

Spencer, MA – Town Administrator



Position Statement

Spencer, MA (11,500 pop.), a charming semi-rural community in Central Worcester County, seeks a skilled Town Administrator to provide leadership that will assist the Town in achieving its many goals. Spencer, located halfway

between Boston and Springfield on Route 9, is a small town that is rich in history and open space. In the Town's earlier days, residents earned their living via farming. In the 19th century, boot and shoe factories and wire mills thrived. Over time, those industries were replaced with service industries and trades.

[Spencer](#) has an Aa3 rating and an FY21 budget of approximately \$23.76 million. Spencer's finances are relatively healthy and the Town is thoughtful in its spending. Spencer's current challenges involve increasing sewer capacity, attracting new businesses to the downtown, preserving the Town's character and charm, and enhancing its financial stability. Spencer's local government is led by a five-member Select Board.

To serve as its next Town Administrator, Spencer is seeking an experienced, confident, and collaborative leader with excellent financial acumen, strong people skills, and a creative mindset. Community engagement is an essential part of this position. The next Town Administrator must be collaborative, approachable, and enjoy working with others. Stopping by the Town's various departments to check in on projects and simply say hello are important aspects of this job. Candidates should be innovative and able to 'think outside of the box.' The next Town Administrator should know how to persuade and influence others and be a consensus builder. Candidates must also be able to make the tough

decisions and be firm when necessary. Candidates with a master's degree in public administration or a related field are preferred; a bachelor's degree is required. Preferred candidates will have a proven record of leadership and be proactive, confident in their abilities, and able to build collaborative working relationships.

Annual Salary Range: \$125,000 - \$145,000 DOQ. The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Spencer is an Equal Opportunity Employer. According to bylaw, the Town Administrator shall reside within 15 miles of the Town limits within six months from the date of completion of any probationary period of employment.

Government

Spencer 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 Spencer. The Select Board appoints the [Town Administrator](#) who serves as the chief administrative, fiscal, and procurement officer for the Town. As Spencer has grown, it has needed to adjust from being almost entirely dependent on volunteers and unpaid officials to a system in which the elected officials guide a professional staff. Spencer's first Town Administrator was hired in 1999 and its first full-time Town Planner in 2005 (prior to 2005, the community employed a part-time Town Planner). Spencer students attend school in the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District and the Town is a member of the Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational-Technical School District. Residents want a Town government that is highly communicative and transparent. The next Town Administrator should be proactive, a creative problem solver, and work collaboratively but also be able to hold firm and say no when appropriate.

Spencer has numerous elected positions, boards, and committees including: Select Board, Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District Committee, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Health, Housing Authority, Water Commission, Park Commission, Sewer Commission, Town Clerk, Treasurer/Collector, Board of Assessors, Constables, Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational-Technical School District Committee, Tree Warden, and Town Moderator. The next Town Administrator must be skilled at working with Spencer's various elected and appointed positions, boards, and committees.

Finances

Spencer, which is in relatively healthy financial condition, leans toward being fiscally conservative but also has a history of approving debt exemptions for specific projects. The Town has an [FY21 budget](#) of approximately \$23.76 million and a Moody's rating of Aa3. In FY21, free cash was certified at nearly \$1.38 million. The FY21 tax rate is \$14.04 for residential, commercial, and industrial properties. The property tax base is approximately 87% residential, 5.1% commercial, and 3.5% industrial. Slightly more than 60% of the Town's revenue comes from the tax levy, with about 10% from state aid. Local receipts bring in about 24.4% of the annual revenue. New growth in FY21 was \$224,576. Finding creative ways to fund Spencer's infrastructure needs while keeping tax increases to a minimum are priorities. Candidates should have demonstrable skill in building balanced budgets that reflect the community's needs while respecting its financial resources.

According to a 2020 Moody's report, Spencer is in a stable financial position, has a modestly sized tax base with average resident wealth and income levels, and has a manageable debt burden and pension liability. Spencer is located within easy commuting distance of Worcester, which provides employment opportunities for residents. There is a desire for economic development, particularly in the downtown, that fits the character of the community and will help fund Town services and support infrastructure needs.



Important Links:

- [Town of Spencer](#)
- [General By-Laws](#)
- [Annual Town Report YE2020](#)
- [Various Annual Town Reports](#)
- [FY21 Operating Budget](#)
- [Spencer Snapshot](#)
- [Master Plan](#)
- [Open Space & Recreation Plan](#)
- [Town Center Revitalization Plan](#)
- [Downtown Spencer Parking Study](#)
- [Projects Status](#)

Economic and Community Development

Spencer began as a farming community and over time its economy moved to manufacturing, mainly shoes and boots. Today, it relies more on service businesses, trades, and tourism. Downtown Spencer, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since the 1980s, is an attractive, mixed-use, and dense center along Route 9 (Main Street). Outside of downtown, Spencer is mostly residential and agricultural. The Town is accessible via Interstate 90 and state Routes 31 and 9. Route 49 connects Spencer to Sturbridge, Route 20, and I-90. The Town's population nearly doubled from 1920 (pop. 5,930) to 1980 (pop. 10,774) but has experienced much slower growth since then, typically increasing less than 1% annually. As with most communities in the Commonwealth, Spencer's population is aging and it is predicted that approximately 30% of residents will be seniors by 2030.

The Town's [Economic Development Committee](#) works to explore opportunities to enhance existing businesses and foster growing industries within the community. The Town Administrator should work with the Committee to attract economic development projects and businesses that will fit with Spencer's character.

Open Space and Recreation

Spencer places great value on the Town's open spaces and rural, small-town character. Residents work hard to protect the community's environmental resources, including wetlands, waterways, and forestland. Spencer has a multitude of scenic places, recreational areas, and open spaces, including the Burncoat Pond Wildlife Sanctuary which is protected by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and Spencer State Forest/Howe State Park, which marks the birthplace of inventor Elias Howe. Howe State Park and Luther Hill Park both provide residents and visitors with swimming areas and the Town offers numerous hiking opportunities, including at Buck Hill, the Mid-State Trail, Ralph Warren Park, Howe State Park, and Four Chimneys Wildlife Management Area. Additionally, there are numerous athletic facilities located throughout Spencer and the Spencer Fair is a major agricultural exposition. Working collaboratively to help create a thoughtful and acceptable balance of open space and economic development that is harmonious with the Town's character is critical.



Current/Upcoming Projects

- Town Meeting recently approved borrowing \$37 million to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, which mainly serves the downtown. This will not produce any additional sewer capacity. The Town Administrator will be expected to offer assistance and to work collaboratively with the elected Sewer Commission on this project.
- The salt storage facility needs replacement with a currently projected cost of approximately \$1 million.
- Town Meeting approved \$19 million to upgrade various streets, culverts, sidewalks, and bridges.
- The Lake Street School project may involve a nonprofit renovating the former school building into 40 units for senior housing. Presuming the project moves forward, a PILOT agreement is expected to bring the Town some revenue.
- A number of solar arrays have been established in recent years in Spencer. A moratorium was enacted last November to allow the Town to craft a bylaw revision that will more clearly define what is allowed for solar arrays.
- The MSBA has approved either a major renovation or new high school for the regional school district which is expected to cost in excess of \$40 million and will require a future debt exclusion.
- The Rapsallion Brewery is in the process of relocating its brewery operations to Spencer from Sturbridge.
- CVS, in the early stages of planning for a \$15 million establishment on Main Street, has sparked some local concern.
- The Economic Development Committee continues to work to attract new businesses to Spencer.
- Funding for an electronic permitting system is in next year's budget which will modernize the permitting process.





The Ideal Candidate

- Holds a master's degree in public administration or a related field (preferred); bachelor's degree is required.
- Is skilled in financial management, economic development, procurement, personnel management, and collective bargaining.
- Has demonstrated success in working collaboratively with staff, boards, committees, and citizens.
- Embraces working with others; enjoys engaging with the community.
- Is a skilled communicator, both internally and externally, and is an active listener.
- Is proactive and a creative problem solver.
- Has the ability to bring people together; consensus builder.
- Is confident in own skills and abilities.
- Has strong leadership qualities and experience.
- Is articulate and persuasive.
- Is able to build trust; is highly approachable.
- Provides guidance and advice to department heads but does not micromanage.
- Employs an open-door policy.
- Engages and empowers staff to share ideas.
- Has a vision for the community's future.
- Places a strong focus on customer service.
- Has excellent follow-through and a strong work ethic.
- Is diplomatic; has strong conflict resolution skills.
- Is team-oriented and calm under pressure.
- Is knowledgeable and supportive of municipal best practices.
- Supports transparency in government.

How To Apply

Send cover letters and résumés via email, in a single PDF, by July 2, 2021, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

Apply@communityparadigm.com

**Subject: Spencer
Town Administrator Search**

Questions regarding the position should be directed to:

John Petrin, Senior Associate
Community Paradigm Associates
JPetrin@communityparadigm.com
781-552-1074

The Town of Spencer, Mass., is an Equal Opportunity Employer.