

ELEMENT 7: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

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 consider, to the greatest extent possible, the maps and plans of any military base or installation, with at 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 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.

In order to meet the requirements of the State of Wisconsin for the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element, the following will be addressed:

7.1 VISIONING

7.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

7.2.1 PERTINENT EXISTING AGREEMENTS

7.3 SWOT ANALYSIS

7.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

7.5 EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

7.6 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

7.1 VISIONING

From the March 25th, 2009 County Plan Meeting:

Vision Statement:

Nurture an environment of divergent viewpoints and responsibilities so that governmental units may work in harmony and cooperation to reduce conflict and duplication of services and increasing efficiencies.

7.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The most successful and cost effective governmental entities work cooperatively with other units of government and the private sector in order to meet the needs and demands of the citizens they serve. Examining relationships County with the municipalities both within and outside its borders would serve the County well in providing services and being cost effective. This element of the comprehensive plan deals with issues related to internal as well as external issues around cooperation amongst governmental entities.

This is the element within the Comprehensive Plan where the process chosen for the development of Polk County's Comprehensive Plan should shine. One of the goals of that process is to establish a common direction for the County that is in line with the majority opinions of County residents. By using input from the local level, the plan should reflect the needs and vision of the residents by allowing more local input in the process.

A major issue brought up is intragovernmental cooperation at Polk County. Currently, many departments are competing for scarce dollars within the County budget and there seems to be a lack of common direction at the County level. Charting a new direction for the County will involve establishing funding priorities and assigning oversight authority to see that identified priorities are addressed.

The County must identify and improve its own (intragovernmental) structure, operations, and communications before it is in a position to facilitate adequate intergovernmental coordination.

7.2.1 PERTINENT EXISTING AGREEMENTS

Here is a partial list of the current intergovernmental agreements that Polk County is a participant in:

- A multi-jurisdictional grant for comprehensive planning with the State of Wisconsin and 24 municipalities
- Revenue sharing and mutual aid agreements with municipalities
- Agreement with West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission for planning services, loan administration, etc.
- Shared tourism center
- Shared law enforcement in towns
- Polk County has an agreement with the majority of its towns to administer the Polk County Comprehensive Land Use Ordinance
- Road maintenance agreements

7.3 SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths:

Overall, zoning and Zoning Office work well with towns – excellent methods and procedures

Employees are very competent and have a good work ethic

UW-Extension is a great resource

Weaknesses:

Ordinances are outdated and uncodified

Unfunded mandates (weakness in lobbying to get more money for mandates)

Regional Planning Commission is not using the current talent efficiently

No focal point for County decisions, therefore departments are divergent and adversarial, competing for money.

Governing boards' operating policies are outdated

Opportunities:

Hire a grant writer

Increase transparency in decision making

General discussion was on opportunities related to taking advantage of strengths and addressing the weaknesses

Better administration of a county direction

Threats:

General discussion on threats presented by obstacles to taking advantage of strengths and addressing weaknesses.

7.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

- Consolidation and sharing of services for cost savings
- Additional meetings with surrounding communities and communities within Polk County to ensure services and efforts are not needlessly being duplicated

Many of the issues most pressing for Polk County -- e.g., preservation of quality agricultural lands/soils and preservation and enhancement of water quality -- do not follow political boundaries. In order to make appropriate headway on these issues, cooperation with other political units of government will be required.

Currently there are efforts underway to work on the water quality of the St. Croix River through multi-jurisdictional collaboration. Polk County should continue to seek and nurture such partnerships if efforts to enhance the water quality of the St. Croix and all of its surface and ground waters.

In regard to farmland preservation, representatives from Polk County are meeting regularly with citizens from St. Croix County and Pierce County to review and evaluate the State of Wisconsin's new Working Lands Proposal for farmland preservation. Discussions revolve around working towards finding the best means for western Wisconsin to preserve its prime agricultural lands.

As mentioned several times within this plan, the Twin Cities metro area is the single largest source of development pressure for Polk County. One of the ways to deal with these development pressures is to meet and evaluate options with units of government in Minnesota to help them address development there, so that less of the unwanted affects of development occur here in Polk County. The multi-state nature that would be inherent in these discussions will present interesting challenges.

7.5 EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

- Unfunded State and Federal Mandates
- Poor intragovernmental cooperation
- Departments are competing for limited financial resources
- Lack of clear direction/priorities for the county
- Differing priorities or standards for land use, water quality, etc.

Means to resolve conflicts:

- Hold meetings with stakeholders in the above to resolve the issues
- Lobby for additional funds and grants to cover unfunded mandates

7.6 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Evaluate existing intergovernmental cooperation agreements for their effectiveness and to address gaps

Objectives:

- 1) Research additional agreements to improve service deliveries and/or cost-effectiveness*

Goal 2: Improve intragovernmental cooperation and communication

Objectives:

- 1) Hold regular meetings on county issues*
- 2) Encourage more interactions among decision makers at the county*
- 3) Assign an administrative direction to the county*

Goal 3: Continue participating in effective intergovernmental agreements

Goal 4: Participate in effective intergovernmental agreements that deal with issues that cover more than one jurisdiction.