

**TOWN OF DRACUT, MASSACHUSETTS
TOWN MANAGER**

The Town of Dracut 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 Town Manager. The Profile draws on discussions with Board of Selectmen members and information received from the Town.

Dracut is located approximately 30 miles north of the center of Boston. It lies close to the intersection of Route 93 and Route 495. The Town’s location adjacent to these highways, which were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s, fostered very rapid residential growth in this once semi-rural community. Today, the Town has a population of approximately 32,000 compared to its 1960 population of approximately 14,000. Commercial development has been modest and is concentrated mostly along the arterial roads.



Dracut, which has 20 square miles of land area, lies between the City of Lowell and the New Hampshire border. The portions of the Town bordering Lowell served for many years as neighborhoods for residents who worked in Lowell, while the balance of the Town’s 20 square miles retained its rural character until the 1950s and 1960s. Subdivision and related development has brought the Town toward full build out over recent decades.

The 2020 Census indicated the median income for a family was \$103,000, higher than the statewide average. Data on the Town’s demographic trends can be obtained from the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments.

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN AND GOVERNANCE

The Town governance structure consists of a five-member Board of Selectmen elected for three-year staggered terms and an open Town Meeting. The five-member School Committee is elected, as are the Library Trustees. The Town Meeting is the legislative body and exercises the functions of appropriating money and making local laws. The Town has had three Town Managers since the position was established in 1987; the position is now vacant due to the retirement of the Town Manager in September 2024. Dracut’s charter, which comprehensively restructured town governance in the mid-1980s, and the Town by-laws are available on its web site. (www.dracutma.gov).



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FINANCE

In financial terms, Dracut is managed very conservatively. Dracut had total General Fund revenues for FY2023 of approximately \$101.1 million. \$57.2 million of this amount was from locally levied taxes. The Town has a single property tax rate and residential property generates over 92.2% of property tax revenue. Dracut has not sought an operating override since FY2000. Many of the Town’s capital projects over the last decade have been funded with cash. Detailed financial information may be found on the Town’s website. The following is a summary.

FY2024 Budget

Municipal	\$53,846,965
School	\$41,905,213
Vocational School	\$5,396,155
Enterprise	\$11,002,811
Community Preservation	\$1,703,996
Capital and Chapter 90	\$6,781,921

FY2024 Tax Base Breakdown

2024 Uniform Tax Rate	\$10.45
Residential	92.27%
Commercial	4.26%
Industrial	1.23%
Personal Property	2.22%

FY2024 Budgeted Revenue

Tax Levy	\$58,821,273
State Aid	\$32,288,742
Local Receipts	\$8,230,000
Bonding	\$1,805,000
Other Funds and Transfers	\$1,751,756
Chapter 90	\$818,362
Free Cash and Stabilization	\$4,579,000
Enterprise	\$10,723,232
Community Preservation	\$1,703,996

FY2024 Reserve Balances

Free Cash	\$8,018,398
Stabilization Funds	\$3,784,000

BOND RATING

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TOWN MANAGER

Building on the Foundation. The Board of Selectmen, Town Managers, and Town Meeting have built a solid foundation for the Town that emphasizes professionalism. Dracut has well trained professional department administrators and key staff. The Town Manager needs to sustain and build on this foundation.

Budget Planning and Service Delivery. Conservative budgeting and strict expenditure control are values strongly held by the Town. Dracut is facing revenue constraints and growing cost pressures and there is the possibility of a deficit and significant budget cuts. The Town Manager will be required to quickly evaluate, identify, and prioritize needs, and forge town-wide financial strategies. Immediate and multi-year plans that consider the Town’s limited revenue sources and critical services will need to be made. Providing professional guidance and information to stakeholders will be key.

Affordable Housing Developments. The Town is approximately halfway through the 10% affordable housing goal set forth by Chapter 40B. Considerable growth is anticipated, and the impact of growth will need to be managed carefully. The Town Manager will need to build relationships with developers, remain informed on project activities, impacts, and options, and advise the Board of Selectmen accordingly.

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Communication, Relationship Building, and Fostering Trust. Well-developed professional communication skills are essential. Open, accurate, and timely communication by the Town Manager with Town government entities, department heads, the public, the many volunteers, and the employees needs to be integrated into the normal operational practices of the Town. The Town Manager must be skilled and comfortable serving as a spokesperson for the Town and actively participate in shaping a strategic message to citizens, stakeholders, and the business and development communities. In addition, the Town Manager must be able to engage the members of the Board of Selectmen in an on-going dialog about the critical issues that face the Town. Further, a strong relationship with the School Superintendent must be developed to ensure effective collaboration in identifying priorities and strategies. The public communication role of the Town Manager will be critical to sustaining the high level of confidence, transparency, and trust that residents have in the Town.

Economic Development. During the last six years, the Town has engaged in economic development activities to support its small local businesses. The Town seeks to sustain these efforts and retain its rural atmosphere while also implementing creative strategies to attract larger businesses that impactfully increase revenue stream. The Town Manager needs to be committed to small- and large-scale economic development and either possess the requisite capacities or institutionalize them within the Town's organizational structure.

