake has a small public beach. The state maintains a boat launch for Flint Pond on the Shrewsbury side of Route 20. There are three significant wetland areas in Grafton: Great Meadows, Fisherville Marshes, and North Grafton Wildlife Management Area. Preservation of open space is important to the residents of Grafton. Working collaboratively to help create a thoughtful and acceptable balance of open space and appropriate economic development is critical.



Photo: Elizabeth Spinney

The Blackstone River Bikeway is currently in planning/design stages and will ultimately extend 48 miles from Worcester to Providence, R.I., with a three-mile stretch in Grafton. There are extensive hiking trails throughout Town, along with boating opportunities and historical sites, such as the Willard Clock Museum. Grafton residents and visitors can also enjoy walking, biking, swimming, fishing, bird watching, and nature photography.

There are numerous playgrounds as well as sports fields and courts located throughout Grafton. The Recreation Department offers organized leagues for youth basketball and flag football and nonprofit groups organize a variety of youth and adult sports activities.

## Current projects

- Transition related to a recent [Fire Department Study](#) and, working with the current fire chief, the implementation of the first full-time fire chief position and a reorganization of the department.
- A [library expansion](#) and renovation project is under construction and scheduled to open in Spring/Summer 2021.
- [Redevelopment](#) of the former Grafton State Hospital on Pine Street.
- Improvements along a two-mile stretch of [Main Street](#) (Route 122A).
- [Worcester Street Village Zoning Project](#)
- [Worcester Street Village Strategic Plan](#)
- Implementation of an online permitting system.

The next Town Administrator needs strong communication skills and should be enthused about engaging with the community. The successful candidate must know how to build collaborative teams, have the ability to inspire and motivate others, and be able to achieve consensus.





## The Ideal Candidate

- Master's degree in public administration or a related field from an accredited college or university preferred; bachelor's degree is required.
- Candidates must have served full-time as the Chief Administrative Officer of a city or town for not less than one year, or as an Assistant Chief Administrative Officer of a city or town for not less than three years, or served full-time as an agent of the Select Board for not less than three years, or any combination of the above for not less than three years.
- Skilled in financial management, economic development, personnel management, and strategic planning.
- Strong financial acumen.
- Skilled communicator, both internally and externally; active listener.
- Demonstrated success in working collaboratively with staff, boards, committees, and citizens.
- Ability to bring people together; consensus builder; supports transparency in government.
- Ability to build trust; approachable.
- Employs data-driven decision making.
- Strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Engages and empowers staff to share ideas.
- Strong focus on customer service.
- Enjoys engaging with the community.
- Excellent follow-through; strong work ethic.
- Creative problem solver; proactive.
- Confident, energetic, and flexible.
- Exhibits excellent attention to detail.
- Diplomatic; strong conflict resolution skills.
- Visionary and strategic.
- Team-oriented; calm under pressure.
- Knowledgeable of best practices.
- Ability to multi-task; ability to deal with change with grace and wisdom.
- Member of, or willing to become member of, ICMA.

## How To Apply

Send cover letters and résumés via email, in a single PDF, by November 16, 2020, 5:00 p.m. EST to:

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

**Subject: Grafton  
Town Administrator Search**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

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

*The Town of Grafton, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity and inclusiveness in the community and workplace.*