

MARCH 20, 2023, STM WARRANT ARTICLE & EXPLANATION

Article 3. To see if the Town will vote to affirm the decision of the Select Boards of Washington and Middlefield to readvertise the position of shared Town Administrator with an annual salary of up to eighty thousand dollars plus benefits and with an appointment by said boards for up to three years as provided for pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, section 23A; or to take any other action in relation thereto.

EXPLANATION

A Yes vote affirms the decision of the Select Boards of Middlefield and Washington to readvertise the position of Town Administrator for a higher salary than originally offered. Although this vote is not required by law or regulation, both Boards believe it is important to keep town residents informed and have their approval before increasing.

With the assistance of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, the position was advertised in the fall of 2022 with a maximum salary of \$60,000. The initial term was a one-year contract, due to the expiration of grant funding after the first year of employment. After two extensive rounds of advertising in 12 venues online, in newspapers of general circulation, and in trade publications, there were only five applicants. Two of the applicants dropped out before interviews; one opted not to have a second interview; two were offered the position, but declined thereafter.

After the final candidate dropped out, the Boards met to jointly review the situation. BRPC prepared a survey of Town Administrator salaries in 29 Western Massachusetts towns with populations less than 2000. With data primarily from 2021 and 2022, the survey revealed a range from just under \$60,000 to approximately \$90,000. The average salary was approximately \$70,000.

Given the extraordinary task of administering two towns simultaneously and the apparent dearth of qualified applicants at the former offer, and after considering the estimated tax rate impact of an increase, the Boards decided that offering a maximum salary of \$80,000 was the most appropriate way to attract qualified applicants. The Boards also decided that a three-year term of appointment would complement the higher salary as an inducement. The longer term does not present any additional financial risk to the communities since the position is still strictly subject to annual appropriation.

The tax rate analysis shows a difference of approximately 5¢ per thousand valuation by increasing the salary from \$60,000 to \$80,000 during the initial grant-subsidized year and 10¢ once the grant is phased out. Accordingly, the increase would add roughly another \$15 to the average single family tax bill during the first year, which would then become \$30 after the grant is expended.

SALARY SURVEY - Western MA Towns less than 2000 pop.

Municipality	County	2020 Pop	Admin	FY	Salary*	Avg. Tax Bill**
Ashfield	FRANKLIN	1,695	TA	2021	\$63,060	\$4,752
Becket	BERKSHIRE	1,931	TA	2022	\$84,888	\$2,973
Blandford	HAMPDEN	1,215	TA	2022	\$68,508	\$3,775
Buckland	FRANKLIN	1,816	TA	2021	\$75,000	\$4,673
Charlemont	FRANKLIN	1,185	TA	2022	\$60,662	\$4,601
Chester	HAMPDEN	1,228	TA	2021	\$76,125	\$3,745
Chesterfield	HAMPSHIRE	1,186	TA	2020	\$51,088	\$5,015
Colrain	FRANKLIN	1,606	TC	2021	\$93,257	\$4,113
Conway	FRANKLIN	1,761	TA	2021	\$74,000	\$5,646
Erving	FRANKLIN	1,665	TC	2021	\$74,395	\$1,736
Florida	BERKSHIRE	694	TA	2022	\$59,840	\$1,501
Gill	FRANKLIN	1,551	TA	2021	\$69,573	\$4,005
Heath	FRANKLIN	723	TC	2022	\$62,034	\$4,207
Leverett	FRANKLIN	1,865	TC	2021	\$65,900	\$6,515
Monterey	BERKSHIRE	1,095	TA	2022	\$75,000	\$4,201
New Marlborough	BERKSHIRE	1,528	TA	2022	\$49,759	\$4,388
New Salem	FRANKLIN	983	TC	2021	\$53,322	\$4,526
Peru	BERKSHIRE	814	TA	2022	\$33,619	\$3,904
Richmond	BERKSHIRE	1,407	TA	2022	\$82,400	\$5,710
Rowe	FRANKLIN	424	ES	2022	\$63,086	\$1,397
Sandisfield	BERKSHIRE	989	TM	2022	\$76,500	\$3,654
Shelburne	FRANKLIN	1,884	TA	2021	\$83,002	\$4,538
Shutesbury	FRANKLIN	1,717	TA	2021	\$64,184	\$5,876
Tyringham	BERKSHIRE	427	TA	2022	\$63,771	\$3,748
Warwick	FRANKLIN	780	TC	2021	\$52,740	\$4,107
Wendell	FRANKLIN	924	TC	2021	\$53,322	\$4,340
West Stockbridge	BERKSHIRE	1,343	TA	2022	\$77,250	\$5,717
Whately	FRANKLIN	1,607	TA	2021	\$81,600	\$4,991
Windsor	BERKSHIRE	831	TA	2023	\$57,200	\$2,873
Middlefield	HAMPSHIRE	385				\$3,839
Washington	BERKSHIRE	494				\$4,080

Population	Salary	Avg. Tax Bill
1,218 average	\$67,072 average	\$4,166 average
1,215 median	\$65,900 median	\$4,201 median

- TA = Town Administrator ≤ \$60,000 8
- TC = Town Coordinator \$60,000 – 70,000 9
- TM = Town Manager \$70,000 – 80,000 7
- ES = Executive Secretary > \$80,000 5

* Note: Not all municipalities employ a full-time administrator; some salaries have been annualized to 40 hrs/wk full-time equivalent.

** FY22 Average Single Family Home tax bill

SOURCES:

- Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Wage & Salary Survey, 2021
- Hilltowns Positions Salary Survey, BRPC in-house survey, July 2022
- Mass. Division of Local Services’ Data Analytics and Resources Bureau.
- Washington Municipal Operations and Organization Review, Collins Ctr., UMass Boston, March 2022 (TA Salary Survey)