

Meeting Notes
County Data Producer Work Group
Wednesday, January 7, 2004
MN Counties Insurance Trust Bldg., St. Paul.

Members Present: Dave Drealan - Chair (Carver County), Gary Swenson (Anoka County), Jane Harper (Washington County), Bill Brown (Hennepin County), David Claypool (Ramsey County), and Randy Knippel (Dakota County)

Members Absent: Jim Hentges (Scott County)

Staff Present: Randall Johnson (MetroGIS)

Summary of December 17, 2003 meeting:

The document was circulated before the meeting for comment and is posted at <http://www.metrogis.org/data/datasets/parcels/index.shtml#private2>. No changes were suggested.

Chairman Drealan called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

1. Pioneer Press Data Access Request

Claypool explained that he had received a request from the Pioneer Press for access to Ramsey County's parcel data that resulted in this item being added to the agenda. The data requestor cited a process authorized by the federal Freedom of Information Act that permits media to obtain data without fee even though a fee is generally associated with access. Brown noted that Hennepin County recently had a similar conversation with a representative from the Star and Tribune.

It was agreed that the workgroup should send a letter to the Pioneer Press contact, under the chair's name, requesting the following additional information:

- 1) A specific data request (data type(s), extent of geographic coverage, and how often do they would like access).
- 2) Rationale for why they believe it would be in the counties' interest to grant the waiver.
- 3) Rationale for why they believe granting the request would be in the public interest.
- 4) Explain the authority under which the requested fee waiver is requested and to explain the circumstances surrounding previous waiver approvals.

Staff offered to draft a letter for the chair's review.

2. Emergency Preparedness Workgroup

Knippel summarized his earlier suggestion, circulated by email, that the members of the County Data Producers Workgroup should consider playing a supporting role for MetroGIS's Emergency Preparedness Workgroup. The group concurred to carry out the following responsibilities:

- 1) Serve as the liaison with their respective county administration for emergency preparedness, as well as, all other MetroGIS matters that affect counties.
- 2) Communicate on a regular basis with the representatives from their respective counties who are participating on the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup.
- 3) Advocate for allocating sufficient human resources in each of their respective counties necessary to support emergency preparedness roles and responsibilities collaboratively defined.
- 4) As a group, help the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup utilize MetroGIS's processes and procedures for reaching agreement on roles and responsibilities associated with regionally significant data resources and associated best practices and in attaining willing and able entities to support the agreed upon resources and best practices.
- 5) Represent more than just the data produced by their particular department (i.e., parcel data), but to keep in mind the entirety of data required to support the agreed upon emergency preparedness functions.

Knippel then summarized the status of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup's activities, noting that a prototype web site was about to be launched to help persons responsible for emergency preparedness

quickly locate data that is readily usable for their purposes. He also stated that the Workgroup should be in a position to offer a recommended regional strategy for Coordinating Committee consideration on March 31st to address the emergency preparedness related information needs.

Staff noted that the agenda packet for the March Committee meeting will be finalized the second week in March. Staff offered to help the Workgroup format its report to the Coordinating Committee.

3. GeoSpan and Pictometry Proposals

GeoSpan: Chairperson Drealan reported that the GeoSpan representative is anxious to learn whether the group would entertain a proposal to swap their data for parcel data, noting that the Carver County Assessor would consider such a swap. The other members reported that their assessors do not have a need for the data produced by GeoSpan. Chairperson Drealan noted that he would communicate this information to GeoSpan.

Pictometry: Knippel commented that the oblique imagery, that comprises the centerpiece of the application, is unique and proving to be very attractive to the Assessor, Emergency Management, and Law Enforcement departments and that the ease of use of the application is also very appealing for non-technical persons. He asked the other workgroup members to comment on whether any departments within their organizations are giving serious consideration to buying this product, noting that the Dakota County is hosting a second meeting with the vendor later in the week, to which over 100 individuals have been invited. Although the price tag is not trivial, Dakota County is looking at the proposal from the perspective of the number of individual users within the county and among the units of government located within the county that can benefit. The decision will ultimately be made on the basis of the cost per seat.

Drealan echoed Knippel's experience, noting that Carver County is exploring the product. Brown noted that Hennepin County is aware of the product but that an internal review of cost/benefit needs to occur before they will give any further consideration. Claypool noted that he is concerned about the licensing requirements that preclude ownership of the imagery and that the Ramsey County Assessor believes the expense is not cost effective, given the adequacy of their current imagery products. Swenson and Harper stated they were not sure whether anyone in their organizations is considering the product. Swenson commented that he is concerned that if this is a stand-alone product, not able to be expanded or integrated into current GIS systems, that in the long run it will result in inefficiencies. He mentioned that installing SDE would seem to be a more cost-effective use of resources at this time for Anoka County.

The group concurred that given aggressive marketing of this product to emergency management, public safety officials there is need to communicate that this product is not a competitor with GIS but rather another tool in the tool box. It is also important to convey that good geospatial data is essential in achieving the full potential of this software and that the GIS community plays a critical role in achieving these desired data needs. It was agreed that this product could be used to broaden support for the resources needed to support the geospatial community.

All agreed that those who are interested should have an opportunity to collectively determine how to deal with the sales pitches that being made to their individual organizations and that there is potential to expand support for the geospatial community among the emergency management, assessor and law enforcement communities. If the opportunity presents itself, Knippel was encouraged to explore the potential for a multi-county purchase discount.

4. ESRI Software Issue

No discussion due to lack of time. Postponed to the next meeting.

5. Access to Archived Parcel Data

No discussion due to lack of time. Postponed to the next meeting.

6. Next Generation Data Sharing Agreements

Staff reported that Trudy Richter had not yet been able to connect with the Hennepin County attorney to discuss issues with the license. It was agreed that the intent of interim authorization provided by each county (Hennepin's is in progress) was that each county would submit the January updates to the regional parcel dataset and that that the assembled regional dataset should be posted on DataFinder, as if the new agreement was in place.

7. Data Access Policy for the Non-Profit Community

Johnson commented that he had encouraged a federation of non-profit, community based organizations to submit a proposal to the County Data Producers Workgroup stipulating why permitting them to access the regional parcel dataset would be in the interest of the counties and the broader community. This matter was raised as a discussion topic at a forum held on November 14th. At that forum, a number of recommendations, including access to the regional parcel and street centerline datasets were set forth in a recent study conducted by PolicyLink for a number of community-based organizations that serve the Twin Cities, which was financed by the Minneapolis Foundation. Staff noted that one of the aspects of the proposal is to involve a clarification of what is meant by "non-profit" and that the attendees understood it was up to them to organize and speak through a single contact.

Staff suggested that the workgroup not take any action on the non-profit access to the regional parcel dataset until the non-profit community submits a proposal as discussed as decided at the November 14, 2003 forum. The group concurred.

8. Next Meeting

No meeting date to be set until more is known about Hennepin County's response to the proposed license agreement for the regional parcel dataset.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Submitted by,

Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator