

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

PAONIA *Colorado*



Why Apply?



Paonia offers a rare opportunity to lead a deeply engaged, values-driven community at a pivotal moment. Stakeholders consistently describe Paonia as “a sweet spot” with a vibrant arts scene, strong agricultural and mining heritage, breathtaking natural surroundings, and a culture that celebrates uniqueness and connection. The Town enjoys high staff retention, key filled positions, and a Board that is newly aligned, collaborative, and appreciative of staff.

The next Administrator will inherit a talented, committed workforce, a community that shows up for one another, and a Board ready for steady leadership. With major infrastructure projects underway, a strong desire for transparency and professionalism, and opportunities to make big and lasting differences in many areas, this is a compelling moment to help shape Paonia’s future while preserving the character that residents cherish.



Located in Colorado's North Fork Valley about 70 miles southeast of Grand Junction, Paonia is a close-knit community of approximately 1,500 residents surrounded by some of western Colorado's most dramatic scenery. Paonia has earned a reputation as one of Colorado's "coolest" mountain towns, with an eclectic character shaped by working farms and ranches, coal miners, healthcare workers for a large retirement population, remote workers, a thriving arts and music scene, locally produced food and wine, and a fiercely independent community spirit.

Paonia's history is deeply rooted in agriculture and mining. Peonies inspired the town's name, while fruit growing became central to its early economy. Today, orchards remain a defining feature of the valley alongside family farms, organic growers, vineyards, cideries, and roadside farm stands. Downtown Paonia is centered on Grand Avenue, where locally owned businesses and eateries sit alongside art galleries, bookshops, and the local public radio station. The historic Paradise Theatre, built in 1928, hosts movies and live events, while the nearby Blue Sage Center for the Arts brings year-round cultural programming into the heart of town. In 2013, the North Fork Valley was designated a Certified Colorado Creative District in recognition of its strong arts community.

In summer, music moves outdoors to Town Park for Pickin' in the Park, where crowds spend Thursday evenings in August "boogying down under Certified Dark Skies." In September, the Mountain Harvest Festival celebrates the season with music, local food, art, and a street dance. Paonia Cherry Days remains a favorite Fourth of July tradition with an old-fashioned parade and festival, complete with a cherry spitting contest.

Paonia's culture of collective care was especially evident during the 2019 water emergency when the Town's system ran dry. Neighbors helped one another, volunteers delivered drinking water to homebound residents, and Town Hall became a community distribution point. That same sense of involvement extends to civic life, with residents deeply invested in preserving Paonia's agricultural heritage, creative spirit, and small-town charm.



THE TOWN OF PAONIA

The Town of Paonia is a full-service municipality serving approximately 1,500 residents within a corporate boundary of 0.8 square miles in Delta County, Colorado. The Town's 2026 budget includes recurring taxes, fees, and utility revenues totaling \$4.5 million; a one-time grant and low-interest loan of \$10 million for much needed water infrastructure and street repairs; and 25 FTEs.

Town departments include Administration, Community Development, Police, Streets Maintenance, Parks and Recreation, Water, Wastewater, and Solid Waste. In addition to serving Town residents, the Town's water system also supplies water to 26 private water companies, bringing the total population served to around 3,000. Fire protection is provided by the Paonia Fire Protection District, while North Fork EMS provides emergency medical and ambulance services. The Town also jointly owns and operates the North Fork Valley Airport with Delta County.

Incorporated in 1902, Paonia is a Colorado statutory town governed by a Board of Trustees composed of a Mayor and six Trustees, each elected at large to four-year staggered terms. The Board serves as the Town's legislative body and delegates broad executive and administrative responsibilities to the Town Administrator. The Town established the Town Administrator position by ordinance in 2014 to provide professional management of day-to-day operations.



FTEs
25

BUDGET
\$14.4 million

AREA
0.8 square
miles

POPULATION
1,500

THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

The Town Administrator manages and oversees Town operations and services under the direction of the Board of Trustees, ensuring compliance with the Paonia Municipal Code and Town policies. The Town Administrator also serves as Town Treasurer. Direct reports include the Accounting Technician, Community Development Director, Public Works Director, and Town Clerk.



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THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Paonia seeks a relationship-oriented, emotionally intelligent leader who can unify diverse perspectives and communicate with clarity, calm, and fairness. Stakeholders emphasized the need for a “cool, calm and collected” Administrator with strong financial skills, strategic and creative thinking, and the ability to explain complex issues simply.

The ideal candidate is visible, approachable, and willing to engage with residents—whether farmers, ranchers, miners, artists, newcomers, or members of the business community—“someone to join the community and dance with us at the events.”

This leader must have a thick skin, a servant leadership mindset, and the ability to navigate small-town politics with integrity. They should be skilled in grants, project management, and utility systems; able to enforce ordinances while explaining the “why”; and committed to fairness, transparency, collaboration, and building trust following recent turnover and controversy.

Above all, they must appreciate Paonia’s uniqueness and help protect it while guiding thoughtful progress.





OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

Water Infrastructure & Development

Paonia's water system is complex, fed by dozens of springs and burdened by aging infrastructure, limited mapping, and a long-standing tap moratorium. The system urgently needs strategic investment, rate restructuring, and clear public communication. The next Administrator will lead multi-phase capital projects—some fully funded and ready to move forward, while others will require additional engineering and grants—coordinate with regional partners, and help the Board and community determine whether and when the moratorium might be at least partially lifted to support additional economic opportunity.

Community Trust, Transparency & Communication

After past turnover and controversy, Paonia is rebuilding trust. Residents emphasized the need for transparent processes, clear explanations, and consistent communication: "People need a leader who is also a collaborator." The Administrator will strengthen public confidence by improving communication systems, clarifying policies, and ensuring fairness in decision-making and enforcement.

Organizational Culture & Staff Support

Paonia's staff is talented and dedicated. Stakeholders praised the current interim Administrator's calming influence and emphasis on teamwork: "We can get through it together." The next leader will reinforce this positive culture, support professional development, and help staff navigate complex projects and public scrutiny.

Economic Development & Community Identity

Paonia's economy blends agriculture, mining, healthcare for a large retirement population, remote workers, arts, small business, and agro-tourism; but the tax base is limited and some businesses have struggled. Residents want growth that aligns with community values—"protect the economy without gentrifying"—and opportunities to attract visitors while preserving Paonia's character. The Administrator will help strengthen business relationships, support events, improve marketing, and explore opportunities such as museums, vocational programs, and partnerships with regional organizations.

Policy Modernization & Systems Improvement

The Town is updating policies, procedures, and information management systems. Stakeholders noted lost records, unclear ordinances, and outdated processes: "The records management system is inadequate, has resulted in lost records, and that has undermined public trust." The Administrator will lead efforts to digitize records, update HR and infrastructure policies, clarify enforcement tools, and strengthen administrative systems that support transparency and efficiency.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Paonia works with Delta County, 26 local water providers, the school district, local non-profits, and state and federal agencies. These relationships can be complex, and the Administrator will play a key role in strengthening regional partnerships, aligning priorities, and advocating for Paonia's needs.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university in public administration, public policy, business management, or a related field. A bachelor's degree in another major may also be considered, preferably accompanied by at least five years of experience in positions requiring skills and abilities directly related to those required of a Town Administrator. A master's degree in public administration or public policy is preferred.
- 4 years of experience in a municipality, county, or other local government, including a minimum of 2 years of supervisory experience.
- An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The Town of Paonia offers an annual salary of \$132,000 and a comprehensive benefits package:

- Health, dental, and vision insurance
- Life and disability insurance
- 457 deferred compensation plan with a 5% Town contribution, regardless of employee contribution
- Paid time off
- 11 paid holidays

RESOURCES

[2026 Budget](#)

[2025 Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Org Chart](#)

[Town News](#)

[North Fork Valley Chamber of Commerce](#)

[North Fork Creative](#)



**TO
APPLY**

Apply Online: gmphr.com

First Review: November 8, 2026

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