



City Manager Elmira, NY

Apply by:
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Welcome to Elmira, a City that prides itself on “honoring the past and building the future!” Situated in picturesque upstate New York, Elmira is a close-knit, family oriented community that prides itself on its friendliness and warmth as well as on the strength of its collective character. For an aspiring municipal professional, the City possesses the rich history, economic potential, scenic beauty, and family values that would make it a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family.

Elmira is the county seat of Chemung County, NY, and the center of the Elmira metropolitan statistical area. The City itself is shaped roughly as a diagonal rectangle running along the western side of the Southern Tier

Expressway (Interstate 86) in the southern portion of central New York State. It is less than 10 miles north of the New York / Pennsylvania border and centrally located between Buffalo (three hours northwest), Syracuse (two hours northeast) Albany (three hours east), and New York City (four hours southeast). In other words, it offers easy transit to virtually every city of note in New York State while being in a rural, idyllic setting.

The City itself possesses a rich history that sets it apart from many of the surrounding communities in New York. The wife of Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) was born and raised in Elmira, and they maintained a summer home here for years after their marriage. There are many

historical sites still dedicated to their memory in the City today. The first African American Heisman Trophy winner, Ernie Davis, hails from Elmira as well, and his story was eloquently told in the 2008 Hollywood film "The Express". The City also lays claim to being the birth place of the first female Space Shuttle Pilot and Commander, Eileen Collins. Also from Elmira are Tommy Hilfiger, the famous fashion designer, and Brian Williams, the NBC News Anchor, who although not born in the City spent much of his early childhood there.

For nature lovers, Elmira is a paradise. The City itself has an excellent park system, and there are many incredible scenic trails and nature walks both in the City and in the nearby Finger Lakes Region. The lakes themselves boast 11 separate bodies of water in an area covering over 134,000 total acres, allowing boating and fishing enthusiasts to explore new alcoves and vistas. The fishing can easily be described as world class and there are plenty of opportunities for other aquatic recreational activities such as water skiing and wake boarding. Furthermore, hunting is a favorite pastime and there are a myriad of excellent spots to pursue game. White tail deer and turkeys are plentiful. Equestrian activities and competitions are also hosted throughout the area.

For the sports fan, the City hosts the Jackals of the East Coast Hockey League (ECHL) at the First Arena. Furthermore, the City's Dunn Field (where Babe Ruth once played) hosts the Pioneers, a summer league baseball team which is composed of outstanding college level players. Not far away are a wide variety of other excellent sports venues. Syracuse University with its excellent football and



basketball teams is a short 80 miles to the northeast, and the professional franchises of the New York City area teams – the Giants, Jets, Rangers, Islanders, Devils, Knicks, Nets, Yankees, and Mets are a little over a 4 hour commute. The Buffalo Bills and Sabres also play roughly 2 ½ hours to the northwest.

For adults who would rather participate, many biking trails and scenic jogging paths are scattered throughout the area. Many 5k runs and walks take place in the City to support a variety of charities such as the Susan Komen Race for the Cure and the “EdieLou5K” run for diabetes. Youth sporting leagues are also available and include baseball, softball, soccer, BMX, golf, football, lacrosse, and others. Varied, opportunities for both indoor and outdoor athletic events abound for your entire family.

Regarding cultural opportunities, Elmira hosts a wealth of attractions to capture one’s imagination. Located in the heart of downtown Elmira, the Clemens Center is the region’s premier performing arts center with its 1,618 seat Powers Theater. It recently underwent an 18 month renovation and hosts a Broadway Series, School-Time Series, Comedy Club, and many other events throughout the year. The Powers Theater has been called the most beautiful theater between New York City and Buffalo. The Arnot Art Museum, possesses paintings from the Early American Period, the Contemporary Period, and many others. Additionally, the Finger Lakes region is home to many fine wineries that any connoisseur can both explore and richly enjoy. The National Soaring Museum, a unique locale that houses entire exhibits dedicated to memorializing the history of non-motorized flight, is located nearby. Finally, local businessmen recently purchased the aforementioned First Arena Events Center and plan to increase the variety and number (from 40 to 100) of cultural and sporting events it hosts annually.

