

## Executive Recruitment for

### **WAUSAU, WISCONSIN**

GovHR USA is pleased to announce the recruitment and selection process for a CITY ASSESSOR on behalf of the City of Wausau, Wisconsin. This brochure provides background information on the City and its organization, as well as the requirements and expected qualifications for the position. Candidates should apply by April 5, 2017 with cover letter, resume, and contact information for five professional references. To apply on-line visit [www.govhrusa.com/current-positions/recruitment](http://www.govhrusa.com/current-positions/recruitment). Questions regarding the position may be directed to the attention of Lee Szymborski, Senior Vice President, at [LSzymborski@GovHRusa.com](mailto:LSzymborski@GovHRusa.com) or by calling 847-380-3240. The City of Wausau is an Equal

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### **CITY ASSESSOR**



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**City Assessor, Wausau, WI (pop. 39,160).** Progressive, mature, full-service city with a lively downtown, Wausau is 95 miles northwest of Green Bay in Marathon County. Located on the shores of the Wisconsin River, Wausau is a friendly community known for its beautiful neighborhoods, vibrant corporations, dining and shopping opportunities, and abundant year-round recreational activities.

The City seeks an experienced leader to serve as City Assessor. This is a complex managerial and administrative position working closely with the Mayor, Assessor's Office staff, and other City Departments to develop and maintain accurate and timely property value information for tax purposes, and to serve as a focal point linking many aspects of the City's property-related information systems. The City Assessor must possess strong and proven leadership competencies.

The City is a Class 2 city, its equalized value is \$2.6 billion and there are more than 17,000 parcels. The City also provides assessment services for the adjoining city of Schofield, with an equalized value of more than \$209 million.

The ideal candidate will possess, or have the ability to quickly obtain, State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue Assessor II certification. The City is seeking an energetic, ethical and experienced leader with strong technical and interpersonal skills. A commitment to high professional standards is required. The ideal candidate must have an inclusive managerial style, as well as clear, concise, and

open communication skills, plus the background and knowledge to lead staff and collaborate with other City Departments regarding property-related information systems of the City.

A bachelor's degree in real estate, appraisal, public administration or accounting with 10 or more years of experience in commercial and residential valuation is required. Starting salary for the position is \$79,353 (midpoint) +/- with an excellent fringe benefits/pension package.

### COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The City of Wausau (population 39,160) is located 95 miles northwest of the City of Green Bay in Marathon County. Wausau's history and development are directly tied to the Wisconsin River, which runs through it. Early in the City's history, the river served as a means of transportation, first for Native Americans and later for the explorers who came to the area. It then became a highway to float logs down as well as a source of power to run the sawmills for the logging industry.

The town was originally known as Big Bull Falls and formed in 1845. Marathon County was formed in 1850 and Big Bull Falls name changed to Wausau. In 1872, Wausau became a City under a new charter issued by the State of Wisconsin. In 1873, the first Mayoral elections were held and August Kickbush was elected Wausau's first mayor.

The landscape in Wausau changed significantly over the years due to fires and floods in the mid to late 1800s. In



1864, the great fire of Wausau occurred, with the town being saved by a bucket brigade formed by residents from the river to the fire. In 1874, the railroad came to Wausau and lumber rafting on the river ended.

In 1885, the first City Hall was built, followed by the telephone company in 1889. In 1906, electric street cars came to Wausau and the Marathon paper mill was built in 1909. By 1920, Wisconsin had gone from first to twentieth in lumber production in the United States.

In 1954, the first television station hit the airwaves in Wausau (WSAU). In 1961, Highway 51, a four-lane divided highway opened. In 2002, Governor McCallum announced that Wausau was accepted in the Main Street Program. The City entered into several private-public partnerships which changed the cityscape to include four, 10-story buildings, improved the tax base and increased employment in the community.

