

Additional Sample Interview Questions

From Chatham

1. (This is a warm up question). Mr/Ms. xxxxx, Please tells us about yourself and in particular how your experience and training qualifies you to help Chatham meet the Challenges described in the Profile.
Possible follow up – What about the Chatham Town Manager's job has drawn your interest.
2. Chatham is a sophisticated town, one that has a Triple A bond rating, with a population that expects a high level of service. What in you background specifically can provide evidence that you have the experience to serve as Manager in Chatham?
Possible follow up – Citizens expect a high level of service, but also expect the Town to be managed in a financially prudent way. Public perception of financially prudent management is important. How do you think the town should communicate with the citizens so that they have confidence that the Town is being managed in prudent way?
3. The Town is a small but complex organization and we are fortunate to have some skilled Department heads. What is your management style in working with Department Heads and staff? (Possible part 2 of question) – Department Heads are the people responsible for direct service delivery what is your experience developing Department Heads as effective leaders of their organizations.
Possible follow up question – A new bargaining unit has been certified, but does not yet have its first contract negotiated. The unit includes some department heads and virtually all of the previously non-union employees (about 100). In fact, one of the department heads is the President of unit. How might this situation affect your ability to manage effectively? What strategies or approaches might you consider to shape and manage this new element in the Town's management environment?
4. Chatham has been able to provide a high level of service and investment because financial planning has been executed in a thoughtful way with a five to seven year perspective in mind. This has been a consistent value of the Town, at least since 1995, when the first Town Manager was appointed. What in your experience provides evidence that you can play a leadership role in the financial planning process, a process the Town believes is essential to maintaining its service delivery capability.
5. Chatham is a small town. Our citizens expect their public officials to be available and accessible to them. How do you interact with citizens and what concrete actions have you taken in your previous jobs to improve direct services and communication to citizens.
Possible follow up question – What is your day-to-day interaction style with citizens.
6. Boards of Selectmen and Town Meetings are often not unanimous on decisions Town should take. How do you manage in a context where there is a clear majority on an issue, but nevertheless there are very different views in the Town?
7. Even though Chatham is well off, at least in a relative sense, the current economic downturn has placed pressure on the town to reduce staff. The town has accepted the state law that permits certain early retirements and seven staff members has opted for early retirement. In the future the Town is likely to facing staffing pressures and be required to sustain service levels with fewer people. What in your experience prepares you to manage in this kind of environment?

8. Chatham is blessed with many interested and capable citizens who are interested in serving on town committees, in fact many key issues like the wastewater plan are addressed by citizen committees that are typically appointed by the Selectmen. What is your experience working with citizen committees and what do you feel is the Town Manager's proper role with citizen committees appointed by the Selectmen to address a specific issue.

Closing Question: We have hit you with a lot of questions in a very limited time frame, it's only fair that before we close to ask if you have any questions for us or want to make a closing statement

Yarmouth

1. What attracts you to Yarmouth and why do you feel you would be a good fit for our community? What do you see as the Town's greatest asset? What do you see as the Town's greatest challenge? – *intro questions*
2. Describe your approach to managing staff. What practices have you put in place to ensure accountability? What practices have you put in place to strengthen the management team? – *managing internal relationships*
3. The Town is about to seek funding for the largest capital project it has ever undertaken – construction of a sewer system with an estimated cost of \$277 million over a 25 year period. Describe your experience managing large capital projects. – *project administration*
 - a. Can you offer any lessons learned or potential pitfalls based upon your experience?
4. Describe your approach to working with your board of selectmen or city council.
 - a. How do you communicate with the elected officials?
 - b. Do you have any particular strategies or guidelines for promoting the effectiveness of the elected board? – *working with the board*
5. What has been the most difficult situation you faced in your professional career? How did you handle the situation? – *character, self-awareness*
6. Describe your experience with labor relations, collective bargaining and arbitration.– *managing internal relationships*
 - a. What strategies have you found to be effective or ineffective?
 - b. Can you identify one or two particular successes that you had with union negotiations? What was good about the outcome? How did you achieve it?
7. What do you feel are the most important qualities or skill sets that the next Town Administrator needs to address the challenges Yarmouth faces? – *management style, priorities*

