



— POSITION AVAILABLE —

VILLAGE MANAGER | Apply by April 9, 2021

## Welcome to Islamorada, Village of Islands, Florida

If you are looking for water, sun, expansive ocean and bay views, great restaurants, and a small-town atmosphere, read on. Islamorada is the jewel of the Florida Keys, and indeed all of Florida. Split lengthwise by the scenic Overseas Highway, it stretches 18 linear miles and is composed of four main islands—Plantation Key, Windley Key, Upper Matecumbe Key and Lower Matecumbe Key. Clear night skies and low levels of light pollution make visibility of the stars and planets one of the area's many attractions. If you and your family love the water and the outdoors, Islamorada is paradise.

Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, Islamorada is a great place for a fisherman. Tarpon, grouper, hogfish, snook, snapper, mahi mahi, sailfish, and permit are all plentiful here. That is why Islamorada is known as the Sport Fishing Capital of the World. Don't have a boat? Don't worry.



Kayaks and charters are readily available as are offshore and backcountry fishing guides. Or just throw your line in from one of the bridges. If you would rather watch the fish instead, the area is known for its snorkeling and scuba diving. You can visit reefs and shipwrecks, or just prowling the bottom. Do you like lobster? Well, for two days in July and then for eight months starting in August, you can jump in the water and catch your own dinner.

The true center of the community and one of its treasures is Founders Park. It is not just a spectacular 40-acre multi-use recreational facility, but the home of many community events including concerts, festivals, competitions, and other fundraising events. Start your day at the beach with swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and paddle boarding. Nearby are showers, a barbecue area with picnic tables, and shade. Move over to the Ron Levy Aquatic Center with an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a splash pad, and an attached diving center. Team sports are played on the athletic fields and basketball courts. Tennis and pickle ball courts compliment the golf driving range. Then there is an 88-slip marina and boat launch. You will find fishing, diving and eco tours starting here. Finish off the day with an outdoor concert at the amphitheater and its Great Lawn.

Other Village parks include the Islamorada Library Park Beach, Anne's Beach, Southwinds Park, Key Tree Cactus Nature Preserve, Plantation Tropical Preserve, Green Turtle Hammock Nature Preserve, and Plantation Hammock Preserve. Or visit Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park. Here you will find an exposed coral reef that once served as a quarry for construction of the Key West extension of the Florida East Coast Railway. An environmental center documents regional history and nearby are self-guided nature trails that wind through mangrove hammocks. Just offshore and accessible by boat is Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park. The island features a virgin hardwood hammock, along with an early pioneer home and a stone wall believed to have been built by Native Americans.

Of course, the Village is not without commercial attractions. Located on Windley Key, the Theater of the Sea opened in 1946 and is a marine mammal park. Visitors can swim with Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, California sea lions, and sting rays as well as

nurse sharks. Dolphins put on quite a show swimming, jumping through a hoop and ringing a bell. The 17-acre site has exotic birds, lizards, crocodilians, sea turtles, tropical game fish, sharks, and other forms of marine life. Short cruises and bottomless boat rides (that is, a boat with an open center) are offered here. The park also engages in ecological conservation programs, including the first artificial flipper transplant on a sea turtle.

Another point of interest is The Florida Keys History of Diving Museum which is dedicated to the preservation, education and exhibition of the history of diving, with emphasis on the contributions of South Florida and The Florida Keys. Not far away is The Florida Keys History & Discovery Center which is a world-class museum featuring interactive exhibits delving into Florida Keys history and aquariums exploring the Florida Reef. For those who want to get in the water, you can dive and snorkel at San Pedro Underwater Archaeological Preserve State Park. Located in 18 feet of water, you will find the shipwreck of the San Pedro, sunk in 1733. You will also find an eighteenth-century anchor, replica cannons, ballast stones encrusted with coral, a dedication plaque, and a mooring buoy system.

