

CHAPTER 7 Intergovernmental Cooperation Element

66.1001 (2)(g) Wis. Stat.:

Intergovernmental Cooperation element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent local governmental units, for sighting and building public facilities and sharing public services. The element shall analyze the relationship of the local governmental unit to school districts and adjacent local governmental units and to the region, the state, and other governmental units. The element shall incorporate any plans or agreements to which the local governmental unit is a party under s. 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.

Section 7.1 Introduction

The Portage County Urban Area functions as a single community for purposes of education, health, employment, shopping, leisure time activity, and other human activities. Transportation, communication, and some governmental linkages further contribute to a single functional community. While the interconnected nature of much of daily living is undeniable, the individuality of Urban Area municipalities can be expected to continue, and with it, localized community identity and development objectives.

The intent of this chapter is to identify opportunities for establishing or maintaining cooperation between local units of government. Cooperation improves lines of communication between different units of government, and aids in the recognition and possible resolution of, conflicts between jurisdictions, and allows for the identification of mutual service needs and improvements.

Section 7.2 Inventory of Intergovernmental Agreements

The communities within the Portage County Urban Area (City of Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, and Park Ridge, the Town of Hull and parts of the Towns Plover, Linwood, Carson, and Stockton) each have a number of existing agreements or relationships with each other. Information on these relationships, which range from fire protection to utility services to snow plowing, can be found in the individual municipal Comprehensive Plans. The focus here will be projects that are truly “metropolitan” in nature.

A. Sewer Service Area Planning

The general purpose of the current (original) *Stevens Point Urban Area Sewer Service Plan* was to develop a 20-year sanitary sewer boundary for what it described as the “Stevens Point urban area”, along with the institutional structure for implementing the Plan and managing the extension of sanitary sewage services within the urban area. The 1983 document was prepared under the direction of an appointed Advisory Committee, consisting of local elected officials from Stevens Point, the Villages of Plover, Whiting, and Park Ridge, and Towns of Hull, Plover and Linwood, to comply with the Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 121 requirement that a Sewer Service Plan be prepared for all urban areas over 10,000 in population.

The sanitary sewer service area boundary of the plan identified the geographic land area within which sanitary sewer service *could be* made available for the duration of the plan (in this case 2003) through a cost-effective and environmentally acceptable manner. In addition to

delineating an urban sewer service boundary, the Sewer Service Plan provided a framework for future planning at each municipal level with its goals and policies intended to also be useful in the development of local policy direction with respect to land use decisions within the communities.

Twenty-three years have passed since the plan's adoption, with no update to the text occurring over that period. The boundary has been adjusted a number of times (see Chapter 4 of this Plan). A comprehensive revision of this plan will be undertaken beginning in 2006. Due to the continued growth of urban development patterns to the east of Stevens Point and Village of Plover projected in the City and Village Comprehensive Plans, the Town of Stockton will likely become a member of the Advisory Committee. Any revision or redrafting of the existing Sewer Service Plan document should also include a requirement that the Sewer Service Plan be updated every five (5) years; to avoid the current plan lapse and problems it creates.

B. Urban Area Transportation Planning

There is long range transportation planning currently underway within the Portage County Urban Area, involving State Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Portage County, and local municipal officials. The grant-funded project has been in-process since 1997. The purpose of the "Stevens Point Area Transportation Plan" (SPAT) is to:

- Prepare a transportation plan for the Stevens Point Urban Area to guide WisDOT and local units of government in making appropriate transportation decisions through 2030;
- Develop a travel demand model as a planning application tool;
- Laying the planning foundation in anticipation of the Portage County Urban Area reaching 50,000 in population, and forming a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Transportation planning is required of all metropolitan areas as a prerequisite to receiving federal funding for street and highway, transit and bicycle and pedestrian facility projects. Usually each metropolitan area is assigned a Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO, to carry out these required transportation planning activities. In Wisconsin, the Governor, (through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation) designates an MPO for each metropolitan area (population greater than 50,000). The Stevens Point Urban Area is expected to reach this threshold within the near future.

The study area planning boundary utilized in developing the SPAT, includes the City of Stevens Point, Villages of Park Ridge, Plover and Whiting, and parts of the Towns of Carson, Hull Linwood, Plover and Stockton. All transportation planning activities pertaining to this project will be overseen by Technical and Policy Advisory Committees. The Technical Advisory Committee is comprised of transportation and planning staff at the municipal, County and State levels of government. The Policy Advisory Committee will be the Portage County Urban Area Steering Committee, is comprised of elected or appointed representatives from each unit of government in the SPAT study area.

The main purpose of the plan is to identify future road network needs and prioritize any actions that may need to be taken to correct deficiencies. It is a capital improvements planning tool directed specifically at transportation.

C. Urban Area Cable Television Contract

The intent of this agreement was to issue a nonexclusive franchise agreement to provide public cable television and other services within the Portage County Urban Area. The Village of Park Ridge participates in this agreement along with the City of Stevens Point, Villages of Plover and Whiting, and the Towns of Hull, Plover, Stockton, Sharon, Carson, and Linwood.

D. Emergency Facilities and Services

The Urban Area communities of Stevens Point, Plover, Whiting and Park Ridge each have municipal fire departments (see Map 4.4 in the Utilities & Community Facilities Element of this Comprehensive Plan). All Portage County Fire Departments participate in a countywide mutual aid agreement ensuring compatibility between responding agencies. A statewide fire network frequency and communication system with other fire departments has also been established. All fire departments check pre-fire response plans and perform inspections on a regular basis. Firefighters are trained using usual fire scenarios for local hazards on a regular basis.

During 2001, the Portage County Fire Chief's Association developed and implemented a MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System). This pre-planning system identifies resources needed in the event of a variety of mutual aid fire situations. The system utilizes resources in a method that does not deplete the assets of any one fire department while mobilizing resources of multiple departments and utilizing a "move-up" system. All emergency dispatchers have received training in the utilization of the MABAS system.

Portage County is served by 18 fire districts, of which 13 districts operate fire stations located within the County. Of the 13 fire districts located within Portage County, seven; Amherst, Dewey, Hull, Plover, Rudolph, Stevens Point, and Whiting offer rescue services. The Town of Stockton is in the process of establishing their own fire district.

The Portage County Ambulance Service, operated by the Stevens Point Fire Department, serves all of Portage County. The SPFD also provides emergency medical public education and ambulance services at the Paramedic Level to all of Portage County. Portage County operates four fully equipped ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulance vehicles and one BLS (Basic Life Support) vehicle. Every municipality in Portage County supports and/or operates a medical First Responder program. The Village of Plover first responders are trained to the EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) level. In addition to the above services, Portage County supports two Industrial First Responder groups that respond to situations within their own facilities.

Portage County and the City of Stevens Point are seeking a comprehensive study of community needs for an ambulance treatment-transport service, paramedical based, with support of First Responders and/or EMS non-treatment-transport personnel. This study shall also include an assessment of the current fire-based paramedic treatment-transport service, and will include considerations/options for making high quality and cost effective EMS services available to all Portage County residents.

The City of Stevens Point and the Village of Plover have their own municipal police departments. The Portage County Sheriff's Department provides protective service to all other areas of Portage County. The Law Enforcement agencies have a countywide mutual aid agreement which allows them to assist each other.

To coordinate these services, Portage County has developed and maintains an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). This plan provides a general outline for county and municipal

emergency response personnel during disasters. The document serves to coordinate the County and local units of government during times of response and recovery.

E. Solid Waste and Recycling

The Portage County Sanitary Landfill is owned by Portage County and operated for the benefit of all County residents and businesses in the most economical and environmentally-friendly manner possible. The Villages of Plover, Whiting, and Park Ridge are among the number of Portage County communities that are part of a consortium contracting with a private waste hauler through the Portage County Solid Waste Management Board for solid waste collection and disposal at the County Landfill. The City of Stevens Point does its own solid waste collection and hauling for disposal at the County Landfill.

F. Comprehensive Planning

In 1999, the State of Wisconsin created new requirements for municipal long-range planning documents. As a result, all Portage County Towns, Villages, and City of Stevens Point found that they were required to adopt a new “comprehensive plan” to guide their future growth and development activities. In May of 2001 the Portage County Planning & Zoning Department, supported by signature of the grant application by all Portage County municipalities, was awarded a \$504,000 grant to work with the municipalities to draft comprehensive plan documents to meet the State content requirements. Also included in the grant program was the completion of plan documents for Portage County overall, as well as a separate plan specifically for the central, urban core of the County.

The Portage County Urban Area Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was formed in June of 2001. The Committee is made up of two representatives each from the nine Urban Area communities (Stevens Point, Villages of Plover, Whiting, Park Ridge, and Towns of Hull, Plover, Stockton, Carson, and Linwood). Meeting over a period of years has allowed the member communities to communicate in a formal and regular fashion that did not previously exist, and has proven to be a fertile ground for airing issues and concerns for metropolitan-level discussion. The product of their work will be a planning document adopted by the Urban Area incorporated communities to provide general, unified goals for future growth.

Section 7.3 Analysis of Intergovernmental Agreements

The current metropolitan-wide agreements are considered satisfactory at this time. Additional opportunities for mutual aid and cooperation should be pursued where possible and feasible.

Section 7.4 Identification of Existing/Potential Issues or Conflicts and Procedures for Resolving Them

A. Stevens Point Area Public School District

The Stevens Point Area Public School District is controlled by the Stevens Point School Board, which is an independent political body. The Urban Area governments do not control the operation of the public school system. The governmental units can express opinions to the School Board and provide input into the operation of the School District.

The Urban Area governments should work with the school district on:

- Issues relating to the future of neighborhood schools. Recent drops in enrollment have resulted in the closure of Jackson School. Governmental units should have input into the

future of the remaining schools and the disposition of closed school properties such as Jackson School and the former Emerson School site.

- Continuation of recreational programs.
- Expanding the shared use of facilities.
- The potential need for new schools in expanding areas of the Urban Area.

B. Towns of Hull, Plover, and Stockton.

- The Urban Area governmental units have identified the areas east of Stevens Point and Village of Plover, currently in the Towns of Hull, Plover, and Stockton, as the area targeted for future urban growth. Conflicts may arise between the Towns and the City/Village due to perceived loss of tax base.

Most of the lands projected to be annexed are currently in farm use. The amount of Town taxes collected from farmed lands is relatively small due to the State of Wisconsin policy of taxing farm land at its agricultural use. Typical Town assessment for 40 acre farmland tracts next to the City are Hull: \$4,600/40 acre; Plover: \$5,966/ 40 acre; Stockton: \$6,370/40 acre. Local town taxes collected on these 40-acre parcels is Hull: \$17.47/40 acre; Plover: \$13.51/40 acre; and Stockton: \$21.17/40 acre (source: Portage County Treasurer's Office, 2004 tax year). Loss of tax base is not a large financial impact to the townships. Discussions are underway with the Towns to discuss proposed land use categories for these areas, and how existing town residents would be protected. Current State law requires the annexing City/Village to compensate the Town from which property is annexed with what the tax collections would have been for the annexed property for a period of five years.

- Adoption of common Official Street Maps will assist in defusing conflicts related to future street planning.
- Timing of future development is potentially an issue of conflict. Development on larger lots using on-site private sewage systems has proven in the past to be an impediment to future City/Village expansion. Prevention of premature development while allowing a reasonable use of the land owner's property will have to be addressed. Development decisions will continue to reside with the property owner. Coordinating development timing among various independent owners will likely continue to be a challenge.

C. Portage County

The County is the logical regional level of government able to implement regional solutions to regional issues. A few future issues include expansion of the Business Park, continuation of ambulance service, regional transportation issues, and regional recreational facilities including the next regional urban park.

Section 7.5 Intergovernmental Cooperation Vision Statement Adopted June 26, 2002

IN 2025, units of local government cooperate routinely on decisions related to the provision of services countywide. This cooperation and collaboration has resulted in a truly integrated community, where service delivery is based on maximizing efficiency. The people of Portage County recognize that they have the responsibility to be active in community decision-making,

and units of local government rely on that participation as an integral part of their decision processes.

Key Vision Ideas for Intergovernmental Cooperation:

- Local units of government in Portage County cooperate with each other to coordinate the provision of shared services in the most cost effective and efficient ways.
- Communication between local units of government is routine and productive.
- Citizen participation by people of all ages is encouraged and utilized in community decision-making processes.
- Local units of government work together to develop creative ways to plan for and share the benefits of growth across municipal boundaries.

Section 7.6 Urban Area Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals, Objectives and Policies

A. Goals

1. Encourage cooperation between the Urban Area and other units of government to ensure appropriate, cost effective services and facilities.
2. Enter into intergovernmental agreements.

B. Objectives

1. The local units of government in the Urban Area should work together to develop creative ways to plan for the timing and the nature of growth across municipal borders.
2. Share services across county or municipal borders.
3. Periodically review intergovernmental agreements to re-affirm they are still in the interests of the governmental units.

C. Policies

1. Jointly develop, adopt and administer Official Street maps in the extra-territorial areas.
2. Establish / maintain communication with the municipalities for discussion of land use and other related issues. These may include land use issues, park planning, and recreational trail planning
3. Maintain existing intergovernmental relations and cooperation with various municipalities.
4. Take an active role in the Urban Area Transportation Plan.
5. Notify Town government when items are on City/Village agendas that may affect town interests or town residents.
6. Prevent development of land in future urban expansion (extraterritorial) areas prior to provision of municipal services.

Section 7.7 Urban Area Conclusions Regarding Intergovernmental Relations

- A. The Urban Area units of government, particularly the City of Stevens Point and Village of Plover should:

- Coordinate with Portage County to improve ambulance and emergency service to the urban area.
- Expand mutual working relationships with the Towns of Hull, Plover and Stockton.
- Continue to work with the Portage County Business Council and the Central Wisconsin Area Economic Development Council (Centergy).
- Continue to work with Towns of Hull, Plover and Stockton on extraterritorial and land use issues.
- Work with Portage County on topics that reach beyond urban boundaries or where project benefits reach beyond urban boundaries, including ambulance service, regional transportation issues, regional parks and recreation issues, and expansion of the Business Park.
- Continue to work with Portage County Solid Waste Department.
- Work with Department of Transportation and Portage County Highway Department on transportation needs.
- Work with the Stevens Point School District on school issues such as maintaining neighborhood schools as neighborhood centers and sharing of facilities.

B. Continuation of the Urban Area Steering Committee

Throughout the Comprehensive Planning process, the Urban Area Steering Committee has functioned as a sounding board for growth and development issues within the multi-jurisdictional core of Portage County. Each community participating in the Urban Area discussions has benefited from the information presented, opinions expressed, and conclusions drawn. Some issues of area-wide importance, however, have come into being beyond the range of consideration by the Urban Area Committee. Unfortunately, in the absence of a mechanism for encouraging or requiring larger-area discussions of these projects beyond their normal approval channels, operations of other committees, such as Sewer Service Committee, were distracted from their primary purpose in order to achieve results that were beyond their purview.

The Urban Area municipal governments have procedures in place for development approval that have been successfully implemented for many years. With the Urban Area Committee scheduled to be disbanded when their charge of drafting the Portage County Urban Area Comprehensive Plan is completed, consideration should be given to continue utilizing the Urban Area Steering Committee to discuss issues of regional impact and forward input to respective Boards or Councils for their consideration on intergovernmental agreements, or as growth or development issues arise. In order for this idea to be undertaken, the Urban Area communities will need to take action individually to sanction exploration of this new collective activity.