

Town Manager Recruitment Profile

Abingdon

Virginia





TOWN OF ABINGDON

The Town of Abingdon is seeking an experienced professional to serve as **Town Manager**, the chief administrative officer responsible for directing programs and operations of the Town government.

This recruitment profile provides background information on the community, its government operations and its aspirations. It also outlines the qualifications, experience and characteristics determined to be necessary and desirable for the position of Town Manager.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter and resume, with salary history and professional references, to The Berkley Group via email at kimball@bgllc.net. While the position is open until filled, **review of candidates will begin February 4, 2019**. Inquiries relating to the Town Manager position may be directed to:

Kimball Payne

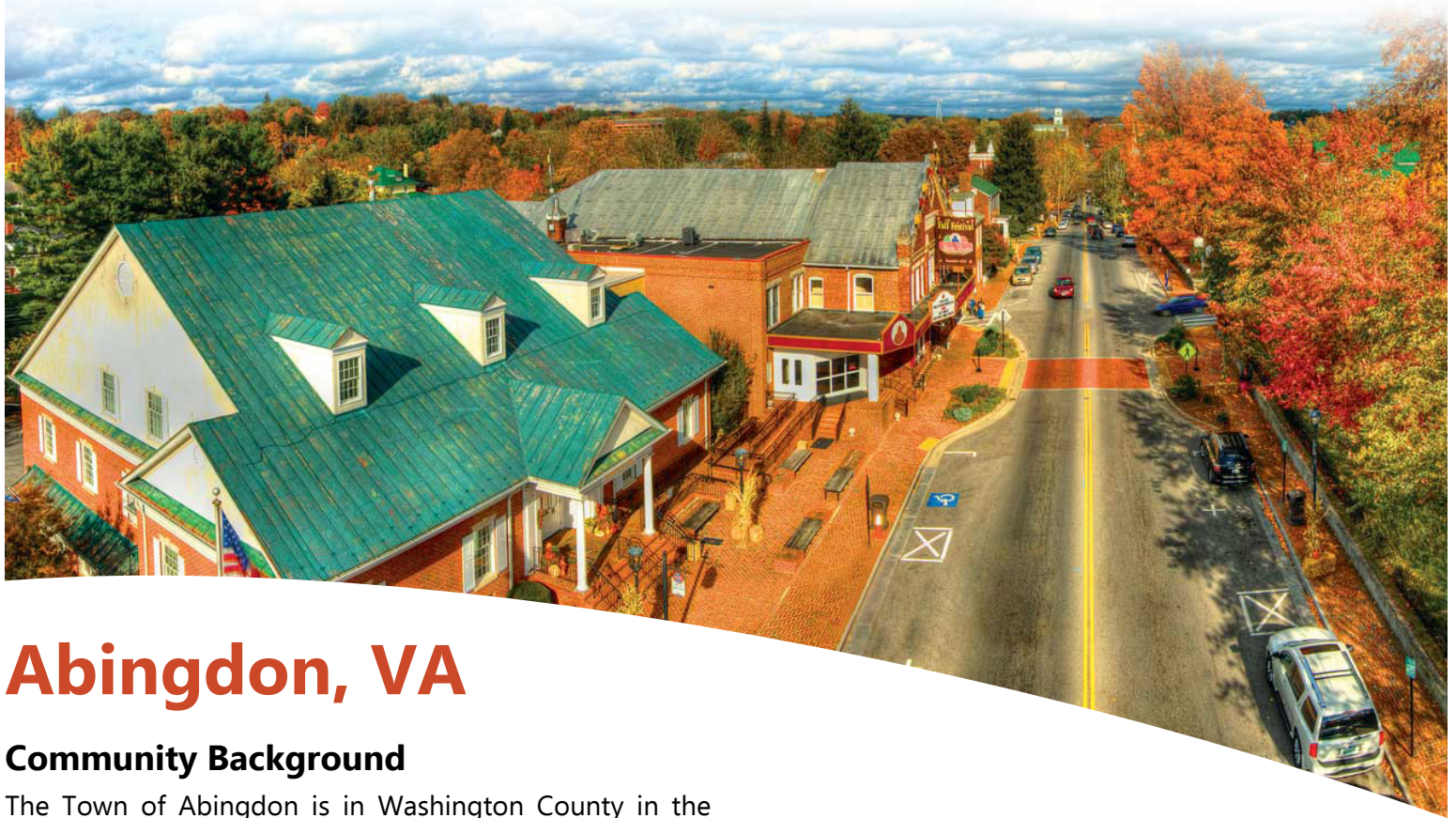
The Berkley Group

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Abingdon, VA

Community Background

The Town of Abingdon is in Washington County in the scenic Blue Ridge Highlands region of Virginia. Established by an act of the Assembly of Virginia in 1778, the town was named after the ancestral home of Martha Washington. The town's location on Interstate 81, approximately fifteen (15) miles above the Virginia-Tennessee border, makes it easily accessible from much of the eastern United States. Abingdon is the county seat of Washington County and is part of the Kingsport-Bristol (TN)-Bristol (VA) Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is a component of the Johnson City-Kingsport-Bristol, TN-VA Combined Statistical Area, commonly known as the "Tri-Cities" region.

Abingdon enjoys an exemplary quality of life with both natural recreation and major metropolitan areas nearby. Five other state capitals are closer to the town than the Commonwealth's capital of Richmond.

Jefferson National Forest, the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Grayson Highlands State Park and the Appalachian Trail, as well as numerous streams, rivers and lakes, are easily accessible from the town. The western terminus of the Virginia Creeper Trail, a popular rails-to-trails project, is in downtown Abingdon. Bikers come from all over to get a shuttle to White Top mountain, 35 miles away, and ride the mostly downhill trail back to Abingdon.

The Town of Abingdon is characterized by its charm, historic buildings, unique businesses, and arts and cultural activities. Downtown is a Virginia Historic Landmark and its 20-square block Historic District includes many restored and preserved buildings such as the Fields-Penn 1860 House Museum, which shows how a typical family lived in the pre-Civil War period, and The Arts Depot, a restored



