



# TOWN MANAGER

TOWN OF RICHLANDS, VA

"The Center of a Friendly Circle"





**The Town of Richlands** is seeking an experienced professional to serve as Town Manager, the chief administrative officer responsible for directing programs and operations of the Town government. A retired manager, an Executive Manager with the Berkley Group, is serving as Interim Town Manager and will not be a candidate.

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 expectations and professional references, to The Berkley Group via email at [karen.edmonds@bgllc.net](mailto:karen.edmonds@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, **the formal review of candidates will begin August 11, 2023**. Inquiries relating to the Town Manager position may be directed to:

**Karen Edmonds**

The Berkley Group

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## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

A close-knit community in the Appalachian Mountains region of Southwestern Virginia, the Town of Richlands is known for its friendly and welcoming spirit. Nestled within the mountain ranges, it offers a wonderful opportunity to lead and manage the Town government operations within a scenic community that embraces quality of life and work principles for its citizens, business and industry, and employees. This peaceful community exhibits its pride through quality arts, youth sports, education, and outdoor activities and programming.

## LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

The Town of Richlands has a total of 2.7 square miles and is situated along the Clinch River just east of the Tazewell-Russell county line of Virginia. Cedar Bluff borders Richlands to the east, and the community of Raven lies just to the west. U.S. Route 460 (a four-lane highway) and Virginia State Route 67 both traverse Richlands.

Richlands has access to several major interstates, which brings larger metropolitan markets within easy reach. Interstate 77 and Interstate 81 are both within an hour's drive. From the intersection of these two interstates, Interstate 64, at Charleston, WV, is 2 ½ hours north; and Interstate 75, at Knoxville, TN, is 2 ¾ hours west. Frankfort, KY, lies just west of the Interstate 75/Interstate 64 intersection.

## HISTORY

Known as a Small Town with a Big History, Richlands certainly lives up to this slogan. The land now containing the Town of Richlands was probably once a Native American village. As late as 1775, the area containing the future town of Richlands held the line as a western outpost of civilization. Forts and militiamen offered refuge and protection to pioneer families during native tribal raids. Not until December 1792 did civilization push its borders into Kentucky, and the area was no longer a military outpost.

In the 1890's, touted to speculators and investors as the "Pittsburgh of the South" due to its readily available coal, iron, and timber, Richlands began with promises for riches and success. The Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company, a conglomerate of seven companies, purchased extensive holdings in the valley. Historian William Pendleton estimated the Richlands area as measuring two by four miles with five thousand acres of "very valuable land." The Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company owned and leased out extensive property in the surrounding area.



The name Richlands evolved from the land grant of 1785 Patrick Henry, then governor of Virginia, to John Fowler for a tract of two hundred acres extending from Lake Park (Lick Lot then) to Doran. The grant described the land location as "in the rich lands on both sides of the Upper Fork of the Clinch River." As pronounced in that document, both words were and are accented equally Rich-lands. Historian Bickley commented that Richlands was "...noted for its fine lands. It is a pretty place, and desirable."

Richlands went "online" around 1889 when the Norfolk and Western Railroad arrived. By 1890, the town had established a street system and industrial sites. With this industrial expansion came roads, a water system, and new housing. That same year the town contained a large office building, a bank, and the luxurious Hotel Richlands. At the factory on Iron Street, behind what is today the Richlands post office, rolling mill workers converted cast iron into wrought iron. Glass factories were eventually part of this boom town.

In 1892, Richlands became incorporated, but the stock market crash of 1893 led to depression and regression. Northern companies ordered their agents home, closing factories, mills, and the Hotel Richlands. When the rolling mill closed, the company demolished the mill and hauled away the remains. Realizing the hotel now stood empty, residents carried away the sterling silver, the Dresden China marked "The Hotel Richlands" in gold, crystal chandeliers, and mahogany furniture.

Although the coal industry was not the heart of Richlands, Richlands was certainly the heart of the coal industry. Local coal mining included operations at Big Creek, Seaboard, Hill Creek, Doran, and Raven, as well as Middle Creek and Indian Creek at Cedar Bluff. Depending on that coal was the brick plant located off Kents Ridge Road. Dating to 1890 when the town had iron, ice, and glass factories, the brick plant alone survived.

Today the Richlands Historic District is a national historic district. The district encompasses 91 contributing buildings in the central business district of the Town of Richlands. It includes residential, commercial, and institutional buildings dating from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries. Notable buildings include the W.B.F. White and Sons Hardware building (c. 1892), Bank of Richlands (c. 1890), Norfolk and Western Railroad Section House (c. 1889), First Christian Church (1908), First United Methodist Church, and Richlands Presbyterian Church. In addition, the Tazewell Avenue Historic District, and Williams House, are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





## ECONOMY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Richlands offers a peaceful and beautiful setting, combined with efficient utilities, quality education, interstate access, and business incentives to make Richlands an ideal location for economic development to prosper.

Notably, the Tadano Mantis Corporation manufactures cranes and heavy machinery in Richlands. It is a supplier of cranes that are used in power transmission line erection, highway and bridge construction, railroads and energy and oil pipelines. It expanded its operation in 2015, having received \$100,000 from the Governor's Opportunity Fund.

CNX Resources, an independent natural gas company, will be relocating and expanding from its current location in Claypool Hill to Richlands in 2024, bringing 75 jobs to Richlands. CNX is a natural gas development, midstream, and technology company in the shale gas formations of Appalachia, one of the most energy abundant regions in the world. Richlands has three taps for natural gas in the town.

A new economic development aquaculture initiative, Pure Salmon fish farming, is coming to the border of Tazewell County and Russell County by the end of 2023. It would be the world's largest vertically integrated indoor aquaculture facility, bringing more than 200 jobs to the area.

## ATTRACTIONS

The scenic Clinch River, a 135-mile river which flows through the Great Appalachian Valley before joining the Tennessee River, runs through downtown Richlands. It contains more species of fish than any other river in Virginia, making it attractive for fishing, boating, and kayaking with four kayak launches on the river.

For relaxation or recreational activities, Richlands Town Recreation Park offers opportunities for all ages. The Critterville Playground provides areas in which families and children can play and enjoy a picnic. The Clinch River Pedestrian Walkway and Bike Trail provides an excellent path for walking, jogging, or biking. The Recreation Facility houses indoor/outdoor tennis and basketball courts as well as a new outdoor swimming facility.

The multi-faceted Spearhead and the Hatfield & McCoy Trail Systems feature the Clinch River and are a premier tourism destination for hiking, biking, equestrians, ATV and 4x4 Jeeps, and bird enthusiasts. Richlands includes 76 miles of off-road and side-by-side trails in town (600 miles over seven trail systems for any skill level) that connect to Buchanan and Pocahontas Counties.

Known for its strong arts program, Richlands Area CART (Citizens for the Arts) offers seasonal performing arts programming. In addition, the Appalachian Arts Center in nearby Cedar Bluff and Bluefield offer beautiful quilts, glasswork, and arts to appreciate. The Clinch River Artisan Trail in Tazewell and Russell Counties is a driving tour taking visitors through history, culture, and the traditions of rural Appalachia.

Other tourist attractions in town and in the region include the Clinch Valley Millworks, a stop on the Artisan Trail, specializing in custom cabinetry, flooring, and millwork, Adirondack chairs and custom furniture; the Crab Orchard Museum and Pioneer Park, the Premier Cultural Heritage Center in Tazewell County; and the Richlands Coal Miners' Memorial, dedicated in 2003 as a tribute to the men and women who sacrificed all they had to make a living in the coal mining industry. Additionally, the Richlands Farmers Market offers seasonal fresh vegetables and fruits grown in the area.



