

City of
WASHBURN
WISCONSIN



City Administrator Washburn, WI

Position Profile



Public Administration Associates



The Community

Washburn, WI is a community in northern Wisconsin's picturesque Bayfield County and serves as the County Seat. Washburn is located on the shore of Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay along STH 13. Washburn operates a full-service Marina with slips for rental and ownership, boat repair, and store for supplies and souvenirs. Washburn is 20 minutes from the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and 10 minutes from the 1.5 million acre Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest where outdoor recreation opportunities abound. Washburn is 80 minutes from Duluth/Superior, 3 hours from Eau Claire and 3.5 hours from the Twin Cities, MN where entertainment, cultural and professional sports venues are abundant. Originally settled as a Village in the 1880's, the current City of Washburn was incorporated in 1904.

At 3.9 square miles, Washburn offers its 2,057 residents a great mix of residential, retail and commercial uses surrounded by an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities ranging from skiing, fishing, hunting, camping, snowmobiling/ATV and hiking/biking trails. In addition to the opportunities to explore and enjoy Lake Superior, the region is also near multiple lakes and waterways. The community has an idyllic small-town quality of life with numerous big city amenities that make it an extremely attractive place to live, learn, work and play.

Washburn median household income (2025 dollars) was \$60,288 with 89% living in owner-occupied dwellings with a median home value of \$255,200. While Washburn's population is relatively flat, its property values have grown (48% increase in equalized value in the last five years).

Washburn is known as a recreational paradise and is also known for having a strong arts community. Along with a museum and galleries, there are retail shops, restaurants, taverns, a brand new brew pub, a taphouse, and even a martini bar.

Washburn is an employment center for the region with over 1000 people commuting into the City daily for work and is recognized regionally, nationally, and globally for the products created here. Many locally owned and operated businesses have been here for multiple generations. Businesses include an independent bookseller, pharmacy, insurance agent, music store, guitar shop, hardware store, lumber yard, a foundry, and an engraving business.

The Washburn School District is the community's larger employer and is home to Washburn High School, Washburn Elementary School, Middle School, Early Learning Center and WI Virtual School. Additionally, Northwoods Technical College is in Ashland, WI (7 miles from Washburn) and UW-Superior approximately an hour away.

