

# Belmont, Massachusetts

## Town Administrator

# Profile



## Introduction

The Town of Belmont has retained the services of the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist in the Town's recruitment of a new Town Administrator. The Collins Center focuses on helping governments work better. This Profile draws upon our discussions with selectmen, department heads and elected officials. It describes our understanding of the organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate, and the professional and personal attributes an ideal candidate will possess. For more information about the Town of Belmont please consult Belmont's web site ([www.town.belmont.ma.us](http://www.town.belmont.ma.us)).

## The Town of Belmont

Belmont is located 8 miles west of Boston and is neighbor to Cambridge as well as sharing borders with Arlington, Watertown and Waltham. Belmont is on the commuter rail and provides for easy access to highways and airports.

The Town, known as the Town of Homes, is 95% residential. The town's average assessed value of a single-family home was \$730,849 in FY2011 - 17th highest among 338 Massachusetts municipalities that reported. In FY1990, the town's average assessed value ranked 11th highest in the state and in FY2000 it ranked 10th. This consistency also reflects a strong and stable tax base, which accounts in large part for the AAA rating the town has earned from Moody's credit rating agency.

Belmont has an excellent school system. Belmont High School was voted the 100th best high school in the nation. Additionally, Belmont is home to the Belmont Hill and Belmont Day private schools. Belmont has many multi-generational families but because of its location and community attributes also attracts people from around the world. Belmont is home to McLean Hospital one of the nation's premier mental health facilities. In 2010, the median income for a family was \$99,123, significantly higher than the statewide average. Data on the Town's demographic trends can be obtained from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's web site ([www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org)).

Its location, charm, schools and community make Belmont a desirable location to live and work. The 2001 Mission Statement approved by Town Meeting remains as on-point now as it was a decade ago:

a desirable and welcoming community that retains a small-town atmosphere within a larger metropolitan area. Our town provides excellent educational opportunities and high quality town services. We protect the beauty and character of our natural settings and historic buildings. Thriving business centers contribute economic stability while offering places for residents to dine, shop, and socialize. The town government responds to the concerns of the residents, practices sound fiscal management and plans for future generations. We make a commitment to preserving and enhancing our strengths as a community while respecting our differences as individuals.

While it appears to be a quiet residential community, which it is, it is complex in many ways, making it a fascinating place to live. In Belmont the best and the brightest get involved in local government by serving as volunteers. The Town's population is 26,500 and its land area is only 4.6 miles, making it a densely populated community. Citizen participation in governance is embraced and adds to the flavor and the culture of the community.

## Organizational Design and Governance

The Town governance structure consists of a three member Board of Selectmen elected for three year staggered terms and a 288 member Representative Town Meeting. The School Committee is elected, as are the Assessors, Library Trustees, Board of Health and Cemetery Commissioners. The Treasurer/Collector, Town Clerk and the Moderator are also elected. The Town Meeting is the legislative body and exercises the functions of appropriating funds and enacting by-laws. Town Meeting is advised by an 18 member Warrant Committee appointed by the Town Moderator to advise on the budget, appropriations and on a full range of financial matters presented to the Town Meeting. The Town does not possess a charter or a comprehensive special act specifying its governmental structure.

The position of Town Administrator has become well established and respected. Elected boards with specialized functions select and manage their own staff, make policy and program decisions in their arena and exercise considerable autonomy although the Town Administrator is responsible for town-wide budget, human resources, and procurement management. The Town Administrator is also responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Town and working with all department heads to achieve the Town's goals. There has been some discussion of a potential change in the government structure. The community is expected to continue the discussion in the near future.

The Town has had two Town Administrators since the Town Administrator position was established 18 years ago. The position is now open due to the resignation of the former TA after the expiration of his contract. The Assistant Town Administrator is currently serving as Interim Town Administrator.

## Public Finance

Belmont had total General Fund revenues for FY2011 of approximately \$83 million, almost \$70 million of which was from property taxes. The FY2011 School Department Budget was \$40.5 million. The Town has a single tax rate of \$13.35.

