

**Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Policy Board
Room 1A, Metropolitan Council's Mears Park Offices
October 19, 2005**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Members Present: Jim Kordiak (Anoka County), Gary Delaney (Carver County), Tom Egan (Dakota County), Scott Simmer for Randy Johnson (Hennepin County), Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County), Joseph Wagner (Scott County), Molly O'Rourke for Dennis Hegberg (Washington County), Conrad Fiskness (Metro Watershed Districts), Dan Cook (School Districts - TIES), Terry Schneider (AMM- City of Minnetonka), and Tony Pistilli (Metropolitan Council).

Members Absent: None

Coordinating Committee Members Present: Nancy Read (Chairperson), Will Craig, Rick Gelbmann, Jane Harper, Brad Henry, Randy Knippel, and Steve Lorbach.

Visitors: Mark Vander Schaaf (Metropolitan Council), Debra Ehret (MN Dept. of Health), and Carla Coates (Ramsey County).

Support Staff: Randall Johnson, Michael Dolbow, and Steve Fester.

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

Member Fiskness moved and Member Pistilli seconded to approve the meeting agenda, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

3. MEETING SUMMARY

Member O'Rourke moved and Member Kordiak seconded to accept the July 27, 2005 meeting summary, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Chairperson Reinhardt presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Michael Dolbow for his significant contributions to MetroGIS over the past five years. Mr. Dolbow is member of the Metropolitan Council's GIS Unit and has been of a member of the MetroGIS staff support team for the past five years. He has accepted the position of GIS Coordinator for the Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture and will be leaving the Council and MetroGIS on October 28. In his comments, Mr. Dolbow noted that it has been a pleasure to work for MetroGIS because it is providing nationally recognized leadership to accomplish collaborative solutions to information needs shared by government interests that serve the Twin Cities. He wished the Policy Board well in its future efforts.

4. GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION

Rick Gelbmann, GIS Manager for the Metropolitan Council, demonstrated a natural resources planning application that the Council's GIS Unit is in the process of developing, entitled "Natural Resources Atlas Application". It runs on ArcReader software, which can be downloaded free of charge. The Council's GIS Unit is creating value by making it easy for the user to obtain a variety of data, which are produced by several organizations, by organizing and bundling it, and creating an easy means to access the it via the ArcReader software. This application is tentatively planned for release next spring.

Board members asked a number of questions ranging from who will have access to the application, how to add additional datasets, what triggers adding a specific property to a designated natural resources/park area, and value to the effort of investments made by counties and others to improving the spatial accuracy and completeness of their base map data, such as parcel boundaries. The latter investments were acknowledged as having substantial value. It was also noted that it is too early in the process to objectively respond to the other questions that were raised.

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Emergency Preparedness – Proposed Interim Regional Solution Report

Coordinating Committee Chairperson Read introduced the need for regional interoperability of emergency preparedness-related data with the following scenario. A jet aircraft is having difficulty and dumps fuel before landing. The fuel falls across a three county area. Emergency responders need to assess the impact on water intakes.

She then introduced Randy Knippel, Dakota County GIS Coordinator and Chair of the MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup, noting that the Coordinating Committee had endorsed the proposed collaborative solution presented in the agenda materials at its September 21st meeting. The presentation slides can be viewed at http://www.metrogis.org/teams/pb/meetings/05_1019/slides.pdf.

Knippel summarized the collaborative vision, noting that the seven counties are to be the core participants and that officials affiliated with each of the counties had been actively involved in the development of the vision. He commented that the initial focus is on public health related topics such as data related to the Strategic National Stockpile initiative and that a major benefit is provision of a common operating picture for how the GIS and Emergency Preparedness/Management communities can collaborate. The key is recognizing that all disasters are local and that local officials possess the detailed knowledge needed to quickly respond. Moreover, to apply outside resources – nearby communities, state, federal assistance – quickly and effectively, there is a compelling need to create systems that facilitate easy and comprehensive access to data about the specific locality involved. In short, the protocols proposed by the Workgroup are designed to capture a host of data important to effectively respond to emergencies and create a sustainable mechanism with defined organizational roles and responsibilities to keep these data current and readily accessible. He also noted that a website has been created to improve communication with and understanding by the emergency preparedness community.

Before concluding his presentation, Knippel invited Debra Ehert of the Minnesota Department of Health to comment from the perspective of a benefactor of the proposed vision. Ms. Ehert spoke strongly in favor of the proposal, noting that the efforts of the Workgroup have been critical to their ability to effectively integrate GIS technology into their day-to-day business functions. She emphasized that the existence of cross-jurisdictionally compliant data are critical to achieving the Department of Health's mandates, as there is a major spatial dynamic to their work.