1870 railroad station. A Four-Star, Historic Hotel of America, the Martha Washington Inn & Spa, built in 1832, sits across the street from the Barter Theatre. Considered the "State Theatre of Virginia," the Barter Theatre is one of the longest running professional regional theatres in the nation, hosting such Hollywood luminaries as Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, and Ernest Borgnine.

Abingdon is one of the towns along "The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail" and is home of the annual Virginia Highlands Festival, one of the most popular events in Virginia. Agriculture has historically played an important role in the life of the region, although production has shifted away from tobacco to more varied crops, beef cattle, dairy and eggs. The Abingdon Farmers' Market and farm-to-table restaurants are popular attractions.

All of this, a thriving arts scene, foodie culture, vibrant history, and great outdoor recreation are just a few of the reasons that USA Today named Abingdon the #2 Southern Small Town in 2015.

Abingdon students attend Washington County public schools. Virginia Highlands Community College, offering 2-year degrees, is in the town. The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, on the campus of VHCC, provides the region with access to undergraduate and graduate degree programs and courses from participating institutions Emory & Henry College, Old Dominion University, Radford University, University of Virginia, University of Virginia's College at Wise, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Highlands Community College, Virginia Intermont College, and Virginia Tech. Emory & Henry College is located seven miles north of the town.

Abingdon's population of nearly 8,000 is approximately 93% white, 3% African American, 3% Hispanic and 2% Asian. The Median Household Income is \$38,338 (2017) and the poverty rate is 17.6%. Washington County has a population, including town residents, of approximately 54,400. Regional employment is focused on transportation equipment, specialty chemicals and metal manufacturing, distribution, health care, professional, scientific, and technical services, lodging, and food and retail services. K-VA-T Food Stores, Inc., the owner of the Food City grocery chain, has its corporate headquarters and a distribution center in Abingdon. Johnston Memorial Hospital, a 116 bed, not-for-profit facility located just north of town, provides healthcare to residents of the region.