To truly understand Islamorada, you need to realize it is part of the Florida Keys—a chain of islands stretching 120 miles, each one approximately 400 yards wide. The community is split by U.S. Highway 1 (sometimes called the world's longest driveway) into an "oceanside" and a "bayside." Mileage and properties are numbered along the highway based on their driving distance from Mile Marker 0 in Key West. Islamorada's Village Hall, for example, is 88.6 miles up the road and its address is 88600 Overseas Highway. Life can be casual, laidback and simple here as in many ways, Islamorada is very rural. As such, it either does not have many of the things found on the mainland, or they are some distance away. For example, while the nearest movie theater is five miles from Village Hall, if you do not like what is playing there, the next closest is in Marathon, 37 miles toward Key West. If that does not work, your best option is probably in Florida City or Homestead on the mainland and 41 miles to the northeast of Islamorada. Shopping malls? Let's just say it is a very long way to the nearest one. The Village does have one major chain grocery store and two nice privately-owned grocery stores, however.





While good, basic medical care is readily available here, advanced care and specialists may mean a trip to Miami.

The rural nature of Islamorada with proximity to Key West and Miami allows one to enjoy the advantages of two worlds. Local nightlife consisting of music and dancing is available at one of the many beautiful resorts, restaurants or bars where overcrowding is rarely a concern. Or, more lively options are available only 80 miles (and a potential night's stay) away. Serious crime is very low, and the crime rate over the past five years has declined. Public schools offer small class sizes, excellent curriculum and options for students.

Tourism in Islamorada and the Florida Keys has continued to increase leading to economic advantages. However, it also means locals opt to stay off the main highway on many weekends. The popularity of vacation rentals and second homes in the Florida Keys has resulted in long-term housing that is very expensive—per Zillow, the average cost of a home in Islamorada is a bit north of \$800,000. An entry level dry lot home (that is, not on the water) starts at around \$500,000. In terms of living here, the community is close knit, and the residents are warm and friendly—without pretense and often very direct. Some have affectionately referred to Islamorada as a saltwater Mayberry with a bit of an attitude. Neighbors help neighbors, and if you need help, they are there for you. Best of all, they treasure their community!

If you want to travel, it is 64 miles to Miami International Airport and 85 miles to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International. Both offer service to virtually anywhere in the world with a stop or two. For those who like to

cruise—something we think will be back sooner rather than later—the Port of Miami is the number one cruise port in the world in terms of passenger volume and Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale is number four.

HISTORY

First sighted by Spanish adventurers in 1513, the Florida Keys were named Los Martires (The Martyrs). Indian Key (just off Islamorada) was an early Spanish trading post, and Islamorada's name came from early Spanish for "purple island."

In 1733, a Spanish treasure fleet was wrecked on the reefs off Islamorada during a hurricane. As a result of this and other wrecks, a salvage industry thrived. The salvagers (called wreckers) were paid a proportion of the value of the goods they recovered from vessels which were unlucky enough to be wrecked on the reefs. Rumors abound that in many cases luck had nothing to do with it.

Surprisingly, Indian Key, all of 11 acres, was the first seat of Dade County. At the time, it consisted of about 40 houses, a general store, a bar, post-office, warehouse, and the Tropical Hotel with a ballroom and possibly a bowling alley.

In the mid to late 1800s, settlers began to arrive from the Bahamas. First came the Russell family, with their eight children, in the 1850s. They settled in Matecumbe on 160 acres. In the 1870s, the Pinder family laid claim to a plot two miles south of the Russell's. Others soon followed.

The Pinders opened the first factory for canning of a delicacy that would become renowned worldwide—pineapples. The farmers also raised limes, melons and vegetables. Transportation was by water as no roads and bridge had yet been built.

In the 1880s, Henry Flagler realized Florida's potential and consolidated railroads between Jacksonville and Daytona Beach. He then extended the line further south reaching Miami in 1896. The next step was to continue it to Key West, and the effort began in 1903. He filled swamps, bridged waterways, conquered jungles

and then did it all again after destruction by hurricanes. Flagler rode his train to Key West in 1912.