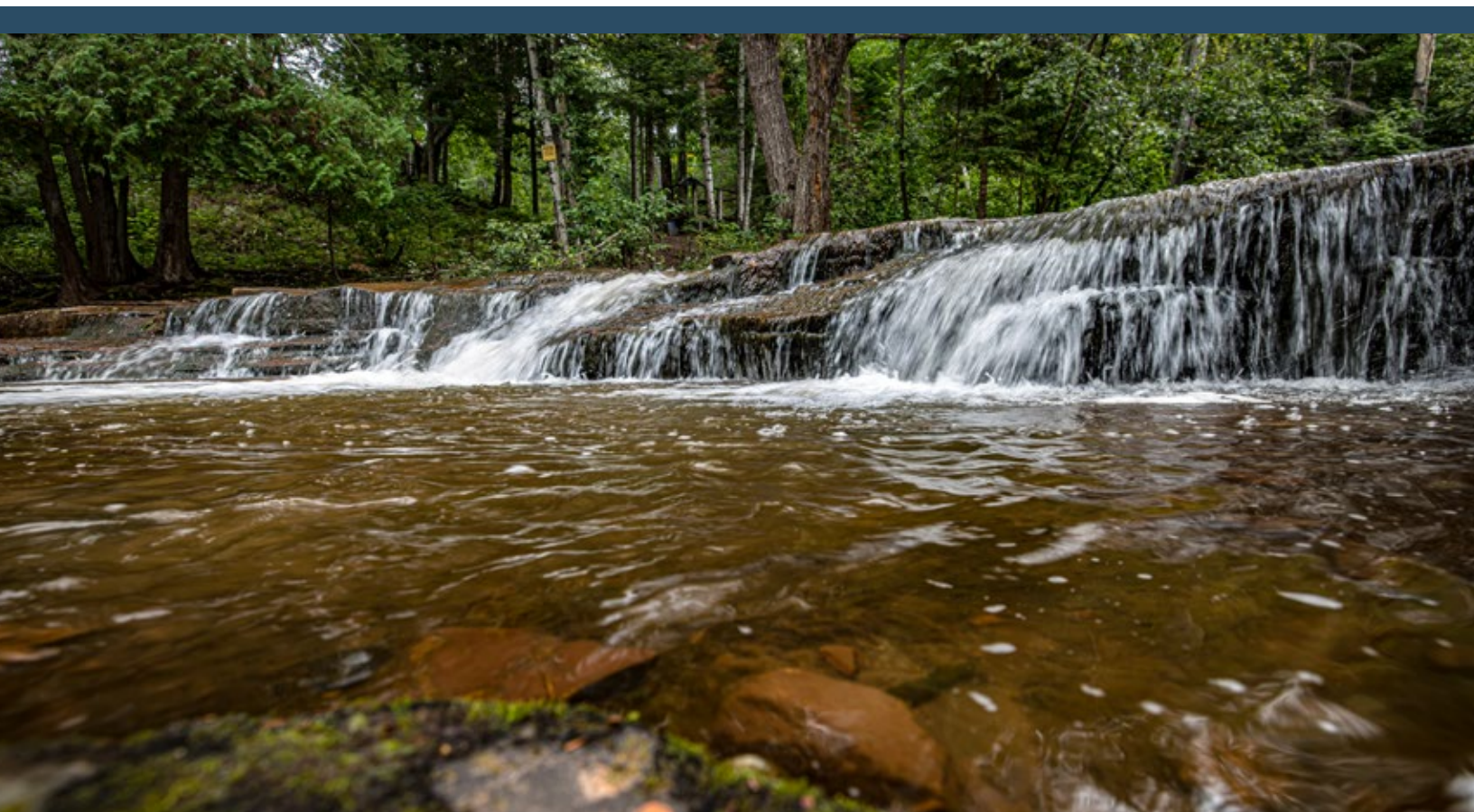
The Position

Washburn has a City Council form of government organized under Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 62. The Mayor (Mary Motiff) was elected in this leadership role in 2020 and the seven Alderpersons are non-partisan positions (two from each of the three districts, and one at-large).

The City Administrator oversees a staff of 21 Full time and 50 part-time and seasonal employees as well as the day-to-day City operations guided by policies and directives approved by the City Council. The City Administrator prepares the annual budget with assistance from the 5 department heads (Fire Chief, Chief of Police, Public Works Director, Treasurer, & Ambulance Director) and approval of the City Council. Washburn also operates a full-service Library, Marina, stormwater, water & wastewater utilities, and 2 lakefront campgrounds. The City Administrator also directs internal City operations and external relations, listens to the concerns and requests from the community, and anticipates municipal needs. The City Administrator advises the Mayor, council members, Commissions and other standing committees based on research, state law and intergovernmental peer discussions.

Other responsibilities of the City Administrator include; planning, zoning administration, community and economic development, personnel management and procurement. Additionally, the Administrator, in conjunction with the City Treasurer, manages City and utility finances.

The Administrator oversees an approximate \$3.25M annual operating budget (general fund) with a property tax levy of \$1.4M, excluding municipal utilities and a Tax Increment District.



Washburn Finances

The 2026 Washburn City Budget totals approximately \$6.2M with a breakdown of budgeted expenses as follows:

General Government: \$542,014
Public Safety: \$1,247,464
Public Works: \$696,188
Health & Human Services: \$45,586
Culture, Recreation, and Education: \$569,539
Conservation & Development: \$35,129
Miscellaneous/Contingency: \$116,350
Total General Fund: \$3,252,270

Capital Fund: \$614,000
Debt Service Fund: \$386,663
TID #3 Fund: \$198,626
Harbor Commission Fund: \$350,847
Water Utility Fund: \$536,600
Sewer Utility Fund: \$736,000
Storm Water Utility Fund: \$123,100
Total All Funds: \$6,198,106

The City had a General Fund Balance of \$1,666,182 on December 31, 2024 which represents a healthy 53% of the 2025 City General Fund Budget. The City applied \$280,654 of that amount towards the 2025 Budget up slightly from the \$279,471 applied in the previous year.

Financial highlights from the Washburn 2024 Audit include the following:

- Total governmental fund revenues were \$10,117,370; including \$1,758,105 of property taxes, \$758,074 of general state aid, and \$4,168,277 of charges for services and operating and capital grants. Total governmental funds expenditures were \$6,016,509. The City increased the amount of prior outstanding general obligation debt by \$2,419,187
- Total business type activity fund revenues were \$1,354,874; including \$1,325,215 of user fees. Total business type activity expenditures were \$1,402,650. The City increased the amount of business type debt by \$886,433.
- The City's financial status, as reflected in total net position, increased by \$3,001,902. Net position of governmental activities due to operations increased by \$1,328,071 and business type activities (water, sewer, storm water) increased by \$1,673,831.