## HEALTH CARE

The Clinch Valley Medical Center is located within two miles of the town. The Medical Center is a 175-bed acute care hospital with a growing integrated network of care that offers many health-related services for the Richlands community and the town's residents. Services include cancer care, diabetes education, emergency room, general surgery and related surgical services, obstetrics and gynecology, rehab and physical therapy, and orthopedics. Clinch Valley Physicians Practices provide quality healthcare and specialized services. This includes Cedar Valley Urgent Care and the Clinch Valley Oncology Center in Richlands.

## EDUCATION

Education is an important asset to the Richlands community. Richlands Elementary, Middle, and High Schools (all fully accredited) are a division of Tazewell County Public Schools, providing a quality educational environment. The student-teacher ratio for each school is approximately 15:1.

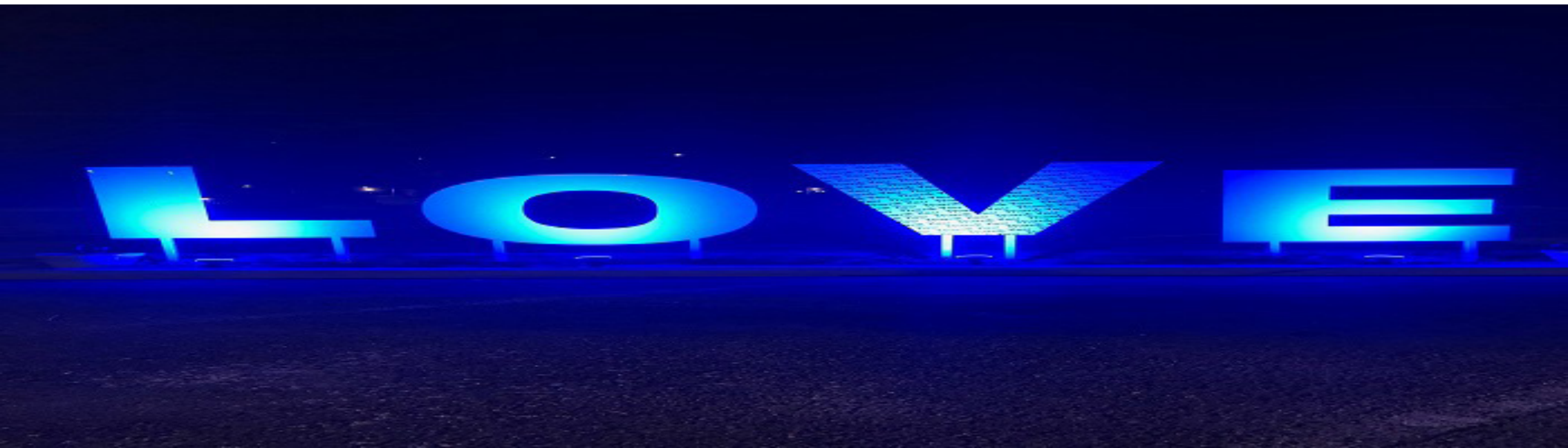
Richlands Elementary serves 583 students in grades PreK-5. It placed in the top 30% of all schools in Virginia for overall test scores in the 2020-21 school year. Total enrollment in Richlands Middle School is 497, serving grades 6-8. In 2022, it ranked 97th in Virginia Middle Schools out of 414. Richlands High School also ranked 137th within Virginia and 6,520th Nationally, with an enrollment of 717 in grades 9-12. These schools have achieved high proficiency in several areas that exceeded the Virginia average.

Advanced educational and training opportunities include Old Dominion University Teletechnet; Southwest Virginia Community College (SVCC); and the Small Business Development Center at SVCC located in the community area. The Foundation for Southwest Virginia Community College is the largest of any community college in Virginia.

