

## Chapter 9:

# INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

## INTRODUCTION

The adage: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” speaks to the value of intergovernmental cooperation. Although the Town of Washburn is not the economic, educational, social or cultural center of the regional area, the Town itself still provides an integral part for the continued success of the region’s future. Many issues that may affect the Town of Washburn also affect other governments in the region. By cooperating with each other, all units of government can benefit. Intergovernmental cooperation is a “win-win” proposition for all involved.

This chapter provides a plan for the Town of Washburn to strengthen its relationship with other units of government. It provides an analysis of existing areas of cooperation and potential conflicts between governments, and it describes strategies to resolve the conflicts. It also includes goals, objectives, policies, and programs for joint planning and decision-making that affect the Town and the region.

## INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### OVERVIEW

#### **Description of Neighboring and Overlapping Governments**

Neighboring governments (those abutting the Town) include the City of Washburn, Town of Bayview, Town of Barksdale, Town of Bell, Town of Clover, Town of Port Wing and the Town of Tripp. The City of Bayfield and the City of Ashland, although they do not directly border the Town of Washburn, they still serve as important urbanized neighbors.

In addition, other towns and cities in the region, as well as the Red Cliff Reservation and the Bad River Reservation, provide opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation. Overlapping governments and governmental agencies include Bayfield County, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Washburn School District.

The Town of Washburn can also benefit by cooperating with various organizations including the City of Washburn Chamber of Commerce, the Alliance for Sustainability, the Wisconsin

Indianhead Technical Center, Northland College, the Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation, the Bayfield County Extension Office, and others.

The continued cooperation with the city and the surrounding towns is crucial for the expanding educational, economic, social and environmental opportunities and values for the students and residents of the Town of Washburn. Cooperative planning with these local governments on future public infrastructure and service projects could improve these services greatly for the region. Pooling resources in communities where resources are limited is important during lean time. Communities should cooperate in establishing and maintaining a clear framework for working together to provide services to residents and visitors and to preserve the rural character of the region while maintaining the unique identity of each local community.

### **Existing Cooperation**

The Town of Washburn has taken proactive steps in cooperating and working with neighboring and overlapping governments on numerous issues. The Town contracts with the City of Washburn to provide fire and emergency (ambulance) services, and Bayfield County provides police protection and roadway patrols. The Town also cooperates and works the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in protecting and preserving environmentally sensitive corridors (trout streams and rivers) and providing public parking areas near these resources. Many other examples exist as well.

Recently, the City of Washburn invited representatives from all neighboring and overlapping governments to participate in four intergovernmental cooperation meetings that the City facilitated as part of its own comprehensive planning process. Representatives from all neighboring and overlapping governments, including the Town of Washburn, attended the meetings. The meetings provided an excellent forum for the various governments to discuss opportunities to work together. The surrounding and overlapping governments also cooperated in reviewing and commenting on each other's Comprehensive Plans or existing Land Use Plans. Strong cooperative relationships exist between the Town of Washburn and neighboring and overlapping governments.

### **Existing Intergovernmental Agreements**

Washburn has several agreements with other governments. For example, the Town has an agreement with the neighboring City of Washburn to provide fire protection and emergency medical services. The Town relies upon Bayfield County's professional staff to provide zoning ordinance regulations and oversight, code enforcement, and assistance to those seeking specific land use permits and/or applications within the Town. The Town also has agreements with the County and State for road maintenance and repair, and the U.S. Forest Service to provide snowplowing and general road maintenance for the numerous miles of forestry roads within the Chequamegon National Forest. In addition, the Town of Washburn and the Washburn School District cooperate on numerous issues.

### Other Potential Intergovernmental Agreements

Intergovernmental agreements are the most widely used formal agreements used by local units of government in Wisconsin. Many of these agreements are used in the framework of sharing public services such as police, fire, and emergency services, or road maintenance, accounting, bookkeeping or miscellaneous professional services. These types of agreements can also be extended to include revenue sharing, establishing boundaries, and resolving land use issues or conflicts within boundary areas. The following are types of agreements that the Town may wish to consider and explore in the future if certain conditions or opportunities present themselves:

- 1) **Trading services.** The Town of Washburn and one or more of the surrounding communities could agree to exchange services or equipment, such as joint snowplowing of town line roads (each town does one side of the road) or plows or maintains roadways or facilities that are logistically easier for another municipality to maintain.
- 2) **Renting equipment.** The Town of Washburn could rent equipment to, or from, neighboring communities and other governmental units. Renting equipment can make sense for both communities - the community renting gets the use of the equipment without having to buy it, and the community renting out earns income from the equipment rather than having it sit idle.
- 3) **Sharing municipal staff.** The Town of Washburn could ask to share utilize staff from the neighboring communities and other jurisdictions – both municipal employees and independently contracted professionals. The City or County could share a building inspector, assessor, planner, engineer, zoning administrator, surveyor, accountant, drivers, mechanics, etc. whenever or if ever needed.
- 4) **Consolidating services.** The Town of Washburn could agree with one or more other communities or governmental units to provide a service together. Consolidation can make a particular service feasible when it otherwise might have been cost-prohibitive or inefficient.
- 5) **Joint use of a facility.** The Town of Washburn could use a public facility along with another jurisdiction(s). The facility could be jointly owned or one jurisdiction could rent space from another. Examples of facilities that can be shared are municipal buildings, garages, parks and campgrounds, education/job training centers, swimming pools, golf courses, or community centers.
- 6) **Joint purchase and ownership of equipment.** The Town of Washburn could agree with other jurisdictions to jointly purchase and own equipment such as pothole patching machines, mowers, rollers, shoulder-shaping machines, snowplows, street sweepers, and crack-sealers. Sharing equipment can be especially important for towns because road maintenance represents such a large percentage of their expenditures.

- 7) **Cooperative purchasing.** The Town of Washburn should consider cooperative purchasing, or procurement, where jurisdictions purchase supplies and equipment together to gain more favorable prices. In addition to saving money, cooperative purchasing reduces staff time in researching products, comparing prices, writing bid specifications, and administering the contract. Cooperative purchasing can also include buying used or surplus equipment from other jurisdictions.

There are also other state statutory methods for formalizing intergovernmental agreements for services, as follows:

- **General Agreements** (*authorized under §66.0301, Wis. Stats.*) This is the type of intergovernmental agreement that is most commonly used for services. These agreements grant municipalities with authority to cooperate on a very broad range of subjects. Specifically, municipalities may cooperate together for the “*receipt or furnishing of services or the joint exercise of any power or duty required or authorized by law.*” The only limitation is that municipalities with varying powers can only act with respect to the limit of their powers. This means that a general agreement cannot confer upon your community more powers than it already possesses.
- **Cooperative Boundary Agreements** (*authorized under §66.0307, Wis. Stats.*). If a community’s service sharing arrangement is part of a larger agreement about municipal boundaries, then you could utilize the cooperative boundary agreement statute. The statute requires that a plan be developed that describes, among other things, how services will be provided to the agreement area.
- **Stipulations and Orders** (*authorized under § 66.0225, Wis. Stats.*). This statute provides a boundary agreement procedure for municipalities that are locked in a lawsuit over boundaries. The statute provides the litigants a chance to settle their lawsuit by entering into a written *Stipulation and Order* that is subject to approval by the judge. A referendum may be held if requested by area residents. If the residents vote to approve the agreement, the Stipulation and Order becomes binding.
- **Municipal Revenue Sharing Agreements** (*authorized under §66.0305, Wis. Stats.*) This is the only type of agreement specific to revenue. It allows adjacent communities to share taxes and fees for specific uses or services. Examples may include where a city provides sewer and water to a residential development in a nearby town, and in return the town and city share in the property tax revenues.

The distinctions between these types of agreements are illustrated on the following Table 9-A.

<b>TABLE 9-A: DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT TYPES</b>				
	<b>General Agreements</b>	<b>Cooperative Boundary Agreements</b>	<b>Stipulations &amp; Orders</b>	<b>Revenue Sharing Agreements</b>
Used for?	Services	Boundaries, services, revenue sharing	Boundaries	Revenue sharing
Binding with boundaries?	No	Yes, period fixed by participants (10 years or longer with MBR approval).	Yes, so long as any party is willing to seek enforcement of the agreement	Yes, period fixed by participants (10 year minimum)
Notice required?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public hearing required?	No	Yes	No	Yes
Referendum?	No	Advisory referendum possible	Binding referendum possible	Advisory referendum possible
Who decides?	Participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating municipalities</li> <li>• MBR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipalities involved in the lawsuit</li> <li>• Judge</li> <li>• Area residents (if they request a referendum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating municipalities</li> </ul>
Who Reviews or Comments?	Participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating municipalities</li> <li>• MBR</li> <li>• Area jurisdictions</li> <li>• State agencies</li> <li>• RPC</li> <li>• County</li> <li>• Residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipalities involved in the lawsuit</li> <li>• Judge</li> <li>• Area residents (if they request a referendum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating municipalities</li> <li>• Residents</li> </ul>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, *Guide to Preparing the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element of a Local Comprehensive Plan*.

## **ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS**

The Town's Comprehensive Planning Committee investigated and attempted to identify any potential intergovernmental conflicts between the Town of Washburn and the neighboring and overlapping governments. Due to the overwhelming desire of its residents to retain the rural lifestyle and remain a low-density residential township, and the fact that most of the high density or intensive land use changes (such as commercial or manufacturing uses), would more than likely take place in the nearby City of Washburn, the potential for conflicts should be minimal. No major points of conflict have been identified between the Town of Washburn and the adjacent communities.

The following information summarizes key intergovernmental cooperation issues and opportunities that came out of the intergovernmental cooperation meetings that the City of Washburn facilitated as part of their comprehensive planning process. The Town Planning Committee has selected only those potential conflicts that may directly or indirectly affect their own Town, or those that may arise between the Town of Washburn and neighboring and overlapping governments. For further reference or conflicts, refer to corresponding chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

## Land Use

Land use issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- Explore opportunities to work together on land use planning issues near and along the shared corporate boundaries between the Town of Washburn and City of Washburn, especially along the County Highway C corridor.
- Ensure the City of Washburn controls or address land use practices that allow sprawling, poorly planned development in the rural areas of the region.
- Explore the possibility of working together to develop a regional or joint industrial park that would benefit the region, not just one community.
- Work together to preserve productive farmland in the region.
- Work together to address the long-term maintenance of closed landfills in the region.
- The Town and City of Washburn will work together and notify and discuss well in advance any ideas or talks of potential land annexation plans by the City. (*Note: due to the remaining available and developable land within the city limits, there are no immediate or future plans to annex any portion of the Town or neighboring lands within the next 20 years.*)

## Rivers, Streams, Lakes and Waterfront/Coastal Resources

The glorious rivers, streams, recreation lakes and waterfront and coastal resource issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- All entities need to work together to preserve and protect the various trout streams and rivers throughout the Town, the recreation lakes found in the Chequamegon Forest, and the wetlands and drainage ways that eventually feed into the rivers and streams that eventually drain into the Chequamegon Bay/Lake Superior basins.
- Recognize that Lake Superior is a regional resource that people throughout the area enjoy and depend on. Explore ways to ensure that all residents in the region have adequate access to Lake Superior.
- Work together to protect the Chequamegon Forest's and Chequamegon Bay's plants, animals, and water resources.

## **Transportation**

Transportation issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- Work together to enhance the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system. Explore ways to encourage use of the public transportation system. Work to make the public transportation system more energy efficient and cost effective.
- Explore the creation of a bus and/or rail transportation hub that could serve residents in the region as well as visitors from other areas of the country including Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.
- Explore opportunities to provide public parking and park and ride facilities that benefit the region. Promote carpooling opportunities.
- Encourage additional bicycle and pedestrian trails that connect communities and key destinations throughout the region.
- Enhance regional snowmobile and ATV trails and the connections between communities and key destinations including the Chequamegon National Forest. Address concerns relating to use of the trails.
- Work together to explore designating State Highway 13 as a scenic byway. Also, explore designating pertinent roads as rustic roads.

It is imperative that governments cooperate on transportation issues. Potential conflicts could arise if one community does not see the value of working together on regional trails, or if some communities do not contribute their fair share to addressing and supporting public transportation efforts.

## **Utilities and Community Facilities**

The Town of Washburn is willing to cooperate and assist with neighboring and overlapping governments on many issues relating to utilities and community facilities. The residents have indicated their desire to provide financial support of the nearby City of Washburn's library system and recreation programs, and also support of the City's fire and rescue services and facilities. Yet with all the cooperation that exists, governments can do more. Issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- Explore opportunities to work together on parks and recreation facilities that benefit the region.
- Continue to share and operate police, fire, and emergency medical services in a manner that provides quality, cost effective service.
- Work together to address the concerns of area school districts regarding declining enrollment and the need to upgrade facilities. Coordinate with the Washburn School District to explore the possibility of replacing the Washburn Middle/High School with a new school that may serve a broader area than it currently serves. Consider integrating regional recreation facilities with the creation of a new school.
- Promote recycling, reduction, and reuse of materials.

- Promote energy conservation programs and explore opportunities to develop sustainable energy production in the region, including wind and solar energy.
- Identify opportunities to share or trade equipment and services.
- Explore options to develop joint facilities for stockpiling road salt and sand, fuel stations, and other public works facilities.

Potential conflicts could arise if communities do not contribute their fair share to supporting the area's community facilities. For example, if the population of a neighboring town grows significantly, but the neighboring town does not provide additional park or recreation opportunities for its residents, other communities may see increased pressure on its parks and other community facilities without increased revenues to address the pressures. However, by working together, these types of issues can be successfully addressed.

### **Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources**

Washburn can do its part to address issues relating to the agricultural, natural and cultural resources, yet the region as a whole must cooperate to ensure the protection and enhancement of these resources. Agricultural, natural and cultural resources issues discussed among governments include the following:

- Recognize that the enhancement and protection of natural resources is strongly tied to the region's economy and its quality of life.
- Work to connect fragmented ecosystems.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen food production in the region, including aquaculture.
- Promote the region's historic and cultural resources.
- Work together to enhance and promote the creative professions in the region.

Potential conflicts between governments could arise if a jurisdiction allows insensitive land use practices that adversely affect the region's resources or another community. For example, a neighboring city or town that allows a major residential subdivision or large commercial/industrial use on prime agricultural land would conflict with the Town's vision to reduce sprawl, and more importantly preserve the existing natural and agricultural resources within the area.

### **Housing**

Housing issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- Recognize that economic development is tied to the region's ability to provide diverse housing options that meet the needs of the region.
- Promote quality, affordable rental options and provide transitional housing as needed.
- Address concerns over the proliferation of seasonal (second) homes in the region.

- Work to enhance property maintenance throughout the region.
- Work together as a region to discuss an appropriate balance of new housing between rural and urban areas.

Potential disagreements between governments could arise if, for example, a government promotes a high-density housing development in a rural area that cannot be adequately served by community facilities and services.

### **Economic**

Washburn's economy and the regional economy are connected. Consequently, the Town of Washburn and its neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions must cooperate to ensure that the regional economy is healthy. Economic issues and opportunities discussed among governments include the following:

- Continue to promote tourism as a means to grow the economy, but also explore other options that produce higher paying jobs.
- Explore technological innovations that can grow the regional economy in a healthy and sustainable manner. For example, explore the possibility of producing wind and solar energy, biodiesel fuels, and telecommuting hubs.
- Explore opportunities to use the Ashland Agricultural Research Station in a manner that continues to benefit the region.
- Capitalize on the tremendous number of public sector jobs and services in the region by exploring potential spin-off opportunities that would provide synergistic relationships between the public and private sectors.
- Promote and provide greater opportunities for the rural township residents to work from home or establish home-based businesses, which will reduce the travel, needs and costs between homes and employment bases.
- Work together to promote value-added industries that incorporate regional resources.
- Continue to coordinate regional events and festivals that draw people from across the country.

Potential conflicts could arise between governments if a government chooses to allow economic development that adversely affects the region's natural and social resources.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following goal is a broad statement that reflects the overall Town of Washburn's vision for intergovernmental cooperation. It represents the end that the Town is striving to attain. The following objectives are specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress towards the goal. The following policies are key actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives.

**Ch. 9 – Goal 1: The Town of Washburn and all neighboring and overlapping governmental jurisdictions work proactively and cooperatively to ensure that the Chequamegon & Nicolet Forest and Chequamegon Bay region has a strong, sustainable economy; respects natural resources; and meets human needs fairly and efficiently.**

**Objective 9.1:** Provide open communication and good working relationships between the Town of Washburn and neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

**Policy 9.1.a:** Participate and encourage efforts to organize intergovernmental workshops involving representatives from neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

**Policy 9.1.b:** Encourage neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to review and comment on amendments and updates to the Town of Washburn's Comprehensive Plan and other pertinent plans in the Town's future. Request that neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions allow for the same consideration to the Town of Washburn in the review and consideration of planning efforts that may affect the Town of Washburn.

**Policy 9.1.c:** Openly share information that may be beneficial to neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

**Policy 9.1.d:** Coordinate education efforts that may be beneficial to neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

**Objective 9.2:** Partner with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to provide efficient, cost effective, high-quality services, where practical or mutually beneficial.

**Policy 9.2.a:** Explore the possibility of sharing services and facilities with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions, where practical or mutually beneficial.

**Policy 9.2.b:** Support regional facilities and services that benefit the Town of Washburn and the region.

**Policy 9.2.c:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to coordinate shared purchases of bulk items and special equipment, where practical or mutually beneficial.

**Policy 9.2.d:** Work with the Washburn School District and neighboring communities to coordinate efforts to provide quality recreation programs and facilities for area residents.

**Objective 9.3:** Work proactively and cooperatively on planning issues that affect neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.

**Policy 9.3.a:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions on land use decisions that may affect the other jurisdictions.

**Policy 9.3.b:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to ensure that the Town of Washburn and the surrounding area have a safe, efficient, well maintained, and connected transportation system.

**Policy 9.3.c:** Work with the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system and neighboring and overlapping governments to promote the use of the public transportation system, and encourage the inclusion of the Town as a future bus route or stop if demand calls for one.

**Policy 9.3.d:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to preserve and enhance natural, coastal, cultural, and agricultural resources in the region.

**Policy 9.3.e:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to coordinate development and improvements of utilities and community facilities that meet the needs of area residents.

**Policy 9.3.f:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to ensure that there is a full range of housing to meet the diverse needs of the area.

**Policy 9.3.g:** Work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions on economic development issues and planning that will strengthen the economy of the region.

**Policy 9.3.h:** Partner with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to establish alternative energy programs that will provide sustainable, efficient, cost effective energy that is practical and mutually beneficial.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION PLAN

Key concepts of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Plan include the following:

- Periodically meet with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to identify issues and opportunities for cooperation.
- Openly share information that may be of interest to neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions; for example, distribute planning reports to neighboring communities and invite others to attend City meetings and seminars when appropriate.
- Help organize joint planning committees to address regional issues.
- Share purchases of bulk items and special equipment.
- Continue to share services, such as fire protection and emergency medical services. Trade services where practical and beneficial.
- Continue to share facilities, equipment, and services where practical and mutually beneficial.

- Communicate and coordinate all components of the Town of Washburn's Comprehensive Plan with other jurisdictions.
- Explore opportunities for alternative energy programs.
- Work together to address the concerns of area school districts.
- Cooperate on developing and maintaining parks and recreation facilities that benefit the region.
- The Town of Washburn will cooperate with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to ensure that the Chequamegon Forest and Bay region has a strong, sustainable economy; respects natural resources; and meets human needs fairly and efficiently.