The railway included a stop in Islamorada and brought day-trippers and fishing enthusiasts. Locals saw opportunity and adapted to the needs of these early adventurers. In 1928, the first road through the Keys opened, and they began to truly flourish.

Islamorada was hit almost directly by the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, causing 423 deaths including over 40 members of the Russell family. A Hurricane Monument memorial, including the ashes of over 300 victims, exists today at Overseas Highway (U.S. Highway 1) mile marker 82 in Islamorada.

Table 1: Islamorada Demographics

Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
White	94.5%	0 to 15	10.1%
Black	0.5%	15 to 25	7.7%
Asian	1.1%	25 to 45	17.6%
Additional Races	3.7%	45 to 65	36.5%
Total	100%	65 to 85	25.4%
Hispanic Ethnicity (all races)	12.5%	85 +	2.7%
Estimated Population: 6,433			
Educational Achievement (Over Age 25)			
High School or Higher		95.6%	
Bachelor's Degree or Higher		41.5%	
Other Statistics			
Median Age—Islamorada		54.9	
Median Age—U.S.		37.8	
Median Household Income—Islamorada		\$82,500	
Median Household Income—U.S.		\$61,937	
Poverty Rate		6.3%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Growth continued slowly but steadily afterwards. Frustrated by lack of local control, residents of Islamorada decided to form their own village. On December 31, 1997, Islamorada was incorporated. One of its first acts was to purchase the 37-acre Methodist Campground which became the heart of Founders' Park.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

See Table 1 on page 4 for Islamorada Demographics.

## CLIMATE

Islamorada's climate boasts seven "comfortable" months from October through May with high temperatures between 70°F and 85°F. January lows average around 62°F. Summers are warmer with high humidity. Temperatures generally peak in the low 90's with lows in the high 70s. Weather tends to be mitigated by the water surrounding the Keys. The area has never had a frost, and the all-time high is 97°F (recorded in 1880 and 1956). Islamorada gets an annual rainfall of 48 inches compared to the US average of 38 inches. On average, Islamorada has 254 sunny days annually (compared to a US average of 205).

Hurricanes strike Florida from time to time, especially from June 1 to November 30, though their impact is generally limited. If you are more than 50 miles from the center of Category 1 through 3 storm, it will probably not materially affect you. The last significant area storm was Hurricane Irma in 2017. It was a category 4 storm with sustained winds of 130 miles per hour when its center struck the City of Marathon and Cudjoe Key in the lower Keys. It had some but limited impact in Islamorada—it spent nearly \$10 million in response and recovery. The Village maintains a healthy fund balance in its General Fund that is designated for future emergency management needs.

## GEOGRAPHY

Islamorada is located in Monroe County, Florida. It stretches 18 miles from mile marker 90 toward Miami to mile marker 72



Figure 1: Location of the Village of Islamorada, FL

toward Key West and covers a total area of 7.2 square miles (7.1 square miles of which are land). It is part of the Florida Keys and is composed of four main islands: Plantation Key, Windley Key, Upper Matecumbe Key, and Lower Matecumbe Key. To its north lies the Gulf of Mexico and to its south is the Atlantic Ocean. Without traffic, it is 1.5 hours south of Miami and two hours northeast of Key West. It is also about 160 miles north of Cuba. The average elevation in Islamorada is five feet with the highest being 16 feet.

## COMMERCE

Commerce in Islamorada focuses largely on tourism and many of the businesses are small retail establishments, restaurants, and bars. While quite a few residents are retired, the Village's proximity to Miami attracts people who are able to telecommute/work remotely as well as those who work in the airline industry. See Table 2 on page 6 for the principal employers of Islamorada.

## THE GOVERNMENT

Islamorada operates under the council-manager form of government. The Village Council is composed of five members elected at large for two-year terms. All are elected at the same time

Table 2: Principal Employers, Islamorada, FL

Employer	Industry	Employees
Publix Super Markets Inc. #1495	Retail	135
Islamorada, Village of Islands	Government	133
Crystal Health and Rehab LLC	Healthcare	105
World Wide Sportsman	Retail	100
Forest Tek Lumber	Retail	36
Caribee Boat Sales & Marina	Retail	25
Dooley Construction	Construction	25
Islamorada Pool Service & Maintenance	Construction	21
Houston Air	Travel	20
Sands of the Keys	Hospitality	17
Hershoff, Lupino & Yagel, LLP	Law	16

Source: Monroe County Tax Collector based on occupational license application information.  
(Does not include employee counts in the hospitality, restaurant or professional services fields.)

and limited to four consecutive terms. The most recent election was in November 2020, and the current Council is entirely new (although one member served a term years ago). The prior Council had several members who met their term limits of eight consecutive years. They may run for re-election after a two-year period. The Council Members are collegial and work reasonably well together. While they do not always agree, they respect each other and hold the overall staff in high regard. Regular Council meetings are currently held every third Thursday.

The Village Council appoints a Village Manager to implement its policies and to oversee the organization's day-to-day operations. It also appoints the Village Attorney to oversee its legal matters. Village-provided services include Fire/Rescue, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development (including Building Services and Code Compliance), and Public Works (including Roadway Maintenance, Solid Waste, Stormwater Utility, and Wastewater Utility). Police services are provided through a contract with the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, and wastewater treatment is provided offsite by the Key Largo Wastewater Treatment District. Support departments include

Finance and Administration, the Village Attorney, and the Village Clerk. See Figure II for more information about the Village government's internal structure. Additionally, the Village operates the Plantation Yacht Harbor Marina, named by Yachting Magazine as one of the "Top 50 Marina Destinations in the World." There are 70 to 83 slips available on daily, weekly, monthly or annual agreements.

The Village's FY 2021 General Fund Budget is \$14.8 million, and its total budget is \$35.8 million. The Village has 110 full-time employees and 23 part-time employees. Seasonal employees are also hired to staff the Village's summer camp. The Sheriff's Office accounts for another 16 contract employees. Only the fire fighters are unionized; and they are

represented by the International Association of Fire Fighters. Their current contract expires on September 30, 2021. See Figure 2 on page 7 for the organizational chart of Islamorada.

