

Successful Municipal Practices: Responding to New Challenges



Tools for Change

WORKING REGIONALLY WITH NEW PARTNERS

Shared Municipal Offices

Village of Glenboro and the R.M. of South Cypress

The Village of Glenboro, an urban municipality located 80 kilometers southeast of Brandon (656 residents) and the Rural Municipality (R.M.) of South Cypress (821 residents) have partnered to reap the benefits of a shared office and shared administrative staff.

When the Glenboro council faced the challenge of replacing a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) retiring after 41 years of service, they realized their options were limited. Because Glenboro was a one person office, council did not have the opportunity to promote from within, and attracting a qualified candidate to a smaller rural community could be difficult, particularly with the increased shortage of experienced CAOs.

The Village council soon realized that it may be time to start sharing administrative services with the R.M. of South Cypress. The timing was appropriate as no one's job would be jeopardized and, because of their proximity to one another, (Glenboro is located almost in the centre of the R.M.) the 2 municipalities already shared many services; fire protection, waste management, economic development, community planning and recreation, to name just a few. Closing the doors to the village office and moving to share space with the R.M. office only a couple of blocks away would enable Glenboro and South Cypress to share the services of a CAO.

After initial discussions, the Village and the R.M. councils agreed that the idea deserved serious consideration. There would be savings to both municipalities by eliminating the duplication of costs for office building maintenance, office equipment, phone and hydro bills. Additional savings would be realized because Glenboro had never computerized their accounting system and the municipalities could use the R.M.'s existing computer system and share the future costs of software and hardware maintenance and upgrades.

The two municipalities already shared many services including fire protection, waste management, library and recreation.



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An added benefit would be improved customer service. The Village office had always been a one person office, while the R.M. employed the CAO and a part-time office clerk. These limited staffing numbers made it necessary to occasionally inconvenience customers by closing during regular business hours if someone was ill or on vacation. Both municipal corporations could enjoy the benefit of one joint office that employed the services of the CAO, a full-time assistant CAO and a part-time clerk.

Important to the success of this partnering proposal would be public acceptance of the closure of an office that Glenboro customers had visited for many years to conduct their municipal business. Through local newspaper articles and notices, council publicized their intention to move the village office to the R.M. office location and invited residents to ask questions and share their concerns.

Feedback was positive and the idea well received. The citizens of both Glenboro and South Cypress appreciated the savings that could be realized by running a shared office and the Glenboro citizens pointed out they would be comfortable dealing with a CAO that they knew from his 26 years of service with South Cypress.

On July 1, 2005 the Village of Glenboro and the R.M. of South Cypress took a giant step into the future and joined forces to share office space and administrative staff. Each municipality has its own elected council, conducts its own council meetings, and maintains a separate set of records and books. The CAO and staff are now in the process of “computerizing” the Village of Glenboro accounts and enjoy serving both their urban and rural customers. It’s a progressive step that captures cost efficiencies and improves customer service for both municipalities.

For more information contact:

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*For more information
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Manitoba
Municipalities’
website, at
www.amm.mb.ca.*