



# TOWN MANAGER

TOWN OF GROTTOES, VIRGINIA



The **TOWN OF GROTTOES, VIRGINIA** is seeking an experienced professional to serve as Town Manager, the chief administrative officer responsible for directing programs and operations of the Town government.

This recruitment profile provides background information on the community, its government operations, and its aspirations. It also outlines the qualifications, experience and characteristics determined to be necessary and desirable for the position of Town Manager.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references, to The Berkley Group via email at [doug.walker@bgllc.net](mailto:doug.walker@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, **a review of candidates will begin Friday, September 20, 2024**. Inquiries relating to the Town Manager position may be directed to:

**Doug Walker**

Berkley Group, LLC

P.O. Box 181

Bridgewater, VA 22812

Email: [doug.walker@bgllc.net](mailto:doug.walker@bgllc.net)

Mobile: (540) 325-0684





## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The Town of Grottoes is located in the historic Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Grottoes is an incorporated town encompassing parts of Augusta and Rockingham Counties. Called by its residents, "the best kept secret in the Shenandoah Valley," Grottoes is a quiet community of friendly and supportive citizens. The Rockingham County portion of Grottoes is part of the Harrisonburg Metropolitan Statistical Area, while the small portion extending into Augusta County is part of the Staunton-Waynesboro Micropolitan Statistical Area. Only a small number of the Town's approximately 3,000 residents reside in Augusta County. Grottoes is easily accessible from Interstate 81, seven miles to the west, on Virginia State Route 256. Washington, DC and Roanoke, Virginia are within 150 miles, north and south respectively. The Town is on U.S. Route 340, fourteen miles north of Waynesboro. Interstate 64 at Waynesboro provides connection to Charlottesville, Richmond and Hampton Roads within three hours to the east.

The Town of Grottoes has a rich railroad and manufacturing history. The early settlement known as Grottoes today was originally known as "Liola" in the early 1880s. Most of the land was owned by the Abbott Iron Company. In 1888, the name of the settlement was changed to "The Grottoes" (for the caves which are so prominent in the area). As things began to take shape, Shendun, the original name of the town when it was laid out in 1890 and incorporated in 1892, was alive with industries and growth, due in part to the efforts of The Grottoes Company, which started buying up land in the area. It was through that company's president, Jed Hotchkiss, who was also Stonewall Jackson's mapmaker during the Civil War, that the Town of Shendun was founded. The Town was well planned and laid out for factories, schools, churches, and homes. There was adequate land in the area for manufacturing plants; the land was suitable for businesses to locate; it was a beautiful location for home sites (being located on the South River with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background); and the area had natural drainage. The Shenandoah Valley Railroad, from Hagerstown, Maryland, to Waynesboro, went through the region. This was an important factor in the development of the area. There were rich beds of coal and ores there, the deposits of which were easily transported to the markets in the North via the railroad. As the town evolved, its name was officially changed from Shendun to Grottoes in 1912. There continues to be freight and rail access through Norfolk Southern in the Town providing for transportation access and industrial development.







Grand Caverns, first founded as the Weyers Caves, was discovered in the early 1800s and became famous worldwide by 1889. The Caverns, now owned and operated by the Town of Grottoes, are the oldest continually operating show cave in the U.S. and were declared a National Natural Landmark in 1973. Grand Caverns is a popular regional tourist attraction, bringing in significant revenue to the Town through shelter rentals, cavern tours, mini golf, weddings, and other events.

Grottoes has expanded the last couple of decades, developing a 54-acre park, John E. Painter Park, with pavilions, a boat ramp, baseball/softball facilities, and a driving range; a privately developed shopping center opened; the Town upgraded its wastewater treatment system; and two annexations were negotiated with Rockingham County to provide additional land to support the Town's growth into the future. The Town Council has worked with the Virginia Department of Transportation to improve traffic and pedestrian patterns within the town, including the extension of Route 256 to Route 340. In 2008, a Veteran's Memorial was constructed in front of the Municipal Building to honor the courageous men and women who lost their lives serving the country.

The largest employer, Pactiv Evergreen Inc., started as Reynolds Metals Company in 1956 and manufactures food packaging and food service products just outside the corporate limits in Augusta County. The Town also has a "ready to go" Industrial Park providing an opportunity for prospective industries looking to locate near a river source and with railroad access. One unique aspect of the Town is there is no clearly defined downtown area. Primary commercial establishments are located along Routes 256 and 340, with small businesses and in-homes offices scattered sporadically throughout the town. This pattern is a legacy of the decline and evolution of the once bustling boom town.