Today, Wausau is a bustling, family-friendly city with a vital commercial and retail district. The City's geographic location provides excellent transportation access and year-round sports and recreational activities. Snow skiing, fishing, boating, kayaking and other special events like the World Ice Fishing Championships and The Wisconsin Woodchucks baseball all are home to Wausau.

*Wausau Events*, a local non-profit organization designed to bring community events to Wausau, sponsors activities such as the Celebrate Summer Series, Gallery Night, Family Fun Series, Concerts on the Square, Marketplace, Chalkfest, Hot Air Balloon Rally, Big Bull Falls Blues Festival, Thrillville, and the Holiday Parade.



Other annual events held in Wausau are the International Canoe and Kayak Whitewater Races, Badger State Winter Games, the Wisconsin Valley Fair, Children's Festival, Gus Macker, Jaycees 4th of July Celebration, Art in the Park, Festival of Arts, Birds in Art, and Festival of Trees.

There are 14 elementary schools, two high schools, two middle schools and one early childhood center in the Wausau School District. The city also has one technical school – Northcentral Technical College, one two-year university – University of Wisconsin-Marathon County, and seven parochial schools.

Wausau's neighborhoods provide a wide variety of housing stock. These diverse neighborhoods, combined with excellent schools and an engaged citizenry, provide the foundation for a high quality of life for Wausau's residents.

## WAUSAU AT A GLANCE

**Population:** 39,160

**Households:** 18,330

**Equalized Assessed Value:** \$2.69 billion

**Land Area:** 18 square miles

**Median Home Value:** \$114,300

**Median Household Income:** \$41,757

## CITY GOVERNMENT

The City of Wausau is a progressive, dynamic, full-service municipal organization. The City is governed by a Mayor who is elected at large, together with 11 Alderpersons, one from each of the 11 districts covering the City. Council meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month. The Human Resources Director is appointed by and reports to the Mayor.

The City has more than 350 full, part-time and seasonal employees. There are 11 departments reporting to the Mayor and City Council including Police, Fire, Public Works, Assessor, Community Development, Customer Service, Human Resources, City Attorney, Parks, Airport and Transit. The City's total FY 2017 budget for all funds is approximately \$96 million.

**The City's Mission Statement is:** *In response to our citizens, we will provide services in the most effective and efficient manner in order to promote and enhance our living environment. Plan and encourage positive growth. Promote a positive community image by encouraging citizen involvement and civic pride.*

**The City's Core Values include:**

- **Professionalism** – *We choose to take pride in our work, communicate effectively, project a positive image, and deliver service at the highest standards every time, in every situation.*
- **Accountability** – *We accept responsibility and take ownership for our actions.*
- **Integrity** – *We act ethically, honestly, and lead by example by having our actions reflect our word.*
- **Respect** – *We choose to treat everyone the way we would like to be treated.*

## ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

The Assessment Department has the statutory duty to value all taxable real and personal property in the City of Wausau for ad valorem tax purposes while maintaining a level of assessment that is within ten percent of the statutory required "Full Market Value." The total assessed value of all taxable real and personal property in the City of Wausau as of January 1, 2016 is \$2,696,195,000. A revaluation was last done in 2015.

The Mission of the Assessment Department is to fairly and equitably value all real and personal property in the City of Wausau and the City of Schofield by following Wisconsin State Statutes (predominantly Chapter 70), the Wisconsin Property Assessment Manual (WI Stats 73.03), the Wisconsin Constitution Article VIII, and USPAP (Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices) requirements to deliver a high-quality annual assessment roll along with providing property information which is used by the entire City for mapping, housing and licensing projects, and analytical analysis. The City and other taxing authorities operating budgets' are predominantly dependent on annual assessments which bring in the generated tax revenues.

For the 2015 Assessment Year, there were 17,103 total parcels: 13,291 Residential Properties, 1,290 Commercial Properties, 74 Agricultural Properties, Six Agricultural Forest Properties, Six Productive Forest, Four Other Properties, Three Managed Forest Property, Eight Undeveloped Properties, 589 Exempt Properties, 82 Manufacturing Properties, 1,594 Personal Property Accounts and 182 Mobil Home lots.

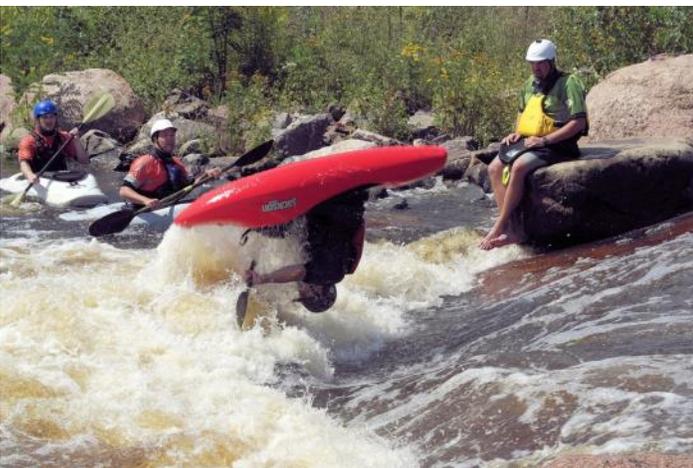
The City Assessor manages a departmental budget of \$595,000 and six full-time professionals – two senior property appraisers, three property appraisers and one administrative assistant. The responsibility of the Assessment Department is to discover, list and value all taxable real and business personal property at 100% of its Market Value. The Assessment Department has the statutory duty to value all taxable real and personal property, except manufacturing property, in the City of Wausau for ad valorem tax purposes while maintaining a level of assessment within ten percent of the statutory required "Full Market Value" (WI Statutes 70.32). The Wisconsin Department of Revenue makes the annual assessment of all manufacturing real and personal property in the State.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Some of the Assessment Department's goals and objectives for 2017 as set forth in the City's most recent budget are highlighted as follows:

- ◆ Support senior staff training to meet new Appraisal Qualifications Board (AQB) and Department of Revenue (DOR) standards reducing the City's need to contract outside resources.
- ◆ Purchase and installation of new electronic tablets for the appraisal staff.
- ◆ Continue to perform audits of personal property accounts.
- ◆ Continue the Department's policy to request interior inspections of properties which have: 1. Sold during the year; 2. had permits issued; or 3. had a property owner request a review of their assessment.
- ◆ Discuss with the Mayor, Council, the City of Schofield and any other neighboring jurisdictions the possibilities of continuing or expanding future collaboration for assessment services to bring in additional revenues resulting in an offsetting of expenses to the City of Wausau.
- ◆ Hold a timely Open Book Period allowing taxpayers enough time to study their values, sales and meet with Assessment staff thereby reducing the likelihood of filing an objection.
- ◆ Continue the staff's educational and training pursuits.



In addition to the 2017 goals outlined above, the new City Assessor can expect to work closely with the elected officials and Department Heads on many projects and initiatives. These include, among other issues:

- ◆ In June 2016 a tax error was inadvertently made by the interim City Assessor whereby the Municipal Assessment Report submitted to the state omitted \$40 million worth of new construction projects in the city. The miscalculation was not caught in time for tax bills sent to property owners in December, resulting in Wausau property owners receiving a lower-than-expected tax bill. Consequently, property owners will see a tax hike next year.

The Mayor has assured the community, through the media, that there will be no interest or penalties charged to residents as a result of the error. The City also mailed a letter to all property owners informing them of the issue. Yet Wausau property owners with a home valued at \$150,000 may see a \$90 increase next year. The next City Assessor can expect to work closely with the Mayor, City Council, the business community and Wausau residents by educating all stakeholders about the nature of assessment services, seeking to demystify the process and assuring all concerned that errors made in 2016 will not be repeated.

- ◆ The Department is evaluating new assessment software and has narrowed the choices to two, as the current software is no longer supported. The Department seeks to have the software installed and running after the 2017 Board of Review. The next City Assessor can expect to work with Department staff and other City users (e.g., the City Attorney, GIS, Inspections, Community Development, Finance and title companies) to assure that the installation is, to the extent possible, trouble-free and that training on the new software is comprehensive and implemented in a timely fashion.
- ◆ The Department is budgeted and authorized to have seven full-time positions. Two senior property appraiser positions, however, are currently vacant, and left open until the next City Assessor is on-board and can have a hand in determining the Department's next steps.
- ◆ Leading and coordinating the City's responses to litigation by some owners of commercial properties appealing the assessed value of these properties as determined by the City.

- ◆ The next City Assessor can expect to work within the organization to assure close and cooperative working relationships with all City departments, assuring easy and transparent sharing of information and resources.

## DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS CRITERIA

The City of Wausau is seeking proven and innovative candidates committed to integrity and excellence in the field of property appraisal. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate leadership within their department as well as within the organization. The following factors of education, experience, and demeanor have been identified as necessary and/or desirable for the City Assessor to succeed in this position. The starting salary (midpoint) is \$79,353 +/- DOQ with excellent benefits.

### Education and Experience

- ◆ A bachelor's degree in real estate, appraisal, public administration or accounting with 10 or more years of experience in commercial and residential valuation is required.
- ◆ Technical proficiency with computer systems used in gathering and analyzing a large amount of data.
- ◆ Have a strong, demonstrated GIS background and knowledge to lead staff and collaborate with other City Departments regarding property-related information systems of the City.
- ◆ Possession of, or the ability to obtain, a State Assessor II certification.
- ◆ Have a thorough knowledge of laws and regulations as they pertain to the administration of property assessment including familiarity with current and emerging issues in the field of property assessment.
- ◆ Have a demonstrated record of success in employee supervision and management, consisting of treating employees in an open, fair, and supportive manner.
- ◆ Have experience working with elected and appointed officials and the public, with the ability to present technical assessment information in an understandable manner with the ability to effectively respond to their questions.

- ◆ Have experience and be comfortable with preparing for and testifying in court regarding appeals of property value assessments by owners of commercial properties.

- ◆ Have demonstrated experience in effective customer service and in working with news media.

- ◆ Have a record of continuing professional education and training to keep up to date with current practices, programs, and technologies of Assessor Department operations; be committed to the need for regular employee training and skill development for Assessor Department staff.

### Management Style/ Personal Traits

- ◆ Possess absolute integrity and honesty in all professional interactions.

- ◆ Be diplomatic when dealing with the Mayor, City Council, citizens, and community organizations, outside vendors, Department Heads and City staff.

- ◆ Have the demonstrated ability to develop productive relationships with others and share information in a timely and relevant manner.

- ◆ Have the ability to clearly present ideas and understand appropriate electronic, written and verbal communication techniques. Be cognizant of one's own personal communication style and have the maturity and tact to adjust one's communications based on the needs of others to ensure shared meaning.

- ◆ Understand the formal and informal structure within an organization and have the skills to successfully achieve positive, desired outcomes. Be comfortable in stressful situations and possess the grace to demonstrate strong leadership. Be able to respond with composure in stressful situations.

- ◆ Be skilled at seeing the potential in others, and the ability to create a positive environment; demonstrate formal and informal coaching techniques. Thoughtfully assign challenging tasks that will stretch and challenge others.

- ◆ Exhibit a positive attitude toward other employees and departments. Support the mission and direction of the organization.
- ◆ Provide timely and straightforward feedback to employees regarding work and task performance and achievement of assigned goals and objectives.
- ◆ Be comfortable in serving a community that expects a high level of services and responsiveness on the part of municipal staff and employees.
- ◆ Have the maturity, self-confidence, and strength of professional convictions to provide administrative insights and counsel to the Mayor, City Council and staff; be able to firmly and diplomatically present professional views and carry out administrative decisions in a timely, professional, and impartial manner.
- ◆ Demonstrate a sense of humor when appropriate and genuinely enjoy public service.