Knippel concluded his presentation by summarizing the components of the recommendation. In response to a question from Member Delaney, Knippel commented that the Workgroup is asking if the Board concurs that the vision has political legitimacy before further testing is initiated. Policy Board members then suggested that in addition to seeking a finding of legitimacy from the Policy Board, the Workgroup should be seeking the desired acknowledgement from the Pawlenty Administration, in particular the Department of Public Safety, as well as from the Legislature, League of Cities, and Association of Minnesota (and Metropolitan) Counties. At the county level, Board members concurred that the focus should be on seeking legitimacy from the Emergency Management Coordinators (EMC), as opposed to directly from the County Boards, noting that if the EMC's are sold on the idea, they will recommend it to their respective county boards. Member Delaney noted that each of the county EMCs is responsible for

detailed plans to satisfy FEMA compliance standards and that access to accurate data is critical to their ability to effectively carry out this planning requirement.

Member Schneider commented that he supports the vision concept as most cities and counties have detailed plans that call for a high level of coordination. He concurred with other members that the plan should seek to obtain recognition at the state level sooner rather than later. He also offered constructive criticism concerning the graphic that illustrates the process, which is included in the agenda materials. The Board concurred with Member Schneider that the graphic needs to focus on demonstrable program-related outcomes familiar and important to policy makers and that the terminology needs to be more aligned with their worlds.

Vice-Chair Kordiak asked for clarification about how the Workgroup expects the Emergency Management community to use GIS technology. Knippel responded that the goal is to raise awareness of the value that the GIS professional can bring to a disaster response effort and include them on the team. No one is expecting the Emergency Managers to use the technology themselves in the time of a crisis.

Member Schneider noted that the presence of accurate data maintained in a system that permits analysis of “what if” scenarios would provide an enormously valuable training tool.

Motion: Member Egan moved and Member Delaney seconded, with the understanding that the process graphic will be improved to illustrate program rather than process outcomes, that the Policy Board and, in particular, each county representative:

- 1) Advocate among the leadership of their respective organizations for the next phase of testing and further refinement.
- 2) Offer suggestions for how the proposed roles and responsibilities might work better in their respective organization.
- 3) Authorize Chairperson Reinhardt to sign a letter inviting members of the EP community to attend an outreach event(s) at which the subject interim strategy will be explained and next steps discussed.

Motion carried, ayes all.

b) Strategic Directions Workgroup and 2006 MetroGIS Work Plan

Chairperson Reinhardt informed the Board members that she had added this topic to the agenda. The purpose of this item is to suggest that the Board set a target of February 2006 to host the Strategic Directions Workshop that has been postponed to allow the Metropolitan Council to evaluate the value of MetroGIS to its internal operations. She then recognized Member Pistilli, who provided a copy of the Metropolitan Council’s internal evaluation of the MetroGIS initiative to each of the Policy Board members, noting that the document had been printed the day before and had not yet been seen by members of the Metropolitan Council.

Member Pistilli characterized the findings set forth in the evaluation as complimentary to the products of MetroGIS’s efforts. He also noted that the evaluation raises some questions about MetroGIS’s reporting and organizational structures, commenting that, in his opinion, what seems to make MetroGIS work also raises these questions. He commented that he believes that discussion of the cited issues may lead to improvements. Mark Vander Schaaf, Director of Planning and Growth Management for the Metropolitan Council, briefly commented that the Council’s Audit Committee is scheduled to consider the document on November 2 and that the Council’s Community Development Committee is scheduled to consider it on November 7.

The sentiment expressed by Policy Board members was support for Council’s program evaluation process acknowledging that sufficient public value must be received in return for support of initiatives. In

response to a question from Chairperson Reinhardt, which was echoed by other Board members, Member Pistilli commented that he supports providing Policy Board members an opportunity to provide substantive input into the Council's process from this point on. Member Schneider asked for clarification about how these discussions might affect MetroGIS's 2006 budget. In response, Vander Schaaf and Member Pistilli commented that the Council's proposed 2006 budget maintains at MetroGIS's 2005 funding level, as had been requested by the Policy Board. Member Pistilli and Chairperson Reinhardt agreed to discuss options following the meeting for providing input from the Policy Board to the Council concerning the findings and recommendations presented in its Program Evaluation Report for MetroGIS.

