

Meeting Notes
County Data Producer Work Group
Wednesday, March 31, 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 January 7, 2004 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 11:00 a.m.

1. Pioneer Press Data Access Request

Each of the members concurred that the requested waiver should not be granted. All agreed that the recently reduced fee, that is consistent across the counties, is fair and reasonable for the data involved. It was also agreed that it would be premature to act on this request until the matter of whether or not to grant free access to specified non-profits has been resolved. Harper commented that if the media were able to separate their journalism side from their business operations, as implied by the Pioneer Press's request, there might be some foundation for looking at the journalism side as a community service similar to non-profits/community organization that provide public services. Harper agreed to share the Workgroup's conclusion with the Chairperson Reinhardt the next day.

2. Emergency Preparedness Workgroup – County Data Maintenance/Assembly Role Proposed

Knippel explained a concept that the Emergency Preparedness workgroup is evolving whereby the counties would be accept responsibility to validate the accuracy and oversee maintenance of specified emergency management-related data that will be served via a MetroGIS website designed for emergency managers. Knippel emphasized there is a need to incorporate local knowledge into the data validation process to ensure creditability. He explained the workgroup's concept to have the counties take the lead and work with cities and others, as appropriate, to manage the accuracy of data disseminated via the subject website. He noted that in some cases these data are produced by state agencies and are not accurate enough for local use or are in a format that is not readily usable in a GIS. In other cases, the data may be best produced by the counties. Knippel also noted that the workgroup's efforts in the Metro Area are being coordinated with the efforts of the Governor's Council Emergency Preparedness Committee and that it is possible that the collaborative procedures developed for the Metro Area will be offered as a template for areas outside of the Metro Area.

Harper commented that this proposal is consistent with the Hazard Mitigation planning that each county is obligated to complete and that the two efforts should be coordinated. Each of the other members concurred, noting that coordinated effort among the seven counties will likely save them all time and effort.

The members concurred that Knippel should work with staff to document the desired roles and responsibilities in the form of a proposed Regional Policy Statement for Emergency Management Data for approval by the Coordinating Committee at its June meeting.

3. Emergency Preparedness Workgroup – Waiver of Licensing Requirement for Browsing Parcel Data

Knippel explained that the Emergency Preparedness workgroup has developed a website designed to quickly disseminate a variety of geospatial data to emergency managers. During the website prototyping, the workgroup concluded that the current policy of restricting browse access for parcel data to only licensed users is overly restrictive.

Those counties that currently permit online browsing of their data without licensing commented that browsing parcel data on the subject website is no different than what they currently permit. All concurred with the workgroup that the current licensure policy is too restrictive. Most agreed that a letter from each county should suffice to authorize browsing of parcel data via the emergency management website. The Staff Coordinator agreed to draft a sample letter that each member could share with his or her respective administrations.

4. Access to Historical Parcel Data Without Need for Licensure

The Staff Coordinator summarized a request from Will Craig (U of M CURA) that MetroGIS consider supporting access to historical versions of the regional parcel dataset and to permit access to these older versions of the Dataset without the need for licensure.

Harper commented that in her role as a planner she often has a need for a historical view of an area or for trend analysis that could be greatly aided by the access to historical parcel data and believes it would be beneficial public service. As such, she stated that she favors Craig's request that MetroGIS support access to historical versions of the regional parcel dataset.

Some members noted that the concept is acceptable but that certain data fields should not be included for the versions available to everyone who wishes to view the data. For instance, Knippel noted that Dakota County's policy is not to make names available (property owner, taxpayer, resident) for unlicensed access. Swenson commented that Anoka County is concerned about a possible negative impact on their mailing label production service revenues if the unlicensed version contains addresses (site and mailing). It was also agreed that the historical data must be clearly identified as such to preclude inadvertent use as current data.

All agreed that, if possible, MetroGIS DataFinder and Café should be modified to support access by licensed users to previous versions of the complete regional parcel dataset. (*Editor's note: following the workgroup meeting, Mark Kotz confirmed that the resources required to support access to historical versions of the regional parcel dataset would be negligible and agreed to begin doing so for licensed as well as unlicensed users if the policy is endorsed by MetroGIS. The pending enhancements to the regional parcel dataset will include this change in policy.*)

Staff was directed to write a letter to Will Craig to ask if unlicensed access to historical versions (2-3 years old) of the regional parcel dataset that are missing the fields that relate to names, mailing and site addresses would be acceptable.

5. ESRI Software Issue – Use of ArcIMS for Mailing Labels If A Fee Involved

No discussion due to lack of time. Postponed to the next meeting. Knippel agreed to follow-up.

6. Next Generation Data Sharing Agreements

Staff commented that the Dakota and Hennepin County attorneys are assisting with the license language and that Trudy Richter is coordinating the discussions. The major item of discussion involves the need for a designated "licensor" without which the license is not enforceable. The Council is being asked to take on this role on behalf of the counties.

Everyone concurred that it is important to reach agreement soon so as not to lose valuable momentum. All are concerned that the amount of effort being expended on the license not outweigh the value of the data. Staff commented that closure will hopefully occur by the end of April.

7. Next Meeting

No meeting date was set.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Submitted by,
Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator