

# City of Springfield, Massachusetts

## Chief Administrative and Financial Officer

# *Profile*



**EDWARD J. COLLINS JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**  
McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

## Introduction

The City of Springfield, MA has retained the services of the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist in its recruitment of a new Chief Administrative and Financial Officer. The Collins Center, established in July 2008, focuses on helping governments work better. This Profile draws upon our discussions with the Mayor, department heads, staff and community representatives. It describes our understanding of the organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate, and the professional and personal characteristics an ideal candidate would possess. For more information about the City of Springfield, please consult its website: [www.springfieldcityhall.com](http://www.springfieldcityhall.com).

## Background on the City of Springfield

Springfield is located on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River about 90 miles west of Boston and 27 miles north of Hartford, CT. Springfield traces its history to the early colonial era. During the 19th and early 20th century, it developed as a manufacturing center and later as a financial center as well. Over the last 50 years the demographics of Springfield have changed significantly following a pattern similar to that of other industrial cities in the Northeast – out migration of middle class residents, significant shifts in ethnic and racial population and the deterioration of the manufacturing base that supported the city for generations. Springfield's population is estimated at 150,000 according to the 2000 census. The City is relatively densely populated within its boundaries of thirty-three square miles. Springfield has served as the regional service center and cultural capital of Western Massachusetts and boasts the Basketball Hall of Fame, several colleges and a civic center. Springfield and its environs is integrated with the Hartford region and both are served by Bradley International Airport less than 20 miles away. Springfield has a significant corporate presence that regularly engages in public-private partnerships with the City. Among these

are Baystate Health, a top 40 Health System in the US with over 10,000 employees and Baystate Medical Center, nationally ranked as a top 100 teaching/research hospital. Similarly MassMutual, a top 200 company in the US has long been headquartered in Springfield.

## Organizational Design and Governance

A strong Mayor elected for a two-year term and a nine-member city council elected at-large has governed Springfield. This structure has been in place for decades, however, due to a recent statutory change a thirteen-member council will be elected in November 2009 that includes eight district councilors and five at-large councilors. In addition, a question on the November ballot seeks voter approval of a four-year term for Mayor. If approved the Mayoral election in 2011 will be for a four-year term. The school system functions as a City Department but is under the policy jurisdiction of an elected School Committee. The School Committee is comprised of six members elected for four-year terms. The Mayor serves ex officio as Chair of the School Committee. The schools represent about two-thirds of the City's total budget. Independent authorities carry out certain municipal functions such as water and sewer and off-street parking. In 2004, due to the near insolvency of the City, the Commonwealth established the Springfield Financial Control Board by statute. The Board was given management and financial control of the City and in the ensuing five year period instituted major reforms to City operations and procedures. On June 30, 2009 the Springfield Financial Control Board was dissolved and the City is now functioning without special state supervision.

The current Mayor, Domenic Sarno, was elected in 2007 for a two-year term. He is a candidate for reelection. Previously he served on the City Council for eight years which included one year as President.

As a part of the post-Control Board strategy the position of Chief Financial and Administrative Officer (CAFO) was created by state statute. A copy of the statute is posted on the Collins Center web site along with the most recent bond offering statement. Interested candidates are encouraged to read the statute. According to the statute the CAFO is appointed by the Mayor from a slate of not less than two nor more than five names submitted to him by a screening committee. The CAFO has direct authority over all the City's financial and staff functions and is responsible for consolidating school financial operations under his/her authority. Given the CAFO's comprehensive responsibility for financial, human resources and procurement functions it is expected that the CAFO will have significant influence on all aspects of city governance and service delivery.



## Public Finance

The City is in good financial condition with positive fund balances. In April 2009 the City received a bond-rating upgrade from Standard and Poor's. The upgrade is a consequence of five years of diligent effort to institute cost and spending controls, generate own-source revenue and a relatively favorable economic climate through much of this period. Like all Massachusetts municipalities Springfield is facing significant cuts in state aid and is taking the steps necessary to adjust to this situation. In fiscal year 2009 State Aid represented approximately 59% and property taxes represented 28% of its revenue. In the current economic climate, limitations on new construction may adversely affect the prospects for increases in property tax revenues. The recent offering statement has been posted on the Collins Center web site ([www.collinscenter.umb.edu](http://www.collinscenter.umb.edu)). The statement provides an extensive discussion of the City's financial situation, a 20-year financial history and projections for FY 2010 and beyond. A significant accomplishment during the last five years has been moving the City from a chronic free cash deficit position to one characterized by very substantial positive balances at year end.

## The Chief Administrative and Financial Officer (CAFO)

The CAFO position was created by state statute to ensure that the progress made under the Springfield Financial Control Board would be maintained and that the City could, on its own, move forward on a path of continuous improvement. The position is structured to directly oversee the City's financial functions and to serve as the principal city management advisor to the Mayor. The statute provides for a small staff for the office of the CAFO and specifies an appointment process designed to limit the final pool of candidates to qualified professionals. In addition, the CAFO has very significant management control over the functions that are direct reports. As evidence of continuing state interest in Springfield, the state Secretary of Administration and Finance must approve the appointment. While many of the explicit roles of the CAFO are in the financial arena, it is not expected that the position will require a hands-on financial technician, rather the expectation is that the CAFO will set tone, direction and strategy for management of the City as a whole, acting in close consultation and collaboration with the Mayor. A major technical task for the CAFO is the assumption of school finance and business functions. The CAFO statute prescribes the assumption of these functions. The current managers that report to the CAFO are serious professionals with considerable capability.