Building a Team; Attracting & Retaining a Competent Workforce. Recruitment and retention of staff is a critical. While Dracut has a well-regarded group of department heads, several key positions are now vacant. Departmental operations are generally working well but ongoing effort will be required to attract and retain employees and maintain essential services with decreased staffing levels. The Town Manager will need to direct funds where needed to fill key vacancies and foster an interdepartmental approach to problem solving and governance. Maintaining staff morale, fully utilizing the considerable talents of staff, and maintaining high performance standards will be critical to the success of the Town Manager.

Public Role. The Town Manager will play a public role in the community. Participation in civic functions, representation of the Town with other governmental entities, visibility, approachability, and serving as a voice for the Town will be important. The Town Manager must play an active role in managing the Town's relationship with the key state government actors that drive regional economic and transportation policy decisions.

Maintaining a Positive Labor-Management Climate. Dracut has sustained a positive labor relations climate by utilizing careful budgeting and good management practices at the department level. Most of the Town's employees are members of the five collective bargaining units. Collective bargaining activities are the responsibility of the Town Manager. Maintaining a positive climate will require careful attention in the coming years as the Town navigates through an environment characterized by fiscal stress and shifting public expectations.



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THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The Dracut Board of Selectmen seeks a Town Manager who is a seasoned manager in an environment of similar complexity and possesses a high level of financial acumen with strong organizational, communication, and community leadership skills. This is not a learning position.



Dracut seeks a Town Manager with the skill, energy, creativity, and experience to achieve the Town's goals, including preserving public service levels, effectively managing financial resources, fostering and supporting development to increase revenues while maintaining the Town's character, and maintaining the Town's positive civic attitude toward the future.

Dracut seeks a Town Manager willing to commit to a tenure long enough to build long-term strategies supporting the sustainability of the Town's service levels. The Town Manager must support regional solutions when that is in the Town's interest, as well as foster volunteerism and private contributions as a partial solution to service delivery. Dracut needs a Town Manager who can help set the stage for addressing the Town's needs through community-wide approaches that produce sound outcomes and avoid polarization.

The following attributes have been determined important in Dracut's Town Manager.

- Able to demonstrate unquestioned integrity in interactions with officials and citizens.
- Able to work cooperatively with the Board of Selectmen on the establishment of annual goals and objectives for the Town and its departments, update the Board and staff on progress, and actively participate in the annual review of results and operations.
- Able and willing to play a highly visible role in the community and be comfortable engaging with citizens. Must participate broadly across the leadership structure of the community and region and be a champion of the community while maintaining a non-partisan and impartial approach.
- 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 Manager can have no agenda beyond being professional and ensuring that service delivery meets the community's standard for customer service.
- Able to be a vocal and positive spokesperson for the Town's agenda at Town Meetings, at public forums, with state agencies, and with the media. The successful candidate must be able to use the status inherent in the Town Manager's position to advance the Town's agenda.
- Able to assume a strong organizational management role. The Town Manager needs to delegate, while maintaining strict accountability without micromanagement. The successful candidate must be direct, facilitative, and clear.
- Able to create and sustain a goal-oriented environment by establishing, maintaining, and promoting effective policies and initiatives. The Town Manager 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.
- An experienced leader of a comparable organization with extensive personal experience in finance, capital and operational planning, expenditure management, labor relations, public facilitation, grant writing and management. Able to delegate to Department Heads while maintaining strict accountability.

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- Highly competent in budgeting and cash management. The Town Manager must be able to make effective operational decisions that support critical services with limited resources.
- Knowledgeable of and strategic in implementing human resources practices, including effective recruitment and appointment of staff based on competencies, performance assessment, team building, and staff retention.
- Informed and insightful in Chapter 40B housing regulations and issues. The ideal candidate has a record of building relationships with developers and facilitating stakeholder communications to positively influence outcomes for the community.
- 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 while taking 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.
- Both strategic and tactical. The Town Manager must be experienced in providing seasoned and 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 sustain service delivery.
- Capable of keeping elected officials comprehensively informed in an impartial manner while remaining appropriately detached from the legislative process and ensuring staff maintain a similar impartiality and detachment.
- Comfortable working with and managing an organization often characterized by vigorous debate among well-informed citizens who are active in local decision-making processes.
- Committed to remaining informed on municipal issues and trends through participation in Massachusetts Municipal Association activities and fostering communications with officials and managers in other communities.
- Committed to adherence to the International City/County Management Association tenets as a job requirement.

DIVERSITY

The Town seeks to be an employer of choice and values diversity in employees and perspectives. All qualified individuals who are interested in becoming part of the Dracut team are encouraged to apply.

QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor's Degree and at least five years of experience in a municipal chief executive or assistant chief executive role; or another position that oversees the operations of a public entity governed by an elected policy body. Please see the Town Charter for statutory qualifications.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The successful candidate will receive an attractive compensation package including health and retirement plans and professional development. The anticipated starting salary range is \$185,000 - \$220,000 depending on qualifications and direct experience.

APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

Please submit a cover letter and resume in a combined PDF, with a file name format of "LAST NAME – Dracut," to the Collins Center for Public Management at recruitment.umb@gmail.com. Review of resumes begins October 10 and will continue until the position is filled. Please contact Mary Flanders Aicardi, HR Practice Leader at 508-215-8992 with any questions. A Screening Committee will review resumes, and selected candidates will be interviewed in executive session. The Screening Committee will present candidates to the Board of Selectmen for interviews. *To learn more about the Collins Center for Public Management, please visit www.umb.edu/cpm.*