



## Position Profile

Prepared by Robert Half - Executive Search

**City Manager**

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## Company Information

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Watertown is home to more than 23,500 people, and it has a trade area of more than 100,000 people in northeastern South Dakota and West Central Minnesota. Watertown's location and quality of life make it one of the most desirable medium sized cities in South Dakota.

Watertown's location along I-29 and US Highway 212 provides efficient transportation for its manufacturing businesses and easy access to larger nearby towns (Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Minneapolis) for Watertown's residents. Watertown has abundant outdoor recreation opportunities – especially hunting and fishing – as well as the benefit of being nestled between two lakes. Our school district is one of the best in the state. Our hospital is the largest privately-owned facility in South Dakota, and in November was included in Newsweek's list of America's Best-in-State Hospitals 2025. Lake Area Technical College continues to grow rapidly as it has been ranked as one of the top three technical colleges in the entire country over the last few years.

For most of its modern-day history, Watertown had a “strong-mayor, weak-council” form of government. This was particularly true during the late 1960s to 2000 time-period when Watertown grew by nearly 50% (13,000 to 20,000 population). Our mayors during this period were elected to successive two-year terms, with our last “multi-term” mayor serving for more than a decade.

Watertown's growth continued after 2000, but by the late 2017, city leaders (as discussed in the H2O-20 plan) recognized our form of government was hampering effective, consistent and professional management of what had become a medium sized city rather than a small town. This inherent problem was exacerbated by a series of “one-term only” mayors from mid-2000s through 2021. We were caught in a cycle of “un-electing” mayors, our de facto city leader/CEO. We knew we couldn't continue our winning growth streak without some change. As a result, the city re-instituted its Home Rule Charter Commission in 2018 to evaluate a new form of city government, with the goal to specifically address a more consistent and professionally led city. Twenty community leaders began meeting and evaluating alternatives. In the end, the Home Rule Charter Commission recommended the city vote to change to a City Manager form of government.

In 2019, the city voters overwhelmingly supported changing from strong-mayor (non-voting, except forties) and 10 council members (two per ward) to a City Manager, with a seven-member council, made up of a mayor, an at-large member and one member for each of the five wards. The mayor is charged with setting and running the council meetings. All day-to-day activities and city personnel report to the City Manager, and the City Manager reports to the council.

We hired our first City Manager in 2021. She arrived with a backlog of tasks and projects to accomplish from the past 15 years. At the top was addressing the “how” do we collectively run our city with this major change in governance.

There is no question we have had the successful launch that the citizens demanded with their vote for a new form of government. Kudos to our first city manager and city staff for all that has been accomplished and yet there is much more to do as we begin our search for our new city manager. It is clear, though, our city has left the “small-town” mindset behind, and we have taken the first steps to become a professionally managed mid-sized city.

The City of Watertown and the Watertown Development Company have a strong track record of working together with business leaders to attract a variety of businesses and industries to town. Recently, this group was successful in convincing Terex to consolidate their various facilities across the USA into a single 450,000 square foot facility next to the Redlin Art Center along I-29. Other notable additions to Watertown in recent years include:

- Watertown is home to the Redlin Art Center, a gift from wildlife artist Terry Redlin to his hometown. The center, which has free admission, features more than 160 of Redlin’s original oil paintings.
- Bramble Park Zoo is the second largest zoo in South Dakota. Open since 1912, the zoo sits on 15 acres in northwestern Watertown with approximately 500 animals representing 130 different species.
- The city has three industrial parks — Pheasant Ridge Industrial Park, Calvin Industrial Park, and Mallard Pointe Business Park. Access to the interstate and US Highway 212 help move supplies and products.
- The Prairie Lakes Wellness Center was built in 2017. The 105,000 square foot facility was designed to meet the current and future needs of the community in terms of gymnasium space, aquatics space and overall wellness. Eight outdoor pickleball courts were added outside the wellness center in the fall of 2024.
- Five years ago, the community rallied to raise \$5 million from private sources to save and restore the 135-year-old Goss Opera House in downtown Watertown. This historic building provides a unique venue for corporate meetings, ticketed entertainment events, and weddings.
- A new airport terminal with daily flights to hubs in Chicago and Denver allow people to get where they need to go. In recent years, usage has easily exceeded the minimum of 10,000 enplanements required for essential air service support.
- The Prairie Lakes Ice Arena opened in 2024. The indoor facility is designed for hockey and ice skating. The Watertown Shamrocks, the latest addition to the North American Hockey League, compete in the Central Division and call the arena home.
- The city is finishing renovations on a new city hall in downtown Watertown, to be completed in 2025.

The city is poised to continue moving forward and is looking for an energetic, skilled individual to work with the council and community to point us in the right direction and manage efficient provision of public services.

For more information: <https://www.watertownsd.us/>

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### Position Information

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The City Manager serves as Chief Administrative Officer for the City; they provide leadership with the development and execution of the City's strategic vision; they provide policy support to the Council; direct the executive level managers and reviews overall operational performance; and exercise budgetary and contractual control over revenue and expense for the City. The position requires a proactive/results-oriented business mindset and a collaborative management style.

Compensation for this role includes a salary range of \$175,000-225,000 (depending on experience). Benefits available with this position include medical, dental, vision and etc.

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### Key Responsibilities

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- Directs, manages, coordinates and expedites activities of all City departments.
- Serves as spokesperson and representative for Watertown and represents the city in discussions and negotiations with other government entities.
- Develops and maintains standard operating procedures relative to the City's business affairs or exercise of governmental power and suggests changes to City ordinances where appropriate.
- Provides recommendations for the development of policy by the City Council.
- Develops and executes operating procedures and strategic plans aligned with the City Council's vision.
- Recruits, appoints, hires, discharges, and supervises city employees.
- Directs the executive management team and provides development opportunities to lead team effectively.
- Prepares and presents annual budget and ensure fiscal responsibility.
- Attends all City Council meetings unless excused and carries out directives of the Council.
- Fosters positive relationships with community stakeholders, organizations, and citizens.
- Communicates city plans to the public effectively and address concerns from the citizens.
- Must live within two miles of the city limits of Watertown.
- Promotes and creates opportunities for economic development.
- Manages emergency response plans and disaster recovery efforts.

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### Candidate Profile

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#### Education and Certification/License Credentials

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Public Administration, Business, Finance, or related field.
- Credentialed Manager through ICMA preferred.
- Master's degree from an accredited college or university preferred.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Minimum ten (10) years of increasingly responsible management experience, of which five (5) years is at an executive level, inclusive of executive level financial responsibilities.
- Executive-level experience for a large non-profit organization, government entity, or corporation
- Knowledge of government management, business administration, accounting, budgeting, fiscal management, and project management principles.
- Proficiency in leadership, strategic planning, goal setting, and program development, with a strong understanding of servant leadership.
- Skilled in analytics for developing departmental goals, budgets, and reports; determining capital and operational needs; and ensuring compliance with regulations.
- Expertise in strategic and long- and short-range planning principles to achieve organizational goals.
- Ability to interpret and implement local policies, procedures, written instructions, correspondence, and Federal, State, and local regulations.
- Collaborative, organized, and efficient, with strong conflict resolution, time management, and stress-handling abilities.
- Proficiency in supervising, training, and evaluating personnel while upholding confidentiality and ethical standards.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills for preparing reports, administering budgets, and implementing methods effectively.
- Proficiency in computer systems, software, and related applications.



## ROBERT HALF - EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONTACTS

Scott Foley  
Senior Managing Director  
Direct: (612) 656-0200  
[Scott.Foley@Roberthalf.com](mailto:Scott.Foley@Roberthalf.com)

Mark Rahe  
Managing Director  
Direct: (720) 264-2901  
Mobile: (720) 771-1123  
[Mark.Rahe@Roberthalf.com](mailto:Mark.Rahe@Roberthalf.com)

Bob Meyer  
Associate Director  
Direct: (608) 831-3211  
[Bob.Meyer@Roberthalf.com](mailto:Bob.Meyer@Roberthalf.com)

Samantha Rodriguez  
Senior Search Coordinator  
Direct: (646) 556-6811  
[Samantha.Rodriguez@Roberthalf.com](mailto:Samantha.Rodriguez@Roberthalf.com)

Robert Half Executive Search  
[www.roberthalfes.com](http://www.roberthalfes.com)