

## **7. Intergovernmental Cooperation.**

### **Overview**

Intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communicating and sharing information informally, or it can involve entering into formal agreements to consolidate and/or share resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. Intergovernmental cooperation is an essential part of Rusk County's planning process, as it has been the heart of the comprehensive planning effort. The county, towns, villages, and city not only share common boundaries, but also school attendance areas, watersheds, transportation and recreation routes, fire and emergency protection services, lakes, rivers, recycling programs, and rural based economies.

This chapter will provide an analysis of the relationship of Town of Atlanta to the region, the state, school districts, and other governmental units and incorporate any plans or agreements to which Town of Atlanta is a party under ss66.0301, ss66.0307, and ss66.0309. This chapter will also identify existing or potential conflicts between the Town of Atlanta and other governmental units and describe processes to resolve such conflicts.

### **7.1 Relationships with other Entities**

#### **School Districts**

There is only one school district within the Town of Atlanta – the Bruce Area School District. The Utilities and Community Facilities chapter has additional information concerning the school district. In the past the four school districts (Ladysmith, Flambeau, Chetek, and Bruce) have shared facilities and services when feasible and are projected to continue this relationship into the future.

#### **Adjacent County and Overlapping Local Governments**

There are six counties that surround Rusk County: Chippewa, Taylor, Price, Sawyer, Barron, and Washburn. There are seven towns that surround the Town of Atlanta: Stubbs, Murry, Wilkinson, Thornapple, Hubbard, and Strickland. There is one village that shares a border w/ the town: Bruce.

Within Rusk County there are a total of 24 townships, 8 villages, and 1 city. Each of the 33 governments is represented by elected officials and delegated responsibility by their constituents to manage the affairs of the local government following state legislation that provides direction and authority. Statutory law also requires the town of Atlanta to implement and oversee certain rules and regulations that protect the health, safety, and

general welfare of the community and/or environment. The town of Atlanta board (1 chairman and 2 supervisors) represents the people's voice on matters and issues pertinent to town affairs. While issues from time to time do occur, the town board has and will continue to respond on the values and best judgments representing the town as a whole.

## **State**

There are several state agencies that affect planning in the town of Atlanta. The town is located within the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Norwest Region, and its regional office located in Eau Claire. WisDOT plays an important role in supporting all forms of transportation. The department is responsible for planning, building, and maintaining Wisconsin's network of state highways and Interstate highway system. The department shares the costs of building and operating county and local transportation systems – from highways to public transit and other modes. WisDOT plans, promotes, and financially supports statewide air, rail, and water transportation, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The town of Atlanta has a working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

The town is located in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Northern Region, and its regional office in Spooner. The Department of Natural Resources is dedicated to the preservation, protection, effective management, and maintenance of Wisconsin's natural resources. It is responsible for implementing the laws of the state and, where applicable, the laws of the federal government that protect and enhance the natural resources of our state. It is the one agency charged with full responsibility for coordinating the outdoor recreational opportunities for Wisconsin citizens and visitors. The town of Atlanta currently has a working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The town of Atlanta, WisDOT, WDNR, and other State Departments continue to coordinate and discuss issues and potential joint projects in efforts to provide desirable and valuable service to residents and visitors of the town. Continued cooperation will ensure future dialog and accomplishments benefiting the county.

## **FEDERAL**

Active Federal Agencies in the town of Atlanta include the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). Primary interaction between these agencies occurs between the Rusk County Land Conservation office and the agencies. The town board works directly with FEMA as necessary.

## **REGION**

The town of Atlanta is within the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's (NWRPC) area of representation. NWRPC is an economic development district and planning agency for the counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, and Washburn. This includes the tribal nations of Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac Du Flambeau, Lac Courte Oreilles, and St. Croix. Planning services provided by the commission include comprehensive and land use planning; community development; economic development; hazard mitigation planning; transportation planning, wildfire protection planning, and recycling and clean sweep programs and services. The Town of Atlanta has worked with the NWRPC on various projects.

## **7.2 Planning and Other Agreements**

The Town of Atlanta has developed a number of internal planning and development documents that provide fundamental guidance to various areas. While many of these documents have been identified within respective chapters, a summary of such documents is listed below though it is not an all-inclusive representation of all such documents.

