

Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Policy Board
Room 1A, Metropolitan Council's Mears Park Offices
January 18, 2006

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Members Present: Jim Kordiak (Anoka County), Gary Delaney (Carver County), Tom Egan (Dakota County), Bill Brown for Randy Johnson (Hennepin County), Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County), Joseph Wagner (Scott County), Jane Harper for Dennis Hegberg (Washington County), Conrad Fiskness (Metro Watershed Districts), Terry Schneider (AMM- City of Minnetonka), and Tony Pistilli/Blair Tremere (Metropolitan Council).

Members Absent: Dan Cook (School Districts - TIES)

Coordinating Committee Members Present: Nancy Read (Chairperson), David Arbeit, David Claypool, Will Craig, Rick Gelbmann, Brad Henry, Randy Knippel, and Ron Wencil.

Visitors: Prof. Shashi Shekhar (University of Minnesota)

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Steve Fester.

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

Member Fiskness moved and Member Pistilli seconded to approve the meeting agenda, moving Item 4 after 5c. Motion carried, ayes all.

3. MEETING SUMMARY

Member Egan moved and Member Pistilli seconded to accept the October 19, 2005 meeting summary, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

4. GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION

Postponed to April meeting.

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) 2005 Accomplishments and Annual Report Theme

Coordinating Committee Chairperson Read highlighted MetroGIS's major accomplishments in 2005. Chairperson Reinhardt also called attention to Ian Masser's recognition of MetroGIS (Agenda Item 7a) as the only example in the U.S. of an organizational structure capable of sustaining a spatial data infrastructure consistent with the vision of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI).

Member Fiskness asked why MetroGIS's organizational structure has not been more widely emulated, given the recognition MetroGIS has received for its success. Johnson responded by noting that active engagement of elected officials in MetroGIS's efforts is what sets MetroGIS apart from others and is a key reason for the recognition received from Ian Masser. He also noted that the ability to engage elected officials is apparently a major stumbling block in other areas.

Motion: Member Egan moved and Member Fiskness seconded that the Policy Board accept the:

- 1) Listing of major 2005 MetroGIS accomplishments, as listed in the agenda report.
- 2) Proposed annual report theme of "how MetroGIS's efforts are making a difference and facilitating improvements via e-government while doing so".

Motion carried, ayes all.

b) 2005 Annual Performance Measurement Report

Coordinating Committee Chairperson Read presented the findings of the 2005 MetroGIS Performance Measurement Report. The slide presentation utilized to provide context for these findings can be viewed at http://www.metrogis.org/teams/pb/meetings/06_0118/pm_slides.pdf.

Member Pistilli asked why the number of visits to DataFinder is substantially greater than the number of data download events. Johnson commented that users most likely review the metadata and browse data to decide if the data are suitable for an intended purpose more often than they actually download data.

Motion: Vice Chairperson Kordiak moved and Member Fiskness seconded that the Policy Board accept, the MetroGIS 2005 Performance Measurement Report, dated December 23, 2005, as presented in the agenda materials. Motion carried, ayes all.

c) Update on Council Consideration of MetroGIS Governance and Funding Questions

Chairperson Reinhardt introduced this topic and turned the presentation over to Member Pistilli to explain the process intended by the Metropolitan Council to respond to questions raised about MetroGIS governance and funding in the Council's Program Evaluation and Audit Report of MetroGIS, which was provided to the Policy Board at its October 2005 meeting.

Member Pistilli explained that the Metropolitan Council's Community Development Committee (CDC) has created a working group comprised of four Council members and Chairperson Reinhardt. This workgroup is tentatively scheduled to meet 4 times – twice in February and twice in March - to address the Council's Program Evaluation and Audit Report of MetroGIS. Member Pistilli asked Blair Tremere, Community Development Director for the Metropolitan Council, if he wished to share any additional information.

Tremere commented that ten years have passed since the Council decided to foster creation of MetroGIS and that it is timely and appropriate for the Council to revisit its involvement in MetroGIS from the perspective of today's needs. He stressed a goal of the workgroup is to better inform the Council and Council management about MetroGIS. This is a reason a program evaluation and audit was initiated, with an initial focus on whether there is duplication with other programs. Tremere acknowledged that the findings of the Audit demonstrate that MetroGIS does provide valued service. He also explained that MetroGIS's unique structure raises governance and funding equity questions that he believes need to be revisited to assure that sufficient accountability is achieved. He commented that he believes the pending examination is a matter of clearly articulating organizational relationships and benefits received for the respective investments. Tremere closed his remarks by emphasizing that there is no predetermined outcome for the workgroup's process and that the goal is to complete the process by the end of March 2006.

