

City Manager

Roanoke, VA

(Population 94,000)

The commercial and cultural hub of Southwestern Virginia, Roanoke is a hidden treasure. Early explorers told of blue mountains and a snug flat valley beside the upper Roanoke River. Today, the Appalachian Trail lies just north of the City and the Blue Ridge Parkway just south. A little west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it is located in the Roanoke Valley, part of the “great valley” that extends from Maryland to Tennessee. Along with many historic buildings, the center city has a new \$67 million art museum and a large civic center. It also has a lively downtown that boasts an historic farmer’s market that operates seven days a week and that becomes the scene of brisk nightlife after dark. The people are warm, friendly, helpful, concerned and progressive. The community is family-oriented and a child can get a very good education with some hard work and good parenting. When asked to characterize Roanoke, one elected official said, “Hot dogs and art,” meaning the residents are culturally oriented (the orchestra is more than 55 years old) but without pretense. Another way to characterize the City, particularly given its railroad history, would be that it is the economic engine of the region. With housing being quite reasonably priced and many, many outdoor activities nearby, it is simply a great place to raise a family, to live, to work and to play. The City has an excellent regional airport, outstanding healthcare and great opportunities for higher and continuing education, both within the City and in the surrounding area. All in all, Roanoke is a big city with a big heart. Everyone knows everyone else and, in this case, that is a very good thing. One of only two cities to be named an All-America City five times, Roanoke not only is a premier city but it has all the pieces in place and is well positioned to go to the next level. While some have commented that I-581 (the interstate passing through the City) can often be crowded, there really isn’t any reason to leave Roanoke anyway.

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Although Roanoke is nestled in the mountains, it is by no means isolated. In fact, two thirds of the population of the United States lies within a 500 mile radius of the City. Nearby or immediately adjacent are Roanoke County, the City of Salem and the Town of Vinton. Together with the City and a few other small jurisdictions, they form the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with a population of approximately 300,000. Overall, it is the fourth largest MSA in Virginia behind Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads and Greater Richmond. In many ways, it is the perfect size. It is large enough to have all the amenities of a big city but small enough not to have many of the problems. It is only 180 miles to Richmond, 240 miles to DC and 440 to Atlanta. As noted, it also has an excellent regional airport although destinations are somewhat limited and fares can be somewhat higher than one might like.

The City covers approximately 43 square miles and is essentially landlocked. Since 1979, the State Legislature has taken several actions which make it difficult for cities to annex land from

the surrounding counties. The net effect is that the City of Roanoke must look within its boundaries for its future growth.

Roanoke's population has been relatively stable since 1950 at approximately 95,000. This lack of growth can be seen as both a strength and a weakness. While the City has not added population the way some have, it has also not experienced the economic roller coaster ride. Property values, for example, have held steady in Roanoke in the recent economic downturn.

Demographically, the population is relatively evenly spread among age groups. Approximately 31% is 24 or under, 31% is in the 25 to 44 age group, 22% are between 45 and 64 while the remaining 16% are 65 and over. 69% of the population is white while 27% is African American. The remainder is primarily 4% is Asian or multiple races. Those of Hispanic origin make up 2% of the population. Surprisingly, City's residents represent 92 different nationalities. Not surprisingly, Roanoke is proud of and cherishes its diversity. One of its strengths is its neighborhoods. People tend to be involved in them and the associations can be a very positive force. On the negative side, Roanoke is a relatively segregated city – not due the wishes of the current residents but because it takes a long time to overcome historic housing patterns.

The City is has four distinct but relatively mild seasons. During the winter months, the high temperatures average in the mid 40's with an average low around 30°F. Summer temperatures have average highs in the mid 80's with average lows in the 60's. Flooding is the primary weather related hazard, particularly when the remnants of a tropical storm pass through the area. The most severe such event occurred when the remains of Hurricane Juan stalled over the area in 1985 and 10 people drowned.

THE GOVERNMENT

Roanoke City 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 total surrounded by Roanoke County but is not in anyway a part of the County.

The City has an elected city council composed of a mayor and six council members. The mayor is elected separately and all are elected in at large. They serve staggered four year terms with elections in May of even number years. The Council Members are progressive and genuinely have the best interests of the City at heart. They all want a great city with great neighborhoods and great schools. They may differ on the best approach to achieve these ends but they are collegial and genuinely seem to like each other. The result is that they are civil to and respectful of each other. They also like, respect and support city staff.

Overall, the City staff is very good. The employees are dedicated and serious about their work. Numerous City departments are accredited and/or have achieved a variety of awards and recognition. The City provides a wealth of training programs for its employees including basic orientation, diversity awareness, supervisory skills, leadership development and technology training. The formal City Leadership Team is comprised of leaders from various levels (department head to supervisor) and it is a talented body whose members are well-credentialed in

their fields and who possess strong values in work ethic and community involvement. The City has a variety of formal policies and procedures that govern processes within the government. A conservative culture surrounds its practices pertaining to procurement, contracting, employment and internal controls.

Roanoke also has five constitutional officers: Clerk of Circuit Court, City Treasurer, Commissioner of the Revenue, Commonwealth Attorney and the Sheriff (who oversees the jail and court security – the City has a separate Police Chief who reports to the City Manager). The City follows the Council-Manager Plan of government although, in addition to the City Manager, the Director of Finance, City Attorney, City Clerk and the Municipal Auditor also report directly to the City Council. Finally, the City Council also appoints the School Board that oversees the operations of the City's schools.

The City provides all the services a county typically provides including building, economic development, emergency medical services, fire, housing and neighborhood services, human services, libraries, parking, parks and recreation, planning, police and public works. It also oversees city properties such as the civic center, the market building and the municipal golf course. Two services it does not provide are water and sewer which are provided by the Western Virginia Water Authority.

Overall the City has approximately 3,680 FTEs. Of those, 2,831 work for the School Board while 1,849 work in other City functions. The General Fund FY 2009-2010 budget is \$257 million (a 1% contraction from the prior year). Given the current economic situation, the budget has been relatively stable. In fact, the City concluded its FY09 year with General Fund revenue growth of .5% and total revenues of \$260 million. Approximately two-thirds of General Fund revenues are from local taxes, a quarter of the revenues from the State with the remaining from various fees and charges for services. Approximately \$71 million of the budget is allocated to the schools, \$60.3 million to public safety and \$39.6 million to health and welfare. The City's capital improvement program will average approximately \$20 million annually for the next four years. The City holds credit ratings from all three rating agencies. It is rated AA by Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's while it is currently rated Aa3 by Moody's Investor Service with a negative outlook. The City's fund balances are considered "narrow" by Moody's and are indeed much lower than median AA cities. The City's debt levels are considered moderate. Given the City's debt policy, Roanoke is at its ceiling in terms of long-term debt with approximately 10% of its current General Fund budget being devoted to debt service. As an aside, much of the reason for the relatively high percentage of debt service is that the City has built and completed two brand new high schools in the past three years. In coming years as economic pressures subside somewhat, it will be important for the City to bolster its reserves and carefully select among potential capital projects to ensure that debt policies are adhered to.

Over the years, the City has been very supportive of its City Managers and the position has been very stable. In fact Roanoke has only had seven managers since 1918. The current City Manager will be retiring on March 1, 2010 after approximately ten years as the manager.

It should also be noted that Virginia is a Dillon Rule state: that is, local governments have no powers outside of those specifically enunciated in their charters. Additional authority can only be granted through an act of the state legislature.

