

Town Administrator Profile
Wenham Chronicle & Town Website - August 2015

Department Name: Town Administrator
Website: www.wenhamma.gov/town_government/town_administrator.php
for general information
http://www.wenhamma.gov/administrator_updates/2015_updates.php
for regular updates
Department Head: Peter Lombardi
Number of employees (FTE): 2.0
General functions: Coordination and Supervision of Town Departments; Public Relations and Communication; Budget; Personnel; Facility Maintenance; Procurement; Project Management
Important numbers to call to reach them: 978-468-5520 x. 2
Annual budget: \$297,121 (Town Administrator & Town Hall)

Who are you (past work experience, years of municipal service, time in Wenham, etc) and what is your department (mission)?

The principal role of the Town Administrator is to support and manage an integrated team, working with all Town departments and elected and appointed officials to provide the most effective and efficient delivery of services to residents. I began in Wenham this past May and am excited to make a lasting contribution to the community, having lived and worked on the North Shore my whole life. Prior municipal experience includes, most recently, serving as the Director of Policy and Administration in Newburyport where I was responsible for overseeing daily operations as the Chief Administrative Officer for the city. Prior to my time there, I spent two years as the Grants Administrator in Winthrop where I focused on a number of infrastructure projects and community and economic development initiatives.

What are some of the most common tasks you assist the public with daily?

As Town Administrator, my primary responsibility is to act as a resource and solve problems. Our office generally works on broad policy questions but frequently gets involved in complex constituent issues that require coordination with multiple departments, boards, and committees. Items that require Board of Selectmen deliberation or approval are also channeled through this office. I am trying to be more proactive in how we communicate and engage with residents – these monthly profiles are indicative of this approach to reaching out in new and different ways.

What are some of the more rewarding elements of the work your department carries out?

Working in local government, we have this incredibly unique opportunity to create public value that is tangible – that is one of the things that sets this profession apart and it's why I look forward to coming to work every day. My priorities as a manager are to encourage collaboration, focus on process, pay attention to the details, and, most importantly, build relationships with people. Local government gives you the opportunity to connect with your professional peers, local officials, and residents. It is also an incredibly deliberative process that invites many voices and impacts people's daily lives in a more personal way than other forms of government do. It is certainly rewarding to get to see the fruit of your labors, having solved a particular problem or addressed a long-standing issue by working together.

What are some common challenges?

Unfunded mandates imposed by new state and federal policies and regulations have proven problematic for municipalities to take on – their cumulative effect, working within the budgetary confines of Proposition 2½, present fiscal challenges that are especially difficult for smaller communities to account for. In Wenham, we are further constrained in our ability to expand our tax base since the community is almost entirely residential. While we have been a leader in seeking regional solutions to leverage our capacity to deliver exceptional services with limited resources, we need to continue to examine best practices and evaluate where those efficiencies are best gained without losing the personal touch of small town governance.

In what ways do you work with other town departments daily?

Generally, any issues that our departments cannot address individually – that require a collaborative approach or an interpretation of policy – require my involvement. Whether it is in assembling the annual operating budget, planning and administering a specific capital project, or just working through a specific resident request, I interact with all of the departments on a daily basis, taking care to ensure both strong communication and cohesion in our approach.

What are some achievements made by the department recently?

Town employees, local officials, and residents have been uniformly supportive in welcoming me to the organization and the community during my transition into this position. Having been here for three months now, we have made great headway on a number of fronts already. In terms of personnel, we have reevaluated how several administrative positions were structured in Town Hall, have posted those jobs with updated responsibilities, and look forward to rounding out our team in the coming weeks. We have also implemented a wage and classification policy for all Library employees – a process long in the making. On the communication front, we now post regular updates on the Town's homepage to let residents know what we are doing to help improve services. We have also approved a number of updated contracts with key vendors, have realized cost savings by joining collective purchasing consortiums, and continue to make important investments in our IT infrastructure.

What are your goals for the department over the next year?

The Board of Selectmen and I developed our collective goals for the coming fiscal year at our annual retreat earlier this month. Consensus priorities revolve around ensuring a successful Annual Town Meeting, attending to human resource management, improving communications, initiating strategic planning measures, and facilitating economic development. Action items related to these goals include drafting a comprehensive budget document and annual report, implementing market driven and equitable wages, conducting long-term financial forecasting, and continuing to examine the feasibility of development options for Boulder Lane. For more information on specific deliverables and timelines associated with this year's goals, residents are encouraged to tune in to Board of Selectmen's meetings over the next few weeks, with a finalized report posted on the Town website by September.

What's the best way for the public to give you feedback and to get the assistance they need from you?

Residents are strongly encouraged to call the main line at Town Hall (978-468-5520) and dial extension 2 to reach the Town Administrator's office. Our doors are always open to walk in traffic during Town Hall business hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9AM to 4:30PM; Tuesday from 9AM to 7PM, and Friday from 9AM to 1PM. You can also email Administrative Assistant, Deb Morong, at dmorong@wenhamma.gov or me at plombardi@wenhamma.gov. We actively invite feedback from residents, and we are happy to help with any issues, especially ones that don't seem to fit within any one department.