Other universities within a short driving distance of Richlands include Bluefield University, Bluefield State College, Emory & Henry College, Concord University, Appalachian School of Law and Appalachia College of Pharmacy. Virginia Tech is approximately two hours away.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Town of Richlands has a population of 5,261 (2020 Census). It is part of the Bluefield, WV-VA micropolitan area, which has a population of 107,578. The County's residents (2022) are 94.7% White, 3.7% Black or African American, .1% Hispanic or Latino and 1.7% other Races Combined. The 2021 Median Household Income was \$31,169, with a median value of owner-occupied housing of \$94,800, and a poverty rate of 27.8%.





## TOWN GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES

The Town provides a range of services to its citizens and businesses, including police and fire services, parks and recreation, sanitation, water and wastewater services, electricity, road maintenance, financial and administrative support services.

The Town operates under the Council-Manager form of government (as defined by Charter). The Town is governed by a Mayor and six members of Town Council, elected at large for four-year terms, with elections staggered at two-year intervals. The Mayor, elected in November 2022, presides over the meetings of the Council, but votes only in the event of a tie. Council members meet in January after an election to select a Vice-Chair to serve a two-year term. The Town Council is the legislative policy-making body for the town government. It enacts ordinances, adopts the annual budget, appropriates funds, sets tax rates, establishes policies, and adopts plans for town growth and development.

Richlands owns and operates a municipal electric distribution system, one of only 12 localities in Virginia to do so. The Town is a member of American Municipal Power (AMP), a nonprofit corporation organized to provide generation, transmission, distribution, and related energy services to its members in six states. Through this association, Richlands is able to purchase energy wholesale, and provide its 2,500 customers with reliable, economically priced electric service. The Town is analyzing generating some of its own power within the next few years.

The Town also owns and operates the Richlands Regional Water Treatment Facility, a 2.5 million gallon per day (MGD) facility; and the Richlands Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility, a 4.0 MGD facility.

The Regional Water Treatment Facility utilizes conventional methods to treat and deliver potable water to the Town's distribution system. Partnering with the Town of Cedar Bluff and the Tazewell County Public Service Authority, the facility was constructed in 1994 and currently furnishes water to the Town of Cedar Bluff, the communities of Raven and Doran and other rural areas in the Northwestern district of Tazewell County. In addition, the facility provides potable water to some areas of Russell and Buchanan Counties through the distribution system of the Tazewell County Public Service Authority. The water treatment plant is currently operating at about 48% capacity and serves 2,465 in-town and 77 out-of-town customers. The plant also provides water treatment services to approximately 10,000 customers outside of the Town through the agreements with the Tazewell County PSA and neighboring counties. Water distribution is accomplished through the use of booster pumping stations and storage tanks located throughout the service area.



The Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility utilizes advanced activated sludge, through a nitrification / de-nitrification process, to treat wastewater. The plant treats wastewater from both the Town and the Tazewell County Public Service Authority's sewage collection system. Partnering with the Town of Cedar Bluff and the Tazewell County PSA, the facility was constructed in 1990 and currently serves the Town of Cedar Bluff and the communities of Raven, Doran and Baner Bottom. Treated wastewater is discharged into the Clinch River while sludge is disposed of naturally. The wastewater treatment plant is at approximately 30% capacity and serves 2,403 in-town and 60 out-of-town customers. Almost all potential users in the town with access to a nearby sewer line are connected to the system. The plant also provides wastewater treatment services to approximately 10,000 customers outside of the Town through agreement with the Tazewell County PSA.

The Town of Richlands enjoys a low crime rate through its provision of excellent law enforcement and code enforcement for its citizens. A mutual aid agreement is in place for three-fourths of Tazewell County and surrounding areas. The Town provides a School Resource Officer (SRO) at the Elementary and Middle Schools while the Tazewell Sheriff's Office provides an SRO for Richlands High School. The Police Department oversees a Drug Task Force for Tazewell County. Accreditation is expected for the Police Department within the next year. The Department has seventeen (17) sworn officers and currently has twenty-one (21) vehicles in its inventory.

The Town of Richlands provides Fire/Rescue and EMS services for town residents and supports the surrounding communities on a 24-hour cycle. The Fire and Rescue Department serves all areas within the Town limits and the Western and Northwestern Districts of Tazewell County. Made up of thirty-eight (38) full and part-time staff, the Department has nine (9) fire trucks, five (5) ambulances, and two (2) SUV's. The strength of the staff and training, the newness of the equipment, response times, distances traveled to a fire, and water availability and pressure have helped the Town achieve an ISO Rating of 6, helping keep insurance rates down for the community. The Fire and Rescue Department also maintains a 1,730 square foot Burn Building for the purpose of training more than 300 firefighters from the Town of Richlands and surrounding communities.

The Richlands Library is part of the Tazewell County Public Library System. This system has four Library Branches. In addition to Richlands, these are in Bluefield, Pocahontas and Tazewell.

The Tazewell County Animal Shelter provides animal intake, housing, and adoption services to Richlands and the surrounding areas.

The Town of Richlands has approximately 80 FTE and 20 part-time and seasonal employees, and a FY23 balanced budget of approximately \$18 million, including utilities. The General Fund, with undesignated fund balance, is \$4.8 million.





## THE POSITION

The Town Council appoints a Town Manager to act as Chief Administrative Officer of the Town. The Town Manager serves at the pleasure of the Council, carries out its policies, and directs business procedures. He or she is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the town government and manages and supervises all departments, agencies, and offices of the town, except the Town Clerk and the Town Attorney, who report directly to the Council. The Town Manager is responsible for developing and, upon adoption by the Council, implementing annual operating and capital budgets. He or she recommends policies and priorities for the Council's consideration and leads the Town workforce in delivering services and responding to citizen issues or concerns. The Town Manager serves as a liaison between the Town Council, the judiciary, regional, state, and local agencies and authorities, and community organizations. He or she also serves as the Treasurer, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer, and the Purchasing Agent, and is a member of local and regional committees, commissions, and authorities.





## ISSUES, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES

1. A top issue of the Town is the upgrading of an undersized and old infrastructure, including the Wastewater Treatment and Water Treatment Plants. Grant monies and low interest loans will be sought to assist in these projects. The Town is also challenged by floodwater at times due to the system not being able to handle the volume. It does participate with the Tazewell County Task Force that has been working on regional flooding issues.
2. To improve the viability of the Electric Division, the Town is seeking, evaluating, and pursuing power supply opportunities in order to maintain service reliability at cost competitive rates. This may include construction of a natural gas generation facility.
3. Although the fiscal budget is balanced and the Town experiences low debt, it has been challenged with financial constraints. It will be necessary for the new Town Manager to strengthen the Town's financial sustainability and resiliency and find more revenue streams to help with building back financial reserves. A Capital Improvement Program is not in place but is desired.
4. The Town has a Comprehensive Plan developed in 2017, but it has not been followed. Town Council is interested in the Plan being updated or redone, as well as related strategic planning to prepare the Town for short-term and long-range considerations.
5. The Town would like to expand its tourism efforts and opportunities. It is currently part of the Cumberland Plateau PDC, Heart of Appalachia, Virginia Coalfields Economic Development, and Clinch River Initiative, which contribute to the tourism and economic development efforts of the entire region.
6. Limited on available land to develop, the Town desires to have the current housing shortage addressed in some way. Currently, existing housing is costly.
7. A new Town Manager should explore automation enhancements and a level of transformation within the Town government as opportunities present and are amenable to the Town Council.
8. The Town has a dedicated and hard-working staff, which stands ready to help the new Town Manager be successful.







## QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

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

- A Master's Degree in Business Management, Public Administration, Political Science, or a related field;
- Three to five years of progressively responsible senior level executive management experience as a chief executive/administrator, deputy executive/administrator, or department head in a high performing, comparably sized or larger, community; possessing a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of Town government operations.
- Good financial and/or risk management skills and grants expertise; a preference for engineering strengths is desired.
- Comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practice of public administration, local government finance, public works, and economic development. An understanding of the statutory authority and requirements of municipalities. Local government experience in Virginia is desirable.
- 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 as an ICMA Credentialed Manager is a plus.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant for this position may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

## PERSONAL TRAITS AND DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, open, and personable interactions with members of the Town Council, community members, and all Town employees.
- Be present at Town activities and regional events; meet with individuals and groups as needed.
- Professionally competent, with confidence tempered by humility.
- A "people person," approachable, compassionate, empathetic, with a good sense of humor, and fair with everyone.
- A good steward of public funds; knowledgeable of best practices for efficient, effective, and equitable local government management.
- A sound decision maker, available and open to input from stakeholders, exhibiting sound judgement, and decisive when appropriate.
- A visionary, open to different ways of thinking and new approaches while respecting the cultural norms and customs of the organization and the community. Able to envision strategic needs of the Town and present them, with proposed approaches, to the Town Council, Town employees, community leaders, and the citizenry.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills including the ability to collaborate, listen effectively, and understand differing views; an effective public speaker.
- Candid and tactful when conveying important information, principles, and recommendations.
- A consensus builder; able to diffuse tense situations and seek common ground when different perspectives create friction.



- Strong participate leadership skills within the government organization, the community, and the region; visionary, proactive, and decisive; able to integrate new ideas and facilitate the blending of differing points of view into a reasonable approach for community betterment.
- Ability to manage supervisory staff, engage others and bring people together, while providing effective structure in the Town government.
- A role model, coach, and mentor for Town employees; dedicated to the professional development of staff; able to empower and support employees with a focus on performance, collaboration, and accountability; able to build a competent staff team and to delegate responsibility.

## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The following performance expectations are the elements for successful performance:

- Short-term, immediate actions will be to engage with staff, the Town council, community leaders, and residents; review the Town budget, structure, policies, and procedures, and get up to speed on active projects.
- Evaluate and prioritize infrastructure needs and projects within water, wastewater, and electric systems; including timelines and funding sources.
- Focus on organizational enhancements in structure, policy, and practices with the goals of modernizing and improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of Town operations.
- Be available and responsive to citizen concerns and issues; listening, understanding, and providing timely follow-up.
- Demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent government; promoting a positive and interactive relationship with citizens and stakeholders; encourage citizen engagement and inclusion.
- Conduct effective communications with all stakeholders; presenting information in a form understandable to various audiences; maintain strong, consistent, and equal communications with the Town Council.
- Focus on promoting communication, cooperation, and collaboration with community stakeholders, Richlands Public Schools, non-profit agencies, the private sector, other local governments, and regional organizations.
- Be a leader in regional activities and a facilitator, building effective relationships and promoting collaborative efforts consistent with Town priorities.
- Serve as an effective liaison with representatives and agencies of the State and Federal governments.
- Practice fair and equitable investment in and support of Town employees and departments with a priority of enhancing competency, consistency, and accountability through individual development and improved business processes. Avoid micromanagement; empower and entrust employees in fulfilling their responsibilities. Foster a team environment that welcomes staff feedback and participation.
- Become an active and visible resident of the Town, building relationships with citizens, business owners, and other regional stakeholders.







## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Consideration for compensation may be in the approximate \$130,000/year range, dependent 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, professional development support and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment agreement.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

A formal review of applications will begin on August 11, 2023, and those candidates considered to most closely match the qualifications contained in this profile will be contacted for initial interviews. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled; however, timely submission ensures the most advantageous review. To be considered, please submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references to The Berkley Group, via email at [karen.edmonds@bgllc.net](mailto:karen.edmonds@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

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For additional information, please visit [www.town.richlands.va.us](http://www.town.richlands.va.us)

The Town of Richlands is an Equal Opportunity Employer.