

Watertown, MA – City Manager



Position Statement

Watertown, MA (35,329 pop.), is a thriving community that provides a suburban-like setting with urban amenities. Located just six miles from Boston, the City is a hidden gem offering many of the benefits of a smaller town with access to the economic, cultural, and educational resources of a big city. Cultural destinations like the Arsenal Center for the Arts and the Armenian Museum of America are complemented by welcoming neighborhoods, a good school system, international food offerings, coffee shops, and fresh green grocers. The City, which has a diverse population including the second-largest Armenian population in the country, celebrates and supports the rich and varied cultures within the community. Watertown is a City in transition as it has been experiencing demographic and socio-economic changes in recent years.



Watertown is well managed and well situated for continued success. It has an AAA rating and an FY22 budget of \$164.4 million. The City's challenges include managing its growth, maintaining its superior financial stability, continuing to build a strong team of municipal department heads as retirements occur, increasing communications with residents, maintaining the City's relative affordability, and moving to the forefront on social issues, including diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism efforts. Watertown recognizes that climate change impacts community health, local natural resources, and infrastructure and is diligently working to mitigate the impacts and to enhance climate resiliency.

The position of City Manager has become available following the current City Manager's retirement after serving the community for 45 years, including 29 years as City Manager. Watertown is seeking an experienced, knowledgeable, and talented leader with superior communication and community engagement skills, strong financial acumen as well as strong personnel management and project management skills to serve as its next City Manager. Preferred candidates should have a bachelor's degree (master's preferred) in public administration or a related field and experience as a city/town manager or assistant city/town manager or an equivalent public or private sector level of experience. Candidates should be proactive and strategic thinkers, instill confidence and trust, and be able to build collaborative relationships with appointed/elected officials, business owners, residents, and employees. The next City Manager should be engaged, forward-thinking, and innovative. Watertown is an exciting place to live and work and an exciting City to manage.

Annual Salary: \$200K+. The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Watertown is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Challenges and Opportunities

Government

Watertown recently completed a charter review process in which a revised [Home Rule Charter](#) was adopted with a number of modifications including a revised preamble, creation of a Community Engagement Officer, and creation of a Human Rights Commission. It retained its Council-Manager form of government but redesignated itself to be known as the City of Watertown. The nine-member City Council serves as the legislative and policy-making body of Watertown. The Council appoints the City Manager as the Chief Administrative Officer of the City. The City Manager is responsible for implementation of policies established by the City Council, for the efficient administration of all city activities under the manager's control; appointment of all department heads, town officers, and boards, commissions, and committees; employees under the manager's supervision; preparation of the annual operating budget and capital outlay program as well as other responsibilities detailed in the City Charter. Other elected bodies include: School Committee and Board of Library Trustees. The City Manager must engage with Watertown residents and collaborate with its various elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees.



Finances

Watertown has an FY22 budget of approximately \$164.4 million and a Standard and Poor's rating of AAA with a stable outlook. The City is in exceptionally strong and stable financial condition. Watertown has a fully funded Retirement System (as of July 2021) and a long-range funding plan has been created for addressing the unfunded OPEB liability which is scheduled to be fully funded in 2031. Additionally, it has a Building for the Future plan, which is a comprehensive, forward-looking initiative to address learning, operational, and capacity improvements for all school facilities. The FY22 tax rate is \$13.25 for residential properties and \$21.28 for commercial properties. Approximately 7.9% of the City's budget comes from state aid. New growth in FY21 was \$3.4 million, in FY22 is \$7.9 million, and is projected to be \$4 million in FY23. The total assessed value of Watertown properties in FY21 is nearly \$9.4 trillion. Free cash for FY21 is estimated at \$20 million.

The next City Manager should have solid financial acumen and the ability to help maintain Watertown's healthy finances. The next City Manager needs to be decisive and forward-thinking regarding finances and all aspects of municipal management. Collective bargaining experience would be beneficial in this position.

Important Links:

- [City of Watertown](#)
- [Home Rule Charter](#)
- [City Code](#)
- [Annual Town Reports](#)
- [FY22 & FY21 Budgets](#)
- [FY23 Preliminary Budget Overview](#)
- [Watertown Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Arsenal Park Master Plan](#)
- [Economic Development Report](#)
- [Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)
- [Watertown Organizational Chart](#)
- [Resilient Watertown Climate and Energy Plan](#)

Education

The [Watertown Public Schools](#) provides an excellent education and currently serves slightly more than 2,600 students. It has a preschool, three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Watertown's student



body is diverse – 63.6% White, 19.1% Hispanic, 7.2% Asian, 5.3% multi-race non-Hispanic, 4.3% African American, and 0.4% Native American – reflecting the ever-changing demographics of the community and the country. Approximately 39.1% of students come from homes where English is not the first language. Special education serves about 19% of students. Watertown Public Schools prepares students for life by

engaging them in a challenging and meaningful education within an inclusive, diverse community. Watertown schools are working to address climate resiliency in various ways, including via two new elementary schools that will be Net-Zero due to energy efficiency efforts and solar deployment.

Economic and Community Development

Watertown, founded in 1630 as a settlement based on agriculture, is today transitioning into a post-industrial community with a mix of cultural, racial, educational, and economic diversity. The City benefits from its location, bordering Soldiers Field Road and the Massachusetts Turnpike, which are major arteries into downtown Boston. It is close to Cambridge and Kendall Square.

