



ONANCOCK
1680

TOWN MANAGER
TOWN OF ONANCOCK, VA



The Town of Onancock, Virginia, is seeking an experienced, strategic, and community-oriented professional to serve as its next Town Manager. The Town Manager serves as the chief administrative officer responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Town, implementation of Town Council policy, financial and organizational leadership, and stewardship of the Town's historic, waterfront community.

This recruitment profile describes the Town of Onancock to prospective candidates, identifies town priorities, and outlines issues, challenges, and opportunities that the new Town Manager will face. The profile also describes the ideal candidate in terms of qualifications, leadership style, and desired characteristics. The profile also provides background information on the community, its government operations, and organizational aspirations.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter, resume, salary expectations, and professional references to: The Berkley Group via email to libby.gooden@bglc.net. While the position is open until filled, review of the candidates will be around February 16, 2026; however, highly qualified candidates may be invited for an interview at any time. Inquiries related to the Town Manager position may be directed to:

Libby Gooden
The Berkley Group
P.O. Box 181
Bridgewater, VA 22812
Email: libby.gooden@bglc.net
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COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The Town of Onancock is situated along Onancock Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, and is known for its walkable downtown, working waterfront, and strong sense of place. Founded in 1680, the Town of Onancock is a historic waterfront community located on Virginia's Eastern Shore in Accomack County. Once the first county seat of Accomack, Onancock has long served as a commercial, cultural, and civic hub for the region.

Onancock, a Virginia Main Street community, serves as a regional destination for Accomack County. Neighboring communities include Accomac (the county seat), Onley, Parksley, Wachapreague, and Melfa. The Town benefits from proximity to U.S. Route 13, which provides north-south connectivity across the Eastern Shore, Hampton Roads and the state of Maryland.

Today, the Town blends more than three centuries of maritime heritage with a modern vision focused on economic vitality, infrastructure stewardship, and quality municipal services. The Town, due to its strategic location and well-preserved downtown and housing stock, attracts visitors, retirees, and entrepreneurs drawn to its character, cultural amenities, and quality of life.

The Town of Onancock has a population of approximately 1,160 residents and reflects a mature demographic profile, with a median age of approximately 44.6 years. The community includes long-term residents, retirees, professionals, entrepreneurs, and seasonal visitors. Median household income is approximately \$53,750 and the Town is committed to inclusive service delivery and community engagement.



RECREATION & LIFESTYLE

Life in Onancock offers a rare blend of professional fulfillment and personal quality of life rooted in its waterfront setting, historic character, and close-knit community. With direct access to the Chesapeake Bay, the Town provides daily access to boating, kayaking, paddleboarding, fishing, and crabbing, with the waterfront serving as both a working harbor and a public amenity. Residents and visitors alike enjoy scenic views, public access points, and a marina and wharf that anchor community life and reinforce Onancock's maritime heritage.

Onancock's walkable downtown is central to its lifestyle appeal. Market Street features locally owned restaurants, coffee shops, galleries, specialty retail, professional offices, and cultural venues housed in well-preserved historic buildings. Community events, seasonal festivals, farmers markets, and arts programming foster regular interaction among residents, business owners, and visitors. The downtown environment supports a lifestyle where professional, social, and civic engagement naturally intersect.

The Town and surrounding Eastern Shore region offer abundant outdoor and recreational opportunities beyond the waterfront. Residents enjoy access to nature trails, wildlife refuges, beaches, and rural landscapes that support hiking, cycling, birdwatching, and outdoor recreation year-round. The Eastern Shore's agricultural heritage, seafood industry, and coastal ecology contribute to a more relaxed lifestyle that values sustainability, local food systems, and environmental stewardship.

The Town attracts artists, entrepreneurs, retirees, and professionals seeking a slower pace of life without sacrificing engagement or purpose. Proximity to neighboring towns, regional events, and Eastern Shore destinations allows residents to enjoy a broad range of dining, recreation, and cultural experiences while maintaining the intimacy of a small-town environment.