Grottoes is a small town (1.9 square miles), that's why its residents like it. It is a bedroom community for the surrounding area, including nearby Harrisonburg. The Shenandoah Valley provides a tremendous array of outdoor amenities and cultural activities, including ski areas, wineries, breweries, music and art venues, educational institutions, local businesses, restaurants, beautiful farms and surrounding mountains, and many special events and festivals. Nearby Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway offer hiking, fishing, biking, gorgeous vistas, and relaxing opportunities. The Shenandoah Valley includes a significant German-American population, which bring cultural aspects of farming, food production, quilting, arts and crafts, and peaceful living to the region. The Massanutten and Bryce Resorts are nearby, and feature acres of mountain fun at its very best, offering an Indoor/Outdoor Water Park, Ski and Adventure Park area, snowboarding, snow tubing, fantastic golf courses, escape rooms, farm-to-table dining experiences, shopping, and recreation options, along with a day spa for complete relaxation and rejuvenation. The Shenandoah Valley is wine country with breathtaking views at Purple WOLF Vineyard, Marceline Vineyards, Brix and Columns Vineyards, and Cross Keys Vineyards all close by; these are just a few of the scenic attractions in the Valley.



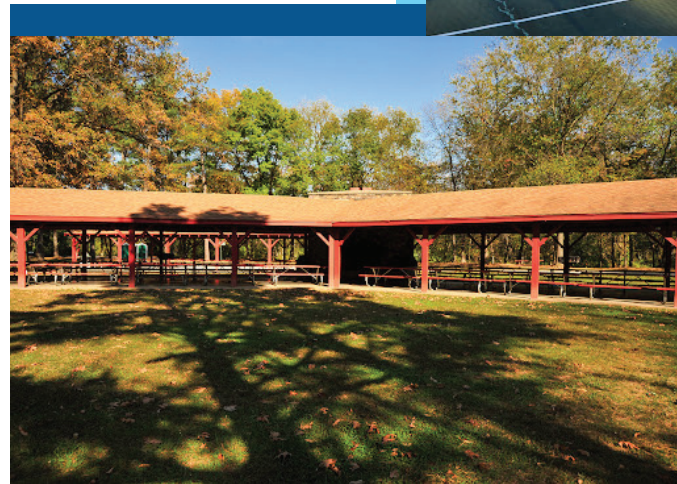
Grottoes is home to the Grottoes Cardinals baseball team at Mountain View Park. The Cardinals are a member of the Rockingham County Baseball League (RCBL). The RCBL, founded in 1924, is a summer baseball league; the second oldest in the country, trailing only major league baseball. Mountain View Park is also home to the Grottoes Community Little League, one of the largest programs in Rockingham County.

Grottoes Family Dentistry is located in Grottoes, with two hospitals, Sentara Rockingham Medical Hospital in Harrisonburg, which is 15 minutes from town, and Augusta Medical Center near Waynesboro, a 30-minute drive.

The Grottoes population of 2,953 was estimated in 2019 to be 89% White, 2% Black, and 8% Hispanic/Latino. Median household income is \$56,135 with a median single-family home price of \$230,000, an unemployment rate of 2.4%, and a poverty level of 11%.

Most Grottoes' students attend Rockingham County Public Schools. The Town is proud to host South River Elementary (PK-05) within its limits, a National Blue-Ribbon School of approximately 400 students. Elkton Middle School and East Rockingham High School are located within approximately 7 miles of Grottoes. The Grottoes Branch Library, located in the Town Hall, is part of the Massanutten Regional Library, currently operating a holds service available for books, DVDs, Audiobooks, and magazines for carry-out only; and, offering virtual programs, Dial-a-Story, craft kits, faxing and scanning services, photocopying, and printing of email documents.

There are several public and private colleges and universities near Grottoes. Blue Ridge Community College is seven miles west of Grottoes in Weyers Cave. Located within 45 minutes, are the University of Virginia (UVA), a public research university in Charlottesville; James Madison University (JMU), another large public university, located in nearby Harrisonburg; Mary Baldwin University, a private, liberal arts university, located in Staunton; Bridgewater College, a private liberal arts institution in the Town of Bridgewater; and Eastern Mennonite University, a private liberal arts institution in Harrisonburg.



## TOWN SERVICES & GOVERNMENT

The Town of Grottoes provides municipal services that complement the more broadly delivered services, such as public education and social services, provided by Rockingham County. The annual budget of approximately \$4.4 million, includes a General Fund budget of approximately \$2 million, and a Water Fund (\$392,000), Sewer Fund (\$711,000), Parks and Facility Fund (\$954,000) and Refuse Fund (\$308,000). Audits have been completed through 2021, and work is underway to complete audits through the most current fiscal year. The Town has adequate reserves and good cash flow. The tax base includes real estate, personal property, machinery and tools, meals, lodging and cigarette taxes.

Grottoes follows the Council-Manager form of government, with the Town Council being the legislative policy-making body. The Council is composed of six members and a mayor. Council members are elected at-large to four-year staggered terms. The Mayor is elected to a four-year term and is the chief executive officer of the Town. The Mayor presides over Council meeting but casts a vote only in the event of a tie, and does not have veto power over Council actions. In addition, the Mayor is recognized as head of the town government for all ceremonial purposes, for purposes of military law, and for the service of civil processes but has no administrative duties. A Vice Mayor is elected annually by the Council to preside in the absence of the Mayor. Town Council appoints the Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Town Clerk. Each Council member serves on three Council committees, which meet as needed. In November 2024, the town will hold elections for three available Council seats.

Serving as the chief administrative officer of the Town, the Town Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the town government, appoints and supervises employees, implements policies, and addresses priorities adopted by the Council. The Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all laws, ordinances, resolutions, and bylaws of the Council are faithfully enforced. In addition, the Town Manager represents Grottoes to federal and state agencies and in other matters as required.

The Town has 27 full-time employees providing Town services that include a 24-7 Police Department, water and wastewater operations, streets and street light maintenance, refuse collection, planning and zoning, and parks and tourism. Emergency response is provided by the Grottoes Volunteer Fire Department, organized in 1948; the Grottoes Rescue Squad, established in 1967; both active, vibrant volunteer agencies of 80+ members that are supported by the Rockingham County Department of Fire and Rescue.

Grottoes' water comes from an aquifer and requires no treatment. Residents refer to it as "the best domestic drinking water in Virginia." The Town is beginning a study of its water system to include the evaluation of the water capacity and storage needs, as well as fire suppression capacities for the growing community. Aging water lines need replacement and a plan established for future capital maintenance and repair. The Town has aging sewer lines causing inflow and infiltration problems which needs to be addressed. The Town has a unique wastewater treatment system where each developed property has its own septic tank to allow solids to settle out and liquids to be sent to and treated by the wastewater treatment plant. The Town recently completed a wastewater treatment study that will require a substantial financial investment to remove sludge and upgrade the treatment equipment.

The topography of the Town is relatively flat and with the nearby South Fork of the Shenandoah River, flooding has been an issue at times.



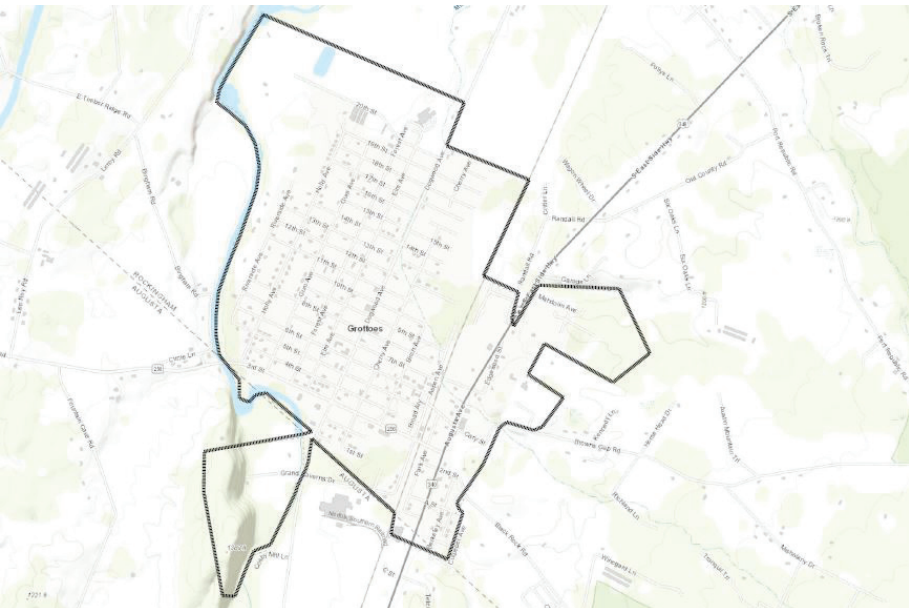




## CHALLENGES, ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Town Council is very eager to work with the new Town Manager to address a number of opportunities to improve Town operations, service delivery, infrastructure, and the quality of life in the community.

- The Town's Comprehensive Plan, last adopted in 2017, is currently under review. Areas under consideration in the new plan include improved pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and connectivity, and actions to improve the Town's visual appeal. Updating the comprehensive plan is a necessary first step toward revising the zoning ordinance to enhance and protect housing and provide encouragement for appropriate business development.
- The Comprehensive Plan review should include a Capital Improvements Plan to address improvements to the water and sewer infrastructure, sidewalks, parks, a possible indoor recreation facility, and other public amenities. The review and amendment process will require continued close coordination with Rockingham County's planning efforts.
- Timely attention to the highest priority water and sewer infrastructure needs will be essential.
- In addition to a new Comprehensive Plan and a revised Zoning Ordinance, there is interest in taking other appropriate steps to attract and retain business to provide jobs and retail opportunities in the Town.
- The Town Council also desires to create opportunities for professional growth and development of the existing staff, and to offer training for its own members.
- The Town Council seeks to assure long-term financial stability as well as near-term funding capacity for top priority capital improvements. In conjunction, the Council is eager to obtain grant funding to help offset the local cost of implementing priority projects.
- There is interest in developing and comprehensive workplace safety program for Town operations and facilities.



## QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

The following education and experience factors are the desired qualifications for successful performance:

- A Bachelor's degree in Public Administration, Business Management, Planning, or a related field; Master's degree is preferred.
- At least three years of progressively responsible leadership at an executive/administrator level in an organization with comparable responsibilities; possessing a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of Town government operations. Local government experience in Virginia as a manager, deputy, assistant, or department head is desirable.
- Experience with grants application and administration, budgeting, staff development specifically and human resource management generally, financial management, water and sewer utilities, planning and zoning, youth services and economic development would enhance the candidate's attractiveness.
- A record of being visible and active in the community; with demonstrated leadership.
- A demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development through participation in organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA); designation or progress toward designation as ICMA Credentialed Manager would be a plus.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

## PERSONAL TRAITS & DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, open, and personable interactions with all Town employees, community members, and the Town Council.
- Professionally competent, with knowledge, principles, and confidence tempered by humility.
- An excellent communicator with the ability to listen effectively and understand differing views and to speak assertively and always in a constructive manner; empathetic; gives credit to others when due; tactful and diplomatic.
- Strong leadership skills including being a highly effective problem solver and solution finder; confident in decision-making and presentation; adaptable to changing circumstances yet clear and concise when delivering information.
- Superior interpersonal skills with a high degree of emotional intelligence; persuasive; collaborative; humble; authentic and genuinely approachable.
- A forward thinker who is able to anticipate issues and plan accordingly;
- Calm under pressure; comfortable with conflict and dealing with emerging challenges.
- Goal oriented with a strong work ethic, building on effectiveness; exhibits a desire to learn; is not a micro-manager; is self-improvement focused.
- Is highly responsive to questions from council members and community members.
- Knowledgeable of the Town Code and supportive of the principles of the council-manager form of government and respectful of the different and complementary roles of the Town Council and the Town Manager.
- A role model, coach, and mentor for Town employees; dedicated to the professional development of staff; able to empower employees with a focus on performance, collaboration, and accountability; regularly seeks staff input and consistently provides feedback.
- Sincere enthusiasm for being part of the community, including active participation in Town activities and events; Truly enjoys engaging with community members.



## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

- Short-term, immediate actions will be to engage with staff and council, review Town policies and procedures and understand the budget and capital improvement program.
- Get quickly up to speed on active issues and projects.
- Identify and facilitate innovation and positive change while demonstrating an appreciation for the community's culture and history.
- Be an active and visible participant in community activities; act in public as a "co-face" of the Town with the Mayor and in conjunction with Council members.
- Demonstrate a clear focus on relationship building in the community, being accessible and responsive to citizen concerns and issues; listening, understanding, providing timely follow-up, and facilitating creative solutions.
- Become familiar with Town Charter, Town Code and State enabling legislation.
- Be proactive in reaching out to town businesses, listening to their concerns, and be responsive when issues arise.
- Demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent government; promoting a positive and interactive relationship with town citizens and stakeholders; encouraging citizen engagement.
- Show constructive and effective communications with all stakeholders; presenting information in a form understandable to various audiences.
- Be accessible to Council members and committed to keeping them all equally informed; be able to stand up to Council for what Manager believes is right.
- Demonstrate fairness and equitable treatment of Town employees.

## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The adopted FY25 pay range for the Town Manager position is \$80,000 - \$120,000. The hiring range for this position will be competitive and based on qualifications and experience. The successful candidate will be offered a generous benefits package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System, health insurance coverage, paid time off, deferred compensation, professional development support and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment agreement.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Initial review of candidates will begin on September 20, 2024. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled, however, it is anticipated that telephone interviews with selected candidates will be conducted during the week of **September 23, 2024**. Timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. To be considered, please submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references to the Berkley Group via e-mail at [doug.walker@bgllc.net](mailto:doug.walker@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

Doug Walker  
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For additional information, please visit [www.ci.grottoes.va.us](http://www.ci.grottoes.va.us).  
The Town of Grottoes is an Equal Opportunity Employer.