With a network of squares and multi-modal corridors, Watertown is a well-connected and attractive place to live and work. A variety of housing types and innovative reuse of old industrial sites along the river and former rail corridor provides flexible options for a mix of business and residential uses. In addition to having a key location, Watertown is a well-maintained community, with a popular public library, recently constructed police station, three well-maintained fire stations, relatively new DPW facility, and upgraded recreation fields. The City is thriving, which is apparent via its vibrant downtown, squares, and mixed-use developments.

There has been considerable investment in Watertown from biotechnology and life science industries as well as in the retail and restaurant sectors in recent years. Additionally, a second hotel in the City was recently completed and opened for business. A number of prestigious academic institutions have facilities located in or near Watertown, including Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Boston University. Watertown is a thriving community with such major employers as Perkins School for the Blind, Exergen Corporation, Athena Health, and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. In addition to easy access to the Mass. Turnpike and Route 128, Watertown is served by several MBTA bus and trackless trolley routes as well as two community shuttles. Residential and open space account for slightly over 78% of the City's total property valuation.



Departments

Watertown's department heads and employees are collaborative and supportive of the City's many initiatives. For example, the [Community Development & Planning](#) department, with 14 full-time and four part-time employees, is currently working on the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Climate and Energy Plan, and implementation of the Public Art and Culture Master Plan, among other initiatives. The [Department of Public Works](#) Director was hired relatively recently and is overseeing numerous projects, including major sidewalk initiatives, Complete Streets, sewer infrastructure, and compliance with MS4 requirements. The [Watertown Free Public Library](#) is considered a crown jewel of the community and is strongly supported by residents; the longtime Library Director is retiring and the search for a new Director is in progress. The [Police Department](#) has four divisions – detective, patrol, traffic, and community and staff development – with 83 full-time and 21 part-time employees. The [Fire Department](#) has 87 full-time employees and three fire stations; the Fire Chief recently announced his upcoming retirement. The [Council on Aging/Senior Center](#) offers myriad programs and services, with most programs currently running via Zoom due to the ongoing pandemic. The finance-related departments – Assessing, Auditor, and Treasurer/Collector – are well regarded and will assist the next City Manager in maintaining the City's current financial stability. The City recently created the position of Community Engagement Officer which is charged with reaching out to residents and increasing transparency. All departments continue to adapt to increased service requirements in relation to the City's ongoing development.

Open Space, Recreation, and Climate Resiliency

Watertown has beautiful open space along the Charles River, in the reservation owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, including more than four miles of direct frontage. The City is also home to the multi-use [Arsenal Park](#), Filippello Park, the Whitney Hill Conservation Area, the [John A. Ryan Arena](#) (skating rink), and 10 playgrounds. The City's [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#) was developed to identify Watertown's open space and recreation resources and to ensure that the resources are not lost due to pressures of development or uncoordinated individual actions. Watertown is continuing its efforts to increase the amount of protected open space. Additionally, the City is committed to equity, communication, and innovation while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enabling all residents to thrive in the face of climate change. Watertown is a leader in making high efficiency buildings the norm and powering them with clean energy. Watertown has three municipal solar installations and two new elementary schools will be Net-Zero through a combination of energy efficiency and aggressive rooftop and canopy solar deployment.

Projects

- Construction of a new high school is expected to begin in 2023 with the facility slated to open in 2026. The high school is to be co-funded by the City and MSBA.
- A new elementary school is scheduled to open later this year, a second elementary school has nearly completed construction, and a third elementary school is slated to begin construction. Total cost of the three schools is \$170 million and is being funded within the confines of Proposition 2½.
- Continue work on updating the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Watertown Open Space Study is in progress.
- Determine future use of the former police station building.
- Possible recruitment and hiring of a Deputy City Manager; recruitment of a Community Engagement Officer.
- Continue efforts to acquire additional open space.
- Determine resolution to space needs at City Hall.
- Continue to increase the City's walkability.
- Determine appropriate use of ARPA funding.
- Recently established Municipal Affordable Housing Trust.
- Complete a Climate Action Plan.





The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree, preferably in a field related to public or business administration; advanced degree preferred.
- Minimum of five years of experience as a City/Town Manager or Assistant City/Town Manager or equivalent experience.
- Skilled in communications, financial management, personnel management, community development, project management, and collective bargaining.
- Strong background in municipal operations and law with a preference for Mass. knowledge.
- Skilled at community engagement and interested in social issues; inclusive.
- Recognizes and embraces the diversity of the community and supports the goals of equity and inclusion; recommends and embraces anti-racist policies and practices.
- Creates a welcoming environment for all.
- A strong communicator, both internally and externally; approachable; active listener.
- Data-driven decision making; analytical.
- Understands the balance between housing and commercial development.
- Strong leadership skills and experience.
- Creates a vision for the future & secures buy-in.
- Embraces transparency in government.
- Works in partnership with the City Council.
- Values the uses of modern technologies.
- Experience in setting goals and priorities.
- Treats everyone fairly and respectfully.
- Strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Skilled in long-term planning; organized.
- Forward thinking; proactive; strategic.
- Team-oriented; able to build morale.
- Knowledgeable of best practices.

How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé via email, in a single PDF, by March 11, 2022, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

**Subject: Watertown
City Manager**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

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

*The City of Watertown, Mass., is an Affirmative
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