



# **CITY MANAGER**

## **CITY OF FRANKLIN, VA**



The City of Franklin is seeking an experienced professional to serve as City Manager, the Chief Administrative Officer responsible for directing programs and operations of the City 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 successful performance as City 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 [kimball.payne@bgllc.net](mailto:kimball.payne@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, the **formal review of applicants will begin November 7, 2025**. Inquiries relating to the City Manager position may be directed to:

Kimball Payne

Executive Manager

Berkley Group

Email: [kimball.payne@bgllc.net](mailto:kimball.payne@bgllc.net)

Mobile: (434) 444-3662



## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

A dynamic and diverse community with small-town charm, the City of Franklin is known for its gracious hospitality, resilience, and community spirit. The City, located in the Tidewater region of Virginia, encompasses 8.75 square miles and is home to about 8,400 residents. As a vibrant industrial hub throughout its history, the City remains a center of commerce and trade as well as an important regional hub for health care, education, recreation, and civic life.



## LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

The City of Franklin is intersected by U.S. Route 58 and U.S. Route 258 about forty miles west of Norfolk, Virginia and less than ten miles north of the North Carolina state line. The City is bordered by Southampton County to the west, north, and south and by Isle of Wight County to the east. Within an hour's drive in any direction residents can reach many popular attractions including the Virginia Beach oceanfront, the Outer Banks of North Carolina, historic Williamsburg and Jamestown, and the capital city of Richmond.

Convenient passenger air services can be found at Richmond International Airport (RIC) and Norfolk International Airport (ORF), each about an hour from Franklin.



## HISTORY

Franklin was incorporated as a town in March of 1876. Due to its agricultural advantages and its industry, its growth has been steady. The first official census of 1880 listed 447 inhabitants. By 1950, the town had grown to about 5,000 residents. The Town became an independent City in 1961 and annexations in 1986 and 1996 increased land area as well as the population. After years of a stable population, the City is now experiencing modest residential growth.

Located on the Blackwater River, Franklin began its history as a transportation center. In 1835, the Blackwater Depot, soon after named the Franklin Depot, opened. Passengers from Norfolk could travel to the Depot and depart by stagecoach for points further north or west, or they could board one of several steamships docked at the nearby wharf to continue their journey to North Carolina.

Throughout the 1850s, commerce on the railroad and Blackwater River flourished. New steamboat companies sent their steamers into the Franklin Depot to pick up bales of cotton, livestock, slaughtered beef and pork, and other products. In 1856, a sawmill was constructed opposite Franklin on the Blackwater River. This mill, operated by R.J. and William Neely, processed huge amounts of wood products that were sent by rail to the Norfolk market and elsewhere. For many years, under the ownership of Union Camp, the mill thrived and brought wealth and jobs to the area. In 1999 it was acquired by International Paper. Though Union Camp no longer exists in Franklin, the Camp family name lives on. Its legacy is most notable in the community, with Camp Community College, the James L. Camp Jr. Family YMCA, the Texie Camp Marks Children's Center, and the Ruth Camp Campbell Memorial Library.

Following disruptions in commercial activity caused by the Civil War, Franklin Depot again became active and was a major exporting point for the "ground pea," better known as the peanut, which became a popular food product in the late 19th century. In 1881, a fire destroyed all the commercial buildings in the community. As a result, an ordinance was adopted only allowing for brick or stone buildings. Today the downtown area consists almost entirely of rows of brick buildings that post-date the 1881 fire.

The Franklin Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, and that same year the community became a designated Virginia Main Street community. The Downtown Franklin Association has led revitalization efforts for over 20 years, and many downtown buildings have been rehabilitated with a mixture of private and public investment.

In 1999, the City was devastated by flood waters resulting from Hurricane Floyd. As the Blackwater River swelled to a historic crest of 26.4 ft (8.0 m), downtown Franklin was submerged under as much as 12 feet of water. The flooding inundated 182 business and 150 homes, located primarily in downtown, and resulted in approximately \$13 million in business losses and \$2.5 million in lost annual tax revenue for the City.

Today, little signs of the flooding are visible. The City and its downtown have recovered with new parks, a vibrant farmers market, revitalized buildings, and an active business environment.







## ECONOMY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture is the chief industry in the region followed closely by manufacturing. Adjacent Southampton County is the number one county in Virginia for the most family-owned “Virginia Century Farms”—farms in ownership for over one hundred years—and consistently ranks in the top five of Virginia counties yielding the largest harvest of peanuts, soy, corn, cotton, and timber and hogs. Area manufacturing includes meat products, lumber, chemical and concrete products, plastics, and peanut products. Although Franklin lies in a predominantly agricultural area, manufacturing provides the largest employment for the City’s residents. More broadly, Franklin serves as a major commercial center for the entire region.

Franklin’s most significant industrial presence is International Paper, which is located just to the east of the City in Isle of Wight County and produces lumber, Kraft paper, pulp, and chemical by-products. Other major industries in the area include Hercules, Inc., which produces Pamak rosin and other chemical processing materials, and Birdsong Peanut Co. Bon Secours - Southampton Medical Center is the City’s single largest employer.

Industrial sites are available in a city-owned Industrial Park adjacent to four-lane U.S. Route 58.

Economic development support services are provided by Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc. (FSEDI), a public-private economic development organization serving the City of Franklin and Southampton County since 2005 with a mission to diversify the economy, create high quality jobs and provide a future for the families and youth of the region. FSEDI’s four main focuses are (1) business attraction, including marketing available properties and incentives to local, state, and national brokers; (2) business retention and expansion; (3) tourism, including marketing, promotion, and sponsorship; and (4) small business development, planning and development services, and training. In downtown Franklin, the 40,000 sq. ft. Franklin Business Center provides incubator space for startup and expanding businesses.



## RECREATION & COMMUNITY ATTRACTIONS

The Franklin Department of Parks and Recreation operates 11 recreation areas for both indoor and outdoor recreation activities.

*Armory Drive Recreational Park* offers facilities for organized sports programs for football, soccer, baseball, softball, recreational play, as well as tennis courts, a swimming pool, a tot lot playground and picnic tables.

*Barrett's Landing Park* boasts a large gazebo overlooking the Blackwater River and a wharf and a foot bridge along the water's edge. Barrett's Landing Park is a popular venue for concerts, family outings, picnics, and weddings or for just enjoying the peace and quiet of the natural surroundings. Barrett's Landing is also an ideal fishing spot.

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center* is a community-based recreation center offering a variety of programs and activities such as arts & crafts, fitness, sports, life skills enrichment and family activities. The center consists of a large multi-purpose room, a pool room, a fellowship hall, and additional rooms for community organizations to hold meetings. The outside area has two basketball courts and a play area.

*Blackwater Park* is a 200-acre park which features an 800-foot boardwalk and two miles of trails, giving patrons the opportunity to observe wildlife and learn from educational signage. Blackwater Park is home to some of the City's oldest trees reaching over 155 feet tall. Through the generosity of an adjacent land owner, the park will soon expand by 100 acres.

Following the demolition of the long-closed City armory, the City will break ground on a new recreational facility. It will provide much needed indoor recreation opportunities, including collegiate basketball and volleyball in conjunction with Camp Community College.

The local James L. Camp, Jr. Family YMCA provides a rich mix of recreational, social and educational programs for members. The facility includes a large gym, indoor and outdoor pools, and indoor tennis courts.



The private Cypress Cove Country Club, just west of the City limits, offers its members a clubhouse, swimming pool, 18-hole golf course, driving range, and several tennis courts.

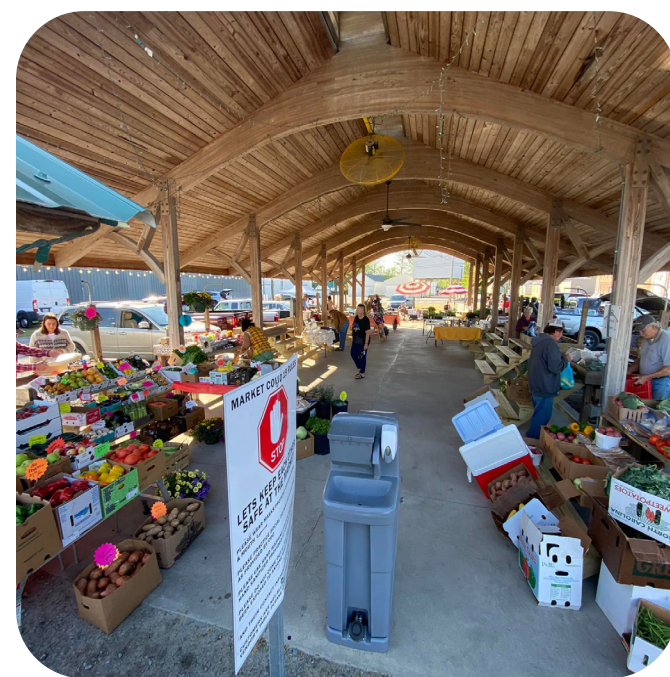
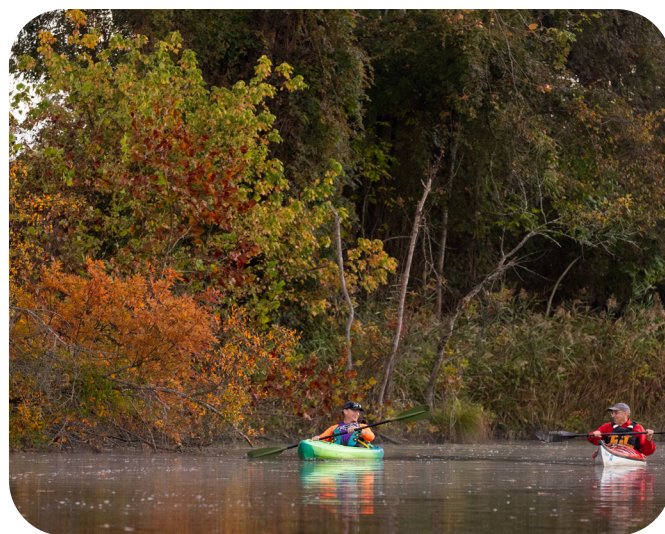
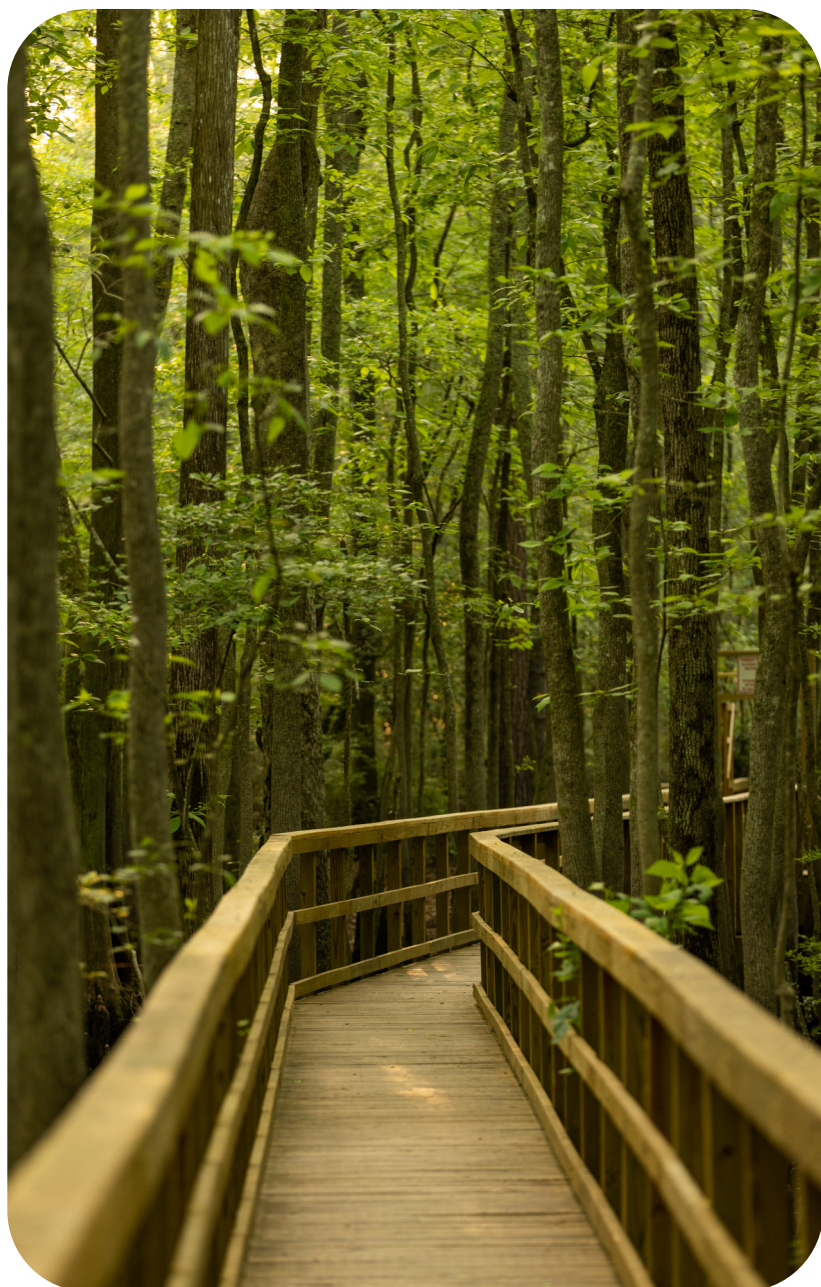
The numerous ponds and rivers in close proximity to the City offer excellent opportunities for boating, fishing, birdwatching, and passive recreational enjoyment.

There are many hunt clubs active in the fall and winter seasons as this area of Virginia is especially productive for deer, birds, ducks, rabbits, and squirrels.

The City also has a 25-lane bowling facility well suited for both competitive league play and family fun.

Franklin is home to numerous active churches with congregations representing the Methodist, Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian, and Episcopal Protestant denominations and a Roman Catholic Mission. In addition, there are many civic organizations serving the community including the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Ruritan Club, Kiwanis Club, Women's Club, Business and Professional Woman's Club, parent teacher associations, garden clubs, fraternal organizations, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Jaycees, Boys & Girls Club, and the Franklin-Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Ruth Camp Campbell Memorial Library, the Franklin branch of the Blackwater Regional Library, provides a full range of library services six days per week.







## HEALTH CARE

Bon Secours – Southamptton Medical Center is located in the City and serves Franklin, Southamptton County, eastern Isle of Wight County, the City of Suffolk, and northeastern portions of North Carolina. This major health care amenity is a Joint Commission-accredited, 219-bed facility that provides inpatient, outpatient, emergency, medical, surgical, and long-term care.

The Virginia Department of Health operates a local Health Department in a City-owned facility adjacent to the Hospital.

Emergency medical response and transport services are provided locally 24/7/365 by the City's Department of Fire and Rescue with additional support from area volunteers.

## EDUCATION

The City of Franklin Public Schools serves 1,130 students with one high school, one middle school, and one Pre-K-5 elementary school under the governance and management of an appointed City School Board.

While there are numerous institutions of higher education within a 60-mile radius offering a full range of certificate and degree programs, Camp Community College (CCC) is located within the City. In addition to its many traditional course offerings leading to certificates and 2-year degrees, CCC also hosts the City's Workforce Development Center which provides a broad range of business support education services including pre-employment training, customized training, job analysis, employee basic skills assessment, open enrollment classes, and business startup and expansion training.







## DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the City of Franklin's 2025 population as 8,430, showing recent growth. The City's racial make-up is 51.7% Black, 37.8% White and 10.5% other. The adjacent counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight have populations of 17,882 and 41,219, respectively. The median value of owner-occupied housing in the City is approximately \$198,000, and the median household income is just over \$65,000. The City had a poverty rate of 16.7% in 2023.

## CITY GOVERNMENT & SERVICES

The City of Franklin has about 260 full-time equivalent employees who support the delivery of a broad range of municipal services to residents and visitors in the areas of public safety, public works, utilities, recreation, social services, and general administration.

The City operates under a Council-Manager form of government as defined by the City Charter. The City is governed by a City Council comprised of six members elected by ward for staggered four-year terms and one member elected at-large to serve as Mayor for a two-year term.

City Council appoints the City Manager to serve as the Chief Administrative Officer responsible for implementing Council policies, enforcing City ordinances, and providing for general management of all municipal functions of City government.

The Franklin Department of Public Works is responsible for all city-owned property including public buildings; streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters; water supply and distribution infrastructure; sewer collection and treatment infrastructure; city parks; and cemeteries. Water is supplied from two deep wells, which provide an abundant supply of unusually soft, pure, and palatable water. Water storage capacity is 1.3 million gallons.

The City owns and maintains the Franklin Municipal Airport located a mile outside the City limits and offering a variety of aviation services including fuel, hangar space, flight training, and maintenance. The airport operates as a City department, and its manager reports to the City Manager.



Public safety services are provided by the Franklin Police Department and the Franklin Fire and Rescue Department. The Police Department provides a full range of law enforcement and crime prevention services through six operating divisions including patrol, criminal investigations, animal control, emergency communications, records management, and special operations. The Fire and Rescue Department provides critical emergency response with highly trained career and volunteer staff from one main station and one substation in the City. The Department also provides supplemental career staffing support to volunteer fire and rescue partners both within the City and in adjacent Southampton County. Southampton County contracts with the City of Franklin for those services.

A unique attribute of Franklin is that it is one of the few localities in the Commonwealth of Virginia that owns and operates a municipal electric distribution system. Established in 1892, Franklin Municipal Power and Light purchases electricity from Dominion Energy and provides its customers in the City and parts of the surrounding counties with reliable, low-cost energy and energy-related services. It also serves as a profit center for the City, providing an annual operational subsidy to the General Fund.

The Community Development Department provides services related to planning, zoning, building permits, and code enforcement.

The City's Tourism office supports a wide variety of community events and marketing efforts throughout the year that serve to enrich community quality of life and to boost tourism related revenues. Notable annual events and activities in the City include The Franklin Market, Spring Fest, Juneteenth Celebration, Independence Day Celebration, Food Truck Rodeo, Boo Bash (downtown trick or treat), Holiday Open House, and Franklin Christmas Parade. The City also partners with Southampton County to promote regional tourism. For more information see: <https://visitfranklinsouthamptonva.com>.

The City of Franklin has an approved FY26 total budget of \$90.6 million, which includes \$35.4 for general government, \$21.3 million for schools, \$3.3 million for water and sewer, and \$18.9 million for electric service. The approved FY26 Budget document, past budgets, and annual comprehensive financial reports can be found on the City's website at: [https://franklinva.gov/government/departments\\_a-g/finance/forms\\_documents.php](https://franklinva.gov/government/departments_a-g/finance/forms_documents.php).





## THE POSITION

City Council appoints a City Manager to serve as the Chief Administrative Officer of the City. The Manager serves at the pleasure of the Council, carries out its policies, and directs business procedures. The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the City government and the required supervision, direction, and evaluation of all assigned staff to ensure that operations and services comply with the policies and direction set by the City Council and with all applicable laws and regulations. He or she is responsible for developing and, upon adoption by the Council, implementing the annual operating and capital budgets. The City Manager also formulates long-range goals for the organization and develops policy recommendations for the Council's consideration. The City Manager represents the City on various boards, committees, commissions, and authorities. The Manager also serves as the Director of Emergency Management and the City Clerk, and as a liaison between City Council and constitutional officers, the judiciary, local, regional, and state agencies and authorities, and community organizations.

## ISSUES, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES

The City's vision statement is: *By the year 2030, the City of Franklin, Virginia will maintain our small city identity, heritage, and beauty while being a regional hub for economic opportunities, first-class education, a job-ready workforce, and balanced housing options.*

Within the context of that vision, City Council's priorities are focused on business development, building a stronger local workforce, enhancing educational opportunities, supporting well-managed, affordable residential growth, and improving City operations and service delivery.

Challenges and opportunities that the new City Manager will address include:

- Building a stronger relationship with the leadership of the public school system.
- Working with the City's new Director of Finance, to strengthen the City's finances and financial management, and to evaluate the benefits and costs of a new financial management system to integrate the City and school system finances.
- The development of develop a realistic, reasonable, and affordable capital improvement plan (CIP) with a focus on upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant, water system upgrades to improve capacity and fire flow, and flood protection.
- Recruiting, training and retaining City staff; providing competitive salaries and benefits; planning for succession; and providing opportunities for professional advancement.
- Working with regional partners such as the Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc. and the Workforce Development Center at Camp Community College to promote economic development and tourism.
- Guiding active or pending capital projects to completion. Projects include renovation of the City courthouse, construction of a new community recreation center, and completion of remaining phases of the City's Riverwalk project. In addition, the City is working with Southampton County on the installation of a new public safety radio system. There is also a study underway to evaluate the feasibility of building a regional juvenile detention facility.
- Working with City Council and the new City Attorney, currently being recruited, to establish a code of conduct for Council members and to update and amend the City Charter.
- Initiating discussions with City Council about a strategic planning process to establish goals for the next three to five years.
- Overseeing, with the new Director of Community Development, an update of the Comprehensive Plan and subsequent updates to applicable City codes.
- Evaluating the City organizational and staffing structure and making recommendations to City Council to best support City operations; considering the need for an Assistant or Deputy City Manager.





## QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. A master's degree in public administration, business administration, or a closely related field is preferred.
- At least five (5) years of progressively responsible senior level executive experience in the management and administration of a full-service municipal government, business, or non-profit organization.
- Possessing a comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practices of public administration, local government finance, public works, and economic development. Understanding the statutory authority and requirements of municipalities. Local government experience in Virginia is desirable.
- Competent with technology and the various applications utilized in a municipal government.
- Having good financial and risk management skills; superior budget management expertise; successful experience with grant writing and grant administration.
- Possessing a working knowledge of state and federal legislative processes.
- Able to analyze problems and to make sound recommendations; to speak and write effectively; and to make persuasive oral and written presentations.
- Able to establish and maintain effective working relationships with City Council, City employees, the public, other governments, contractors, and the media.
- Able to interpret federal, state, and local ordinances, rules, and regulations.
- Able to multi-task; address strategic priorities of City Council while managing daily operations.
- Having a demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development through membership in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA) and commitment to the ICMA Code of Ethics. Designation as an ICMA Credentialed Manager is a plus.
- Residency within the City is expected.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

- Immediately engage with staff, City Council, community leaders, and residents; review the City budget, structure, policies, and procedures; achieve familiarity with active projects.
- Quickly understand operations of the City's municipal electric utility.
- Be available and responsive to citizen concerns and issues; encourage citizen engagement and inclusion.
- Maintain strong, consistent, and equal communications with the City Council.
- Conduct effective communications with all stakeholders presenting information in understandable form with a commitment to open and transparent government.
- Be an active and visible representative of the City, building relationships with citizens and businesses and participating in public events.



## PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, and open interactions with members of the City Council, City employees, and community members.
- Professionally competent, with confidence tempered by humility.
- Tactful and diplomatic with a high degree of emotional intelligence; not easily intimidated; able to diffuse tense situations and seek common ground when different perspectives create tension.
- A leadership style demonstrating interest in working for and with City Council; able to work with independent-minded elected officials while recognizing and respecting the decision-making authority of the body.
- Proactive and forward thinking, being more interested in solution-finding than problem-solving with a strong desire to improve the quality of life of the City.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen effectively, understand differing views, and collaborate.
- A sound, consistent decision maker, open to input from stakeholders, exhibiting good judgment, and decisive when appropriate. Able to identify potential risk without being deterred from acting.
- A genuine interest in being part of the community through direct participation in civic life; available to meet with individuals and groups as needed with a desire and ability to bring people together.
- Approachable, compassionate, empathetic, fair, and with a good sense of humor.
- A role model and mentor for City 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 authority.





## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Compensation will be dependent on qualifications and experience. The City's pay plan identifies a range of \$147,000 to \$220,000 for the position. The successful candidate will be offered a generous benefit package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health insurance coverage, paid time off, professional membership and development, and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment agreement.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

**A formal review of applications will begin on November 7, 2025**, and those candidates considered to most closely match the qualifications contained in this profile will be contacted for initial virtual interviews. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled; however, timely submittal will ensure 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 e-mail at [kimball.payne@bgllc.net](mailto:kimball.payne@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

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For Additional Information, please visit: [www.franklinva.gov](http://www.franklinva.gov)

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