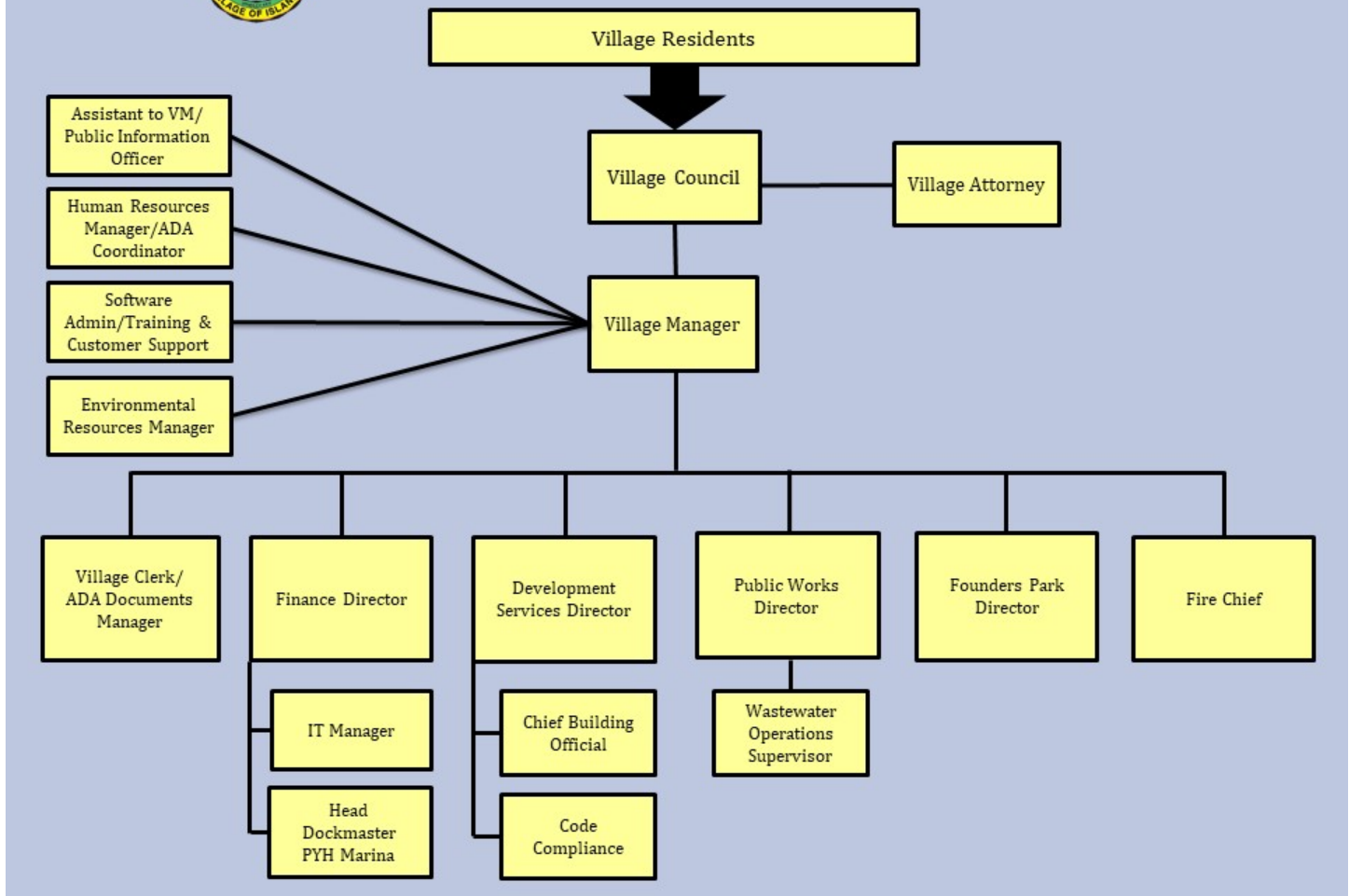
## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Islamorada may be small in size, but it has many challenges, and the next Village Manager will be very busy.

The Florida Keys, including Islamorada, have been designated as an Area of Critical State Concern. As such, what happens here is closely monitored by the State of Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity. Its goal is to protect the natural environment and community character of the Keys while promoting orderly and balanced growth and a diverse and sound economic base. That means the Village is heavily regulated in key areas, and it is absolutely essential that it maintains a good relationship with the Department, other Keys cities, the county, and the State.



## Islamorada, Village of Islands Organizational Chart



Special regulations in the Florida Keys result in a limitation on the number of building permits allowed to be issued. One of the key factors that was considered in establishing the Rate of Growth Ordinance (ROGO) is evacuation of the Keys in the event of a hurricane. All permanent residents must be able to leave within 24 hours when an evacuation order is issued. U.S. Highway 1 (the Overseas Highway) is the only real road between Key Largo and Florida City and is two lanes (with no plans to expand it). The population and development of the Keys is thus limited based upon how many people it has been determined would be able to evacuate the Keys using that road. By 2023, maximum buildout capacity will have been reached and a moratorium on issuance of building permits for new development will go into effect. While the numbers are a little fuzzy, there will probably 600 to 800 lot owners in Islamorada without the ability to build. They may seek compensation

through the filing of takings claims, and the financial exposure for the Village and other local governments in the Keys could be substantial. Identifying the means to address and fund the exhaustion of building permit allocations is essential.

Another concern is the status of the canals and need for stormwater management projects to address water quality issues. In many cases, development included blasting canals in the coral rock so homeowners could get their boats to the ocean or gulf. Dredge and fill construction techniques were used to create canal-based communities. These techniques are no longer allowed due to the negative impact on the environment. In some cases, the canals were not carefully planned, and their depth is such that the water in them does not exchange with that of the surrounding water bodies. The result is poor water quality. It is





believed that at some point the state will mandate their clean-up, and the capital project costs will be high.

Approximately every ten years, a significant hurricane strikes the Keys. As the climate changes, these events are expected to become more prevalent. Although the impact is different depending on where a hurricane makes landfall, being prepared and minimizing the impact of these events is important. Related to climate change is sea level rise. The fact that disaster is not imminent means people tend to take it more lightly than other issues. Estimates are the water here is rising at a rate of one inch every three years. Some areas of the Keys already experience flooding during King tides, and as time goes on, more will. By 2060, if the trend continues, much of the Keys will be impacted by sea level rise. Stormwater management projects are needed throughout Islamorada to address rainfall pooling in the streets at times when sea level and King tides are high. Capital projects are also needed to help alleviate water quality issues in the Village's canals—leading to high project costs and funding needs.

The Village faces additional challenges. Increasingly, the state legislature is passing laws to reduce the authority of cities in the state to solve their own problems. Many Airbnbs have become party houses and are disrupting the residents' right to quiet enjoyment of life. The Village's contract with the fire fighters expires September 30, 2021 and will need to be renegotiated starting in the summer. While the Village's wastewater system is largely complete, some capital projects are still needed to address outstanding issues.



Management of personnel is a challenge for any local government administrator. While the Village has a number of key staff who have worked for the Village five years or more and provide valued institutional knowledge, a risk of attrition and turnover due to increasing housing costs and cost of living in the Keys is always a consideration. When a staff member leaves, replacements are harder to find. Fire fighters, for example, start working at Islamorada often commuting from Miami-Dade County. Once they are trained, they leave for better paying jobs with greater career growth potential on the mainland. More staff must commute from South Miami Dade County, and the Village tries to accommodate commuting employees with flexible schedules and consideration for travel time. The incoming Village Manager will be tasked with identifying, analyzing and overcoming ongoing personnel issues unique to the Keys. A salary study and recommendation of compensation adjustments may be a priority.

#### THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Islamorada is an exceptional place and is looking for an exceptional, results-driven leader and manager. The ideal candidate will partner with the Village Council as a supporter and advisor, while realizing he/she works for that body. The Council is not looking for a “yes” person, but someone who is strong—someone who expresses his/her opinion diplomatically and in the right place at the right time. The individual will be comfortable telling the Council what it needs to hear, not what it wants to hear, and he/she will support recommendations and opinions with facts. Being able to speak truth to power (whether it is in communicating with the elected officials or members of the community) will be expected and valued. The Manager will have a strong moral compass and will understand politics but not become involved.

The Manager will be personable, intelligent, bold, upbeat, friendly, outgoing, organized, positive, responsive, completely honest, transparent, and humble—someone with a “can do” attitude. A sense of humor will be important and useful in diffusing the occasional tense situation. He/she will be practical, resolute yet flexible, consistent, cheerfully persistent, high energy,

values-driven, and a leader who is down to earth—definitely not a bureaucrat. Thinking critically and creatively will be very important. Many of the Village’s problems do not have easy solutions.

The next Manager will have excellent verbal and written communication skills. He/she will recognize, however, that the most important aspect of communication is often listening—hearing what others have to say and making everyone feel their views are understood. Being respectful and direct, as well as clear and concise, will matter a great deal.

The individual will be approachable and out in the community. Managing from behind a desk is not an option. The best candidate will be someone who can and will help bring the community to consensus. She/he will also be very open and approachable. The ability to anticipate/resolve issues before they become problems is critical. Good judgment and common sense are essential. Other important characteristics are experience managing a lean organization and the ability to communicate via all types of media. In particular, the ideal candidate will be savvy in the use of both traditional and social media. He/she will recognize both the good and the harm social media and naysayers can do. When confronted with negativity, the Manager will stand up politely and correct the record. In particular, the individual will be comfortable and strong in his/her response to public attacks upon staff.

Customer service will not be just a catchy phrase but a core principle and a way of life. The individual will lead by example and diligently work with businesses and citizens to resolve their issues. The ideal candidate will inspire confidence, and be a team-builder, delegator and someone who encourages an environment where creativity will flourish. The individual will be an excellent judge of people and be able to determine who is the right person for a job. Working hard to find ways to keep the Village’s many, current, outstanding employees will also be important. He/she will mentor and let staff members perform their duties and achieve their assigned goals. The best candidate will give assignments, set broad performance parameters, and step back. At the same time, when appropriate, the Manager will

not hesitate to jump in and help out. Everyone here rolls up their sleeves and assists, as necessary. The Manager will expect results and hold employees accountable. An eye for detail will be important. When all is said and done and it is time to make a decision, the Manager will not hesitate.

Being calm and low-key in a sea of turbulence is important. While significant storms may be infrequent, the Village needs to be prepared. Florida experience, and ideally experience in the Keys, will be a plus as will experience living in a coastal community that blends owner-occupied homes with resort living. An understanding of Florida's Sunshine Laws and public records laws and ability to ensure they are communicated to and followed by all members of staff, Village Committees, and the Village Council is necessary.

In terms of specific skills, the individual will have a demonstrated track record of achievement in management, problem-solving, negotiation, finance, and emergency management. Skill in intergovernmental relations will be critical. Islamorada is heavily regulated by outside parties and the Manager will easily and comfortably work with local, regional, and national actors to find solutions. Knowledge of and a concern for the environment will be important. Experience working in communities that have successfully secured state and federal grant funds and implemented non-ad valorem assessment programs to fund large capital projects would be helpful. An understanding of state and federal lobbying efforts and experience interacting at these levels is desired.

The Keys have their own nuances, and those who are successful here tend to be those who love and respect the environmental qualities of the Florida Keys and Islamorada. The people who remain here want to be here and care deeply for the future of this island chain.

The selected candidate will be expected to make a commitment to Islamorada. This position should not be viewed as a stepping-stone but a treasure in its own right. The Village is committed to finding a manager who will stay a long time.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range is \$150,000 to \$180,000. A housing stipend may be negotiated as part of the overall compensation package depending on need. Pension benefits are provided through the Florida Retirement System, and the Manager is in the Senior Management Class. Other benefits, including health, dental, vision and life insurance are excellent.

## THE MOST RECENT VILLAGE MANAGER

The most recent Village Manager experienced health issues and resigned after four years. Historically, Managers have served two to four years, and have generally been urged to resign by the Village Council. Change in the Village Council every two years seems to contribute to a high turn-over rate in the Village Manager position. The current Village Council is committed to changing that pattern and hiring a Manager who will serve five to ten years.

## RESIDENCY

The Village Manager is not required by the Village Charter to live in the Village's boundaries. It is, however, highly desirable that he/she live in Islamorada or nearby in unincorporated Monroe County.

## INTERNAL CANDIDATES

We do not anticipate any internal candidates.

## HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit43@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit43@cb-asso.com) by April 9th. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537 or Steve Sorrell (513) 317-0678.



## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida's public records act, once an application is submitted, it is deemed a public record. As a practical matter, we generally do not expect media coverage until after the semi-finalists are named.

## THE PROCESS

Applications will be screened between April 10th and May 19th. Finalists will be selected on May 20th. Interviews will be held on June 1st and 2nd. A selection will be made shortly thereafter.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Islamorada, Village of Islands, is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages women, minorities, and veterans to apply. A veteran's preference will be awarded per Florida law.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the Village, visit:

[www.islamorada.fl.us/](http://www.islamorada.fl.us/)

[www.islamoradachamber.com/](http://www.islamoradachamber.com/)