Town Government

The Town of Abingdon provides an array of municipal services complementing the more broadly delivered services, such as public education and social services, provided by Washington County. Services include planning and zoning, building inspection, stormwater management and erosion control, streets maintenance, wastewater collection and treatment, and solid waste collection. The Abingdon Police Department is responsible for law enforcement and emergency response is provided by the Abingdon Fire Department and Abingdon Volunteer Fire and Rescue, Inc. Washington County provides centralized E911 call answering and dispatch services.

Cultural and recreational activities are provided by a robust Parks and Recreation Department. The main branch of the Washington County Public Library is in Abingdon. The town also has active economic development and tourism programs.

Abingdon has approximately 200 employees, with an annual general fund budget of approximately \$20 million, including approximately \$7 million in capital expenditures. The Sewer Fund, an enterprise fund, has an annual budget of \$3.2 million.

The Town of Abingdon is governed by a five-member Town Council, elected at-large to four-year, staggered terms. The Council is the legislative policy making body for the town government. The Council elects a Mayor



from its members, who presides at meetings of the Council and is recognized as the head of the town government for ceremonial and certain statutory purposes.

The Town Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the town government, appoints and supervises employees, serves as the town purchasing agent, implements policies and addresses priorities adopted by the Council. The manager is also responsible for ensuring that all laws, ordinances, resolutions and bylaws of the Council are faithfully enforced. In addition, the Town Manager represents Abingdon to federal and state agencies and serves on various local and regional boards representing the town.

Challenges, Issues & Opportunities

A defining characteristic of the Abingdon town government at the current time is a wholesale turnover in leadership. The two most senior members of the town council have served for two years each. The remaining three members were elected in May 2018. In addition to the position of Town Manager, the position of Assistant Town Manager is vacant. The Town Attorney has served less than one year, and the Town Planner has served in an interim role for eighteen months. Town employees are understandably interested in how new leadership will develop. The new Town Manager will have the opportunity to engage with the staff, to provide necessary support and to encourage teamwork and collaboration.

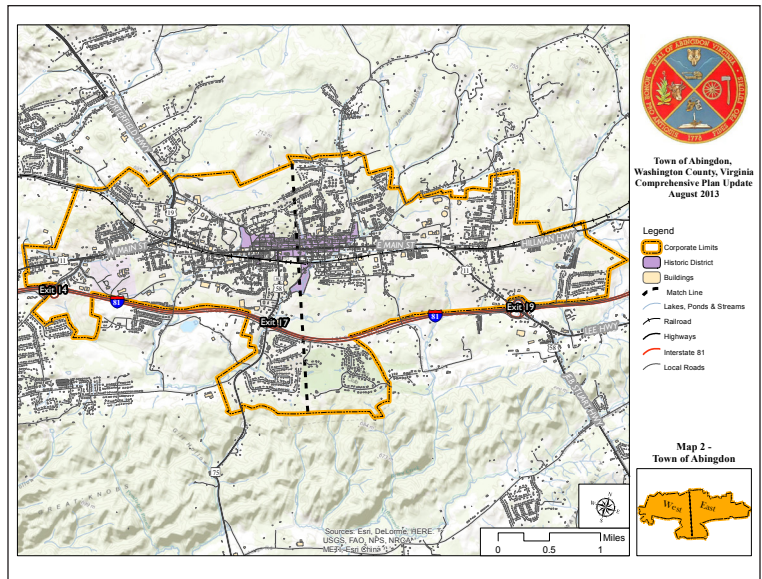
The Town Council, although aware of its lack of knowledge and experience, is addressing important issues and indicates that its members get along well with each other. A Code of Ethics to guide council behavior and interactions was adopted in July 2018. Newly elected council members plan to attend training offered by the Virginia Municipal League and the entire council held a strategic planning retreat in December 2018.