The 2024 Audit also highlighted the following factors that will impact the City's financial future:

1. Development within the City has not been adequate to keep up with necessary tax revenue generation. The Lost Apostle brewery project has been completed, and that is a significant development for the downtown area. An affordable housing project has also been recently completed and is fully leased out. A small manufacturing company is relocating to Washburn this year in a newly constructed facility.
2. The first phase of a large water and sewer project was completed in 2024 and the second phase will begin in 2027. This will coincide with the reconstruction of STH 13 through downtown. Improvements will also be made to the stormwater system, and there will be additional amenities to enhance the attractiveness of the downtown area. Additional debt needs to be taken out for these projects, so the debt amount is expected to be on the high side of the comfortable limit by 2027.
3. The City has struggled with frozen or declining support from the State of Wisconsin to maintain operations and services at current levels. While aid was increased for certain areas in 2024, it did not solve the underlying issue. Without additional revenue in the coming years, the City will be forced to make further cutbacks in operations and staff if current trends continue.



Opportunities and Challenges

Despite its relatively small size, Washburn has an aggressive capital improvement plan, economic (re)development, quality of life enhancements, infrastructure maintenance and strategic planning initiatives underway. The major project is the reconstruction of Bayfield Street (STH 13) through Washburn. Phase 1 of the 2-phase project is complete, and Phase 2 will begin in 2027. The City Administrator will be involved in the levying of special assessments, coordinating funding, administering pay requests and coordination of communication with residents and businesses along the impacted construction zone. The next Administrator must be willing to take the reins and continue to drive these plans forward while keeping abreast of surfacing economic development and funding opportunities that will benefit the City.

The City of Washburn updated the Comprehensive Plan in 2023 with the addition of an Outdoor Recreation component, which will serve as the City's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. Here's a link to the updated [Comprehensive Plan](#). Additionally, the City of Washburn partnered with UW-Extension in 2021 to develop Community Branding book to assist the City in marketing its assets. Here is a link to Washburn's [Brand Report](#).

Future impactful opportunities for the next Administrator include continuation of the economic development momentum, coordinating a General Obligation debt issuance, expansion to the campgrounds and coordinating projects from TID No. 3 created in 2015.



The Ideal Washburn Candidate

The ideal candidate should be a person with strong experience in budget development and management; capital improvement planning and execution and a track record of economic development successes. The next City Administrator shall possess the ability to think outside the box, possess a strong work ethic; be a team builder and leader in addressing community issues. The candidate should possess excellent communication skills; be proactive in responding to economic development opportunities, work cooperatively with both elected officials and other governmental entities, be well-versed in community planning and have a successful track record of obtaining grant funding.

The Washburn Administrator plays a critical role in the continued economic development and community redevelopment that is a high priority for the community. The next City Administrator should have a good working knowledge of various business financing mechanisms, including grant writing, management of Tax Increment Districts, developer agreements and utility financing.

Skills and Experience

The successful candidate must demonstrate a strong background in economic development and Tax Increment District management; budget development and management; capital project planning and management; as well as grant writing and intergovernmental relationships. Possess several years of progressively responsible administrative and leadership experience in a municipal organization. Consideration of candidates with private sector or military experience will be made if they can demonstrate accomplishments that directly relate to necessary skills identified.



Qualifications (and Compensation)

Require Bachelor's Degree in public or business administration or related field; prefer Master's Degree.

Must have a valid Driver's License, or ability to obtain one.

Residency in the community is encouraged but not required.

Starting salary range: \$100K-\$120K DOQ, plus excellent benefits.

Additional information about the City's personnel and compensation policies can be found in the Washburn Employee Handbook. Contact Shawn Murphy, Public Administration Associates for a copy at smurphy@public-administration.com. In addition to the benefits summarized, the City will consider relocation expenses for the selected candidate.

How to Apply

Send cover letter, resume, salary history and 5 work-related references (in one PDF file) to Public Administration Associates, LLC,

Attn: Shawn Murphy, Associate

Address: 1155 W. South Street Whitewater WI 53190

E-mail: smurphy@public-administration.com

Application Deadline: 3:00 pm, Monday June 22, 2026

Confidentiality must be requested by the applicant and cannot be guaranteed for the finalists.

Visit the community website at www.cityofwashburn.gov for additional information.