Town of Atlanta Five-year Road Improvement Plan

Town of Atlanta Subdivision Ordinance

Library Agreement – Bruce Library

Fire Department – Bruce Department & Weyerhaeuser Department

Forest Management Plan for town land

## **7.3 Existing and Potential Conflicts**

The comprehensive planning legislation requires the Town of Atlanta to identify existing and potential problems between the town and other governmental units, and describe processes to resolve such conflicts. While the overall planning process was designed to avoid and minimize potential conflicts, existing and potential conflicts remain that may have an impact through the town.

It is important to note such conflicts to enable governments and others the ability to open dialog to address such issues. The following section addresses known or potential conflicts as well as a potential solution process.

### **Existing Conflicts**

- **Town of Atlanta and Rusk County Comprehensive Zoning.** The Town of Atlanta Board has found the Rusk County Zoning Board to not be transparent and the Rusk County Zoning to be unresponsive to requests.

- Town of Atlanta and Rusk County Supervisors. The Rusk County Board has split a municipality of less than 1000 people into three wards even though ss 5.15 Divisions of Municipalities into wards Part 2(a) states is not required and the Town Board of Atlanta has not authorized.

## Potential Conflicts

### 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 of Atlanta 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 the 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 party's 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.

## **7.4 Programs and Implementation Tools.**

Implementation tools (programs) are the specific means by which the Town of Atlanta can accomplish its plan goals, objectives and actions. There are an infinite number of ways local units of government can cooperate and coordinate to implement their comprehensive plans. This section will describe four main avenues that the Town of Atlanta could utilize to help implement the intergovernmental cooperation element of this comprehensive plan.

- **Cooperating with Services**  
Cooperating with services may be the easiest area the Town of Atlanta and other jurisdictions can agree on. It can be a chance to build a base of success and positive feelings from which more challenging intergovernmental projects can be undertaken. Some ideas for how to cooperate with services include: voluntary assistance, trading services, renting equipment, contracting, routine town services, sharing municipal staff, consolidating services, joint use of a facility, special purpose districts, joint purchase and ownership of equipment and cooperative purchasing.
- **Cooperating with Regulations**  
The Town of Atlanta creates and administers ordinances, laws and regulations. These rules are important because they play a key role in implementing this plan. How the Town of Atlanta's ordinances relate to those of neighboring communities and to the laws of other jurisdictions could influence whether or not this plan is implemented. Examples of the kinds of laws and ordinances that the Town of Atlanta could cooperate with neighboring communities include general zoning ordinances, official maps, agricultural zoning ordinances, and storm water management ordinances.
- **Cooperating with Sharing Revenue**  
Sharing revenue can improve relationships between communities and other area jurisdictions, enhance services for residents, and improve the area's functioning as a whole. An example of this could simply be two communities that apply jointly for a state or federal grant.

- Cooperating within Boundaries

Boundary agreements may be the most challenging of all intergovernmental issues. Cooperative boundary agreements, although more associated with incorporated municipalities, affect our lives, impacting land uses and development, services, revenue, transportation, agricultural systems, natural resources, and economic opportunities.

Municipal boundaries can be altered through annexation, detachment, incorporation, consolidation and intergovernmental agreements to name a few.

#### 7.5 Summary – Goals & Objectives

To maintain the current level of intergovernmental cooperation, an overall goal to proactively and cooperatively work with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions has been developed. It is important that the Town of Atlanta and other governmental bodies cooperate in an effort to strengthen their relationships and whenever possible to eliminate any unnecessary duplication in services.

GOAL: Encourage and promote intergovernmental cooperation between the various governmental-tax payer supported entities internal and external of the Town of Atlanta.

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Promote having active communication channels between governmental agencies.
2. Work to eliminate duplication of services by governmental entities internal and external of the Town of Atlanta.
3. Encourage State and Federal agencies to eliminate unfunded mandates on local bodies.
4. Work with other governmental bodies to accurately inform the public of current policies and practices.

#### ACTIONS:

- a. Work with other governmental entities to address the goals and objectives found in this plan.
- b. Encourage cooperation among municipalities to find efficiencies in service delivery and cost savings.
- c. Be proactive in resolving current and potential conflicts with other government entities.