
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, political leaders at the state level have been expressing the need for local units of government to explore and enhance intergovernmental cooperation and shared services. These intergovernmental cooperation and shared service relationships foster open communication between governmental units that is advantageous in reducing cost of services and in identifying future issues that can be averted. The Town of Blaine supports the development of intergovernmental cooperation and shared services with Burnett County and surrounding townships.

This chapter will examine the relationship of the Town of Blaine to adjacent jurisdictions, school districts, and federal, state, and regional agencies.

7.2 GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO THE TOWN OF BLAINE

The Town of Blaine shares a common border with the Towns of Swiss and Webb Lake in Burnett County, the Town of Minong in Washburn County, the Town of Dairyland in Douglas County, and the State of Minnesota. Other indirect relationships exist with the Webster and Northwood School Districts, the National Park Service, the Burnett County Forestry Department and the State of Wisconsin. An overview of the relationships between the Town of Blaine and other units of government and organizations is highlighted below.

Adjacent Jurisdictions

- The Towns of Swiss and Webb Lake in Burnett County, the Town of Minong in Washburn County, the Town of Dairyland in Douglas County, and the State of Minnesota.

No conflict exists between the communities concerning land use or development. In the future, the Town of Blaine encourages surrounding units of government to discuss the cost benefits of sharing services on matters concerning road maintenance.

Schools

- Webster School District and Northwood District

Students from the Town of Blaine attend the Webster and Northwood School Districts. In an effort to provide the student population and community with buildings and recreational facilities that better provide an educational experience and community services, the Webster district recently (2002) constructed a new school serving grade levels 5-12 located in the Village of Webster. An elementary school had previously been operated in the nearby unincorporated town of Danbury but was closed in 1994.

According to Northwood School District officials in September 2003, 447 students were attending school within the district. Based on a 1999 survey conducted on a school-by-school basis by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Northwood School District was not rated as being overcrowded. This survey is the result of Section 115.33(4), Wis. Stats. Enacted into law in 1998 that requires the state superintendent to conduct a study of the physical condition and capacity of the public schools and their suitability for use as public schools.

The town and school districts do not have any existing conflicts. Although there are no current plans for facility upgrades or expansion, in the future as the need for improvement is warranted, it is encouraged that the school district engage the public and local governments in discussions that seek multi-purpose use of the school facilities in an effort to maximize its community use.

County and Regional Agencies

- Burnett County
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Burnett County and the Town of Blaine have a cooperative relationship. It is critical that the county and town communicate on all issues, especially on all land use actions as the preparation and adoption of the comprehensive plan will assist the town and county in making future land use decisions. Due to the county having a significant amount of land in the town, future management decision should be shared with the town board. No conflicts currently exist between the town and the county.

Regional planning commissions are formed under Section 60.0309 of Wisconsin State Statutes to provide a range of services to local units of government within the RPC boundaries. RPC's provide planning assistance, assist local interests in responding to state and federal programs, serve as a coordinating agency for programs, and provide other technical and advisory assistance to local government. The Town of Blaine is within the boundary of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC), which is based in Spooner, Wisconsin.

The regional planning commission has no authority over land use or policy decisions at the local level and is available to provide technical assistance to units of government. No conflicts currently exist between the town and NWRPC.

State Agencies

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- State of Minnesota

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is responsible for management of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area in the south-central and north-central portion of the town as part of a twenty-year lease agreement with the land's owner and Burnett County. No conflicts currently exist between the town and WDNR.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is responsible for maintenance and access along the state trunk highway system. State Highway 35 bisects the western portion of the

town from north to south. Although the town has not had direct interaction with the department, the town desires to be engaged in future highway improvement projects, driveway access permits, and billboard development or improvement projects. The town encourages the establishment of direct dialog with the department to ensure local issues are discussed. No conflicts currently exist between the town and WisDOT.

Federal Agencies

The National Park Service owns and manages some of the lands adjacent to the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Much of this land has been federally designated as part of the upper St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and is managed by the National Park Service. The riverway is one of the most beautiful and least developed river systems in the Midwest, offering recreational opportunities with a wilderness feel. The National Park Service, Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and Xcel Energy manage the riverway cooperatively. No conflicts currently exist between the town and National Park Service.

7.3 COOPERATIVE BOUNDARY PLANS OR AGREEMENTS

The Town of Blaine maintains an informal agreement with the Town of Dairyland for sharing maintenance work and snowplowing on some of each other's roadways.

7.4 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

As part of the planning process in preparing the comprehensive plan for the Town of Blaine, existing or potential land use or other development conflicts were reviewed. To provide the framework for resolving planning related conflicts that may arise between the town and adjoining or overlapping jurisdictions, a conflict resolution process (Intergovernmental Cooperation Planning Agreement) was developed to provide a low-cost, flexible approach to resolving land use disputes between governmental entities. This process should not supersede local processes established for conflict resolution and is not intended to be used by parties dissatisfied with the appropriate application of local rules and regulations within their jurisdiction.

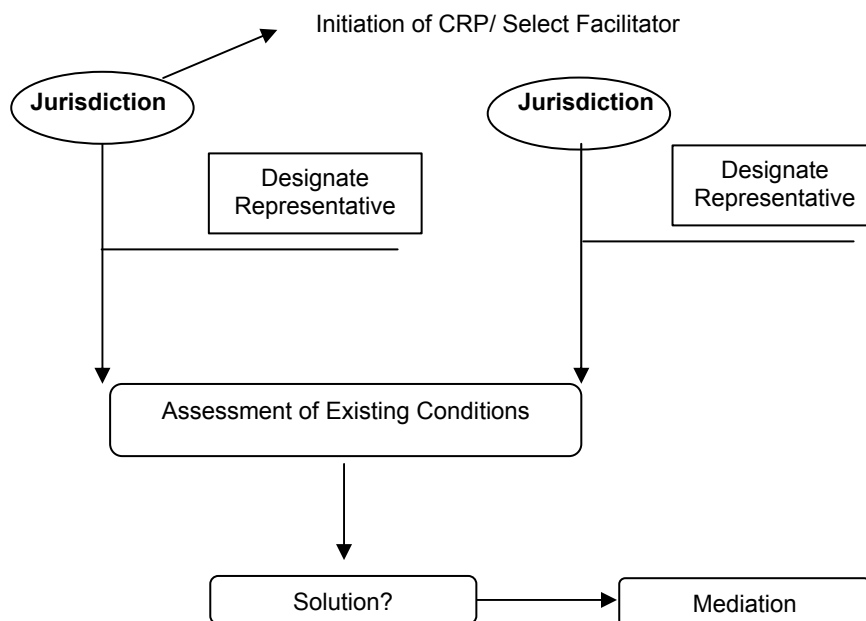
The conflict resolution process (CRP) should involve an *authorized representative* (selected by local governing authority on 2/3 majority) of the involved jurisdictions. The designated representative shall have the authority to act on behalf of the jurisdiction and will be responsible for maintaining communications with the jurisdiction throughout the conflict resolution process. The process should accommodate public participation and comment pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 19.81(2).

SECTION I Initiation of the CRP. The CRP may be initiated by a local jurisdiction or any other parties named in the *Intergovernmental Cooperation Planning Agreement*. Requests to initiate CRP should be submitted to an outside facilitator and to affected jurisdictions and shall clearly and concisely identify the land use issue, the jurisdictions involved, and the affected

jurisdiction’s authorized representatives. Upon receipt of CRP notification and unless otherwise requested by the jurisdictions involved, the facilitator would proceed with the issues assessment process.

SECTION II Assessment of existing conditions. An outside facilitator named under Section I shall conduct an assessment of existing conditions. The assessment should consist of examination of pertinent documents, maps, ordinances, or other materials and/or public meetings to gather input from affected jurisdictions (representatives). Meetings should allow equal time for jurisdictions to comment on the issue and to propose suitable alternatives.

SECTION III Mediation. A neutral party who understands land use planning and growth issues in the Blaine area should mediate all land use disputes. A mutually acceptable mediator is to be selected from those groups or individuals listed in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement.



An informal agreement was developed in order to provide the framework for a coordinated planning process and to define a procedure for conflict resolution throughout the planning process. It is the intention of this agreement to outline the coordination actions necessary to ensure consistency in planning related matters and to facilitate communication between all units of government. A formal agreement addressing intergovernmental cooperation and the conflict resolution process should be developed and implemented following the completion of the comprehensive planning process. This agreement could include the following:

- 1) Agree to openly cooperate and share information pertinent to the planning process.
- 2) Agree to coordinate planning activities with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions, including school districts.

- 3) Agree to work to ensure orderly transitions or buffers in areas of joint concern between different communities.
- 4) Recognize that policy, land use, or development decisions by one party affect other jurisdictions. The parties further recognize the need to involve the property owners and residents of the area in the land use planning and priority-setting process.
- 5) Agree to examine the potential for inter-local agreements addressing extra-jurisdictional services when increased efficiency and effectiveness will be achieved.
- 6) Agree to review comprehensive plans and plan amendments of adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions and plans of state and regional agencies for consistency with local planning.
- 7) Agree to utilize the informal conflict resolution process to resolve planning-related conflicts between adjacent and overlapping units of government where appropriate.
- 8) Agree to resolve inconsistencies, which may arise between adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions, through use of formal or informal negotiations or through use of the conflict resolution process.
- 9) Agree to work cooperatively with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions to develop and implement a formalized intergovernmental cooperation agreement as a component of the Intergovernmental Cooperation chapter of the comprehensive planning process. This agreement should coordinate with other comprehensive plans of local governments and regional and state agencies. The formal agreement should outline the process for continued coordination and cooperation and define the mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- 10) Acknowledge that this Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement is not intended to and does not create legally binding obligations on any of the parties to act in accordance with its provisions. Rather, it constitutes a good faith statement of the intent of the parties to cooperate in a manner designed to meet the mutual objectives of all the parties involved in an efficient, equitable, and responsible manner.

7.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and action steps have been recommended for the town to engage and work with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. Implementation of the action steps is a start to establishing cooperative relationships with adjacent and overlapping jurisdiction.

Goal: Encourage cooperative relationships with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions and agencies.

Objectives and Action Statements:

- 1: Look for cooperative opportunities with other municipalities, including tribal governments.
 - a. Contact the Towns of Swiss, Dairyland, Minong, and Webb Lake for future cooperation regarding road maintenance issues.
- 2: Foster cooperation with county regarding town issues.
 - a. Contact county departments regarding cooperative efforts on shoreline development issues, law enforcement needs, and road maintenance in County forest areas.
- 3: Develop more rapport with county police to ensure faster service.
- 4: Enlist cooperation from WDNR and public forest and land agencies regarding the uses of town lands and roads.
 - a. Discuss enforcement of logging contracts and damage done to town roads resulting from logging traffic.