In August 2011, the Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services transmitted a Financial Management Review it conducted for the Town. The report makes findings and recommendations about the town's government structure with emphasis on those related to financial officers; the degree of coordination and communication between and among boards, officials and staff involved in

financial management and operations. The report and other financial information for the Town may be obtained at the web site of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Department of Local Services and at the Collins Center web site. ([www.collinscenter.umb.edu](http://www.collinscenter.umb.edu))

## Challenges for the Town Administrator

- **Leadership.** As Chief Administrative Officer for the Town, the Town Administrator must earn and maintain the respect for the role that the Board of Selectmen have defined. The Town Administrator will serve as the Director of the Office of the Board of Selectmen and direct and manage the delivery of municipal services under the authority of the Board of Selectmen, as well as coordinating the work of entities not directly under the authority of the Board of Selectmen.
- **Professionalism, Staff Development and Morale.** The Town has well-regarded, highly skilled and professional department heads and key staff. The Town has benefited from having a blend of professionals who have served the community for many years, in many capacities, as well the integration of new staff with new ideas and approaches to municipal management. Fully utilizing the considerable talents of staff, inspiring and continuing high performance standards and maintaining staff morale will be critical to the success of the new Town Administrator. The Town Administrator will need to work with department heads to establish performance measures for staff and operations as well as providing top-level support for departmental programs, initiatives and projects.
- **Communication.** Well-developed communication skills in Belmont are essential. The next Town Administrator is expected to play a leadership role in the community. Open, accurate and timely communication by the Town Administrator with all Town government entities, with the public, the many volunteers and employees needs to be integrated into the normal operational practices of the Town. In addition, the Town Administrator must be able to engage the members of the Board of Selectmen in an on-going dialogue about the critical issues that face the Town.
- **Budget Planning and Preparation.** Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Belmont is facing revenue constraints and growing cost pressures. The Town Administrator must build and direct a strategic planning process that strikes an appropriate balance between long-term goals and short-term budget requirements. A significant amount of the Town Administrator's time will be required to forge town-wide strategies to bring these into balance. This task must be addressed in the context of multi-year plans that consider the unknown duration of an underperforming economy.
- **Strategic Planning.** The Town Administrator must provide leadership to the Board of Selectmen and Town for strategic planning. While capital needs are known

and are clear, a valid continuing method of identifying and prioritizing long-range goals is absent. This is a void that must be filled.

- **Sustaining a High Level of Public Services.** The Town is more complex than a drive through Belmont center would indicate. Even though the Town's land area is only 4.6 square miles, it has 26,500 residents, who expect a high level of public service. This expectation combined with historic under investment in the Town's infrastructure has the potential to place significant stress on the Town in the foreseeable future.
- **Establishing and Maintaining a Positive Labor Management Climate.** Belmont has been fortunate in its ability to keep up with service demands and labor costs. Staffing levels have decreased through attrition over the past several years. Departments are clearly doing more with less. The labor relations climate has been generally positive. Maintaining a positive climate will require careful attention in the coming years as the Town navigates through an environment characterized by fiscal stress and often increasing public expectations.
- **Education.** Education is an important civic value in Belmont. Belmont schools are ranked as some of the highest performing in the nation. The School Department has an interim School Superintendent at least through Fiscal 2013. The next Town Administrator must embrace the value placed on education by citizens while collaborating with the School Superintendent and School Department to budget appropriately and mitigate cost increases.

## The Ideal Candidate

The Belmont Board of Selectmen seeks a Town Administrator who is a seasoned manager in an environment of similar complexity who possesses strong leadership, communication and organizational skills.

Belmont seeks a Town Administrator with the energy, skill, creativity and experience to serve the community as the Chief Administrative Officer; direct, manage and/ or facilitate the delivery of municipal services; provide leadership to the Board of Selectmen in strategic planning; provide leadership to departments and serve as the administrative face of the community.