Motion: Member Pistilli moved and Member Egan seconded the following actions:

1. That the Policy Board at its January 2006 meeting, set a target date for hosting MetroGIS's Strategic Directions Workshop.
2. Continue the work in progress for 2006, place on hold initiatives that are planned but not yet commenced, and include initiatives that are identified at the Strategic Directions Workshop as part of the Business Plan Update project.

c) 2006 Meeting Schedule

Chairperson Reinhardt summarized the meeting schedule as proposed in the agenda materials.

Motion: Member Schneider moved and Member Fiskness seconded to set the 2006 Policy Board meetings dates as January 18, April 19, July 19, and October 18, with the understanding that the Board may elect to meet more often for a particular purpose. The 6:30 p.m. start time was maintained:

Motion carried, ayes all.

6. MAJOR PROJECT UPDATES

a1-3): Regional GIS Project Proposals: The Staff Coordinator provided a status update on each of the subject proposals from the materials included in the agenda packet (common web application design, DataFinder Café Upgrade, and fill in incomplete parcel data attributes).

Steve Lorbach, representing St. Paul and the Ramsey County GIS Users Group, noted that he and his constituents support the concept of exploring opportunities to collaborate on common web application needs. He commented, however, that the project should encourage bids for varying systems architectures involving central server designs in addition to distributed server architectures. (*Editor's note: the commentor's reference to a "distributed server architecture" was in response to an application developed for a South Carolina community that the MetroGIS Workgroup had expressed interest in.*) Chairperson Reinhardt instructed staff to pass these comments along to the Workgroup and the Coordinating Committee for their consideration. She also commented that the Policy Board's role had been to affirm the general political legitimacy of the subject project, which is designed to investigate public value that can be achieved if multiple organizations collaborate on a common web application design, and that this affirmation had been granted at the July Board meeting and that design specifications are now under the purview of the Coordinating Committee.

The Staff Coordinator commented that the intent of this project is to seek bids for a variety of systems options to compare and contrast relative to the purposes sought and that to his knowledge the proposed bid specifications are consistent with this objective, but that he would look into the matter before the bid process is initiated.

c) Non-Government Perspective Forum

Member Schneider and the Staff Coordinator updated the Board on preparations in progress for the November 15th forum, noting that 19 individuals from 8 targeted interest groups had thus far RSVPed

from a group of 90 individuals who had been targeted as candidate participants. Staff noted that a reminder would be sent on Monday, October 24th in hopes of increasing participation of around 30 individuals from as many of the 16 target interest groups as possible. Member Schneider reiterated that the objective of the Forum is to facilitate a combination of brainstorming and education on possibilities for non-government collaboration with government interests to address common information needs.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

Chairperson Reinhardt called attention to three of the Information Sharing Items provided and encouraged the members to review the others on their own. The three items called out were as follows:

C) 7: Polaris Mid-Career Achievement Awards

Chairperson Reinhardt called attention to Rick Gelbmann and Randy Knippel, both members of the Coordinating Committee, having been recently honored at the State GIS/LIS Conference with presentation of this prestigious award. Board members congratulated both and gave them a round of applause.

D) 3: Staff Coordinator to Attend Innovations in Governance Program at Harvard

Chairperson Reinhardt called the Board's attention to the Staff Coordinator having been accepted to attend a one-week program, the beginning of November, at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. The program is entitled "Innovations of Governance" and the focus is on regional collaboration to address important public issues. She noted that the case study proposed by the Staff Coordinator focuses on MetroGIS's collaborative organizational structure and, specifically, benefits that have been attained through its presence, as well as, challenges due to its uniqueness. She commented that from her experience this is not an easy program to be accepted into and that she appreciates the Staff Coordinator's dedication and commitment expressed in pursuing the challenge of participating.

D) 6: MetroGIS Leaders Cited in Article about "White Knights"

Chairperson Reinhardt introduced Will Craig, member of the Coordinating Committee, to talk about an article that he wrote entitled "The White Knights of Spatial Data Infrastructure". He commented that his reason for writing the articles was to explore the internal motivation of several individuals, including the Staff Coordinator and members of the Coordinating Committee, who have provided substantive leadership to MetroGIS and the Minnesota geospatial community. The three common motivating factors identified are idealism, enlightened self-interest, and peer support. He noted that the article has been published in national and local journals, including the summer issue of the CURA Reporter, which he handed out copies of at the meeting.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 18, 2006.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Prepared by,
Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator