



The City of Watertown, NY

Invites Candidates to Apply for the Position of

City Manager

Introduction

The City of Watertown's Council-Manager form of government was recognized by ICMA in 1920. It is among the oldest ICMA-recognized plans in New York State. Three City Managers have served Watertown over the past seventeen years. The City currently has a vacancy in the position of City Manager. A retired City department head is serving as City Manager during the interim. The City Council has retained a facilitator to assist in the City's recruitment of its next City Manager. The information presented in this invitation to candidates is gleaned from discussions with the City Council and department heads and represents our understanding of the personal and professional attributes of the ideal candidate, as well as the issues and challenges that will face its next City Manager.

The Watertown Community

Watertown (population 25,900) is the county seat of Jefferson County (population 114,000) and it serves as the prime commercial and service center for much of northern New York State. Jefferson County is the proud home of the US Army's 10th Mountain Division, whose presence at Fort Drum has impacted the Watertown community in terms of commercial and employment growth, demand for services, and housing supply and demand. Fort Drum is the largest single-site employer in New York State.

Watertown is situated at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, near the northern terminus of Interstate 81. Its geographic location provides residents with a multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities on Lake Ontario, within the 1000 Islands region of the St. Lawrence River, in the Adirondack Mountains, or along the Black River, which runs through the city.

The history of Watertown dates to the pioneers who migrated from New England and settled along the banks of the Black River in 1800, and it continues to the vibrant community that Watertown is today. It is a community that is seeking to accommodate its recent growth and demand for services, while retaining its traditional small city character.

The City has undertaken multiple large road improvement projects in recent years through its metropolitan planning organization (MPO). Three major road projects have been completed since 2017, which totaled over \$20 million in their construction cost.

American Airlines currently provides two flight options daily between the Watertown Airport (ART) and the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). An increase in daily flight options is being pursued.

Watertown maintains and operates a vast array of recreational facilities for its residents. These include: the 355-acre Olmstead-designed Thompson Park, and the 63-acre Fairgrounds complex, three municipal swimming pools and a splash pad, as well as numerous neighborhood parks. The Watertown Municipal Arena, which underwent a \$10 million

upgrade in 2016, hosts a variety of skating activities in winter. It also hosts concerts, festivals, trade shows, and other community events. The Arena can provide concert seating for over 4000 persons. The newest municipal pool and bathhouse facility in Thompson Park is currently nearing completion at an estimated total cost of \$3.6 million.

The City Organization

The City of Watertown was incorporated in 1869. The Charter of the City of Watertown, City Law, and other general laws of the State of New York provide a legal framework for the City. The City Council, which is the governing body of the City, consists of the Mayor and four Councilors. The Mayor and Councilors are elected at large to four-year terms. The terms of the Mayor and two Councilors overlap the terms of the two other Councilors.

The City Manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the City and is appointed by the City Council. As the administrative head of city government, the City Manager's duties include: attend all meetings of the City Council, recommend policy measures to Council, implement Council policy, apprise the City Council on city government operations, and keep the Council fully advised of the City's financial condition and financial projections. The City Manager is responsible to prepare and submit a tentative budget to the Council for the next fiscal year.

The City Comptroller serves as the Chief Fiscal Officer of the City and is appointed by the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for the appointment and/or removal of all City employees, except for the City Clerk. The City Attorney is selected by the City Council and is retained on a contractual basis.

Watertown provides a full range of services to its residents including police, a full-time professional fire department, park and recreation facility maintenance, refuse collection, street maintenance and snow removal, and general administrative services. The City provides regional water treatment and distribution, and sewage collection and treatment. Water and sewage services are provided to City residents but also, under contract, to Fort Drum and multiple other jurisdictions throughout Jefferson County. The City also owns and operates a hydroelectric facility on the Black River, which sells surplus power, under contract, to National Grid.

The 2019-20 City Budget provides for a City staff consisting of 324 full-time and 64 part-time employees.

Budget and Financial Condition

The City of Watertown's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. The 2019-20 Adopted Budget includes a \$44 million General Fund, a \$5.7 million Water Fund, and a \$6.5 million Sewer Fund. The Preliminary Budget for 2020-21 will be reviewed and deliberated by the City Council during April and May 2020.

The City of Watertown is currently in sound financial condition. The \$44 million General Fund includes estimated revenue of: \$19.3 million (44%) from sales tax, \$3.9 million (9%) from the sale of hydroelectric power, and a \$9.5 million (22%) property tax levy. The adopted tax levy for 2019-20 resulted in a tax rate of \$8.7835/\$1000 of assessed value, based upon a .92 equalization rate. The 2018-19 fiscal year closed out the General Fund with an appropriated fund balance of \$2 million and an unreserved, unappropriated fund balance of \$10.3 million.

*The City of Watertown has retained an **Aa3 bond rating** since June 2011 when it was upgraded by*

Moody's Investor Services from an A1 rating. At that time, Moody's upgrade was reflective of the City's sound financial position characterized by healthy reserves, a medium-sized tax base with below average wealth levels and a manageable debt burden. Other factors contributing to the rating upgrade were demonstrated strong fiscal management and financial planning as well as the City's increased role as a regional economic center. More recently, however, Moody's added a negative update to the Aa3 rating citing "...strong but recently weakened financial reserves".

Watertown has been a CDBG Entitlement Community since 2014, which status provides the City an allocation of approximately \$900,000 annually to implement community development projects that primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

Although the City's current financial position is sound, like virtually all public jurisdictions in New York State, employee pension contribution rates in the State have a severe impact on municipal finances. Municipalities like Watertown, with paid police and fire departments, are especially impacted by those pension contribution rates which are currently 23.44% of salaries for those public safety employees in the 2019-20 fiscal year. Controlling the rising cost of employee and retiree healthcare benefits will also add to the financial challenges for Watertown's next City Manager.

The Position Profile

Professional Background

The City of Watertown is seeking, as its next City Manager:

- A seasoned leader of a comparable organization with extensive personal experience in finance, budgeting, labor relations, capital and operational planning,

expenditure management, public facilities, and staff development. Excellent public and interpersonal communication skills are essential.

- A graduate degree in Public Administration, Public Policy, Business Administration, Law, or a related field is preferred. A Bachelor's degree is required as a minimum. Ten years of executive experience, including supervisory and budgetary responsibilities, preferably in a municipal setting, is preferred. Five years of such experience is expected as a minimum. 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 is preferred.
- He/she must be comfortable managing in an environment where most employees are members of collective bargaining units and where negotiated labor contracts may place limits on the most efficient delivery of public services. As such, the ideal candidate will be skilled at maintaining a fair and positive relationship with public sector labor unions, while seeking to contain total labor costs in an environment where those costs are rapidly escalating. Unionized city employees are represented by four bargaining units.
- Private sector management experience will be considered to the extent that it is readily adaptable to the requirement of managing and supervising municipal government operations in an enterprise with over 300 unionized employees.
- 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.

- Should be technologically savvy and seek to implement cost-effective technological innovation throughout City government operations.
- The ideal candidate will have experience with community redevelopment efforts, particularly those involving the adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized land and structures that are common in older communities.
- Municipal management experience within New York State will be considered a plus.

Personal Attributes

The City of Watertown is seeking a City Manager with personal attributes, or a management style, that:

- Provides a strong sense of leadership to city government operations and will serve as a *hands-on* administrator.
- Is positive and eager to investigate, consider, recommend, and implement innovative approaches to addressing municipal issues and problems.
- Seeks the advice and involvement of Council in developing consensus on the best action to take, relative to a given community issue.
- Leads department heads and employees through a sense of mutual respect. The City Manager should provide staff with clear direction and oversight.
- Delegates routine administrative tasks to subordinates, follows-up on the status of work assignments, and holds subordinates responsible for the proper and timely completion of those tasks.
- Applies a strong work ethic to the responsibilities of the position.

- The City Manager should be keenly aware of the status of all significant projects and activities within each department.
- Keeps the Mayor and City Council apprised of current and emerging issues; anticipates and identifies potential problems and challenges and brings them to the attention of the elected officials.
- Exhibits a commitment to follow-through on Council directives through expeditious actions.
- Demonstrates unquestioned integrity in interactions with officials and citizens; honest and sincere and treats others respectfully; approachable and is an effective listener. Has the ability to motivate, coach and mentor staff as appropriate. Strives to build a positive morale among staff members.
- Works to focus city government at all levels on the goal of providing quality customer service in all municipal operations.
- Is comfortable and effective in presenting and discussing the City's position on current issues to the community through a variety of public media channels.
- While not required, it is expected that the City Manager will be an individual who chooses to be involved in the community. This would typically include attendance at major public events, participation in goodwill activities, and service on a not-for-profit board.

Opportunities for Leadership

Multiple challenges currently face the City of Watertown and they will provide the next City Manager with opportunities to fully engage his/her leadership skills.