Belmont seeks a Town Administrator willing to commit to a tenure long enough to build a multi-year approach to strategic planning and ensuring the sustainability of the Town's service levels. The new Town Administrator must support regional solutions when that is in the Town's interest. Belmont needs a Town Administrator who can help set the stage for community-wide approaches to addressing the Town's needs, approaches that produce sound outcomes and avoid polarization within the town, while recognizing, respecting and involving citizens as individuals and committees.

The following attributes have been determined important in Belmont's next Town Administrator.

## Personal Attributes

### *The next Town Administrator needs to be:*

- Able to demonstrate leadership internally and externally.
- Able to demonstrate unquestioned integrity in interactions with officials and citizens.
- Able to communicate effectively in all aspects of the position and with all constituencies in the community. The successful candidate must be direct, facilitative, and clear.
- Able to direct a budget process that develops a sound budget for consideration.
- Able to use the status inherent in the Town Administrator's position to advance the Town's agenda. The Town Administrator cannot be a micromanager.
- Able to delegate many of the routine administrative and communication tasks to subordinates, so that time is available for longer range strategic planning.
- Able to create and sustain a goal-oriented and performance based environment by establishing, maintaining and promoting effective policies and initiatives. The Town Administrator will be a genuinely inclusive leader who is capable of exerting influence and direction in a manner that shares successes with elected officials, professionals and volunteers.
- Able and willing to work openly with community groups and employees. A direct, collegial, facilitative style that fosters joint problem solving is needed. The Town Administrator can have no agenda beyond being a professional.

## Professional Attributes

### *The Town Administrator must be:*

- A seasoned leader of a comparable organization with extensive personal experience in finance, budgeting, capital and operational planning, expenditure management, labor relations, public facilitation, and staff development. Excellent public and interpersonal communication skills are essential.
- A professionally stable person with a record of tenure and consistent career growth. The Town seeks a committed management professional willing to stay for a significant period but who is also willing to take risks to improve the organization.
- Able to demonstrate a background in guiding the development of a shared strategic vision for the community. The ideal candidate must be a coalition builder, equally at home with private sector and community leaders. The ideal candidate must be able to exercise leadership within the organization and the community.
- Graduate degree in Public Administration, Public Policy, Business Administration or law preferred.

Bachelor's degree minimally required. Ten years executive experience, managing a complex organization similar in scale and complexity to the Town, preferably in a municipal setting is preferred. Any equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities for this position is acceptable. Experience working for an elected or appointed Board and having worked in a Town Meeting environment is preferred.

- Both strategic and tactical. He/she must be experienced in working effectively in a political environment providing impartial guidance to elected officials to identify and address the long-term strategic needs of the community and the short-term tactical steps necessary to deliver services.
- Capable of keeping elected officials comprehensively informed, while staying detached from the political process and ensuring that staff maintains a similar detachment.
- Comfortable managing in an environment where many employees are members of collective bargaining units and where not all department managers are direct reports to the Town Administrator. Being able to navigate in such a complex environment will take tenacity and skill.
- Familiar with a highly participative local government, with highly educated and passionate citizens, extremely active boards, committees and commissions.
- Comfortable working with and managing an organization in a political environment often characterized by vigorous debate among well-informed citizens who are active in local decision-making processes.

## Compensation

The Board of Selectmen anticipates negotiating an employment contract with a competitive compensation package in the \$140K - \$160K range, depending on qualifications.

## Application Process

Applications are preferred electronically. Please send your resume with a cover letter addressing the job requirements to this email address: [recruitmentumb@gmail.com](mailto:recruitmentumb@gmail.com). Please insert Belmont TA in the subject line. **Please combine all of your documents in a single file.** Kindly use PDF format, if possible. Deadline for applications is March 16, 2012.

Should you have any questions regarding this opportunity, or a recommendation of a colleague, please contact Mary Flanders Aicardi, Associate 508-215-8992.

To learn more about the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMASS Boston, please visit: [www.collinscenter.umb.edu](http://www.collinscenter.umb.edu)