



Welcome to the City of Covington

City Manager Position Open - Apply by December 4, 2015



Population 5,961 (est. 2015)

Located in the heart of the Alleghany Highlands of southwestern Virginia, the City of Covington offers a wonderful quality of life for its residents and a wide array of activities for visitors. It is a classic small, mountain town that features ample opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors before retreating to a quiet dinner at a nearby restaurant. You can step away from the hustle and bustle of the big city and take things a little slower. Here is where you can find all that Virginia is famous for: history, beauty and hospitality.

The county seat of Alleghany County, Covington is the hub of activity for the outdoor recreation enthusiast. The Alleghany Highlands, part of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, offer fantastic scenery, beautiful mountains and a natural, year-round environment for everyone to enjoy. The area is a hiker's paradise. The mountain biking cannot be beaten. Fisherman will find trout, bass and northern pike in the local waters. Hunters can use a bow, a muzzle loader or something more contemporary to hunt deer, bear, small game and turkey. Skiers will find snow nearby for much of the winter.

Also nearby are Douthat State Park (which covers 4,500 acres and includes Lake Douthat) and Lake Moomaw (a 3.9 square mile reservoir created by the Army Corps of Engineers). Both are great places to canoe, kayak, power boat and water ski. The City itself has a state-of-the-art aquatic center and wonderful park system that many cities of populations of 20,000 would die for. The City is also home to the Covington Lumberjacks, a member of the Valley Baseball League (a summer league for college players). World class golf can be found within 20 miles of the City.

For a relatively small town, there is a lot going on in Covington. Local artisans offer a variety of arts and crafts. The City is home to the Allegheny Highlands Arts Council that brings live professional performing arts events to the area. Its Performing Arts Series is held in Curfman Hall at the local high school and has been recognized as one of the most successful entertainment and cultural series in the state. The City offers concerts in the park at the Jackson River Amphitheatre every week throughout the summer. The Masonic Amphitheatre in nearby Clifton Forge is another entertainment venue.

The City's location on the Jackson River is the key to its commercial success. The river provides the water source necessary for paperboard production at Covington's WestRock, formerly, MeadWestvaco Mill. Founded in 1890, the facility employs approximately 1,300 workers. The Mill is one of the most technologically advanced bleached paperboard manufacturing facilities in the world and stretches 1.5 miles along the Jackson River. Amazingly, it produces more than 2,500 tons of bleached paper and paperboard each day. The fact that the City has access to rail and interstate for shipping finished products is another important factor.

Although Covington is nestled in the mountains, it is by no means isolated. Two thirds of the population of the United States lies within a 500 mile radius of the City. Two of the nation's best known resorts, the Omni Homestead Resort (founded in 1766) in Hot Springs, VA, is 30 minutes north and the Greenbrier Resort (founded in 1778) in White Sulphur Springs, WV, is 20 minutes west. Interstate 64 runs through Covington making it easy to get to Roanoke (54 miles), Richmond (174 miles), Charleston, WV (143 miles) and Washington DC (228 miles). Amtrak arrives and departs from Clifton Forge on a regular schedule. The Roanoke Regional Airport is



also easily accessible. Other airports (Charlotte, Charlottesville, Greensboro, and Raleigh-Durham) are further away but offer more flights generally at a lower price.

Crime is very low in Covington and healthcare is readily accessible. LewisGale Hospital Alleghany is about 10 minutes away in Low Moor. The Alleghany Foundation (established with the proceeds of the sale of the local hospital) helps fund community needs. Covington City Public Schools operates Edgemont Primary, Jeter-Watson Intermediate and Covington High School. The elementary and middle school are almost brand new. The high school is quite a bit older having been built in the 1930s but is in excellent condition and being renovated. Jackson River Technical School and Dabney S. Lancaster Community College offer a variety of programs providing entry to higher education. Covington and Alleghany County are known for the low cost of their housing. While a nice, older home for a family of four can be purchased for under \$100,000, a buyer can pay up to \$300,000.

The best part of this community, however, is its small town feel and its residents. They are friendly, helpful, kind and accepting of newcomers. They consider everyone part of their big, happy family. They help their neighbors and love their small town. Those that move away often come back. While it is a small town, it has a big heart.

All in all, Covington is a wonderful place with great potential. So, if you love a challenge, enjoy the outdoors, are content with a little slower pace of life, you may just have found your new home. Please update your resume and apply.