For a Town Manager, Onancock offers a lifestyle that supports balance, visibility, and connection. Community leaders are not distant figures. They are active participants in town life, events, and civic conversations. The role provides the opportunity to live and work in a community where leadership is visible; relationships matter, and professional impact is felt daily. This combination of meaningful public service and high quality of life is a defining feature of Onancock and a key attraction for experienced municipal executives.





TOWN GOVERNMENT & ORGANIZATION

The Town of Onancock operates under a Council–Manager form of government as designated in the Town's Charter. Town Council serves as the legislative body responsible for adopting ordinances and resolutions, approving the annual operating and capital budgets, setting tax rates and user fees, approving the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and making land use and zoning decisions.

Onancock operates under an at-large form of government, with a six-member Town Council and an independently elected Mayor. Council members serve staggered four-year terms, providing continuity of governance, while the mayor serves a two-year term as established by the Town Charter.

The Town Manager is appointed by Town Council and serves as the chief administrative officer, responsible for the day-to-day administration of Town operations, supervision of staff, budget preparation and administration, and representation of the Town in regional and intergovernmental matters. The Town Manager currently serves as chief executive officer, chief financial officer and treasurer, procurement officer and clerk for the town. The Manager also acts as director of planning and zoning, providing staff functions to the town planning commission and the town's board of zoning appeals. The Town Manager selects and appoints all staff, with the exception of the Police Chief, and is responsible for the management of the Police Chief and key staff.

The Town of Onancock's Adopted FY2026 Budget totals approximately \$5.3 million (all funds). The budget supports core municipal services including public safety, administration, public works, planning and zoning, utilities, and waterfront operations.

The Town's financial structure includes a General Fund, enterprise funds supporting water and sewer operations, and special revenue and grant funds. Revenue sources include real estate and personal property taxes, local sales tax distributions, meals tax, business license fees, utility and marina revenues, and state and federal funding.

Town Council has adopted a multi-year CIP funded primarily with state and federal assistance aligned with the

Comprehensive Plan, focusing on infrastructure reinvestment, waterfront and marina assets, public facilities, and essential equipment replacement. The Town Manager is expected to lead the implementation of both the Comprehensive Plan and the CIP. The Town's Comprehensive Plan is currently being updated.

The Town of Onancock delivers a comprehensive range of municipal services to residents, businesses, and visitors through a lean organizational structure of 11 budgeted full-time positions, requiring a highly hands-on, strategic Town Manager who can balance executive leadership with day-to-day operational oversight. Services include public water operations; oversight of an agreement for operation and maintenance of sewer services through an agreement with the Hampton Roads Sanitation District; public works and infrastructure maintenance; contracted solid waste and recycling; zoning, permitting, and business licensing; tax billing and collection; public safety through police services and volunteer fire and EMS; and the maintenance of parks, community facilities, and waterfront assets, including marina and wharf operations.

These responsibilities reflect a full-service municipal operation with a strong emphasis on infrastructure stewardship, public safety, regulatory oversight, and quality-of-life amenities. The Town's wastewater infrastructure has expanded capacity to support future growth and regional coordination, and Town staff manages marina and wharf facilities requiring ongoing asset management, capital investment, and coordination related to dredging and bulkhead maintenance. Public transportation is provided regionally through STAR Transit.

CHALLENGES, ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Town Council has identified several issues, challenges and opportunities the new Town Manager will be presented with, including continuation of projects that have already begun.

- Working with the Town Council to expand transparency and external communications of day-to-day municipal operations to Onancock's citizens and business community.
- Continuing to address the use, rehabilitation, and long-term sustainability of the Historic Onancock School, including capital investment needs and alignment with community expectations and historic preservation standards.
- Managing and reinvesting in aging infrastructure, including water and wastewater systems, streets, sidewalks, bulkheads, and public facilities, while aligning long-term capital needs with limited resources.
- Ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability while funding core services, capital improvements, and quality-of-life amenities, balancing sensitivity to tax and fee impacts upon residents and businesses.
- Reviewing the Town's current staffing structure with possible realignment of some staff functions to provide a higher level of services in a more efficient and transparent manner.
- Operating a full-service municipal organization with limited staffing capacity (11 full-time budgeted positions), requiring efficiency, cross-functional leadership, and effective use of external partnerships.



- Working with the Town's Economic Development Authority, Planning Commission and Town Council to balance economic development and growth pressures with preservation of Onancock's historic character, waterfront identity, and small-town quality of life.
- Collaboration with Onancock Main Street (OMS) and the Onancock Business & Civic Association (OBCA) and understanding the various perspectives of community stakeholders and interest groups to balance their aspirations with overall town needs and resources.
- Participating in town events, developing relationships with local business owners, community members, and regional partners.
- Continued enhancement of citizens' quality of life through investment in parks, public spaces, community facilities, and inclusive public engagement aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Evaluating the current zoning ordinances to determine consistency with the soon-to-be updated Comprehensive Plan, particularly related to land use, housing, waterfront development, and downtown revitalization.



QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION, & EXPERIENCE

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

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, business management or a related field. Master's degree in a similar discipline is preferred.
- Five to ten years of successful leadership as a senior executive/administrator in an organization with comparable responsibilities and possession of a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of town government operations.
- Local government experience in Virginia is highly desired.
- Demonstrated experience managing multiple complex capital projects simultaneously through a variety of funding/granting agencies.
- Extensive experience in local government financial management, including the development and management of operating and capital budgets, and grant writing experience encompassing proposal development, funding justification, and post-award fiscal compliance.
- Experience in economic development, downtown development/redevelopment preferred.
- 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 is preferred.
- A combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant for this position may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Collaborative, demonstrating integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, open, and personable two-way interactions with Council, town employees, partners, and community members.
- Professionally competent, with the ability to multitask while demonstrating confidence in their actions, tempered by humility and the ability to adapt to changing priorities.
- Creative in approach to problem solving with demonstrated experience in providing 'out of the box', big picture thinking.
- Organized with the ability to establish and meet deadlines on a continual basis.
- Demonstrates strong emotional intelligence and self-awareness by understanding the impact of their leadership style and decisions on others, managing emotions effectively, seeking feedback, and adapting behavior to build trust, navigate conflict, and lead with professionalism.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal abilities, including the ability to listen effectively to understand and manage differing points of view.
- A genuine 'people person' who truly enjoys attending town events, engaging with business owners, and interacting with town residents and visitors.
- Energetic and enthusiastic, eager to 'learn' the community and complete current projects while working with Town Council on prioritizing future strategic initiatives.
- Strong collaborative leadership skills, in the government organization, the community, and the region; visionary, analytical, proactive, decisive, and consistent; able to facilitate the blending of differing points of view of elected officials, citizens, community organizations and others into a reasonable approach for community betterment.
- Knowledgeable and supportive of the principles of the Council-Manager form of government and respectful of the complementary roles of the Town Council and the Town Manager.
- Sets the example for and provides timely direction guidance, and feedback to staff and fosters their professional development.





COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Compensation for the Town Manager is dependent upon qualifications and experience within a starting range of \$100,000 - \$115,000 annually. The successful candidate will be provided the Town's benefits package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health/dental/vision insurance, vacation and sick leave, professional development support, and other benefits in a negotiated employment contract.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Initial review of candidates will begin on or around February 16, 2026. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled. Timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. Highly qualified candidates may be invited to interview at any time. To be considered, please submit a cover letter, resume, salary expectations, and professional references to The Berkley Group via email to libby.gooden@bglc.net. Questions may be directed to:

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For Additional Information, please visit <https://www.onancock.com>

The Town of Onancock is an Equal Opportunity Employer