Second Interview Questions

1. Yarmouth prides itself on delivering quality services with a modest tax impact – only 12% of all cities and towns in Massachusetts have a lower average tax bill. Like most municipalities across the country, we are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain services without tax increases. How would you guide the board and the community in making difficult choices with regard to budget reductions? Describe any experience you have had with Proposition 2 ½ or similar tax limitation laws? – *budgeting*
2. Coordination and communication with other Town offices and agencies is an important role for the Town Administrator. Describe how you communicate and work with other officials and agencies such as the School department; department heads, the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, employees, union officials. – *managing internal & external*
3. What experience do you have with economic development?

- a. Describe for us the most important planning initiative that you participated in over the course of your career? What was your role in the planning process? Can you describe any keys to success? – *planning & economic development*
4. Consider the following situation: Your elected Board, at a public meeting, appears anxious and ready to vote on an important policy decision that you firmly believe would be detrimental to the Town. The issue had not been discussed previously. What would you do and how would you do it? – *working with the board*
5. Describe how you would keep citizens well informed about governmental matters and, conversely, how would you make sure citizens' views and concerns are properly received and addressed? – *managing external*
6. Do you have any observations or closing remarks you would like to share with this Board?

Extra question if necessary:

What core values do you rely on when facing difficult professional decisions on the job? Please give an example or two. – *character*

Southborough

1. We've read your resume and cover letter. Tell us something about yourself that you wish to highlight which you believe is important for us to know.
 2. How will you maintain the enthusiasm of the staff? Noting that you may have seen some similar projects fail, yet knowing you want the staff to continue to be creative and energetic?
 3. What have you tried that didn't work? Why didn't it work? What did you learn from this experience?
 4. How do you interact with the Board of Selectmen? What challenges do you see with a 3 member board or one that is made up differently?
 5. Describe a disagreement you have witnessed between boards. How did you help to resolve this situation?
 6. You have spent some time here visiting the town and meeting with the staff. What did you learn from these visits and what issues do you think we need to address?
 7. 60% of the budget is school related here. What is the split in your town? If you could change anything in your relationship with the school department or committee, what would it be?
 8. You've spent some time getting to know the town. What do you see as our primary challenges and why have you chosen these topics?
 9. What have you done to make the budget process work better in your town? What were the results?
 10. As far as labor relations goes, describe your current role. What has your approach been in this area?
 11. If you get this job, how do you expect this Board to measure you in 90 or 120 days?
 12. If you look at the issues we grapple with statewide, what are most critical to this town? How much should we participate in such issues?
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Easton

1. What experience do you have working with regional, state, and Federal government? Please talk about some successes you've had with grants or appropriations.

2. Can you describe a situation in which you played a leadership role in bringing new business or infrastructure to a community?
3. Can you give us an example of a problem you encountered that you had never faced before? How did you educate yourself and handle the issue?
4. Is there anything in your background that would cause embarrassment to our town?
5. Could you briefly walk us through your background? Give us a few points about each job you've held. Why is this next step in your career?
6. Can you tell us what you know about Easton, and what major issues you see the town facing in the next few years?
7. What would your first steps be upon taking the position?
8. What do you see as the three most important elements of a good management style? Are you an out-front or behind-the-scenes administrator?
9. What is your knowledge of procurement law? Do you have experience with issuing RFPs?
10. Can you describe for us a very difficult performance issue you've had to deal with? What made it difficult, and how did you handle it?
 - Have you ever had to fire someone?
 - What steps did you take, and how did you handle it?
11. Could you please describe your past and present relationships with your boards and school committees? What were the barriers, and how did you deal with them?
12. Please describe the role you feel technology plays in town administration. What is your level of expertise with various technology tools?
13. How would you describe your style in relation to the media? To the citizens?
14. Please describe your style and experience with labor negotiations.
15. What do you see as the town administrator's role at town meeting?
16. What aspects or responsibilities of this position most appeal to you?
17. Please tell us the one or two major victories in your career that you are most proud of.