

BENZIE COUNTY 1st
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
SUMMIT
NOVEMBER 13, 2007

The Benzie County Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission jointly hosted a countywide intergovernmental summit on November 13, 2007. Leaders from the county and all municipalities within the county were invited and encouraged to attend. 60 people participated, representing many, but not all municipalities.

There were twenty One (21) representatives from the County's various departments and the Courts, 15 persons representing Almira, Benzonia, Homestead, Crystal Lake and Platte Townships, 9 persons representing the Villages of Benzonia, Beulah, Thompsonville, Honor and the City of Frankfort, 11 persons representing various stakeholder groups and 4 Citizens at Large.

Benzie County Board of Commissioners Chairman Mark Roper introduced John Amrhein, who would be the facilitator for the day. Mr. Roper provided a brief overview of the purpose for the summit.

Mr. Amrhein is a State and Local Government Educator for Michigan State University Extension. He works primarily with local governments in northern lower Michigan and the upper peninsula, providing workshops and technical assistance in local government finance, intergovernmental cooperation, strategic planning, and effective leadership. John is the field co-chair of the Extension State and Local Government Team. Prior to joining MSUE in 1994, his experience included non-profit organization management, agriculture, and broadcasting. He received his BA and MBA degrees from MSU. Mr. Amrhein gave a presentation on successful intergovernmental cooperation and then facilitated the issues identification and prioritization process.

Participants were asked to identify current areas of successful cooperative efforts. Following is the list they developed. Examples cited by participants included the following:

Fire protection
Benzonia Township on-site wastewater effort
Building and zoning
Transportation with schools
Purchasing
School food service
School building trades program
District libraries
Frankfort/Elberta sewer
Recycling
Benzie Bus/BATA/Manistee
Law enforcement
EMS
Community Mental Health (Benzie/Manistee)
Health Dept. (Leelenau/Benzie)
Joint court with Manistee County
Council of Governments
Land use planning
Road commission

Grant for bike paths along Platte Rd.

Human Services Collaborative Body – philosophy of sharing abundance rather than allocating scarcity

There was then a power point presentation. Following are some notes from the presentation. The entire Power Point is available from Kathy Ralston

Where does local government come from? Local Government is provided for in the Michigan Constitution. There are 83 Counties, 1,242 Townships, 261 Villages and 273 Cities in the State of Michigan.

Special purpose units of government include many permitted authorities and districts including education services, airport authorities and emergency service authorities.

There's a total of **1,859** general purpose units of governments. There are **1,025** special purpose units of government. All local units of government in Michigan total **2,884**. Michigan has the **14th** highest number of local units among the 50 states and the **7th** highest number of general purpose units.

Tribal Governments are sovereign nations but function in some ways similar to state local governmental units.

Governments were created to provide the services the individual cannot provide. Economic and public finance literature indicate that some public services including public safety, public works and infrastructure are critical to economic development.

Lack of communication can cause service duplication and increase in taxes and fees.

Today's young people are looking at where they want to live first and finding or bringing their jobs with them.

Privatization – outsourcing or contracting services that had been done by the government. There are advantages but the government should be careful that they are not doing something that in hindsight won't work as well.

Intergovernmental Cooperation:

Positives: Possible revenue sharing, Mutual aid agreements, Merging departments/authorities, Merging into one unit.

Cons: Upfront costs to achieve long term benefits, Legal Barriers.

Cooperative Service Areas:

Police Departments-Evidence does not point to a cost savings/labor intensive.

Fire/EMS-Evidence does point to cost savings, mainly in equipment costs.

Economic Development-Very little scientific research available.

Planning and Zoning-No evidence of major cost savings but the more units of government work together the less border conflicts there are. It is necessary to have the right planning and zoning in place in order to plan for infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer which will encourage economic development.

Transportation and Roads-For rural roads, however, Michigan has already undertaken this process

Property Assessment-Research underway, some may exist but not a major cost center.

Political Consolidation/Mergers:

This has been tried but hasn't achieved the projected cost savings. It may be more achievable in very rural areas or in high density areas such as large cities.

Why Cooperate?

Primary consideration needs to be Value to Citizens. Interconnectedness/interdependences: Economic interdependences, Geographic interdependences, Governmental interdependences, Social interconnectedness.

Note: Cooperation improves the effectiveness and quality of municipal services when they cross municipal lines.

Cooperation is the Future

“The most practicable solution to a multiplicity of future problems facing municipalities lies in cooperative action among local governments.” (Public Management News April 1942).

Michigan Constitution allows for agreements to be made with other States, the United States, Canada or any subdivision of such.

Michigan Constitution allows local government to cooperate on anything they may do separately.

Forms of Interlocal Cooperation

1. Handshake agreements
2. Fees for Service Contracts
3. Joint Agreements – Shared Ownership & Control
4. Regional Planning Organizations (Councils of Government)
5. Urban Cooperative Agreements

Conditional Land Transfer Act (Act 425)

Used for larger areas. Usually a conditional transfer of land from a township to a city for a stated period of time (50 yrs). Different from annexation because the township gets nothing, and contract states if and when land goes back to the township. Is subject to referendum. Must be filed with the Secretary of State. No other form of annexation allowed.

PA 425 v annexation. Issues to be looked are: who gets the benefit of the tax base? who pays the cost of providing the service? Can a shared agreement be worked out? If everyone works together everyone wins.

How to choose what method is best

Does legislation permit? Transition risk/cost? How much control lost or gained? Political fallout and recall. What is politically palatable? Trust. Relative capacity to provide services. Labor relations & trust issues. How to finance?

How do we do it? (Cooperate)

Unload the baggage (irrelevant history). Understand other's point of view. Involve the citizens. Determine the goals and objectives. Involve personnel (Impact of union contracts). Understand why you are there. Understand why others are there. Communicate openly and honestly. Be creative. Gather and share info. Balance self interest w/the greater community. Be sensitive to other's political positions.

Understand there are no stupid ideas only opportunities to explore.

Drafting Agreements

Follow the law. Define objectives and goals. Prerequisite actions. Define scope of power. Define time. Identify: liabilities, insurance, training, prioritization of service provisions, changed circumstances/direction, division of shared assets.

Make It Work

Be inclusive. Pay attention. Cooperate. Be realistic. Study Options. Beware of too much informality. Don't lose site of the purpose.

Participants then worked in small groups to identify issues of importance which could benefit from increased collaborative efforts. After identifying 23 issues, participants prioritized those issues. The top 12 are listed below.

Summary of issues identified for potential intergovernmental cooperation

Rank	Issue	# of votes
1	Communication	35
1	Communication Technology	35
3	Smart Growth	31
4	Education	24
5	Grant Committee	19
6	Economic Development	16
6	Planning and Zoning	16
8	Renewable Energy	14
9	Village Growth	13
10	Affordable Housing	12
10	Recreation	12
12	Headlee Impacts	9

Further discussion about the issues, number of people involved in the process, and their interests, led to combining some of the 12 to yield the following list of 8. Individuals self-selected groups to begin more in-depth discussion about possible intergovernmental efforts to tackle these issues.

FINAL COMMITTEES

Communication	Grants
Communication Technology	Economic Development & Renewal Energy
Planning/Zoning/Smart Growth/Villages	Affordable Housing
Growth	Recreation
Education	Headlee

The County Board and Planning Commission will be tracking the progress of these groups. Kathy Ralston, member of the Planning Commission, and a small group of other members of the two boards organized this first summit, and plan to get participants back together to discuss progress.