

Chapter 8:

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross political boundaries, such as watersheds and labor force. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth or decline in one community spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the entire region.

OVERVIEW

Wisconsin statutes enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Unfortunately, state law neither encourages or requires horizontal governmental relationships such as town to town and municipality to county or town. The result is that towns, municipalities, and counties often act more as adversaries than as partners.

There are over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts in Wisconsin. The significant number of governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision-making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

Intergovernmental cooperation makes sense for many reasons including trust, cost savings, consistency, and ability to address regional issues. As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. It can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. It can lead to consistency of goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities. Finally, by communicating and coordinating their actions and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities can address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.

Residents are the major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation. They may not understand, or even care about, the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy. A variety of factors, some long-standing and others more recent, have brought the issue of intergovernmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- A local government's financial situation
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together
- Elimination of duplication of services

- Population settlement patterns and population mobility
- Economic and environmental interdependence

In addition, as more jurisdictions create and implement comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Shared Services

As discussed in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter, the Town does not maintain its own fire department, but contracts with surrounding Towns of Grand Rapids and Rome, as well as the City of Nekoosa. The Town also contracts for ambulance service. Protective services in the Town of Saratoga are provided by the Wood County Sheriff's Department.

Adjoining Units of Government

The recycling program, snow plowing, and road grading are the most common areas of cooperation.

School Districts

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of Saratoga is served by the Nekoosa School District and has a good standing relationship with the district. Also in the vicinity is the Wisconsin Rapids School District. There are no school district facilities located within the Town.

Post-Secondary Educational Facilities

The town is in the Mid-State Technical College district. This is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. The Town has little participation in issues pertaining to administration or siting of new facilities. All school and college board meetings are open to the public.

Wood County

Wood County directly and indirectly provides a number of services to the Town, and the Town enjoys a good working relationship with many of the responsible departments. These departments include law enforcement through the Sheriff's Office, 911 dispatch services, access permits, maintenance and improvement of county highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, and private sewage system regulation.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, Wood County sponsors a county-wide planning effort to complete these plans and include each individual local unit in the process and resulting final plan. An example of this is the County All Hazard Mitigation Plans which are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in order for individual local units of government to qualify for certain types of disaster assistance funding.

Wood County Planning & Zoning also administers the county’s shoreland zoning. Shoreland zoning covers areas within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond, or flowage, or within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under Wisconsin Statute §60.0309 as a voluntary association of governments within a ten-county area. Wood County is a member of the NCWRPC, which includes all local units within the county. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include economic development, land use, transportation, and geographic information systems (GIS) mapping.

State and Federal Government

Two state agencies, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation are the primary agencies the Town deals with most often. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, lakes, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation is responsible for the planning and development of state highways, railways, airports, and other transportation systems.

State agencies make several grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Saratoga. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Plan (LRIP) and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also several mandates passed down from the state that the Town must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

Most federal programs are administered by the states, so the Town would be dealing with the responsible state agency about federal programs and regulations. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

Existing or Potential Intergovernmental Conflicts

The Town has a good working relationship with other governmental agencies. The process for resolving these conflicts will in part be a continuation of past practices as new mechanisms evolve and take shape. The Town of Saratoga will continue to meet with governmental entities when significant issues of mutual concern arise.

Programs

There are three major programs that are provided by state statute. These are intergovernmental agreements, municipal revenue sharing, and boundary agreements.

Intergovernmental Cooperation: Wisconsin Statute §66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts,

including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes must be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

Municipal Revenue Sharing: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0305, Municipal Revenue Sharing, gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries.

Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and how the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum ten-year period.

Cooperative Boundary Agreements: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0307, helps to resolve boundary issues through mutual agreement. Cooperative boundary plans or agreements are established for ten or more years and include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan, a schedule of changes to the boundary, plans for delivery of services, and a description of any environmental concerns.

Boundary agreements are often used between a city or village and an adjoining town to establish a known progression of boundary change, rather than haphazard annexations. It provides stability for planning and service delivery.

In addition, there are a variety of other arrangements that can be established. These include renting equipment, contracting with other governments or firms, municipal staff sharing, service consolidation, and joint purchase of equipment, among others.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal:

1. Maintain mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring municipalities, Wood County, State & Federal agencies, and the Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School Districts.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate Town planning efforts with local school districts as necessary to allow those districts to properly plan for facility needs.

2. Coordinate with other neighboring municipalities to jointly plan boundary areas and coordinate their long-term growth plans with the Town Comprehensive Plan.

3. Identify opportunities for shared services or other cooperative planning efforts with appropriate units of government.

4. Identify existing and potential conflicts between neighboring municipalities and establish procedures to address them.

Policies:

1. Encourage an efficient and compatible land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between land uses across municipal boundaries and preserves forestry and environmentally sensitive areas in mutually agreed locations. To the extent possible, coordinate the Town's Comprehensive Plan with the City of Nekoosa's, Village of Port Edwards, town of Grand Rapids, town of Rome's (Adams County), Town of Grant (Portage County), and Wood County's Comprehensive Plans.

2. Prior to the adoption of the Town Comprehensive Plan, and for subsequent updates, request comments from Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School District Officials, neighboring municipalities, and Wood County.

3. Request that School District officials keep the Town apprised of any plans for new facilities that could either be in the Town or near enough to the Town's jurisdiction to affect Town roads.

4. Request that neighboring municipalities, Wood County, State or Federal agencies communicate to the Town land use or planning activities which would affect the Town of Saratoga.

5. Collaborate with neighboring municipalities, special districts, and other providers to ensure that Town residents and businesses receive adequate service levels.

6. Continually work with neighboring municipalities to identify opportunities for shared services or other cooperative planning efforts.

7. Continue to participate in the Wood County Town's Association monthly meetings.