

Avon: A Model of Collaboration

Contact Name: Stephen G. Saupe, Clerk & Jim Thares, City Administrator

Government Entity Name: Avon Township / City of Avon

Organization Address: 16881 Queens Road / 140 Stratford Street East

Organization City: Avon

Organization State: Minnesota

Organization Zip Code: 56310

Contact Telephone: 320.248.8036 / 320.356.7922

Contact Email: ssaupe@csbsju.edu / jim.t@cityofavonmn.com

Organization Type: Township / City

Entry Name: Avon: A Model of Collaboration

Description of Your Entry and Your Community *(up to 100 words)*

The City and Township of Avon are located in Stearns County (MN) near the geographic center of the state roughly 15 miles west of Saint Cloud. The City lies in the center of the Township and is essentially landlocked by Township. Historically, The City and Town have had a somewhat adversarial relationship squabbling over annexation, fire protection, and other issues. In recent years, officials from both entities have put any past differences behind and now collaborate on many projects, all of which benefit the residents of the two units.

What makes your entry innovative? *(Up to 250 words)*

Our primary innovation is a change in attitude. Our Town and City officials have moved from an adversarial relationship to a congenial working relationship. It is relatively easy to throw money at a problem; it is much more difficult to change peoples' attitudes. This has occurred because officials from the City and Town finally realized that because of our close proximity many of our problems are joint ones that cannot be solved by a single entity. These new problems require the cooperation of both entities.

What outcomes and impact has your innovation achieved? *(Up to 150 words)*

The new cooperation between the City and Town has resulted in very congenial working relationships. The City Administrator and Clerk frequently work together on an assortment of projects. We share responsibilities for organizing and publicizing meetings, taking minutes

minutes at the meetings and so on. As additional examples of our cooperation: (a) We share a single fire department and jointly make decisions about needs; (b) We share a single compost facility that provides residents an place to dispose yard waste; (c) We are currently in discussion about jointly participating in solar energy concerns; (d) We have a Joint Powers Board that considers issues in the future growth areas of the City; (e) We jointly outlined potential growth areas of the City to provide for sustainable development of both the City and Town; (f) We are currently discussing joint participation in an emergency notification system for residents and businesses; and (g) We are currently working to prevent the spread of Eurasian water milfoil in two area lakes; (h) We are currently discussing drainage problems that afflict City residents but will require a cooperative solution; (i) We share minutes and agendas from meetings; and (j) The City Water Plan process involved the Township.

How sustainable is your innovation? Could it be replicated in other communities? (*Up to 150 words*)

Our innovation is very sustainable and could easily be replicated in other communities. It takes just a few individuals to change their mindset and beginning looking at the bigger picture. Certainly changing the current leadership in the City or Township could reduce our cooperation, but at this point enough momentum has developed that if someone with a grudge becomes a City or Town official we believe that this individual will hopefully change his/her attitude and become a team-player. We are not special – anyone can do what we have done. However, it does take work, forgiving and forgetting, and working toward a brighter future for all residents. This new century requires cooperative solutions to joint problems.