

## Chapter 7: Intergovernmental Cooperation

### Introduction

Cooperation with other levels of government and jurisdictions is a key strategy to this plan. Many issues can be effectively addressed through cooperation with other adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. Cooperation with Taylor County is critical for Little Black in many areas, and cooperation with various state and federal agencies is also important. The Town of Little Black supports intergovernmental cooperation, as 86 % of respondents to the comprehensive planning survey believe neighboring towns and Taylor County should work together toward shared goals. The following is a brief description and analysis of the relationship the Town of Little Black has with other governmental units.

### Intergovernmental Relationships

#### Relationship to Adjacent Towns

A good working relationship between neighbors is important, as it can benefit everyone. A good relationship with local, county, regional, State and federal entities can provide economical, environmental, and financial advantages. Most importantly, it fosters and supports a sense of community and good fellowship. Table 7-1 shows Little Black's rating of its intergovernmental relationships with various governmental units.

**Table 7-1: Intergovernmental Relationship Ratings**

Source: Town of Little Black	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Adjacent Towns: Holway, Medford, Deer Creek, Mayville		X			
Village of Stetsonville	X				
City of Medford					X
Taylor County		X			

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
State of Wisconsin (DOT, DNR, EXT)			X		
Region (NWRPC)				X	
Federal			X		
School District (Medford)		X			

#### Adjacent Towns

The Town of Little Black shares municipal borders with three towns in Taylor County. They include the Towns of Holway, Medford and Deer Creek. Little Black shares its southern border with Mayville of Clark County. It also shares borders with the Village of Stetsonville and the City of Medford.

#### Taylor County

Taylor County provides several services to the Town of Little Black including: law enforcement through the Sheriff's Department, 9-1-1 dispatch service, maintenance and improvements to county highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding, wetland and floodplain regulation, private sewage system regulation, oversight on compliance with soil and water conservation policies for the Working Lands Initiative/Farmland Preservation.

#### Regional Agencies

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) is the only regional planning agency serving the Town of Little Black. NWRPC is a venture of ten counties and five tribal nations. The Commission assists in improving and enhancing the economic conditions in the region to provide a positive economic impact and improve the economic prosperity of the area.

#### School District

The Town of Little Black is in the Medford Area

School District. Facilities are located in the City of Medford and the township of Little Black.

### **State of Wisconsin**

The Town of Little Black has little direct contact with State agencies. However, State agencies regulate certain activities such as planning, development and maintenance of State roads/highways, natural resource protection planning and enforcement, State Patrol law enforcement, as well as other policies and programs at the State level of government.

### **Federal Government**

Cooperation and coordination with federal government agencies is primarily with FEMA and NRCS.

### **Existing Agreements Affecting Boundaries**

The Town of Little Black does not have any cooperative boundary agreements or plans with any other jurisdictions pursuant to §66.0307.

### **General Intergovernmental Agreements**

Intergovernmental agreements are the most common form of agreement used by communities. Communities have used these agreements for years, often in the framework of sharing public services such as police, fire and road maintenance. Existing areas of cooperation for the Town of Little Black include:

- Member of the Stetsonville Area Fire Department
- Centennial Community Center Stetsonville
- Member of Taylor County Recycling Authority

### **Existing/Potential Conflicts**

Intergovernmental issues between municipalities sometimes surface over a number of different matters. The comprehensive planning process examined the existing and potential conflict situation(s) in the Town of Little Black.

### **Existing Conflicts**

1. State- funding.
2. State -Groundwater protection

### **Potential Conflicts**

- State-funding.
- State-Groundwater protection

### **Conflict Resolution**

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the Town of Little Black identify a process to resolve conflicts. What follows is a discussion of formal and informal techniques for resolving conflicts. Each dispute and/or conflict resolution technique has a purpose. When considering how to resolve a conflict, the town will need to determine whether the conflict can be settled out of court and which resolution process is the most appropriate for the type of conflict.

**Mediation** is a cooperative process involving two or more parties and a mediator. The mediator, a neutral third party with special skills and training in dispute resolution, helps the parties voluntarily reach a mutually agreeable settlement of the issue in dispute.

**Binding arbitration** 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.

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

**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.

**A focus group** 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.

**A mini-trial** consists of presentations by the parties to a panel of 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.

**A moderated settlement conference** is a process in which a neutral person, who hears brief presentations from the parties, in order to facilitate negotiations, conducts conferences. The neutral person renders an advisory opinion in aid of negotiation.

**A summary jury trial** is 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.

### Intergovernmental Cooperation Ideas & Programs

There are many ways communities can cooperate. These are some ideas and programs to consider. The following ideas were taken directly from the *Intergovernmental Cooperation Guide* published by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The Town of Little Black currently utilizes several of these.

**Voluntary Assistance:** Your community, or another, could voluntarily agree to provide a service to your neighbors because doing so makes economic sense and improves service levels.

**Trading Services:** Your community and another could agree to exchange services. You could exchange the use of different pieces of equipment, equipment for labor, or labor for labor.

**Renting Equipment:** Your community could rent equipment to, or from, neighboring communities and other governmental units.

**Contracting:** Your community could

contract with another community or jurisdiction to provide a service.

**Routing County Services:** Some services are already paid for through taxes and fees. (An example would be police protection services). Your Intergovernmental Cooperation Element could identify areas where improvements are needed and could recommend ways to cooperatively address them.

**Sharing Municipal Staff:** Your community could share staff with neighboring communities and other jurisdictions – both municipal employees and independently contracted professionals. You could share a building inspector, assessor, zoning administrator, clerk, etc.

**Consolidating Services:** Your community could agree with one or more other communities or governmental units to provide a service together.

**Joint Use of a Facility:** Your community could use a public facility along with other jurisdictions. The facility could be jointly owned or one jurisdiction could rent space from another.

**Joint Purchase and Ownership of Equipment:** Your community could agree to jointly purchase and own equipment such as pothole patching machines, mowers, rollers, snowplows, etc.

**Cooperative Purchasing:** Cooperative purchasing, or procurement, is where jurisdictions purchase supplies and equipment together to gain more favorable prices.