The City also provides ample opportunities for family fun. For example, the Summer Concert Series every Sunday in Brand Park features a wide variety of music. Join a Family Zumba class also at Brand Park. Find market fresh produce three different days and locations within the city. Watch remote control boat regattas at Brick Pond. Ride our restored carousel at Eldridge Park and then play

mini golf or take a paddleboat ride before the fireworks. Enjoy downtown Festivals such as Street Painting, Jazz Festival and weekly Wisner Markets to round out the family fun for the fresh food and music aficionado in all of us.

On the practical side of life, the City also has much to offer. The Elmira City School District provides a well rounded education with a mission “to prepare students by providing opportunities to allow them to realize their full potential as lifelong learners and contributing citizens in our democratic society.” Any student who applies him/herself can excel in a supportive academic environment. Furthermore, the local Southside High School was recognized as a high performing school by New York State Education Department. For higher education, well regarded Elmira College is located on 60 acres within the city limits. Now a co-ed college, Elmira College was the first college for women in the United States. Several other very high quality institutions of higher education are within a two hour drive – notably Cornell University, Syracuse University and University of Rochester. Furthermore, New York City with all of its prestigious schools is just a little farther away. The City is also home to numerous churches.

With regards to housing prices, Elmira is extremely affordable by national standards so it is a great time to buy. The median home sales price is \$76,000 and a 3-bed/2-bath 2,000 square foot Victorian home can run from \$75,000-\$150,000. More upscale living is available for just a little more. Overall the cost of living is estimated to be slightly below the national average.

Elmira is a wonderful place to settle, put down roots, and call home. It offers something for everyone, and is a great opportunity for any municipal professional. We invite you to apply!

History

Elmira’s very early history can be traced back to its roots as a part of the homeland for the Native American Iroquois Confederacy. In 1791 the US signed a treaty with the Tribes and most of the Native American

Table I: Climate Data for Elmira, NY

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Average High °F	32.9	35.8	44.4	57.9	69.7	78.2	82.3	80.8	73.1	60.7	48.8	37.2	58.5
Average Low °F	15.1	16.5	22.7	33.6	43.0	52.8	57.3	55.7	48.1	36.9	29.9	20.9	36.0
Precipitation in Inches	2.0	1.9	2.7	3.1	3.1	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.1	3.0	2.4	36.3
Precipitation in Inches	10.9	9.8	9.6	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	2.4	7.6	41.8

Source: NOAA

population moved to Canada. While the County of Chemung was technically created in 1788, the first settlers arrived shortly after the treaty was signed and the City of Elmira, then called the Town of Newtown, was born. The name was changed to Elmira in 1808.

In the 1830s the Chemung Canal connected New York's Erie Canal Waterways with Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River system and Elmira became a major transit point. A series of railroads followed in the mid-1800's and Elmira entered a period of explosive growth. These facilities also made the City a prime location for an Army training camp in the early Civil War.

The City prospered over the next 80 years and in 1950, the population reached its peak of 50,000. However, as technology progressed and alternative transportation services such as automobiles, trucking and air travel became more prevalent, growth stopped and the City's population began to decline until the City reached its current population of approximately 30,000.

Climate

Elmira possesses a moderate continental climate, meaning its winters are long and its summers are warm and comfortable. See Table 1. The area actually experiences a significant amount of humidity and is stunningly beautiful during the fall and spring months in particular.

Demographics

Overall, Elmira's population is younger (33.9 years of age) than the national median (37.2) and as can be seen from Table 2, the population is relatively evenly spread over the age groups with the exception of those over 65.

The ethnic breakdown of the City's population is very similar to that of the national average, with 78.3% of the population being Caucasian, 14.6% African American, and the remainder composed of those of other races or two or more races. In terms of ethnicity, 4.3% of the population is Hispanic, far below the national average of 16.7%.

Per Census data, the median household income for 2007 - 2011 was \$29,488 which is a little more than half of the state median of \$56,951. 39.7% of the population are high school graduates, 18.5% have attended some college, 10.1% have an associate's degree, 7.7% a Bachelor's, and 5.1% have completed graduate work. The City's

Table II: Age Breakdown

Age Bracket	Percent
Under 10	7.2 %
10 to 20	12.7 %
20 to 30	17.0 %
30 to 40	14.5 %
40 to 50	11.9 %
50 to 60	14.3 %
60 to 70	10.7 %
70 to 80	5.4 %
80+	6.4 %
Median Age	33.9

Source: U.S. Census

unemployment rate as of March 2013 was estimated to be 10.8%.

Commerce

The City of Elmira does not have one primary industry. Table 3 shows the City's largest tax payers. In terms of economic impact, however, a number of major players are not listed below since they do not pay taxes. These include the two hospitals owned and operated Arnot Health, Elmira College, and Chemung County.

Government

Elmira is governed by a Mayor and six Council Members. All are directly elected and at the same time in November of the year preceding the Presidential election. They serve four year terms (prior to 2012, the terms were two years) and the next election is in 2015. While not term limited, five of the seven Council Members are in the

first full term. The Mayor is the longest continuously serving member having served as a Council Member from 2006 to 2011 and the last 18 months as Mayor. One other Council Member served previously (2001 to 2005) and one completed an unexpired term. The change in 2011 was not due to voter dissatisfaction but rather incumbents deciding to retire and choosing not to run for re-election.

The elected officials function well as a body and seem to genuinely like and respect one another. They all have the best interests of the City at heart and also hold the staff in high regard. The staff is a strong, professional and cohesive group committed to public service and the community.

The total budget for 2013 is \$30,600,000. Public Safety makes up the largest single component of the budget at \$12.1 million. The next largest is Employee Benefits at \$7.7 million. Transportation is next at \$2.5 million followed by General Government and Culture and Recreation at \$2.9

Table III: Elmira's Largest Property Tax Payers

Business Name	Business Type	Valuation in Millions
NYSEG	Public Gas & Electric	\$38.9
Howell Inc.	Manufacturing/Distribution	\$7.9
Chemung Canal Trust Co.	Bank	\$6.0
Hilliard	Manufacturing	\$5.5
St. Joseph's Health	Professional Offices	\$5.4
Verizon	Public Telephone Company	\$5.0
McWain	Foundry/Manufacturing	\$4.3
Mark Twain Properties	Residential Office/Retail Rental	\$4.0
Pennsylvania Lines	Ceiling Railroad	\$3.7
Plainview Associates	Holiday Inn	\$3.3
Cole WG (Walgreen North)	Drug Store	\$3.1
TH Agriculture & Nutrition (Walgreen South)	Drug Store	\$3.0
Elmira Real Properties	Residential Office/Retail Rental	\$2.9
Note: These properties compose 14.6% of the City's taxable full assessed valuation.		

Source: City of Elmira

million and \$1.2 million respectively. At year end the budget anticipates a Fund Balance of \$3.3 million. The City has 293 authorized positions although 26 are presently vacant.

The tax rate was recently increased 2.9% this year in order to maintain current levels of municipal services (a little over \$700,000 was also used from reserves). The City also currently employs a sales tax that assists in the payment of municipal obligations, and receives state aid (roughly \$4,500,000 last year). The City also provides Water and Sewer Service, although it is overseen by a separate Water Board and is not one of the City Manager's responsibilities.

The City has three bargaining units: Police Benevolent Association, Elmira Professional Fire Fighter Association and the CSEA (an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees).

The Challenges

While Elmira is an incredibly beautiful City and full of potential, it does have challenges. It has been managed in a fiscally conservative manner over the last several years, and as a result, is financially sound and has actually even increased its bond rating. The next few years, however, will be challenging. New York State in the past has enacted measures that have dealt significant blows to local governments budgets. The New York State Property Tax Cap Legislation, for example, limits the growth of a municipal budget from year to year and has put a significant obstacle in municipalities' abilities to collect tax revenue and pay for services. Furthermore, the New York State Comptroller's Office passes along



shortcomings in pension obligations to municipal governments to pay, and those pension related costs are expected to increase in upcoming years. Quoting from the City's 2013 Budget Report, unless measures are taken to enact change, "the state tax cap legislation, static aid to municipalities, excessive employer pension contributions as well as legislation restricting a city's ability to receive revenue for services rendered on a variety of not for profit organizations will overtime deplete reserves and bankrupt cities." In short, the State has limited revenues and imposed significant costs on municipalities, creating a recipe for financial disaster in the very near future if the situation is not addressed.

A second challenge is the City's tax base. As noted, housing values are relatively low in comparison to the national averages. Further, 38% of the City's value is exempt from taxation (that is, owned by governmental agencies, not-for-profits, educational institutions and religious entities). With property values as they are, some not-for-profit institutions find it less costly to purchase more land than to consider vertical construction. The result is that the brunt of the costs of running

the City are borne by a little under 2/3 of the tax base. If more expansion of these entities occurs, that portion falling on businesses and residents will increase in coming years.

The third challenge is economic development. The City's downtown has a number of vacant/under-utilized buildings and properties. Its goal is to turn these into sources of jobs for residents, increase their value (and thereby tax revenues), and to return the downtown to its former vibrancy.

Other issues include a cemetery that is not covering its operational costs and a number of department heads who are nearing retirement. With tight budgets, it has been difficult to perform the desired succession planning.

The Ideal Candidate

The City is looking for a strong City Manager to partner with the Council and help lead Elmira into the future. The individual will have a vision and present the Council with options in order to execute that vision while always recognizing the Council will make the ultimate decision. Many of the issues the City Manager will face will not be fixed quickly; therefore, the ideal candidate will be someone who is relentlessly positive, upbeat and persistent and who always keeps the goal in mind.

The best candidate will be someone who is an outstanding manager. The individual will think strategically and not be a micromanager. He/she will delegate and place a priority on mentoring so that everyone can reach their potential. By the same token, the manager will expect results and hold the staff accountable.



The ideal candidate will have outstanding interpersonal and communications skills. He/she will relate well to people of all social and economic strata as well as have the ability to translate complex ideas into simple terms. Customer service to all citizens will be an important priority. The individual will lead by example and tolerate nothing less than the best in terms of service. Customers are not always right, but deserve to be heard and receive a response.

Given the aforementioned financial challenges, the next City Manager will have both a strong background in budget and finance and a conservative approach to financial management. He/she will also have an understanding of and experience in economic development. Not all development is advantageous to the City and the next manager will need to understand how to evaluate a developer's proposal. If a proposal is determined to be beneficial to the community, he/she will know how to implement the plan while building consensus and identifying appropriate financial incentives.

The ideal candidate will have experience and skill in working with intergovernmental relations and regional consolidation. Not only is it highly desirable from the point of view of economic development, but it is a possible partial solution to the financial stress local governments are facing. The City and County have made some strides in that area, but much more remains to be done.

The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor's Degree in business or public administration or related field. A Master's degree is preferred but not required. Ten years of progressively more responsible experience, preferably in local government, is expected. Experience as a City Manager or Assistant is strongly preferred. Experience in New York State is a plus.

Residency

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

The Past City Manager

The most recent City Manager is retiring and no internal candidates are anticipated.

Compensation

The salary range will be between \$100,000 and \$140,000. Benefits are excellent. The City Council would prefer to pay in the lower half of the range.

Candidate Confidentiality

The Freedom of Information Law would prevent any disclosure of the candidates until the time of hire.

How To Apply

E-mail your resume to Recruit33@cb-asso.com by September 27th. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates at (561) 707-3537 or Sean Baenziger at (561) 351-9350.

Schedule

Candidates will be screened between September 28th and November 4th. Interviews and a selection will likely occur in mid-November.

Other Important Information

The City of Elmira is an Equal Opportunity Employer and strongly encourages minorities and women to apply. It is also a drug-free workplace. A Veteran's Preference will be awarded if applicable under New York law.