

## 7. Intergovernmental Cooperation

### Introduction

This analysis presents an inventory of existing methods that the Town of Westboro uses to coordinate with other units of government, including: Taylor County, adjacent towns, Rib Lake School District, State of Wisconsin, and regional and federal government. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the existing cooperative agreements and summarize the major challenges and issues regarding intergovernmental cooperation, including:

- Opportunities to reduce or eliminate duplication of services;
- Incompatible goals, objectives, actions and policies;
- Opportunities for joint planning and decision-making;
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution.

Methods for cooperation and coordination primarily take the form of intergovernmental agreements, leases, contracts, and regulatory authority. These can occur between the Town of Westboro and other local, regional, state or federal entities. The following is a brief description and analysis of the relationship of Westboro to other governmental units and various functional areas and services that require the Town of Westboro to coordinate and cooperate at different levels.

### Governmental Relationships

#### Adjacent Towns

The Town of Westboro shares borders with six towns in Taylor County. They include the Towns of Rib Lake (east), Greenwood, Chelsea, Molitor, and Grover (south), and Jump River (west). Westboro also shares borders with three towns, Kennan, Ogema, and Hill, in Price County to the north. The Town of Westboro maintains a cooperative relationship with all surrounding towns.

#### Taylor County

Taylor County provides several services to the Town of Westboro including: law enforcement through the Sheriff's Department, 9-1-1 dispatch service and ambulance, maintenance and improvements to county highways and parks, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, private sewage system regulation, oversight on compliance with soil and water conservation policies for the Farmland Preservation Program and administration of the recycling program. According to town officials, Westboro has a good working relationship with Taylor County.

#### Regional Agencies

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) is the only regional planning agency serving the Town of Westboro. 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. NWRPC has a respectable working relationship with the Town of Westboro.

### **School District**

The Town of Westboro is in the Rib Lake School District. Facilities, which include an elementary school, middle school, and high school, are located in the Village of Rib Lake. The Town of Westboro is therefore within the Rib Lake School taxing district and does not see this changing over the 20-year planning period.

### **State of Wisconsin**

The Town of Westboro 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. The Town of Westboro involvement with State government is minimal but has been an ongoing positive relationship.

### **Federal Government**

Cooperation and coordination with federal government agencies is limited to the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service and their management of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, which covers approximately 46,312 acres in the town.

### **Existing Agreements Affecting Boundaries**

The Town of Westboro 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. Currently, the Town of Westboro has several general intergovernmental agreements for sharing and/or getting services with other municipalities and entities. These include agreements and/or contracts with:

- Taylor County for law enforcement
- Taylor County Ambulance Service
- Surrounding Fire Service with Rib Lake, Ogema, Prentice, and Medford
- Adjoining townships for shared road maintenance
- U.S. Forest Service
- WI State Elections Board
- Wisconsin Valley Library Service

### **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 Westboro.

### **Existing Conflicts**

- No conflicts identified.

### **Potential Conflicts**

- No conflicts identified.

### **Conflict Resolution**

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the Town of Westboro 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 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.

**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.