Table 1: Historic Population

Census	Population
1900	2,950
1950	5,860
1960	11,026
1970	10,060
1980	9,063
1990	6,991
2000	6,303
2010	5,961

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

History

The first settlers in Covington and Alleghany County arrived around 1745 and found abundant wildlife. The City had its beginnings in 1818 when a plat showing the lots and streets was filed. By 1822, the City and surrounding county had 534 residents who were liable for the poll tax. Over the next 70 years, Covington grew slowly as an agricultural center dependent on those who raised crops and livestock.

By the end of the 1800's Covington's local industry included iron producers, tanneries, brick manufacturing, a lumber mill and a paper mill. The population jumped from 704 in 1890 to 2,950 in 1900. In 1902 the Town of Covington was named the county seat of Alleghany County and in 1952 the town became an independent city (meaning it is totally independent of the county that surrounds it and the county has no jurisdiction and provides no services within the city limits).

Commerce and industry peaked in the 1960s and then declined. The rayon factory closed in 1961. WestRock, a world class paper manufacturing facility, remains but very little else in the way of industry.

Demographics

Table 2: Covington Demographics

2015 Estimated Population: 5,961			
Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
Caucasian	84%	0 to 15	17%
African American	13%	15 to 30	18%
Asian	1%	30 to 45	18%
American Indian	1%	45 to 60	22%
Other Races	1%	Over 60	26%

Educational Achievement (over age 25)		Median Age	
High School or Higher	81%	Covington	41.0
Bachelors Degree or Higher	10%	U.S.	37.2

Average Family Income	
Average Family Income	\$47,572
Families Below Poverty Line	13%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Climate

Covington has four distinct seasons. Summers are warm with highs in July and August averaging in the high 80s and winters are distinctly chilly with lows averaging in the mid-20s in January and February. The majority of the annual precipitation occurs between March and September with much of the rainfall coming from thunderstorm activity. The coldest months tend to have limited precipitation and snowfall is not uncommon.

Geography

Covington has a total area of 5.7 square miles of which 5.5 square miles is land and 0.2 square miles is water. The City lies along both sides of the Jackson River. It is at the intersection of US 60, 220 and I-64. Its mean elevation is 1,245 feet above sea level. It is part of the Roanoke Valley and the Alleghany Highlands. Covington is the geographic and population center of the Alleghany Highlands.

Commerce

While Covington serves as an area hub for shopping, its economy is dominated by WestRock. As noted, it employs approximately 1,300 workers at its mill from Covington and the surrounding region. See www.westrock.com and www.ingevity.com. The City's second largest employer is Walmart followed by Covington city schools and the government. (Source: Virginia Employment Commission.) Covington benefits from I-64 which passes through the City and the two interchanges within or near the city limits. In addition to Walmart, a number of hotels, restaurants and other retail establishments are in close proximity to these interchanges.

For Covington to thrive in the future, it needs to take advantage of its environment and the underutilized downtown. This is starting to happen. Sears moved from a big box store on the outskirts to a downtown location. Why? Its business improved. A new restaurant is coming to the central business district and a number of professional offices are located there. Within the past year, six new businesses have located downtown. Ideally, the downtown will draw light industry, such as software development companies or tourism, providing the City with a more diverse economic base. Virginia has been touting its technology corridor in this region and hopefully Covington will be able to capitalize on it. Another possibility is making use of the old rayon plant. The site has an allotment of five million gallons of water per day and the City's water treatment plant is only operating at 30% of capacity. That could be very attractive to the right company.

The Government

Covington is one of Virginia's 39 independent cities. As such, it functions in much the same way a county would in Virginia and in other parts of the country. The City is totally surrounded by Alleghany County but is not in anyway a part of the County.

The City operates under the Council/Manager form of government. It is governed by an elected City Council comprised of five members elected by district and serving staggered four-year terms. A Mayor and Vice Mayor are elected from the five members to two-year terms. The City Council makes policies and appoints a City Manager to carry out those policies. The Council also appoints the City Attorney, City Clerk, and the Covington School Board. Council Members are warm and friendly. None are career politicians and all genuinely have the best interests of the City at heart. They may not always agree and can be very frank with one another. Still when they debate issues, it does not get personal. They have a great deal of respect for city staff.

The City offers a full range of services including engineering, EMS and fire (largely through volunteers), landfill, parks, police, recreation, sewer, water, police, fire and EMS. Other City functions include health, housing, library, schools, and social services.

The total General Fund budget for FY 2014-15 is \$17M with education comprising \$5M of that total. General property taxes provide approximately 48% of total General Fund Revenues. Covington's tax rate is \$0.71 per \$100 of assessed valuation for real estate, \$5.60 per \$100 for personal property and \$5.52 per \$100 for machinery & tools.

