

Chapter 8

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross over political boundaries, such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth and change on one spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

Wisconsin Statute s.66.30, entitled “Intergovernmental Cooperation”, does enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Unfortunately, there is little public policy in Wisconsin law that encourages, let alone requires, horizontal governmental relationships. The result is that towns, villages, cities, and counties often act more as adversaries than as partners.

BACKGROUND

Overview

As discussed earlier in the plan, the Town encompasses the City of Eagle River, which serves as the county seat. Other surrounding communities include the Towns of Cloverland, Conover, Washington, Sugar Camp and Three Lakes. These are important intergovernmental relationships for the Town. Efforts should be made to maintain good working relationships with the surrounding towns and the County.

Statewide, Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts. Having so many 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.

Benefits

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. Some examples include:

- **Trust:** Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. 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.

- **Cost Savings:** Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.
- **Consistency:** Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- **Address Regional Issues:** Communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues, which are regional in nature.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. 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.

Intergovernmental Relationships

Surrounding Towns

The Town of Lincoln has a joint service agreement with the Eagle River Area Fire Department. The Eagle River Area Fire Department is operated by a joint municipal fire commission which is comprised of the City of Eagle River and the Towns of Cloverland, Washington and Lincoln. There is one representative from each municipality and one representative from the fire department who serves as the chairperson. The Town pays a proportionate fair share based upon the equalized assessed value of the Town.

County

Vilas 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 Finance, Highway, Sheriff, Forestry, and Land Records.

County Finance collects local property tax for the Town. The Town contracts with the County Highway Department to plow and mow local roads within the Town. The County Sheriff provides protective services through periodic patrols and on-call 911 responses. The Sheriff also manages the 911-dispatch center, not only for police protection, but also for ambulance/EMS response and dispatching the local Fire Departments. The Forestry and Outdoor Recreation Department maintains a county-wide park system and county forest system for the use and enjoyment of all residents including the Town of Lincoln.

The County Zoning Department administers zoning in the Town, as well as providing land records and land conservation services including joint monitoring of surrounding lakes. The Town is also part of the Landfill Venture Group, which is an intergovernmental compact of numerous towns to deal with solid waste disposal and recycling issues. Currently the group operates the county landfill located on County Highway G in the Town of Cloverland. Currently there are fourteen towns involved in this effort.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, the County sponsors a county-wide planning effort to complete these plans and include each individual local unit in the process and resulting final plan. Examples of this include the County Outdoor Recreation plan which maintains the eligibility for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administered park and recreation development funding of each local unit that adopts it, and All Hazard Mitigation Plans which are required by Federal Emergency Management Agency in order for individual local units of government to qualify for certain types of disaster assistance funding.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under §60.0309 Wis. Statutes as a voluntary association of governments serving a ten-county area. Vilas County is a member of the NCWRPC, which includes all of its local units of government.

NCWRPC provides both regional and local planning assistance. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) land use, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

State and Federal Government

The Wisconsin departments of Natural Resources and Transportation are the primary agencies the Town might deal with regarding development activities. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetlands, lakes, rivers, 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 a number of grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Lincoln. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also a number of 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).

School District

The Town of Lincoln is in the Northland Pines School District, but the Wisconsin Open Enrollment program allows children to attend other nearby school districts, provided that the district has the necessary space to accept the student. The Northland Pines School district has satellite elementary schools located in Eagle River, Land O' Lakes, and St Germain that serve students in Lincoln, and the Northland Pines High School is located in Eagle River. In addition to public schools there are several private K-8 schools for the surrounding area.

The Nicolet Technical College district includes the Town of Lincoln and has its Lakeland Campus located in the Town of Minocqua as well as its main campus in Rhinelander.

The main form of interaction with both school and college districts are through payment of property taxes, which help to fund both districts' operations. 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.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal: Seek to establish mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations between the Town of Lincoln and other units of government.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate and communicate land use planning activities with neighboring towns, Vilas County, and any applicable state and federal agencies to realize individual and shared visions, goals and objectives; to address regional issues that cross political boundaries and jurisdictions; to ensure efficient use of municipal resources; and to provide for increased certainty among all levels of government, developers, and landowners.
2. Assess feasibility of developing additional shared services including police protection, snow plowing, sanitary district services for sewer and water, road maintenance, and garbage collection.
3. Coordinate planning efforts with Vilas County.
4. Coordinate land and water conservation with appropriate resource agencies and private conservation organizations to take advantage of both technical and financial assistance, to promote consistency in preservation and stewardship efforts, to facilitate information exchanges, and to avoid duplication of efforts.
5. Identify existing or potential land use, administration, or policy conflicts that may instigate poor coordination.

Goal: Increase community awareness, support, and involvement in growth management and land and water conservation efforts.

Objectives:

1. Create opportunities for citizen participation throughout all stages of plan development and implementation.
2. Promote public access and understanding of available land use, planning, zoning, and environmental information.
3. Support community organizations and lake associations that dedicate time and resources to community development and conservation efforts.

Goal: Maintain high-quality services and equitable administration.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that existing and future land use regulations are fair and equitable.
2. Balance community improvements with available funding sources to ensure equitable taxation.
3. Provide clear guidance to landowners and citizens as to the appropriate land uses and standards for development.
4. Provide a point of contact to guide developers and individuals through all local regulations and approval processes.
5. Encourage notification of landowners when changes are proposed to land use plans and regulations.
6. Continue to improve the high-quality of existing services.
7. New development and redevelopment should provide for and/or contribute its proportionate fair share of expenses associated with impacts to public services and utilities.
8. Maintain a proactive planning process.
9. Develop a “Development Procedures Manual” which outlines the application, review, license, and public notification process of development activity in the Town.
10. Monitor and evaluate shared service agreements in accordance with increased demand.
11. Determine potential for a development agreement and/or a boundary agreement concerning the municipal boundaries between the Town and the City of Eagle River.