

CHAPTER 7: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Wisconsin State Statute § 66.1001(2)(g)

Intergovernmental Cooperation

A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts, drainage districts, and adjacent local governmental units, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services. The element shall analyze the relationship of the local governmental unit to schools, drainage districts, and adjacent local governmental units, and to the region, the state and other governmental units. The element shall consider, to the greatest extent possible, the maps and plans of any military base or installation, with at least 200 assigned military personnel or that contains at least 2,000 acres, with which the local governmental unit shares common territory. The element shall incorporate any plans or agreements to which the local governmental unit is a party under § 66.0301, 66.0307 or 66.0309. The element shall identify existing or potential conflicts between the local governmental unit and other governmental units that are specified in this paragraph and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental cooperation involves working with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions and agencies to understand how their future planning activities will impact Sawyer County. This also involves sharing information about the Sawyer County Comprehensive Plan with neighboring communities and agencies. A review of actions and programs the county has and will take to foster continued joint decision making and coordination with adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions will be reviewed.

Many issues can be effectively addressed through cooperation and coordination with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. The following is a brief description and analysis of the relationship between the Sawyer County and other adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions.

ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships take continued communication and effort to build trust and partnerships. Governmental units, representing their constituents and property owners, are uniquely positioned to build relationships with overlapping and adjoining jurisdictions. Open and positive dialogue is more critical today than in the past. Shrinking revenue streams, uncertain economies and a movement towards shared services are functions local units of government cannot overlook as they plan for the future. It is important that officials in elected or appointed positions who represent the people strive to represent the community in an open and positive manner as their elected position is temporary based on the electorate or voters.

ADJACENT COUNTY AND OVERLAPPING GOVERNMENTS

Five counties surround Sawyer County: Burnett, Bayfield, Ashland, Price and Rusk. While no conflicts are known to exist at present, Sawyer County and respective county departments have and continue to coordinate and share information and services where appropriate. Several regional and statewide organizations include representatives from adjoining counties, enabling the counties to discuss issues and opportunities.

Within the political boundary of Sawyer County, a total of 16 towns, four villages and one city represent local units of government. Each of the 21 governmental units is represented by elected officials who are delegated responsibility from their constituents to manage the affairs of the local government following state legislation. Statutory law also requires Sawyer County to implement and oversee certain rules and regulations that protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community and/or environment. The Sawyer County Board of Supervisors (fifteen districts) represents the people's voice on matters and issues pertinent to county affairs.

State of Wisconsin

Several state agencies have a relationship with Sawyer County. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) are two main state agencies with a direct relationship with the county. Sawyer County is located within WisDOT's Northwest Region. The Northwest regional office is located in Eau Claire and the field office is located in Superior. WisDOT plans, promotes and financially supports statewide air, rail and water transportation, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and is responsible for planning, building and maintaining Wisconsin's network of state highway and interstate highway systems. The department shares the costs of building and operating county and local transportation systems - from highways to public transit and other modes. Sawyer County currently has a working relationship with WisDOT. However, over the past several years the state's financial contribution to the county for maintenance and snowplowing has been declining. As a result, the availability of services to the public has declined.



Sawyer County is located in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Northern Region, with a regional office in Spooner. The WDNR's Northern Region covers 18 counties and is dedicated to the preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Wisconsin's natural resources. It is responsible for implementing the laws of the state and, where applicable, the laws of the federal government that protect and enhance the natural resources of our state. It is the one agency charged with full responsibility for coordinating the many disciplines and programs necessary to provide a clean environment and a full range of outdoor recreational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens and visitors. The WDNR manages five Wildlife Areas (Totagatic River, Weirgor Springs, Flat Creek, Kissick, and Chief River) and one State

Forest (Flambeau River) throughout the County. Sawyer County currently has a working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Sawyer County, WisDOT, WDNR and other State Departments must continue to coordinate and discuss issues and potential joint projects in efforts to provide desirable and valuable services to residents and visitors of the county. The existing and future payment of funds to Sawyer County, school districts and others is disproportionate (less) than the amount of funds actually paid out. Continued cooperation will ensure future dialog and accomplishments that will continue to benefit the county.

Federal

The U.S. Forest Service manages the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest located in the eastern sections of the county. The forest provides opportunity to camp, picnic, fish, swim, backpack, hike, bike, boat, view wildlife, ATV, snowmobile and ski. Sawyer County and the Forest Service have a cooperative relationship. Continued dialog and cooperation will ensure future accomplishments benefiting the county and its residents and visitors.

The U.S. National Park Service manages the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway, which encompasses the Namekagon River. U.S. National Park Service representatives and county representatives have a cooperative relationship. Continued dialog and cooperation will ensure future accomplishments benefiting the county its residents and visitors.

Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

The Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Reservation encompasses approximately 76,465 acres and overlaps the towns of Bass Lake, Couderay, Hayward, Hunter and Sand Lake. Sawyer County has jurisdiction over zoning (including shoreland, wetland, and floodplain areas) within the Reservation where land is not tribal owned. Sawyer County and the above towns also own and maintain several miles of roads located on the Reservation. In general, the relationship between the LCO Tribe and Sawyer County can be characterized as one in which cooperation and understanding could be enhanced (*LCO Comprehensive Plan*). The LCO Tribal Governing Board and Sawyer County Board of Supervisors continue to hold joint meetings to discuss mutually beneficial topics of interest.

Over the past several years, Sawyer County and the LCO Tribe have continued to work on projects of mutual interest. Sawyer County, the LCO Tribal Police Department, and the LCO Tribal Fire Department continue to coordinate and assist one another as needed. Several LCO Tribal Police Officers are deputized by Sawyer County and can provide law enforcement assistance to the County when requested. Sawyer County also maintains a tribal officer who patrols the Reservation area.

Sawyer County and the LCO Tribe continue to partner and develop expanded public transportation services via Namekagon Transit. Namekagon Transit was established in 1998 as a shuttle system for the LCO Casino, which has since expanded to providing public transportation services in Sawyer County, Washburn County, Barron County, and southern portions of Bayfield County.

Regional

Several regional entities overlap Sawyer County. County representation on these committees forms a dialog that enables local and regional matters to be discussed and addressed. Regional entities with Sawyer County board member representation include the Indianhead Community Action Agency, Northern Waters Library Board, Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program, Sherman and Ruth Weiss Library and Northwest Regional Planning Commission. These entities provide specific services to the county, local units of government and citizens.

School Districts

Four public school districts and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School cover Sawyer County with the school districts of Hayward and Winter having the greatest geographic coverage. The overall interaction between county government and school district boards is limited but a cooperative relationship exists. Future dialog and cooperation are encouraged.

Of concern to many rural northern school districts is that the state school aid funding formula is inadequate to support quality education. The current formula based on equalized value which in rural areas does not reflect income in the area.

EXISTING AGREEMENTS

Intergovernmental agreements are the most common form used between local units of government. While local governments have used intergovernmental agreements for years, they are often informal agreements with no signed documents and used for sharing public services such as road maintenance, police and fire protection. Below is a list of plans and agreements to which Sawyer County is a party to under WI Stat § 66.0301, 66.0307 and 66.0309.

- Ambulance service with Town of Bass Lake/ Washburn County
- Sawyer County/LCO Transit Service Agreement
- Sawyer County Fire & Emergency Association Contract
- LCO Tribal Police
- Child Welfare
- LCO Intergovernmental MOA

EXISTING & POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

According to the comprehensive planning legislation, the intergovernmental cooperation element shall identify existing and potential conflicts between Sawyer County and other governmental units. While the list may not be fully representing all conflicts, it does identify the major conflicts between Sawyer County and other local units of government.

Existing Conflicts

- Impact aide in lieu of taxes.
- Additional items to be sought.

Potential Conflicts

- None currently. Additional items to be sought.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Should intergovernmental conflict arise in the future, it will be important to have a systematic process in place to resolve these disputes in a manner that is efficient, respectful and mutually beneficial.

Mediation

A cooperative process involving two or more parties and a mediator. The mediator, a neutral third party with special skills and training in dispute resolution, helps the parties voluntarily reach a mutually agreeable settlement of the issue in dispute.

Binding Arbitration

A process where a neutral person is given the authority to make a legally binding decision and is used only with the consent of all the parties. The parties present evidence and examine witnesses and the arbitrator makes a determination based on evidence.

Non-Binding Arbitration

A technique in which a neutral person is given the authority to render a non-binding decision as a basis for subsequent negotiations between the parties after the parties present evidence and examine the witnesses.

Early Neutral Evaluation

A process in which a neutral person evaluates brief written and oral presentations early in the litigation process. The neutral person provides an initial appraisal of the merits of the case with suggestions for conducting discovery and obtaining a legal ruling to resolve the case as efficiently as possible.

Focus Group

Can be used to resolve disputes by using a panel of citizens selected in a manner agreed upon by all the parties. The citizens hear presentations from the parties; and, after hearing the issues, the focus group deliberates and renders an advisory opinion.

Mini-Trial

Presentations by the parties to a panel of selected and authorized by all the parties to negotiate a settlement of the dispute that, after the presentations, considers the legal and factual issues and attempts to negotiate a settlement.

Moderated Settlement Conference

A process in which a neutral person, who hears brief presentations from the parties, in order to facilitate negotiations, conducts conferences. The neutral person renders an advisory opinion in aid of negotiation.

Summary Jury Trial

A technique where attorneys make abbreviated presentations to a small jury selected from the regular jury list. The jury renders an advisory decision to help the parties assess their position to aid future negotiation.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION PROGRAMS

There are many ways communities can cooperate. The following programs or actions were taken directly from the *Intergovernmental Cooperation Guide* published by the Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Voluntary Assistance

Your community, or another, could voluntarily agree to provide a service to your neighbors because doing so makes economic sense and improves service levels.

Trading Services

Your community and another could agree to exchange services. You could exchange the use of different pieces of equipment, equipment for labor, or labor for labor.

Renting Equipment

Your community could rent equipment to, or from, neighboring communities and other governmental units.

Contracting

Your community could contract with another community or jurisdiction to provide a service.

Routing County Services

Some services are already paid for through taxes and fees. (An example would be police protection services). Your Intergovernmental Cooperation Element could identify areas where improvements are needed and could recommend ways to cooperatively address them.

Sharing Municipal Staff

Your community could share staff with neighboring communities and other jurisdictions – both municipal employees and independently contracted professionals. You could share a building inspector, assessor, zoning administrator, clerk, etc.

Consolidating Services

Your community could agree with one or more other communities or governmental units to provide a service together.

Joint Use of a Facility

Your community could use a public facility along with other jurisdictions. The facility could be jointly owned, or one jurisdiction could rent space from another.

Joint Purchase and Ownership of Equipment

Your community could agree to jointly purchase and own equipment such as pothole patching machines, mowers, rollers, snowplows, etc.

Cooperative Purchasing

Cooperative purchasing, or procurement, is where jurisdictions purchase supplies and equipment together to gain more favorable prices.