

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION ELEMENT

Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation occurs when officials from two or more jurisdictions communicate visions or coordinate plans, policies, or programs on issues of mutual interest. This type of cooperation is important because the actions of one government often impact surrounding municipalities. Examples can be seen from environmental components, such as air and water, which move freely over man-made boundaries. "Everybody is downstream from somebody," could summarize the need for this element.

This element allows the Town of Garfield to keep the Comprehensive Plan consistent with plans from neighboring municipalities and government units.

According to the WI DOA, Wisconsin ranks thirteenth nationwide in total number of governmental units and third nationwide in governmental units per capita. Having so many governmental units allows for very local representation and means that Wisconsin residents have numerous opportunities to participate in local decision-making. Benefits of intergovernmental cooperation include:

- **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.
- **Address Regional Issues**
By 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.
- **Early Identification of Issues**
Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before the political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.

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 siting 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 §66.0301, §66.0307, §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.

§ 66.1001(2)(g), Wis. Stat.

- **Reduced Litigation**
Communities that cooperate are able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save a community money, as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.
- **Consistency**
Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- **Predictability**
Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.
- **Understanding**
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.
- **Trust**
Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions.
- **History of Success**
When jurisdictions cooperate successfully in one area, the success creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.
- **Service to Citizens**
The biggest beneficiaries of intergovernmental cooperation are citizens for whom government was created in the first place. They may not understand, or even care about, the intricacies of a particular intergovernmental issue, but all Wisconsin residents can appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment and a strong economy.

Because the Town of Garfield is a smaller rural community, it relies heavily on neighboring municipalities to provide services, and therefore, intergovernmental cooperation is a very important element to the Town.

Existing Agreements

Distinguishing between Intergovernmental Agreement Types

	General Agreements (§ 66.0301, Stats.)	Stipulations & Orders (§ 66.0225, Stats.)	Revenue Sharing Agreements (§66.0305, Stats.)	Cooperative Boundary Agreements (§66.0307, Stats.)
Used for?	Services	Boundaries	Revenue sharing	Boundaries, services, revenue sharing
Binding with boundaries?	No	Yes, so long as any party is willing to seek enforcement of the agreement	Yes, period fixed by participants (10 year minimum)	Yes, period fixed by participants (10 years or longer with MBR approval).
Notice required?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public hearing required?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Referendum?	No	Binding referendum possible	Advisory referendum possible	Advisory referendum possible
Who decides?	Participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities involved in the lawsuit • Judge • Area residents (if they request a referendum) 	Participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating municipalities • MBR
Who reviews or comments?	Participating municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities involved in the lawsuit • Judge • Area residents (if they request a referendum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating municipalities • Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating municipalities • MBR • Area jurisdictions • State agencies • RPC • County • Residents

Snowplowing

The Town currently does not own a snowplow and has relied on private contractors to provide the service. A new snowplow would cost the Town about \$150,000 plus labor, service, and storage. Based on the history of costs, at this time, it is more feasible to continue contracting for snow removal versus ownership.

Libraries

The Town relies on public libraries in the Village of Osceola, Village of St. Croix Falls, Village of Balsam Lake, Village of Dresser and the City of Amery. These libraries are all part of the Indianhead Federated Library System; a state funded agency aimed at providing access to public libraries for all residents in the area. Among the many services provided by this agency is a “books by mail” program aimed at residents

who require assistance to leave their homes. Residents in the Town of Garfield are offered this service.

Road Maintenance

The Town relies on private contractors to provide road maintenance. A new snowplow would cost the Town about \$150,000 plus labor, service, and storage. Based on the history of costs, at this time, it is more feasible to continue contracting for snow removal versus ownership.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facilities

Residents and businesses within the Town of Garfield contract directly with private solid waste disposal companies. The companies available in the area include:

Waterman Sanitation: 715-268-6471

Waste Management: 800-782-7347

Recycling is available on scheduled dates twice during each month at the Town Hall in Wanderoos. The Town maintains a calendar that is available on the Town's website.

Police/Fire/EMT/911

The Dresser Osceola Garfield Fire Association (DOG Fire) was created in 1960 under the ownership of the Towns of Osceola and Garfield and the Village of Dresser. The volunteer association has two fire stations; one in downtown Dresser and the other in Wanderoos. There are currently 14 trucks of all types in operation. DOG also provides Emergency Medical First Responders. In 2005, the Town of Garfield spent \$93,091.55 on the DOG Fire Department.

Private Utilities

Private utility services are provided to each resident within the Town. Some of the current service providers include:

Telephone and internet services:	Amerytel / Centurytel
Gas and electric services:	Xcel Energy and Polk-Burnett
General utility locates:	Digger's Hotline (800-242-8511)

School Districts

The Town of Garfield is split between three school districts; Osceola, Amery, and St. Croix Falls.

Results from the community survey showed relatively little interest with the school districts. This may be a sign that there are no existing conflicts between the school

districts at this time. Many responders wrote next to the questions that they didn't know or weren't informed enough to answer. The results are shown below:

The Town has a good working relationship with the Osceola School District

Strongly Agree	15	4.57%
Agree	70	21.34%
Disagree	4	1.22%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.30%
No opinion	238	72.56%

The Town has a good working relationship with the Amery School District

Strongly Agree	16	4.88%
Agree	94	28.66%
Disagree	6	1.83%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
No opinion	212	64.63%

The Town of Garfield has a good working relationship with the St. Croix Falls School District

Strongly Agree	16	4.89%
Agree	66	20.18%
Disagree	4	1.22%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.31%
No opinion	240	73.39%

Adjacent Local Governments

The town shares a border with the Towns of Osceola, St. Croix Falls, Balsam Lake, Lincoln, and Alden.

The Town of Garfield has numerous existing informal agreements with neighboring local governments concerning roads shared on the boundaries of the Town. The Town has communicated with the Town of Alden in the past over service sharing and has recently talked with the Town of Lincoln for exchanging roadway in order to reduce costs on both sides.

Again, the results from the community survey showed that the majority of residents don't have much of an opinion about the relationship between the Town and neighboring communities. Many responders wrote next to the questions that they didn't know or weren't informed enough to answer.

The Town has a good working relationship with neighboring communities

Strongly Agree	14	4.27%
Agree	98	29.88%
Disagree	8	2.44%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
No opinion	208	63.41%

County

Polk County provides a wide array of services to the Town of Garfield. These services include, but not limited to:

1. Police protection
2. Recycling services
3. Completion of tax statement by the county treasurer
4. Joint purchasing of some supplies (mostly office) through the county
5. Economic Development

Additional information on services that are offered by Polk County can be found on the Polk County website at www.co.polk.wi.us and on the Polk County Tourism website at www.polkcountytourism.com.

From the results of the community survey, over half of residents have little opinion over the relationship between the Town and Polk County. The survey results are as follows:

The Town has a good working relationship with Polk County

Strongly Agree	18	5.50%
Agree	102	31.19%
Disagree	8	2.45%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.31%
No opinion	198	60.55%

West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is statutorily charged with the responsibility of planning for the physical, social, and economic development of the region. To accomplish this mission, the Commission conducts area wide planning and provides technical assistance to local governments. Their services include economic development, community development, transportation, environment and recreation, and mapping and graphics among others.

State

The Town has a good working relationship with WI DNR

Strongly Agree	13	3.99%
Agree	91	27.91%
Disagree	4	1.23%
Strongly Disagree	2	0.61%
No opinion	216	66.26%

The Town has a good working relationship with WI DOT

Strongly Agree	10	3.14%
Agree	81	25.47%
Disagree	6	1.89%
Strongly Disagree	3	0.94%
No opinion	218	68.55%

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR performs a variety of responsibilities for environmental quality, state parks, and recreation. The department is divided into five regions of the State. The Town of Garfield is located within the Northern region.

Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

This department is divided into eight districts for administrative and programmatic purposes. The Town of Garfield is located in District 6. The district office is located in Eau Claire.

Department of Commerce (DOC)

The Department of Commerce administers and enforces state laws and regulations regarding building construction, safety, and health. Plan review and site inspection are part of the departments responsibilities in protecting the health and welfare of people in constructed environments.

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

The main responsibilities of this department concern the farmland preservation program and certain agricultural practices.

Department of Revenue (DOR)

The DOR is responsible for assessing real estate.

Other Governmental Units

Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA)

Wisconsin Towns Association is a non-profit, non-partisan statewide organization created under s. 60.23(14) of the Wisconsin Statutes to protect the interests of the state's 1,259 towns and to improve town government. The association is organized into six districts and is headquartered in Shawano. WTA relies on regular district meetings, an annual statewide convention, publications, participation in cooperative training programs and other means to support the goal of keeping grassroots government strong and efficient in Wisconsin.

1,000 Friends of Wisconsin

1,000 Friends of Wisconsin was created to protect and enhance Wisconsin's urban and rural landscapes by providing citizens with the inspiration, information and tools they need to effectively participate in the decisions that have the greatest impact on community health: where we live, work, learn, play and how we get from one place to another. They accomplish their work through three major efforts:

1. Promoting Implementation of Smart Growth
2. Policy Development and Advocacy
3. Research and Information Sharing

Ideas for how to Cooperate with Services

- Voluntary assistance (mutual aid)
- Trading services
- Renting equipment
- Contracting
- Routine county services
- Sharing municipal staff (building inspector, assessor, accountant, etc.)
- Consolidating services (sharing facilities, joint purchasing, etc.)

Existing/Potential Conflicts

There are no existing conflicts between the Town of Garfield and any other jurisdictions. Perhaps the greatest potential conflict would involve the sanitary district around Lake Wapogasset. Such a scenario could include the expansion of the service district. Other stakeholders in this potential conflict could include the City of Amery, Polk County, and the Lake Wapogasset/Bear Trap Lake Association.

Conflict Resolution

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the intergovernmental cooperation element addresses a process that the community can use to resolve conflicts. Recommended methods for conflict resolution include:

a. Mediation

Easily the most recommended form of conflict resolution. Mediation is a cooperative process involving two or more parties and a mediator. The Mediator acts as a neutral third party and is highly trained in conflict resolution to help all parties reach a mutually acceptable settlement. A mediated outcome is often more favored by both sides of the disputing parties, is settled faster, and costs less than a prolonged law suit.

Possible mediators could include County Planning agency staff, Regional planning commission staff, UW Extension agents, and retired or active judges and attorneys.

b. Binding arbitration

This is 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 of the parties. The parties present evidence and examine witnesses and the arbitrator makes a determination based on evidence.

c. Non-binding arbitration

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

d. Early neutral evaluation

Early neutral evaluation is 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.

e. Focus group

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

f. Mini-trial

These consist of presentations by the parties to a panel 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.

g. Moderated settlement conference

This is a process in which conferences are conducted by a neutral person who hears brief presentations from the parties in order to facilitate negotiations. The neutral person renders an advisory opinion in aid of negotiation.

h. 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.

Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs

Goal: Establish a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with adjacent municipalities and jurisdictions.

Objectives:

- Work with other local governments, state agencies, school districts, lake associations, etc. on land use and community development issues of mutual concern.
- Maintain open communication.
- Minimize costs of services and facilities.
- Offer a forum for joint meetings.

Policy:

- Inventory all equipment owned by the Town of Garfield.
- Work to resolve actual and potential conflicts.

Program:

- Distribute inventory list to all neighboring municipalities.
- Conduct yearly meeting with the Lake Wapogasset Bear Trap Association and the Lake Wapogasset Sanitary Sewer District to share concerns.