

# Town of Preston, Connecticut Director of Parks & Recreation Search

We Invite Candidates to Apply



Old State Hospital Property - Purchased by the Town of Preston

[See more details in this Profile](#)

# COMMUNITY PROFILE (Pop 4,778)

The Town of Preston is located in New London County in the southeastern region of Connecticut. This semi rural town is 31.3 squares miles in area, with commercial activity centered on a few small retail centers along the major roads. The population was 4,788 at the 2020 census. The town includes the villages of Long Society, Preston City, and Poquetanuck. Preston has successfully retained the small-town charm that is missing from most modern suburbs, including keeping its working farms and plentiful open space. Pride is inherent in New England and Preston is no exception. It's a special place with a special way of life.

Local government has been actively involved in projects to enhance the quality of life for the citizens, that share the commitment to the future. This includes the plan for the large Preston Riverwalk Project planned for across the Thames River from Mohegan Sun. This development will be a non-gaming destination and is planned to include outdoor and indoor attractions, hotel and retail space, restaurants, housing, a marina, RV Park and more.

The town finds itself between two large casinos, Foxwoods, located in Ledyard, and Mohegan Sun, in Uncasville. The pressures on the highways and roads, as well as fire and emergency services, have been great. In addition, the loss of farmland to development continues to change the character of the town. Mohegan Sun Resort & Casino, located just across the Thames River, attracts 11 million visitors annually. In addition, Foxwoods Resort & Casino only 8 miles away from Preston Riverwalk via Routes 2a and 2 attracts over 13 million visitors annually. Connecticut College and the Coast Guard Academy are located just 20 minutes outside Preston and Eastern Connecticut State University is 40 minutes away. Mystic Seaport, also a short 20 -minute drive away, attracts 300,000 visitors per year. Preston is within an hour to Providence, RI and Hartford, CT and less than an hour to beaches in CT or RI. (Addendum has Preston History—See last page)

## **Town Government—Selectman Form of Government**

The First Selectwoman is the Chief Elected and Chief Administrative Officer of the Town. She works with the Board of Selectmen to develop policy direction and approve the budget that is then sent to the Board of Finance and finally to the Town Citizens.

The Town of Preston has been working on a Strategic Planning Process for the last year, including surveys, public forums and interviews with community stakeholders.

### **The Collaborative Goals include:**

- ⇒ **To create and implement an economic development plan that creates new energy and revenue while preserving the town's rural character**
- ⇒ **To create and implement a plan to improve the quality of schools and municipal services**
- ⇒ **To conduct a study and implement a plan for the best use of all town and school buildings**
- ⇒ **To invest in technology for residents (broadband) and schools/town (cybersecurity/technology needs)**
- ⇒ **To validate and reinvigorate civic pride through communication and community events**



# Town and Parks & Recreation Projects

The first two projects listed are large and have some parks and recreation components. These are highlighted in the descriptions below. Norwich State Hospital was established in the early 20th century on a large tract of land, part of which was in the Laurel Hill area of Norwich, the rest in Preston. Presently, this area, now known as Preston Riverwalk, is owned by the town of Preston and the Preston Redevelopment Agency is working to market the property.

## **Preston Riverwalk**

Preston Riverwalk is a high-profile development campus consisting of six (6) unique parcels totaling approximately 393 acres ranging from 25 to 189 acres. This riverfront campus offers a stunning overlook of the Thames River with long views to Long Island Sound. More than half the property is undeveloped, and a pristine forested hillside surrounds a former reservoir. The Riverwalk is conveniently located just off the I-395 highway connector at the intersection of Routes 2a and 12 with access to 27.5 million people within a 2.5-hour drive. The clean-up of the Preston Riverwalk is nearly complete and conveyance to Mohegan Gaming Enterprises is expected to happen in Fall 2024. This is a unique and exciting opportunity for the Town of Preston, its employees and community in terms of development, infrastructure, and recreational and cultural activities.



## **Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming Project and Heritage Trail Project**

This vital, multi-phase project is centered around the need to control traffic traveling through historic Poquetanuck Village while helping to increase connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists and enhance outdoor recreational activities. While Phase I of this project focuses on the Village, traffic calming and mixed-use development, additional attributes will extend sidewalks, period lighting and multi-use trails west of the Preston Riverwalk and east towards the Community Park and the Tri-Town Trail. Two kayak pad launches will be installed as well. The town will be seeking additional funding to continue phases to the Preston Riverwalk and upgrades to the Route 2A and Route 12 intersection extending to the Mohegan Pequot Bridge. It will include the design of a multi-use trail, within the state right of way (ROW) for Route 2A, meandering alongside the Cove. The ROW is relatively wide for most of its 1½ miles along the proposed trail and will have the ability to accommodate an 8' to 10' wide trail in most areas. In addition, sitting/picnic areas in two locations and fishing access will be added along the trail with public access to the coastal area and the cove. Interpretive signs to identify significant natural resources, wildlife and the areas rich indigenous and colonial history will be added and researched. In all phases, the living museum will provide educational opportunities - school trips, summer recreation and reading programs, senior programs, etc., to serve all populations - educating them about New England Village history, the natural resources, outdoor recreation, and the environment.



# Town and Parks & Recreation Projects (Cont.)

## Summer Enrichment Grants and Programs

Summer programming is an essential part of the Preston Parks and Recreation and Youth Service Bureau department. Preston has been awarded Summer Enrichment Grants for the past few years. These grant funds offer Preston children who attend our Middle School, grades six through eight, high-quality activities that provide social-emotional development and education. They help deter sedentary lifestyles and social isolation that these age groups experience during the summer months since they are sandwiched between being too young and too old for current programming, volunteer, and employment opportunities. These Summer Enrichment grants allow us to expand our camper capacity and maintain staff to camper ratios as well as plan for controlled growth and development of this program.

Many experiences are offered with a focus on field trips consisting of outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, playing in the sand and surf, paintball, and other exciting adventures. There are indoor activities such as laser tag, and trampoline parks. In between the more structured parts of the program, there is downtime to relax, forge friendships and just have time to be in and enjoy the moment. All of these events emphasize socializing, team building, working together, empowerment, and leadership all while having fun and learning.

These funds hire experts in the appropriate areas such as a Behavioral Intervention Specialist, Sports Coordinator and Arts & Crafts Coordinator. Preston believes in our youth and their well-being both physically and mentally. This program is essential to our youth, who we know is our future.

## Other Parks & Recreation Initiatives

- ⇒ The usual summer camps and counselors in training (CIT) program
- ⇒ Sports leagues, sports program, recreational classes, etc.
- ⇒ Expanding our Community Garden
- ⇒ Exploring having a Farmers Market and acceptance of SNAP benefits
- ⇒ Greater cultural and recreational activities that promote equity and diversity
- ⇒ Participating in our Sustainable CT program
- ⇒ Greater participation in our Conservation Plan of Development from an open space, cultural and recreational perspective
- ⇒ Plan and implement programs such as Girl's Circle and Homework Club; provide presentations on social wellness topics. Manage and report on State grants for positive youth development under the Youth Services Bureau Grant



# Director of Parks & Recreation—Job Responsibilities

The purposes of this position are to perform professional, management and administrative work in planning and implementing all adult and youth recreation programs. This position is responsible for the execution of policies and procedures, and the supervision of staff including scheduling and training for all parks and recreation programs. It ensures proper maintenance of P&R facilities. The position evaluates the needs of the various populations it serves and seeks out new ideas and methods to provide the appropriate services. Report to First Selectwoman and Supervise: Recreation Office Assistant, Park Maintainers, Summer Camp Directors & Counselors, Program Instructors, Basketball Referees, Volunteers.

- Plan, organize, and implement the operations of the Parks & Recreation department which includes sports programs (softball, baseball, tennis, basketball, volleyball, etc.) summer camp, extreme teen camp, and after school programs, as well as specialized adult and youth offerings. Responsible for maintenance and supervision of the park, including trails, fields, restrooms and the pavilion.
- Recommend and administer policies, procedures, and fees for department programs,
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services provided by the department; foster development of alternative sources of funding, equipment, property, and labor. Prepare and submit grant proposals.
- Develop short-term and long-range program and facility planning to meet community leisure needs; work with Parks & Recreation Commission to review programs and receive input; serve as staff support for the Commission.
- Assist in recruiting and recommending full and part-time, seasonal employees and contracted instructors as approved; develop and conduct employee orientation sessions and training.
- Create department's advertising materials, including flyers and social media posts. Post programs on Town's website and serve as back-up webmaster.
- Direct the day-to-day operations and activities of the department and supervise staff including scheduling, training, and discipline
- Coordinate and oversee all maintenance at Preston Community Park. On-call for problems or disturbances.
- Directly conduct community events, including setup, implementation, and oversee clean-up.
- Oversee volunteer coaches and schedule practices, games, referees, and scorekeepers.
- Schedule the use of facilities at Preston Community Park. Coordinate the use of school facilities for programs.
- Control and account for the expenditure of department's funds in accordance with budget appropriations. Reconcile bank accounts on a monthly basis using software. Assist the P&R Commission in preparing the annual budget.
- Solicit sponsorships for sports teams and community events.
- Maintain effective working relationships with Town School Officials and Public Works Manager, to maximize cooperative usage of resources and facilities,
- Coordinate with community organizations and other Town departments for special events,
- Act as Preston's Youth Services Bureau Director.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

- ◆ A leader who inspires ethical, professional, honest, dedicated, and loyal behavior.
- ◆ Excellent communication skills with staff, Town agencies, community groups, public, state, and federal agencies.
- ◆ Ability to manage the day-to-day operations/budget of the department.
- ◆ Self-starter who takes initiative to move projects and programs forward and develop new ideas.
- ◆ Excellent management and organizational skills, with the ability to change hats quickly.
- ◆ Ability to meet deadlines, prioritize the work of staff.
- ◆ Thorough knowledge of the methods, materials and equipment used in the maintenance of parks and recreational facilities and programs.
- ◆ A leader who promotes positive youth engagement as well as programs for adults and seniors.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- \* The Town is experiencing growth in certain sections, which will entail development of the Preston Riverwalk and the Poquetanuck Village Project. These projects include various forms of passive and active recreational and cultural activities.
- \* Ability to build upon existing grants by seeking new grants to support summer camps, sports, recreation and community events.
- \* Be part of the team that is deciding on use of Town property for trails, kayaking, fishing, picnicking, etc.
- \* Serve as Youth Services Bureau Director in addition to Director of Parks and Recreation.
- \* Opportunity to help create and build the vision of this charming New England town and its recreational and cultural programs.
- \* The Town has just implemented a new Classification and Compensation Plan for all Town Employees.
- \* Working in a community that has developed a strategic plan for the Town.

### Qualifications:

#### Education, Training and Experience:

The qualifications required would generally be a Bachelor's degree in recreation, physical education or a related area. A minimum of 5 years' relevant experience is required, preferably in a municipality, with 2-3 years of supervisory experience, and/ or any equivalent combination of education, training, and work experience.

#### Special Requirements:

Must have and maintain: Valid CT Driver's License

CPR/First Aid Certification

Certified Parks & Recreation Professional (CPRP) preferred





## Poquetanuck Cove Preserve

### Compensation and Application Process

The Town of Preston offers a competitive salary commensurate with qualifications and experience (Range \$32.98 to \$41.22/hour). The Town provides a generous benefits package which includes health insurance with only 6% employee contribution for employee and family, dental and life insurance, vacation and sick leave as part of Paid Time Off. Additionally, the Town provides a defined benefit pension plan through the State of Connecticut known as MERS

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Ms. Randi Frank (Contact information below). If you have more questions about the position and salary, please contact Ms. Frank. To apply now please submit your cover letter and resume to Ms. Frank. The position will remain open until filled; the first screening date is April 30, 2024.

Residency is not required -within 30 miles is preferred  
Preston is an AA/EOE Employer

More information is available on the following website:  
<https://www.preston-ct.org/>



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# Addendum-Preston History & Settlement

## Settlement

At the time of the first European exploration, the Pequot tribe controlled most of Eastern Connecticut. In 1646, New London was settled by colonists from Massachusetts. The first English settler within the bounds of modern Preston was Jonathan Brewster who acquired land from the Mohegan Chief Uncas at the mouth of Poquetanuck Cove on the Thames River, later called Brewster's Neck. The remainder of the Pequot territory, including the present towns of Norwich and Preston, was retained by the Mohegan's. Although Connecticut's major centers of Native American population in the historic period were outside Preston, a small number continued to live in the area into the 20th century.

## 1600s Settlers Journey

Norwich was founded in 1659 at the mouth of the Connecticut River by settlers from Saybrook. The original territory, purchased from Uncas, was roughly square in plan, with each side about 9 miles long. This included a strip of land on the east side of the Thames, Shetucket, and Quinebaug Rivers, part of which is now in the town of Preston.

As Norwich settlers moved eastward across the Shetucket River, a number crossed the boundaries of Norwich to land farther east, still in the possession of the Mohegan's. In October 1686, 19 persons petitioned the General Court for the incorporation of a new town. This was granted in January 1687. On March 17 of that year, Owaneco, son of Uncas, deeded the area of the new town to the English inhabitants. Preston received its name from the English home of the Park family, early settlers. The town then included most of the present town of Griswold and the eastern half of the present town of Preston. The settlers of Preston were English colonists who migrated from already established towns, the most prominent of which was Norwich.

Preston City prospered in its early years when the town of Preston was an important supplier of agricultural products to the port of Norwich on the Thames River, from which local farm goods were shipped to other ports on the east coast. The period of greatest prosperity was between the American Revolutionary War and about 1830 and is reflected in the architecture of the homes built by successful local farmers and merchants.

## Origins of Long Society

A second village within the town of Preston, Long Society, had its origins in the beginning of the 18th century. As early as 1698, the residents of Norwich living east of the Thames, Shetucket, and Quinebaug Rivers petitioned the General Assembly for permission to establish a new Congregational society. In 1786, Long Society was transferred from Norwich to Preston by act of the General Assembly. Long Society was now nearer both the center of population and the geographical center of the town. Town meetings, which had been held at Preston City, were moved to the Long Society meetinghouse in 1856. In 1889, town meetings were moved across the street to the former district school, a small brick schoolhouse. This building functioned as the Town House until the construction of the present Town Hall off Route 2 in 1974.

With the annexation of Long Society to Preston in 1786, the village of Poquetanuck became part of the town of Preston. Unlike Long Society and Preston City, Poquetanuck developed around industrial activities centered on the two brooks that flow into the head of Poquetanuck Cove. A gristmill was established here in 1685. In 1725, Walter Capron established an ironworks facility on Poquetanuck Brook in the town of Norwich. Other activities soon followed. Shipbuilding, the export of potash and other products of the countryside, and a variety of handcrafts flourished. The Frigate *Confederacy*, a Revolutionary warship was built at Preston.