HISTORY AND COMMERCE

The Roanoke area was first settled in mid-1700s and towns began to form in the early 1800s. In colonial days, it was a hub for trails and roads. The Great Wagon Road started in Philadelphia, passed through the Shenandoah Valley and split at Roanoke. One branch went south into the Piedmont while another, the Wilderness Road, went southwest into Tennessee. The forerunner of modern day Roanoke was Big Lick. It was formed in 1852 and was named after a large salt outcropping that attracted wildlife.

At the time the City was chartered in 1874, it had a population of approximately 500. That all changed very quickly in early 1880s when the Norfolk and Western Railway (N&W) selected Roanoke as a junction. With it came an immediate influx of people and jobs, and the City grew so quickly that it became known as the “Magic City.” The coal fields well to the west of Roanoke proved to be a major commodity carried by the railroad. Eventually, Roanoke became the N&W’s headquarters. It also became the manufacturing and maintenance center for the railroad’s steam engines. Other industry followed – such as the rayon manufacturer, American Viscose, in 1917.

The late 1950s were not as kind to the City. The American Viscose facility closed in 1958 leaving 5,000 workers unemployed. A second blow occurred with the N&W switched to diesel train engines in 1959 and another 2,000 workers were laid off. In 1982, the N&W merged with the Southern Railway to become the Norfolk Southern and most of its headquarter operations were moved to Atlanta.

Offsetting these declines has been the growth in recent years of the Carilion Clinic (currently with almost 8,000 employees) and the rise of many small businesses. Advance Auto Parts and Virginia Transformer Corporation (the nation’s leading transformer manufacturer) are also headquartered in Roanoke while GE and Toshiba both manufacture large drive systems in the City. Norfolk Southern is still a major employer and FreightCar America hired several hundred employees recently to build freight cars. Other significant employers include Wachovia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, Wal-Mart, Kroger and MW Manufacturers.

Roanoke’s downtown is also doing nicely. The residential component is returning as a number of older buildings have been or are intended to be converted to condominiums and apartments. Prices for these units are not inconsequential and can run as much as \$1,000,000 for a larger (4,400 square foot) unit. Another bright spot is that Virginia Tech has recently partnered with Carilion to start a medical school located in the City. Applications are being taken now and the school anticipates opening in the fall of 2010.

One of the more interesting features in Roanoke is the large neon red, white and blue star at the top of Mill Mountain. It was erected in 1949 and can be seen from most of the valley. It is also the origin of the City's latest moniker, "Star City" and the star on the City's logo.

For additional information about the City, visit the following: www.roanokeva.gov,
www.visitroanokeva.com, www.downtownroanoke.org and
www.roanokechamber.org.

THE ISSUES

While Roanoke is already a premier city and is well positioned to become an even more significant force in the region and the country, it is not without issues. Given its size, the issues remain manageable but they have not gone away nor are they likely to be remedied quickly. The City is landlocked and cannot grow, as many cities can, through annexation. The result is growth must come from within and through redevelopment. Jobs are needed to keep the young people in the area. While the downtown's future is experiencing a renaissance and becoming repopulated, more remains to be done. Parking in the heart of downtown can still be difficult.

Roanoke City is, in many ways, an urban core city surrounded by more affluent areas. As a result it carries the burden of being the primary provider of social services to the region. Next, while the City's schools are actually fairly strong, those in the surrounding area are stronger. Many of the City school system's issues are based on the socio-economics of the area. It serves a student body that often comes from single parent homes and parents with relatively low incomes. The result is that over half the student body is on free or subsidized lunches and teen pregnancies are high. It should be noted that the City Council believes strongly in education and knows that without good schools, its redevelopment efforts will stall.

The unique structure of local governments in the region also creates issues. The City is surrounded by the County but is not part of it. The same is true of Salem. Vinton is an incorporated town and is, on the other hand, is part of the County. At times, these jurisdictions seem to be more interested in competing with one another than in cooperating for the greater good. The Western Virginia Water Authority is the most notable exception although even in that case, the City of Salem opted not to join. Some of the other important regional services are animal control, the landfill and the juvenile detention center.

Finally, given the nature of these difficult financial times, the City government will need to continually review its processes for ways to make them more efficient and effective.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City Council is seeking someone to work with it as a partner, a supporter and a trusted advisor, not a competitor. It wants someone who is intelligent, upbeat, friendly, outgoing, organized, positive and progressive – someone with a can do attitude and is visionary yet practical. She/he will be resolute yet flexible, consistent, cheerfully persistent, high energy, and

a leader – not a bureaucrat. Some difficult decisions will need to be made and intestinal fortitude will be required. The individual will also understand the employer-employee relationship. The Council believes strongly that it should set policy while the manager should run the day-to-day operations. By the same token, it expects the policies it sets to be followed. The next manager will have excellent communications skills and use them. The Council does not like to be surprised. The best candidate will be someone who can make the Council Members feel comfortable that their views are being heard and who will help bring them to consensus. He/she will realize that giving the credit to others is the best way to get things done. Customer service will not be just a catchy phrase with the next manager but rather, along with integrity, will be a core principle and a way of life. She/he will be someone who works with the Council, the community and local businesses to find solutions to problems as opposed to someone tends to find reasons to say no. The individual will be approachable, in the community and part of the community, always listening and always looking for ways to make the government more responsive. He/she will be respectful of others, delegate and encourage an environment where creativity will flourish. The individual will be able to recognize talent, mentor that talent and be confident enough to then step back and let the staff member do his/her job. The ideal candidate will give assignments and set broad performance parameters but will also expect results and hold employees accountable. The individual will believe in transparency but also realize its limits. She/he will also be very open and approachable. Other important characteristics are experience managing in lean times, the ability to work with the media, and the ability to anticipate/resolve issues before they become problems. Good judgment and common sense are essential.

In terms of specific skills, the individual will have a demonstrated track record of achievement in management, finance, economic development and redevelopment. Knowledge of and experience with intergovernmental relations will also be a critical factor in evaluating candidates. With three school systems, four local governments and three sheriffs in the immediate vicinity, collaboration will be very important. He/she must know to get along and encourage regional cooperation, particularly in these difficult financial times. By the same token with five constitutional officers and four others who report directly to the Council, being able to play nicely inside the government is also critical. Given the diversity of the community, experience working with other races and ethnicities is also important. She/he will also understand the importance of sustainability as well as green technologies and the role they need to play in the way forward. At the same time, the individual will have a healthy respect for history and recognize that the community is somewhat conservative when it comes to change.

The selected candidate will be expected to make a commitment to Roanoke. This position should not be viewed as a stepping stone but as a gem in its own right. The City hopes and expects the next manager will honor its prior managers' tradition of a passion for the City and lengthy tenures.

The position requires a bachelor's degree in business administration, public administration, public policy or related field and seven to ten years of increasingly responsible experience as a senior level government or private sector executive. A master's degree is preferred.

COMPENSATION

The starting salary will be between \$130,000 and \$200,000. Benefits are excellent and the City has its own pension plan.

RESIDENCY

Residency within the city limits is required.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Council prefers an open and transparent process but it also realizes that not all candidates are comfortable having their names disclosed to the public. **Accordingly, all candidate application materials, including the applicant's name, will remain strictly confidential until such time as the candidate authorizes their disclosure.**

HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your resume to ***RecruitThree@cb-asso.com*** by October 23, 2009. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates at (561) 707-3537.

THE PROCESS

Applicants will be screened between October 23rd and November 23rd. Finalists will be selected in early December and interviews held around December 11th with a selection shortly thereafter. Ideally the next manager will start in February, 2010.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Roanoke is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages minorities to apply. It is a community committed to workforce building and serving its residents and businesses with commitment to the following values: Responsibility, Respect, Teamwork, Honesty and Diversity/Inclusion. It values public service, equal opportunity and the importance of diversity in the workplace.