## Challenges for the CAFO

- **Gaining and maintaining the full confidence of the Mayor.** Springfield is a strong-Mayor city. While



the CAFO has specific powers and duties defined by statute the CAFO will draw much of his/her authority to influence events from the development of an effective working relationship with the Mayor.

- **Creating the institution of the Office of the CAFO.** Expectations are high that the CAFO will sustain an organizational climate that fosters continuous improvement in the efficiency of city operations to ensure the delivery of quality public services. Since this is a newly established position, in many ways, the first person in the job will define the position.
- **Earning the respect and support of subordinates, peers and key opinion leaders.** The CAFO will have extensive interaction with key players in the municipal organization. The CAFO will need to quickly demonstrate a high level of competence and professionalism to earn the respect and confidence of the City's leadership and staff. This is not a learning position.
- **Gaining credibility with key state agency actors.** While the Springfield Financial Control Board has been abolished the state will continue to monitor the Springfield situation closely. The CAFO needs to quickly gain the confidence of state agency actors.
- **Forging a relationship with the top management of the School Department.** State law (Chapter 468) requires that school finance and business operations come under the authority of the CAFO. The CAFO needs to enlist the support of top school management in implementing this change with a view toward providing the schools top-notch support while freeing the school department from many non-educational administrative tasks.
- **Forging a unified and coherent approach to collective bargaining and employee relations.** A somewhat contentious labor relations climate needs to be improved. New leadership in the human resources office will need strong support in implementing many new policies and procedures relative to non-union

personnel. Managers and front-line supervisors need to be trained to manage within collective bargaining contract parameters.

- **Establishing a working relationship with a new City Council.** In January 2010, the new thirteen-member city council may have nine new members. The CAFO must be able to develop a positive relationship with the new Council. A relationship that will be partly educational, as many members will have had limited public financial decision-making experience. Meeting this challenge effectively is necessary to set the stage for the CAFO's long-term relationship with the Council.

## The Ideal Candidate

The Ideal Candidate will be a professionally seasoned manager who has a demonstrated record of effectiveness in public organizations and who has worked directly with political leaders.

### *The Ideal Candidate needs to be:*

- Able to demonstrate unquestioned integrity in interactions with political leaders, staff at all levels and the public.
- Able to firmly exercise the control of city finances envisioned in the statute establishing the CAFO, but to do so in a way that engenders understanding of the City's limitations and encourages participation by staff at all levels in meeting the City's cost containment and revenue maximizing goals.
- Able to help elected officials understand the short and long term financial implications of their policy decisions and the constraints the City faces.
- Able to carry out the duties of the CAFO while functioning as an inside actor who develops strong formal and informal linkages within the municipal and school structures, linkages that foster a shared vision and sense of participation in shaping the future of the City.
- Able to utilize the powers inherent in the position to represent the City's agenda in discussions with senior state and federal leaders and with the private sector.
- Able to develop the institution of the Office of CAFO into the principal management think tank for the City, an office that raises the aspirations of line departments and integrates the efforts of city functions that have traditionally functioned as silos.
- Able to not only preserve the gains that have been made during the previous five years, but establish a culture of continuous improvement citywide and at all levels in the organization.
- Able to function as an accessible and effective organizational leader in a complex urban environment characterized by limited resources, high service demand, a multi-cultural environment and a newly formed legislative body.

The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor's degree and the experience typically gained through a Master's degree program in a relevant field and fifteen to twenty years of public management experience working directly with elected officials, preferably in an urban context. The successful candidate must be a well-rounded manager with a track record of managing complex customer service organizations in an environment of constrained financial resources. Municipal service planning, financial and human resource management and the ability to build and foster a cohesive management team are strengths vital to this position, as is the ability to develop and maintain positive professional relationships with senior officials of the Commonwealth. The successful candidate must have demonstrated a real affinity for working across the leadership spectrum in a highly urban context and on behalf of a widely diverse citizenry.

## The Selection Process

The Screening Committee established by statute has been formed. It is required to submit not less than two nor more than five names of qualified candidates to the Mayor for appointment. Under the statute, the Mayor is required to appoint from the names supplied by the Committee. No legislative approval of the appointment is required, however final appointment requires the approval of the Commonwealth's Secretary of Administration and Finance. The statute authorizes a three-year term of appointment and an employment contract. Interviews are expected to take place in September and the Committee plans to submit candidate's names to the Mayor during October.

## Salary and Schedule

The City will negotiate salary and conditions of employment. Direct salary is expected to be in the mid \$100s, DOQ. Residency is required after one year. The City will execute a mutually agreeable employment contract.

## How to Apply

Applications are preferred electronically. Please send your resume with a cover letter addressing the job requirements to this email address: [spfldrrecruitment.umb@gmail.com](mailto:spfldrrecruitment.umb@gmail.com).

**Please combine all of your documents in a single file.** Kindly use PDF format if possible.

Should you have any questions regarding this opportunity, or a recommendation of a colleague, please contact: Richard Kobayashi, Senior Consultant (617 489-8812), or Geri Connors, Consultant (508 209-2930).

*To learn more about the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMASS Boston, please visit: [www.collinscenter.umb.edu](http://www.collinscenter.umb.edu)*