



Chief of Police

The Town of Sylva is seeking applications for the position of **Chief of Police**. The next Chief of Police to serve the Town of Sylva will be someone who is a visionary and has a demonstrated history of innovative and strategic leadership. The Police Chief must foster effective relationships with the community, Town Board, Town Manager, Administrative staff, department staff and officers, as well as regional law enforcement partners. In addition, the Chief will be approachable, friendly, and enthusiastic about interacting with our community members, who come from all walks of life, to maintain and enhance the department's positive reputation and productive relationship with the community. The ideal candidate will possess a proven track record of transparent leadership, a commitment to modern policing strategies, and an unwavering dedication to open, honest, and proactive communication both internally within the department and externally with our residents and visitors, while continuing to maintain the history of a low crime rate and high quality of life. The Police Department strives to be progressive and proactive, often ahead of current issues and committed to doing what's right even when their approach differs from others. If you are a leader who inspires trust, champions collaboration, and is ready to lead with integrity and a focus on positive community outcomes, we invite you to explore this pivotal role in this exceptional mountain community.



About the Community: Sylva, NC, located in the Great Smoky Mountains, offers a unique blend of natural beauty, exceptional recreational opportunities, and a welcoming small-town atmosphere. With a permanent population of just over 2,500, Sylva maintains its small-town charm while providing a rich array of amenities.



Rich Cultural and Artistic Heritage: Sylva's Historic Main Street District offers a variety of dining options and many locally owned stores and boutiques that sell unique gifts and local merchandise. Sylva has a rich cultural and artistic scene with several galleries and museums that showcase the region's history and arts. Popular attractions include the Jackson County Historical Society Museum and the Appalachian Cultural Museum. The town hosts several annual festivals and events, including the Greening Up the Mountains Festival, a July 4th Celebration, WNC Pottery Festival, as well as the co-sponsored Concerts on the Creek each year from May to September.

APPLICATION PACKET:

- Letter of Interest
- Application
- Resume

Application packets will be accepted January 12, 2026 through 12:00 p.m. February 6, 2026.

Submit application packet by email to Human Resources:

townclerk@townofsylva.org
or in person at 83 Allen Street, Sylva, NC 28779.

Police Department

755 West Main Street
Sylva, NC 28779
(828) 586-2719
Sylvapolice.org



DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS :

- Award-winning Community Care Program
- 2025 Western Carolina University Community Outreach Impact Award for Community Care Program
- 2023 Police Agency of the Year from the NC Police Executive Association.
- Women compile 50% of both command staff and the overall department.



Life in Sylva: Sylva is a town where culture, innovation and community come together to create an exceptional way of life. Sylva is surrounded by several natural wonders, including the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Nantahala National Forest. These places offer breathtaking views and unique experiences for residents and visitors. Jackson County offers plenty of opportunities for hiking, camping, fishing and other outdoor activities. There are several parks and trails to explore, including the Pinnacle Park Trail, the Jackson County Greenway and the Tuckasegee River.

Jackson County is also known as the Trout Capital of NC. The Jackson County Schools system focuses on preparing students for higher education. Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College, two highly regarded institutions for higher education, also reside in Jackson County. For healthcare, Harris Regional Hospital serves the community, with additional comprehensive medical facilities available in nearby Waynesville, Franklin and Asheville.

About the Organization:

Operating under the Council-Manager form of government, the Town Manager reports to the Mayor and five Council Members. There is a commitment to preserving Sylva's vibrant, diverse, and welcoming community, which fosters its distinct character, thriving economy, and high quality of life. The Town Manager leads approximately 40-45 employees across three departments, to work collaboratively to fulfill its mission and strategic goals. All organizational staff are committed to upholding the town's mission statement: "To provide efficient, high-quality services, while fostering diversity, communication, and partnerships by proactively planning for the future". The Town of Sylva has a total adopted FY 2025-2026 of approximately \$7.6 million. The town has also adopted a [2040 Comprehensive Land Use Plan](#) to guide its work and operations.

About the Position:

The Town of Sylva Police Department's (SPD) mission is "to be proactive at providing safety to all, preventing crime, protecting property, and preserving quality of life." The SPD strives to serve the community with the highest level of police services with integrity, professionalism, respect, and transparency. Reporting to the Town Manager, the Chief will lead a department of 15 full-time sworn officers who work in the divisions of patrol operations and investigations. The department has an approximate annual budget of \$2.1 million. The Chief will perform complex managerial, administrative, and specialized law enforcement work in directing the activities of the police department. The Chief will be responsible for developing policies and procedures in support of the town's core values, supervising all departmental personnel through subordinate supervisors, overseeing the preparation of the annual budget, and promoting the department's work and goals to the public.

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Key Position Priorities: The department distinguishes itself through its adaptability, progressive mindset, and deep commitment to compassionate, community-centered policing. Therefore, the next Chief will:

- Thoroughly engage with the department staff to learn about the department's culture, needs, challenges, and opportunities before implementing significant changes that may be required to ensure accountability and that the department's capacity keeps pace with population growth.
- Communicate openly and thoroughly establishing consistent expectations and open communication channels.
- Strategically assess staffing needs, prioritize professional development to enhance skills and address evolving demands, and cultivate a robust succession pipeline to ensure optimal talent placement to sustain organizational effectiveness in meeting community needs.
- Builds rapport with the elected board and the town's senior leaders while continuing the tradition of the Chief being visible, approachable, and accessible to all stakeholders, including staff, community members, and other Town partners.
- Evaluates community relationships and establishes outreach and engagement protocols for all department levels that interact with the public.
- Ensures the effective recruitment and selection of qualified staff, working to build a department that reflects the community's values.



- Bring strong emotional intelligence, exceptional communication skills, a balanced leadership style, and be able to communicate effectively across political perspectives.
- Be a leader who provides clear structure and consistency while fostering independence and trust.
- Be a leader who listens well, understands patrol's perspective and remains current on evolving policies, laws, and political issues that affect policing.

Overall, the ideal Chief is a well-rounded, communicative, emotionally intelligent leader who brings experience, structure, and balance while strengthening both internal unity and community relationships.

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The Successful Candidate:

- Has a thorough knowledge of law enforcement principles, practices, methods, and equipment;
- Has a thorough knowledge of state and federal laws, ordinances, and policies of the department;
- Has the ability to act with sound judgement in routine and emergency situations;
- Is engaged, accessible, and visible within and across departments and in the community, and enjoys being the face of the department;
- Is skilled in developing trust among community members and creating opportunities for collaborative problem solving;
- Possesses a proven track record in developing and supporting staff to achieve excellence and proactive policing, actively coaching officers, and building strong working relationships to foster department goals, succession planning, training, and retention;



- Develops and maintains collaborative partnerships with community organizations, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, other municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and social service agencies to leverage resources and maximize quality of life opportunities, ensuring that the Sylva Police Department is fully engaged and a vital part of the community;
- Is experienced in systematic evaluation of department organization, staffing, resources, and service levels to implement effective plans that maximize current assets;
- Is up to date on evidence-based practices in law enforcement (e.g., body cameras, mental health training, use of force, etc.) and has a track record of evaluating and making appropriate recommendations to ensure optimal departmental responses;
- Understands and uses crime data statistics and other performance metrics to evaluate operations, identify trends, needed resources, develop benchmarks, and measure performance of established policing goals;
- Has experience working in a council-manager form of government and skills in navigating the complexities of varying roles;
- Is experienced across functional areas, including patrol, support services, investigations, and other specialized units;
- Is skilled in budget development and management, policy development and application, and progressive policing strategies despite budget constraints;
- Is an individual with impeccable integrity and a proven record of consistency in managing both internal and external relationships to mitigate challenges and maximize opportunities;
- Thrives in a culture of high expectations and personal accountability and has a track record of developing the same departmental standards as a highly accomplished law enforcement leader.

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Required Qualifications:

- Any combination of education and experience equivalent to graduation from a four-year institution with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, public administration, business administration, or related field, culminating in 10 years of progressive experience in law enforcement across functional areas such as patrol and investigations with five or more years of command-level experience.
- Minimum of 5 years of managerial experience at a Command level or higher in a comparably sized or larger agency.
- Certification as a sworn law enforcement officer by the State of North Carolina or the ability to obtain certification within twelve months of employment.
- Possession of a valid North Carolina driver's license, or possession of a valid license from another state and the ability to obtain a North Carolina driver's license within 60 days of establishing residency (per NC law).

Preferred Qualifications:

- Preference will be given to a candidate who currently possesses certification as a sworn law enforcement officer by the State of North Carolina.
- Master's degree preferred
- Additional training courses in law enforcement

Salary Range and Benefits:

The hiring range is \$78,000 - \$120,000. Base salary and compensation are negotiable within the hiring range based on experience and qualifications. Residency within a 30-minute response time is required. Information about benefits can be obtained from the Human Resources Office.

If you are interested in this pivotal role in the Town of Sylva, please submit a letter of interest, resume, and Town application per the instructions below.

To apply, please visit:

www.townofsylva.org (Click on notice at top of screen/Police Chief Vacancy)

- All completed application packets must be submitted to Amanda Murajda, townclerk@townofsylva.org or in person at Town Hall, 83 Allen Street, Sylva, NC no later than February 6, 2026, 12:00 p.m. to be considered during the first round of reviews.
- A completed application packet includes letter of interest, resume and application and supplemental questionnaire. Incomplete packets will not be accepted.
- The hiring team will invite successful finalists to participate in an interview panel and scenario evaluation the week of March 2-6, 2026. Candidates are encouraged to reserve these dates for interviews should they be invited to participate.
- Selected candidate is expected to begin employment no later than April 15, 2026.

Direct all inquiries to townclerk@townofsylva.org.

The Town of Sylva is an Equal Opportunity Employer.