

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.

Cooperation improves lines of communication between different units of government, aids in the recognition and possible resolution of conflicts between jurisdictions, and allows for the identification of mutual service needs and improvements. The intent of this chapter is to identify, inventory, and analyze existing and potential cooperative relationships.

Section 7.1 Inventory and Analysis Intergovernmental Relationships

A. Cooperative Relationships within Portage County

All Portage County Departments and services are available for residents of the County. While some departments are more visible than others they all coordinate and work together to best serve the needs of Portage County residents.

1. Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

There are currently four different sections operating under the Planning and Zoning Department; they include Planning and Groundwater Management, Code Administration, Land Conservation, and Justice Programs.

The Planning and Groundwater Management Section includes staff and resources to assist local communities in the preparation or amending of various plan documents including comprehensive plans. Staff can also assist in water quality testing associated with siting new developments.

The Code Administration Section staff is responsible for administering the County's Zoning, Wellhead Protection, Tower, Subdivision, Floodplain Zoning, Shoreland Zoning, Non-metallic Mining Reclamation, and Private Sewage System Ordinances. Fifteen of seventeen Towns currently participate under the Portage County Zoning Program; the Town of Pine Grove does not have any zoning; the Town of Grant administers their own zoning program.

The Land Conservation Section staff works with individuals to design and implement conservation practices. Assistance is provided to Towns upon request.

The Justice Programs section staff oversees all community interventions programs, is the liaison between the courts and law enforcement and monitors all contracts for service providers and grants related to justice.

2. Portage County Highway Department

The Highway Department of Portage County maintains and plows State and County Roads in the Towns, and also provides contracted road maintenance and snow removal to municipalities in Portage County. This Department administers the dispersal of funds for local road projects as part of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Local Roads Improvement Program.

3. Portage County Sheriffs Department

The Portage County Sheriffs Department provides protective services to all Towns and Villages throughout the County, including patrol coverage and jail facilities through the Law Enforcement Center. The City of Stevens Point and the Village of Plover also have their own police departments. The Law Enforcement agencies have a countywide mutual aid agreement which allows them to assist each other. Sheriff's Department personnel are also working with other Portage County Board members and staff, City of Stevens Point officials, local agency officials, and residents to choose the location for a new Courts/Law Enforcement Center building to be constructed within the next decade. Intergovernmental cooperation will be an extremely important part of these discussions.

The Animal Control Ordinance (Adopted by the Portage County Board) gives the Portage County Humane Society the authority to handle all animal complaints, in municipalities that participate in the county contract, whether they are for running at large, neglect, abuse etc. The Portage County Humane Society also has the authority to issue County Ordinance citations and investigates all animal-related bites. The Portage County Sheriff's Department has oversight of these investigations.

4. Ambulance Service

The Stevens Point Fire Department operates the Ambulance Service for Portage County, which serves all of Portage County. See Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter for detailed information. 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 will 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. As with the Justice Center discussions, intergovernmental cooperation will be an extremely important part of this discussion as well.

5. Emergency Management Department

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. All Portage County Fire Departments participate in a countywide mutual aid agreement ensuring compatibility between responding agencies.

There are two ambulance service providers that operate within Portage County; the Portage County Ambulance Service, operated by the Stevens Point Fire Department, and Higgins Ambulance Service. The majority of the County is serviced by the Portage County Ambulance Service while a portion of the Town of Grant is served by both Higgins Ambulance Service and Portage County Ambulance.

To coordinate these services, Portage County Emergency Management Department has developed and maintains an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). This plan provides a general outline for county and municipal emergency response personnel during number of disasters.

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

6. County Clerks Office

The County Clerk's Office publishes a County Directory, in book form as well as posted on the internet, which provides a directory of town, village, city, county, state and federal officials representing Portage County. As the information center for County government, this office also makes referrals to various units of government. This office also updates and publishes a County map on a regular basis, and distributes them free of charge when requested to constituents and visitors.

The Clerk's Office distributes all dog licenses and tags to all municipalities as well as commercial animal licenses.

The County Clerk notifies all levels of government when the Portage County Board of Supervisors adopts resolutions and ordinances that may affect their jurisdiction. After adoption of the Portage County Budget, the Clerk's Office apportions the appropriate property tax information to all municipalities.

The County Clerk's Office coordinates with the State Elections Board to work with all Portage County municipalities and various school districts on elections within the County. With the passage of a statewide voter registration requirement, the County Clerk's Office has recently signed contracts with several municipalities to implement this project to utilize, staff, computers and high speed internet access.

The County Clerk's Office works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the sales and distribution of DNR licenses and regulations. The Clerk's Office also works with various state and federal agencies to distribute informational pamphlets and forms to make them readily available for Portage County residents, such as Department of Transportation, Social Security, Department of Revenue, and Department of Natural Resources.

7. Portage County Housing Authority

The Portage County Housing Authority provides rental subsidies for low income households and offers two programs. The Housing Choice Voucher Program allows very low-income families to choose and lease or purchase safe, decent, and affordable privately-owned rental housing. The Housing Authority also owns units in the rural communities of Portage County.

8. Solid Waste Disposal 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 majority of Portage County unincorporated and incorporated communities are part of a consortium contracting through the Portage County Solid Waste Management Board for solid waste collection and disposal by private waste haulers.

9. Portage County Drainage District

Portage County Planning and Zoning Department is the official record keeper and enforcement office for zoning and corridor issues for the Portage County Drainage District.

10. 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 the urban core and Portage County.

The Portage County Rural Area Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was formed in June of 2001. The Committee is made up of representatives from each of the participating Towns and Rural Villages (Towns of Almond, Amherst, Belmont, Buena Vista, Carson, Eau Pleine, Grant, Hull, Lanark, New Hope, Pine Grove, Plover, and Stockton and the Villages of Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City, and Nelsonville). 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 County-wide discussion. The product of their work will be a planning document adopted by the Portage County Board to provide general, unified goals for future growth.

B. Regional Cooperation

1. The Central Wisconsin Airport

Central Wisconsin Airport CWA (C-Way) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. The Central Wisconsin Airport is managed by an individual board that is made up of Marathon and Portage County Supervisors and citizen members. Payroll and accounting oversight is provided by Marathon County; with the employees all considered Marathon County employees. Portage County provides financial support. Generally, airport revenues have paid for the operation of the airport, with the exception of the runway rebuild several years ago, which had contribution from the Counties. Other than that, the Airport has been self sustaining. Any expenses or liabilities that are unable to be paid from the Airport revenues are shared by the Counties (65% Marathon and 35% Portage).

The Airport was constructed during the mid 1960's to provide a regional facility to ensure continued quality air service for North Central Wisconsin. The facility opened for operation in October of 1969. The terminal has been modernized and the highway access has been reconstructed and made more convenient. Portage County's cooperation and participation will be major factors in the upcoming discussions regarding construction of a new terminal building within the next decade, planning of which is beginning now.

2. Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation

The Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation was created in response to a crisis in the commercial insurance market. In 1985, many counties lost their liability insurance when several commercial carriers ceased writing municipal business. This forced counties to purchase insurance from a limited commercial market that increased the cost while reducing

the level of protection offered to counties. As a result, Wisconsin counties joined together to research the feasibility of creating a county owned and operated mutual insurance corporation. In 1988, the County Mutual began operation with 24 owner counties. Today, the County Mutual has 55 county owners.

A mutual insurance corporation is owned by its policyholders. The Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation is owned by the counties that participate in its insurance programs. The County Mutual owners elect the representatives to serve 4-year terms on the Board of Directors. There are 18 county directors and one municipal director on the Board. Directors must be county board supervisors, county executives or elected officials from the county and municipal owners.

3. North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRCP)

The NCWRPC is a voluntary association of governments established in 1973 under Wisconsin Statute s.66.0309, providing land use planning, zoning assistance, economic development strategies, CDBG program assistance, environmental planning, mapping and GIS, transportation plans, and other specialized studies. Portage County is currently not a member of the NCWRPC, but works with them on different project throughout the County and Region. One recent example is the Northeast Wisconsin Public Safety Communications (NEWCOM) Group, which Portage County along with 15 other Counties will create a group that will identify the communication needs for the area, so the 500 plus law enforcement and public safety organizations can communicate effectively throughout the Region.

C. State Agencies

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) are the primary state agencies Portage County must coordinate with to achieve the goals of this plan.

The WDNR takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetlands and other natural resources and other wildlife areas. The WisDOT is responsible for planning and development of state highways and other multi-modal transportation systems. Currently the WisDOT major projects within Portage County include the upgrade of Highway 10 west of Stevens Point to Marshfield, the upgrade of Highway 10 between Amherst Junction and Custer to four lanes, the relocation of 161, and the Stevens Point Area Transportation Plan.

The Department of Administration administered the County's grant for the Comprehensive Planning process.

Open communication and participation in land use, natural resources, and transportation decisions which may impact the County is an important priority for intergovernmental cooperation in the future.

Section 7.2 Analysis of Intergovernmental Agreements

Existing agreements are adequate at this time. All intergovernmental cooperation agreements should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Section 7.3 Identification of Existing or Potential Issues and Conflicts with Other Governmental Units

1. How can annexation issues between Towns, Villages and the City be minimized?
 - *Local municipalities need to continue to meet and work on cooperative agreements.*

2. How can communication between School Districts and the local municipalities be improved?
 - *Work with local school districts to have better communication and participation at the local levels.*
3. How can citizens of Portage County get better information and improve the availability of information on County services?
 - *Work to create a better directory of departments and services.*
4. How can solid waste services be improved across the County?
 - *Work with the Solid Waste Department to improve communications, services and coordination throughout the County.*
 - *Better distribution of educational materials is also needed.*
5. How can local municipalities promote the current level of sheriff patrols and coverage be maintained or increased.
 - *Local municipalities need to work with the County to improve communications with the Sheriff's department and provide input where any additional coverage may be needed.*
6. How can local municipalities work towards the improvement of ambulance response times?
 - *County Emergency Management Department should periodically meet with local municipal officials to get feedback on emergency services performance.*
 - *Participate in the County Emergency Management Study for ambulance service county-wide currently in progress between the City of Stevens Point and the County.*
7. How can County zoning enforcement be improved?
 - *Local municipalities should work with the County Planning and Zoning Department along with the Planning and Zoning Committee and County Board to identify ways to improve the zoning enforcement county-wide.*
8. How can local municipalities have better communication with the Highway Department regarding; highway plans, jurisdictional transfers, maintenance schedules etc? Towns have identified maintenance of County Roads as needing improvement.
 - *Encourage local municipalities to work with the County Highway Department and County Board on specific issues of County road improvements within their municipality.*
9. How can County ordinances, policies and procedures be updated in a more timely manner?
 - *Establish a process for reviewing specific ordinances, policies and procedures and identify those that need to be updated.*
 - *Work with those Portage County Committees and Departments that update the identified ordinances, policies, and procedures.*

Section 7.4 Rural Area Vision Statement

A. Rural Area Vision Statement Related to Intergovernmental Cooperation

(Adopted 6-26-02 by the Rural Area Steering Committee)

In 2025, units of 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 decisions making, and units of local government rely on that participation as an integral part of their decision processes.

Key Vision Ideas for Intergovernmental Cooperation:

- 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 by local officials and utilized in community decisions-making processes.
- Local units of government work together to develop creative ways to plan for and share the benefits of growth across municipal boundaries.
- Local units of government have final control of policy development within their jurisdictions.
- Some ordinances and regulations are developed, implemented and enforced on a countywide basis.

Section 7.5 Conclusions Regarding Intergovernmental Relations

The Portage County Comprehensive Planning process was a multi-jurisdictional cooperative effort featuring involvement on both the local and County levels. This planning process was a “bottoms up” approach, driven by the local communities. Each locally defined plan for future land use was incorporated without change into this Portage County Comprehensive Plan (see Chapter 8 of this Plan).

For those Towns that did not participate in the County-wide planning effort, and did not have adopted Comprehensive Plans, their previously adopted Land Use Plans were incorporated into this document. The lack of discussion by these communities with those municipalities in the project may result in some conflicts. The County encourages these Towns to adopt plans using a similar approach (and land use descriptive categories) as those with recently adopted plans.

There is always the potential for conflict between the incorporated (City and Villages) and unincorporated (Towns) areas of the County, especially when annexations or the potential for annexations occur. Continued intergovernmental discussions are recommended for resolving those differences between local plans.

The multi-jurisdictional planning process was designed to minimize potential conflicts. However, with numerous municipalities effecting land use, some minor differences may always remain. The County encourages the Towns, Villages and the City to continue to coordinate and discuss planning issues with each other and the County. This should consist of ongoing discussions and possible formal agreements between municipalities which will provide the best services to those municipalities’ residents.

Throughout the Comprehensive Planning process, the Rural Area Steering Committee has functioned as a sounding board for agriculture and natural resource topics as well as growth and development issues within Portage County. Each community participating in the Committee has benefited from the discussions. Issues of area-wide importance have come up during this planning process, and the Committee has made recommendations for further discussion of certain subjects beyond the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan. The Portage County Planning and Zoning Committee has requested that the Rural Area Steering Committee remain intact to function as discussion group to for forward recommendations on specific topics.

Section 7.6 Guiding Principle and Preliminary Goals - Intergovernmental Cooperation

A. Guiding Principle for Intergovernmental Cooperation

Encourage cooperation between local units of government to ensure efficient delivery of services.

B. Intergovernmental Cooperation Preliminary Goals:

(adopted 10-23-02 by the Rural Area Steering Committee)

- A central economic development organization actively maintains the growth and informational resources in the community.
- Support commerce and tourism throughout the County.
- Planned development areas are identified and / or established throughout the County.
- Preserve productive agricultural land Countywide.
- Develop partnership efforts that result in the preservation and restoration of natural resources.
- Local units of government work together to develop public access to natural resources.
- Identify, manage, preserve and protect natural resources throughout Portage County.
- Share services across county or municipal boarders whenever possible.
- Create and protect public green space and water resources county-wide.
- Develop a viable public transportation network.
- Develop an area-wide transportation planning approach.
- Local units of government work together to develop creative ways to plan for and share the benefits of growth across municipal boundaries.