- The primary long-term challenge for the City Manager will be the maintenance of

the City's current sound financial condition while being faced with the escalating cost of employee benefits, as well as the demand for new or enhanced services.

- Efforts to establish the ideal organization and staffing level of the City's fire service has led to protracted labor contract negotiations and related litigation with IAFF Local 191, which represents the City's fire department employees. Resolution of these contract and staffing-level disputes will require the City Manager's immediate attention. Negotiations toward a new labor contract for firefighters resulted in impasse. Consequently, a binding interest arbitration award was imposed for a term that expired June 30, 2016. Negotiations toward a successor labor contract have recently commenced.
- The City Council awaits a recommendation from the City Manager on the relative cost-benefit of leasing versus buying city fire trucks.
- The City currently enjoys an exceptionally favorable contract for the sale of surplus power from its hydroelectric facility to National Grid. This contract expires at the end of 2030 and will result in a significant loss of revenue. Revenue from the sale of electricity makes up 9% of General Fund revenue in the 2019-20 budget. The City Manager, City Council, and staff will need to work with a recently formed advisory committee to develop a transition strategy for the eventual reduction in that revenue stream.
- A major renovation to City Hall is currently in preliminary design, which is intended to renovate existing space for

the addition of a second City Court chambers. The initial estimate for this reconfiguration of space and function is \$3.2 million. It will be a challenge to navigate this reconstruction in a smooth and efficient manner.

- Population and economic growth, induced by the expansion of Fort Drum, has generated an expansion of the housing stock, increased demand for public services, commercial expansion, and traffic impacts. The City has moved aggressively to respond to such impacts and will need to continue to do so.
- Population growth outside of the City's corporate boundary, combined with an older urban housing stock, have contributed to pockets of blight and vacant structures within the City. The City and the Watertown community have been addressing these concerns utilizing a variety of approaches. The City Manager will need to take an active role in this Council priority issue.
- The City may also choose to consider whether its extension of water services beyond the City's corporate limits acts to exacerbate its own loss of population and tax base.
- Watertown is not immune to the drug use and drug crimes affecting communities, large and small. The City Council may very well look to its City Manager and Police Chief for innovative approaches to deal with this problem.
- The City Council adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in December 2019. This comprehensive development plan will serve as a guide to the re-write of Watertown's dated zoning ordinance. A re-write of the City's zoning ordinance is planned to occur during 2020-21.

- Watertown has been awarded a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant by the State of New York. A list of fourteen priority projects, submitted by the Watertown community, was approved in 2018. These downtown projects are expected to maximize the leverage of private sector investment and to maintain the transformation of downtown Watertown as a vibrant neighborhood. The City is also active in implementing multiple State downtown revitalization grants that require solid and sustained public-private initiatives.
- Additional opportunities to develop public-private partnerships exist for multiple redevelopment project sites including Sewall's Island, Factory Square, and the potential development of a solar array at the City's former landfill site.
- The City of Watertown maintains and operates an extensive range of parks and recreation facilities. The City Council has prioritized facilities in Thompson Park for further expansion including a new swimming pool and bathhouse that are currently under construction. A small struggling zoo, situated in Thompson Park, has requested financial support from the City and the broader Watertown community to enhance its facility and stabilize its financial condition. Also, interest has been voiced in the development of an amphitheater in Thompson Park as well. The City Manager will be challenged to ensure that approved facility projects in Thompson Park are completed in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- The City expects the next City Manager to maintain its aggressive approach in

seeking state and federal grant sources to support infrastructure, facility, and community improvement projects.

Compensation

The City Council anticipates negotiating an employment contract with a competitive compensation package, depending on the candidate's experience, qualifications, and salary history. The City anticipates an initial annual salary within the range of \$110,000 to \$130,000.

The City Charter stipulates that the City will have a 2-year employment contract with the City Manager. The City Manager is required to reside within the City of Watertown.

Application and Selection Process

Applications may be submitted electronically or by hard copy.

You may email your resume, together with a cover letter addressing the job requirements, and your salary history to this address: citymgr4@gmail.com. Please insert **Watertown City Manager** in the subject line. Please combine all your documents in a single file. A .pdf format is preferred.

Alternatively, the same documents may be mailed to Watertown City Manager Search, Attention: John C. Krol, PO Box 536, Waddington, NY 13694.

The deadline for receipt of applications is:

Sept. 4, 2020.

Should you have any questions regarding this opportunity, or a recommendation of a colleague, please contact the facilitator for the Watertown City Manager search, John C. Krol, at 315-388-3028.