The City government is known for encouraging a strong sense of community pride while preserving its heritage and focusing on a positive and prosperous future.

The Challenges

Covington is a relatively stable and well run community that has weathered a period of economic uncertainty. As such it has few pressing immediate issues, but some long-term challenges. Primary is the need for Covington to focus on its future and its ability to maintain a vibrant community that is responsive to its current residents, attractive to new residents and businesses, and appealing to visitors.

The opportunities for leadership in this environment are manifold. A Main Street that has seen the migration of businesses to the Interstate corridor presents a challenging need to plan for the adaptive reuse of existing commercial



buildings and an emphasis on downtown redevelopment. The decline in population over the years has resulted in a housing stock that may call for an innovative approach to code enforcement and neighborhood revitalization.

Resources are tight. While the City's budget has been stabilized in recent years, the City's infrastructure and particularly its roads need improvement. At the core of this effort will be developing a long-term, community based strategic plan that includes an analysis of the needs, identification of the required resources available locally, in the region and beyond.

Fortunately, the citizenry understands the need and the opportunity to bring greater prosperity to the community. The next City Manager will play a key role in achieving that goal.

Other challenges include managing the City's resources carefully, adding diversity to the City's workforce, and finding ways to work with the other governmental entities in the region collaborating to reduce costs and better provide services to the public.

The Ideal Candidate

The Council is looking for a strong leader; one who will partner with the members to implement their goals and earn the respect of the organization and the community. The individual will be a strategic thinker who can anticipate the future and position the City to maximize its success. The manager will work with the City's elected leadership to create a vision of what the City can be. The manager and the leadership will then partner to rally the community around that vision.

The ideal candidate will be someone who is always seeking better approaches to making Covington a great community and improving the City's operations. He/she will present the Council with options and expect discussion. This Council is quite reasonable but not a rubber stamp. The ideal candidate will make sure all the Council Members have the same information at the same time and that there will be no surprises.

The City Manager will have outstanding communications skills and easily relate to a wide variety of groups. Excellent customer service

will be very important to the City Manager. He/she will lead by example, work with people and resolve problems in a timely manner. The customer is not always right but does deserve to have his/her concerns heard and for the City to make an effort to resolve them.

The new City Manager will build consensus both within and outside the organization. He/she will unify departments in implementing the Council's goals and not be a micromanager. The individual will set parameters, provide resources and then allow the staff to carry out their assignments. At the same time he/she will expect to be kept informed, tasks to be accomplished and deadlines to be met. Accountability will be very important to the individual.

Working with other governments, non-profits and the private sector in the region will be key to moving the City forward. As such, the individual be adept at working with other localities, agencies and state officials. The goal will be to bring the appropriate resources to bear on community objectives and issues. He/she will be knowledgeable of grants and other opportunities for external funding.

Personally, the individual will be firm and fair as well as intelligent, upbeat, friendly, outgoing, organized, and positive – someone with a "can do" attitude and one who is visionary yet practical. She/he will also be consistent, cheerfully persistent, high energy, and definitely not a bureaucrat.

The ideal candidate will have at least a Bachelor's Degree in business or public administration or an area related to city management. The best candidates will have at least five years of experience as a city manager or assistant and expertise in local government human resource management, finance and budget, economic development and redevelopment. Others with strong management skills in a municipal agency such as a leadership role reporting to a governmental board will be considered. He/ she will also have negotiation skills and expertise in intergovernmental relations.

The City is looking for someone who will view Covington as a destination and not a stepping stone. Ideally the candidate will stay at least five and preferably ten years.

Compensation

The salary range is \$80,000 to \$120,000. Benefits are very good.

The Current City Manager

In 2013, the City appointed its Police Chief to be the temporary City Manager. In September 2015 he announced

he would like to give up his duties as City Manager and devote all his time once again to being Police Chief.

Residency

The City Manager is required to live within the City limits.

How to Apply

E-mail your resume to Recruit29@cb-asso.com by December 4, 2015. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

Confidentiality

The entire process will be confidential. The only name to be released will be the name of the next manager.

The Process

Applications will be screened between December 5th and January 19th. Interviews will be conducted January 28th and 29th with a selection shortly thereafter.

Other Important Information

The City of Covington is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women, minorities and veterans to apply.

Additional Information

For additional information about Covington, Virginia, visit: www.covington.va.us

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING