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## **Chapter 7**

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# **Intergovernmental Cooperation**



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### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

#### **7.1 Background**

Wisconsin Statute s.66.30, entitled “Intergovernmental Cooperation,” does enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Typically, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination refers to the management and delivery of public services and facilities. It is also dependent upon a defined geographic area within which cooperation and coordination may be feasible. The City of Park Falls provides fire services to the towns of Eisenstein and Lake. The City also provides utility services to parts of Lake and Eisenstein, and airport services to all area towns. Towns have contributed to the expansion of the airport. Cooperation between the towns, county, and the City of Park Falls was nowhere more evident than when the City, Towns, and Price County cooperated to reopen the Park Falls Paper Mill within the city boundary in 2005.

The City of Park Falls is surrounded by the Towns of Lake and Eisenstein. This is an important intergovernmental relationship for the City. Efforts should be made to maintain friendly relations with the Towns of Lake and Eisenstein and other surrounding Towns.

The relationship between the City of Park Falls and Price County is the basic intergovernmental partnership. Generally the City and County provide different kinds of services to residents. Basic services such as police and fire, sewer and water, plowing streets, and maintaining parks and public facilities are provided by the City. The County offers health, social services, the criminal justice system, and other services to all county residents including those who live in Park Falls. Education is provided by the Chequamegon School District. Higher learning is provided by the Nicolet College Technical School Districts and Northcentral Technical College. Cooperation between these separate levels of government can both increase efficiency and reduce the cost of providing these services to citizens.

Governmental relationships can best be described as “vertical” relationships, such as between federal, state and local units (county/city/town). These relationships are relatively well established in law. Unfortunately, there is little public policy in Wisconsin law that encourages, let alone requires, horizontal governmental relationships such as town to town and municipality to county or town. The result is that towns, municipalities, and counties act more as adversaries than as partners.

A variety of other factors, some long-standing and some of fairly recent origin, are combining to force citizens and local governments in both urban and rural areas to confer, cooperate, and in some cases, to join together in a search for better ways to deliver public services in their respective areas. These factors include:

- Population settlement patterns;
- Local government structure, finance, and politics;

- High population mobility;
- Economic and environmental interdependence; and
- High cost, capital-intensive functions.

#### Park Falls Volunteer Fire Department / Park Falls Police Department

The Park Falls Fire Department, which is a branch of the City government, has mutual aid agreements with surrounding municipalities. Contracts to provide fire service to two of the surrounding towns—Lake and Eisenstein. This is an example of how shared service agreements can allow local governments to give citizens the services they need without endangering the full cost of providing those services individually. This allows the City to maintain a high level of protection within its boundaries and to provide service to the surrounding area. This is the kind of shared service agreement that provides a perfect model for how local governments can work together to provide the best service to residents at the least cost.

The Park Falls Police Department also has mutual aid agreements with the surrounding municipalities and counties.

#### Flambeau River Papers

When Smart Papers closed, the City of Park Falls and area business leaders organized, and it became critical for the City, counties (Ashland and Price), and towns to cooperate on the reopening of the mill. These government entities worked with the City in facilitating the steps required to make it possible for the mill to be reopened under a new owner.

When the opportunity presented itself to do something that would benefit the economic prospects of the entire area, the City, counties, and the towns were able to work together. Intergovernmental cooperation does not have to take the form of boundary or shared service agreements. It can be as simple as making real accommodations when the common interests of the jurisdictions are clear.

#### Snowmobile Trails

Park Falls has forged a series of agreements with snowmobile clubs to permit snowmobiles to operate within the city limits. Most of these clubs are located outside of the City. This allowed members access to the businesses and facilities in the City, under specified conditions, and allowed the City to regulate the use of its streets and prevent the kind of impacts that could result from uncontrolled use.

Similar rules have been applied to ATVs, which have in recent years become more numerous and more controversial. Although the snowmobile clubs are not governmental entities, they do represent a substantial segment of the population. As recreational activities become a larger part of the northwoods economy, this is the kind of cooperative accommodations that have to be made between competing user groups in order to ensure

the negative effects of those activities are not allowed to get out of hand. Once trail use becomes a problem, other users and the public could unit against the interests of both the snowmobile clubs (and ATV users) and the public interest as well.

During the preparation of the City’s Future Land Use Map, representatives of the Towns of Lake and Eisenstein will be invited to be present and observe. This will be a way for the City of Park Falls to inform the towns and ask how proposed land uses in the City would affect the surrounding areas. The town representatives will be able to see the process the City of Park Falls uses in arriving at a future land use vision.

Having become aware of one another’s thoughts on future land use in their respective jurisdictions, perhaps it will be easier for the City and the surrounding towns to reach consensus on development proposals, particularly those that fall within the mile and a half of the City’s boundaries. This is a very preliminary exercise in joint planning, but hopefully it can provide a basis for intergovernmental cooperation in the future.

## **7.2 Goals and Strategies**

### **GOAL: ENCOURAGE COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG NEARBY UNITS OF GOVERNMENTS**

Strategy: The City of Park Falls will work proactively and cooperatively with all neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to ensure regional cooperation and efficient, cost-effective, high-quality services

Strategy: Determine the efficiencies and cost savings that can be secured by coordinating services and facilities with the County and the Towns of Lake and Eisenstein

Strategy: Promote and continue joint service agreements as a means to consolidate and coordinate services among the City, County, and Towns to achieve better services and/or cost savings