

# 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 mentioned earlier, Eagle River is the only City within Vilas County and serves as the county seat. The City of Eagle River is encompassed by the Town of Lincoln. Other nearby municipalities include the Towns of Washington, Cloverland, and Conover within Vilas County, as well as the Towns of Sugar Camp and Three Lakes in Oneida County. These are important intergovernmental relationships for the City. 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 costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

## Tools

### Shared Service Agreements

Wisconsin Statute s.66.0301 enables local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Intergovernmental agreements prepared using this statute, are the most common form 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. Shared service agreements are utilized to allow this type of cooperation.

### Boundary Agreements

Under Section 66.0307 of the Wisconsin Statutes, municipalities may prepare cooperative boundary plans or agreements. Cooperative boundary plans or agreements involve decisions regarding the maintenance or change of municipal boundaries for a period of 10 years or more. The cooperative plan must include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan; a schedule for changes to the boundary; plans for the delivery of services; an evaluation of environmental features and a description of any adverse environmental consequences that may result; and the need for safe and affordable housing. Upon adoption by the participating communities and approval by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the cooperative plan has the force and effect of a contract.

### Extra-territorial Jurisdiction Zoning

Any city that has a plan commission may exercise extraterritorial zoning power in the unincorporated areas surrounding the city, under Wisconsin Statute 62.23. The extraterritorial zoning power may be exercised in the unincorporated areas located within 1 ½ miles of a fourth-class city (Eagle River). Using this tool involves lengthy process and requires strong communication with the surrounding towns.

## Extraterritorial Subdivision Review

Wisconsin Statute, 236.10, allows a city or village to exercise its extraterritorial plat review authority in the same geographic area as defined within the extraterritorial zoning statute. The purpose of extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction is to help cities and villages influence the development pattern of areas outside their boundaries that will likely be annexed to the city or village. This helps cities and villages protect land use near its boundaries from conflicting uses outside its limits.

# Intergovernmental Relationships

## Surrounding Towns

The City of Eagle River has joint service agreements with the St. Germain Volunteer Fire Departments via 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. Additionally, the City of Eagle River and the Towns of Cloverland and St. Germain have formed a multi-jurisdictional commission to head up development of the River Trail, a proposed 10-mile-long trail that would connect to the Heart of Vilas County Bike Trail system.

## County

As the county seat, Eagle River is the hub of County government. The Courthouse, as well as a variety of other County assets are located in the City, including the Vilas County Sheriff's Office. These all require ongoing communication between the City and County to provide residents of the City and County the best service.

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 City 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 City of Eagle River. 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 City must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

## School District

The City of Eagle River 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 located throughout the district. Additionally, Northland Pines Middle and High School is located in Eagle River. In addition to public schools there are several private K-8 schools located within the Eagle River area.

## Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** Strengthen local control of land use decisions.

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage Vilas County to create sewer only zones in areas that have sanitary sewer available to the property within the Eagle River extraterritorial planning area.
2. Cooperate with the Town of Lincoln to develop a mutually beneficial boundary agreement with the City of Eagle River to encourage sustained growth in the border areas.
3. Seek and establish mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations.
4. Continue to cooperatively provide services for the library, airport, fire, landfill, combating Aquatic Invasive Species, old landfill, buoy placement, etc.

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