

# SUTTON, MA – Town Manager



## Position Statement

Sutton, MA (pop. 9,436) is a safe, charming, historic community located in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. Sutton's rural landscape features working farms, country roads, unique rock formations, scenic vistas, lakes, ponds and rivers. Sutton comprises five villages, each with its own unique identity – Manchaug, South Sutton, Sutton Center, West Sutton, and Wilkinsonville. Three of the five villages, with hundreds of contributing elements, are on the National Register of Historic Places in addition to three other historic sites.

Sutton is ideally located just minutes from Worcester and the Mass Pike; 15 minutes from the Rhode Island border; and 45 miles from Boston. While its prime location is attractive to residents and businesses, the town is wary of development. Sutton also faces infrastructure challenges, which limit its growth. The public water districts that serve residents are privately owned and not municipal utilities. Another key challenge facing the town is the need for more affordable housing and the potential impact of needed housing as well as housing to fulfill state housing mandates, including 40B and the MBTA Communities Act.

The new Town Manager will need to balance a desire to retain Sutton's rural character and limit the tax burden on residents while growing revenue to support town services, staffing, and future capital needs. The Town Manager should also have strong personnel and conflict management skills and the ability to attract and retain a strong team.

Residents appreciate the close-knit community feel, open space and natural beauty of the town, and respect its historical role during the Industrial Revolution. The town would like a Manager who actively engages with residents and maintains an open-door policy.

Sutton prides itself on its conservative fiscal policies and is seeking a Town Manager who will work closely with the town's Finance Director to continue that philosophy. Experience in strategic planning is also preferred as the new Town Manager will need to assess the town's short- and long-term needs.



**Annual Salary: \$190,000+/- DOQ.** The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package, including health and retirement plans, commensurate with qualifications and experience. Sutton is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Government

Sutton has an open Town Meeting form of government with a five-member Select Board and a [Town Manager](#). The full powers and responsibilities of the Town Manager are outlined in the [Town Charter](#). The Town Manager is the chief administrative official of the Town of Sutton and is responsible for the operation of the town. The Select Board appoints the Town Manager, so is also responsible for implementing the policies of the Board. The Board seeks a manager who communicates closely with members.

## Personnel Management

The new Town Manager should have extensive experience in personnel management including collective bargaining as well as human resource management. A minimum of five senior staff will likely retire within the next 3-7 years, therefore experience with succession planning will be important. The ideal candidate will be an active listener with good judgement who addresses issues and conflicts in an impartial, straight forward, and timely fashion. The Town Manager should have proactive and regular staff interactions including at off-site locations, encouraging conversation in groups and one-on-one, and with all staff. A successful manager will appreciate the importance of understanding the general functions and daily challenges of each department with an eye toward addressing staff needs, understanding work conditions, and both bolstering morale and getting ahead of issues.

## Finances

Sutton prides itself on its financially conservative, common-sense values and fiscal stability. It has an AA+ bond rating with \$4,353,694 in certified free cash. The town's budget for Fiscal Year 2025 is \$42,279,116. The tax levy for Fiscal Year

2024 was \$29,763,424. As a rural community with limited capacity for economic growth, the town relies primarily on residential taxes as its revenue source. Residential taxes accounted for more than 86 percent of the levy at \$25,635,345; commercial, \$1,778,022; industrial, \$1,433,997; and personal property, \$1,116,060.

Other sources of revenue come from the state, \$7,094,971; local receipts, \$2,202,183; enterprise funds, \$1,017,336; free cash, \$1,551,767; and other funds, \$649,435. The town has a single tax rate of \$12.02 for Fiscal Year 2025. The average single family tax bill is \$7,182. The new Town Manager must be cognizant of the growing tax burden on residents, particularly senior citizens. The candidate should have a strong background

in municipal finance, along with experience in long-term budgeting and capital planning strategies and the ability to balance the needs of the town while keeping it affordable for future generations and its growing senior population. The town is seeking to continue its strong, stable leadership via a Town Manager who will work as a team with the School Department's business manager and the town's finance director to create a fiscally responsible budget.

## Education

The [Sutton Public Schools](#) are well regarded and have about 1,300 students spread out among the Simonian Center for Early Learning, Sutton Elementary School, Sutton Middle School, and Sutton High School. The district is led by an interim superintendent and is in the process of hiring a new leader for the schools. Sutton is also served by the [Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School](#) in Upton, which has 18 vocational-technical programs, and [Norfolk County Agricultural High School in Walpole](#). As costs associated with education continue to rise, the town is seeking a Town Manager who will work closely with the new superintendent on budget issues that impact Sutton's overall finances.

## Economic and Community Development

With its proximity to major highways, airports and cities, businesses continue to explore the possibility of moving to Sutton. The town is also facing pressure for additional and more affordable housing as a community need and in response to the state's 40B affordable housing law and the MBTA Communities Act. Sutton has been designated as an "adjacent small town" under this law and must approve a new multi-family zoning district at Town Meeting or lose access to crucial state funding sources. The Planning Board is establishing a subcommittee to update its Housing Production Plan to proactively address affordable housing needs on its own terms.

Several factors have significantly restricted the town's economic growth.

- In excess of 92% of Sutton is zoned for residential use only, and 91.7% requires nearly two-acre lots.
- There is also a strong desire among residents and town leaders to protect its open space and small-town charm.
- The public water districts in town are privately owned and are not municipal entities. In two of the three districts, additional supply is very limited at best.

The new Town Manager will face the challenge of maintaining Sutton's historic, rural character while addressing 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges such as housing, the ramifications of the MBTA Communities Act, and revenue growth to support municipal services – all with limited water infrastructure.

## Open Space and Recreation

Residents are drawn to Sutton for its natural beauty. The town is very protective of its historic identity, rolling fields, beautiful vistas, 10 lakes and ponds, rivers, and large forests. Several of the town's notable businesses are based off the land, including working farms like the 500-acre Whittier Farms, and two renowned golf courses. Hiking and walking trails can be found at Purgatory Chasm State Reservation, Sutton State Forest, Waters Farm, Shaw Farm, Merrill Pond State Reservation, and Marion's Camp. The town owns Marion's Camp on Lake Singletary and has made significant improvements in recent years. In addition to trails, the property includes Goddard Lodge and the town beach and a canoe launch.

Other protected land includes historic buildings such as Waters Farm, a hilltop homestead built in 1757 and now a living history museum listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With a stunning view overlooking Lake Manchaug, barns, outbuildings, and 120 acres of pristine farmland, Waters Farm is a window into Sutton's 19th century farm life. Sutton is seeking a Town Manager who understands the town's desire to protect and maintain these assets.



## Current Issues/Projects

- Addressing housing needs and mandates including affordable housing and the MBTA Communities Act.
- Balancing the need for additional financial resources with limited water/growth capacity.
- Succession planning within town departments.
- Assessing the need for future capital projects, which may include replacement of the severely outdated/non-compliant highway facility, a new school/community track, and space/additional needs for the library and fire departments.





## The Ideal Candidate

- Bachelor's degree required (with a master's preferred), preferably in public administration or a related field.
- Previous experience as a Town Manager/Administrator or Assistant Town Manager/Administrator.
- Adept at managing personnel and building relationships.
- Experience in conflict management and problem solving.
- Effective communication skills internally and externally.
- Experience in succession planning.
- Empathetic.
- Good listener.
- Future thinking.
- Practical, common-sense approach.
- Open door policy.
- Proficient in municipal financial management, budgeting, long-term planning.
- Willing to make difficult decisions.
- Eager to engage and interact with the community.
- Consensus builder and problem solver.
- Willing and able to work cooperatively with boards, committees, residents, and other stakeholders.

## How To Apply

Send cover letter and résumé via email, in a single PDF, by January 29, 2025, 3:00 p.m. EST to:

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

**Subject: Sutton Town Manager**

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 Sutton, Mass., is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.*