The new Town Manager will have the opportunity to assist the Council in its development as an effective governing body and to implement and build on decisions reached at its retreat. The Town Council has identified several areas needing attention:

- The evaluation, use and maintenance of town-owned historic properties
- Implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Plan
- Review and updating of town ordinances, specifically regarding zoning, noise, taxicabs, and signage
- A potential change to the town charter to reduce the number of appointees by the council
- Review and revision of the organization's policies and procedures
- The promotion of teamwork among and the building of the morale of town employees
- Strengthening relations with Washington County

Two important guiding documents need updating. The town's comprehensive plan, adopted in 2013 to guide land use and development to 2027, is up for review as mandated by state statute. It is also time to renew the capital improvement plan (CIP) that was adopted for the ten-year period 2010-2020.

Capital projects will require the attention of the new Town Manager. The Park Street streetscape improvement project, with a cost of \$860,000, will be administered by the town. Two sewer studies have been completed and identified areas for potential upgrade. Additionally, there is growing interest in a new or renovated municipal building and town



shop with the possibility of bringing more town operations into a single location.

The most important development project currently underway in the town is The Meadows, a seventy-acre site, rezoned from agriculture to business in 2015, and designed to support thirty acres of commercial development and a forty-acre town sports complex. Although the project was controversial at its inception and some concerns linger, it is under construction and the developers have announced that the commercial site is mostly leased. The Abingdon Town Council is committed to seeing the project through and is working to fulfill the town's obligations, which include the realignment of Green Springs Road and the development of the sports complex. The town has secured a \$10 million line of credit to fund those projects.



Position Profile

Town Manager, Abingdon

Qualifications, Education & Experience

The following education and experience factors are the expected qualifications for successful performance:

- A Master's degree in Public Administration, Business Management, Planning or a related field; experience equivalent to a master's degree may be considered.
- Three to five years of successful leadership at a senior executive/administrator level in an organization with comparable responsibilities; possessing a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of town government operations. Local government experience in Virginia as a manager, deputy or assistant is desirable.
- A record of being an active member of the community, through participation in local service organizations and volunteer activities.
- A demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development through participation in organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA); designation or progress toward designation as ICMA Credentialed Manager would be a plus.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

Personal Traits & Desired Characteristics

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, open and personable interactions with all town employees and community members.
- Professionally competent, with confidence tempered by humility.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen effectively and understand differing views.
- Strong leadership skills, in the government organization, the community, and the region; visionary, proactive, and decisive; able to facilitate the blending of differing points of view into a reasonable approach for community betterment.
- Knowledgeable and supportive of the principles of the council-manager form of government and respectful of the different and complementary roles of the Town Council and the Town Manager.
- A role model, coach, and mentor for town employees; dedicated to the professional development of staff; able to empower employees with a focus on performance, collaboration and accountability.
- A promoter of teamwork and collaboration among town departments, with Washington County, and across the region.

Performance Expectations

- Short-term, immediate actions will be to engage with staff and council, review town policies and procedures, master the budget process, and get up to speed on active capital projects.
- An active leader who demonstrates and seeks excellence befitting historic Abingdon.
- Active and visible participation in community activities as a resident of the town.
- Responsive to citizen concerns and issues; listening, understanding and providing timely follow-up.
- A commitment to open and transparent government; promoting a positive and interactive relationship with town citizens and stakeholders; encouraging citizen engagement.
- Effective communications with all stakeholders; presenting information in a form understandable to various audiences.
- A focus on promoting interdepartmental communication, cooperation, and collaboration in the town organization.
- Fair and equitable treatment and evaluation of town employees and departments with a goal of improved services.

Compensation & Benefits

Compensation for the Town Manager will be competitive, depending on qualifications and experience. The successful candidate will be offered a generous benefits package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health insurance coverage, paid time off, deferred compensation, professional development support and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment contract.

Application Process

Initial review of candidates will begin on February 4, 2019. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled. Timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. To be considered, please **submit a cover letter and resume with salary history and professional references to The Berkley Group, via email at kimball@bgllc.net.** Questions may be directed to:

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For Additional Information

Visit <https://abingdon-va.gov/>

The Town of Abingdon is an Equal Opportunity Employer