Chairperson Reinhardt acknowledged that government has a responsibility to periodically evaluate the cost effectiveness of the programs it supports and stated that she is pleased to be a member of the CDC Workgroup charged with addressing questions raised in the Council's recent evaluation of MetroGIS. She also stated that the Council should be very proud of the accomplishments of MetroGIS that its investment has facilitated. Chairperson Reinhardt encouraged the Council to recognize the value of other stakeholder contributions as it evaluates the cost-effectiveness of its involvement with MetroGIS.

The Board's attention was then directed to the Coordinating Committee's recommendations as outlined in the agenda report. There was no discussion of the recommendations other than to concur with Chairperson Reinhardt's request to create of an advisory group to support her as she represents MetroGIS on the CDC workgroup.

Vice Chairperson Kordiak commented that he understands the need for periodic audits and expects the outcome of the pending process will be a stronger relationship between the Council and MetroGIS.

Motion: Vice Chairperson Kordiak moved and Alternate Member Harper seconded that the Policy Board:

- 1) Authorize creation of a MetroGIS workgroup to support the Chairperson Reinhardt in her role as MetroGIS's representative on the Metropolitan Council's CDC workgroup that is charged with responding to recommendations set forth in the October 2005 Program Evaluation and Audit of MetroGIS.
- 2) Be provided with e-mail updates through MetroGIS's representative(s) to the CDC workgroup as its work progresses. The updates should also be sent to the Coordinating Committee.

Discussion after the motion.

Member Delaney shared his recent difficult experience with the consolidation of the Metropolitan 911 and Metropolitan Radio Boards. He pointed out that when valuable services are involved in reorganizations, the process is often very stressful, in particular, when possible funding modifications are also involved. Delaney stated that he believes the Council is the largest beneficiary of MetroGIS and asked Tremere what other organization(s) might MetroGIS blend into to maintain the valuable services currently provided. Tremere commented that a component of the pending examination is to ratify the proper relationship between the Council and MetroGIS and that the process is intended to focus on education and review of the merits for Metropolitan Council members.

Alternate Member Harper encouraged those involved in the process to examine the CrimNet initiative as she believes it has many of the same objectives as MetroGIS but is focused on the specific needs of the criminal justice community. CrimNet is funded by the state and is not organized via a Joint Powers Agreement. She mentioned that there may be some lessons learned by looking at the CrimNet governance model

Member Schneider concurred with Vice Chairperson Kordiak's comments. He also stated that he would have preferred if the Council were to have brought concerns about funding equity directly to the Board when it was initially conceived. He emphasized that MetroGIS has been able to accomplish on a shoestring what others have spent enormous amounts of funding to accomplish. He also noted that extraordinary value has been created and is concerned that if the pending examination is backward looking as opposed to forward looking that valuable opportunities for the region that have as yet not been defined could be lost. He challenged those involved in the pending process to keep the big picture in mind, in particular, maintaining the ability to leverage what we have already learned and accomplished to address even larger and more far reaching challenges.

Vice Chairperson Kordiak stated that he would not be surprised if the outcome of this process is that the Council will discover they need MetroGIS more than MetroGIS needs them. Moreover, he speculated, given the critical nature of the functions supported by MetroGIS, that if the Council were to decide to withdraw its funding, as stated in one of the options that the workgroup will evaluate, the other stakeholders would establish some other way to support these common needs.

Member Pistilli stated for the record that the Program Evaluation and Audit of MetroGIS was not initiated by the Council itself but rather by Council management and that the findings and recommendations set forth in the report are the result of the Auditor's examination. A purpose of the pending Council workgroup, of which he is a member, is to have the Council decide if there is merit to pursuing any of the options outlined by the Audit. Value and benefits are acknowledged but the Report mainly looks at MetroGIS from the Council's cost-benefit perspective, not from a broader community perspective. Member Pistilli explained that he recognizes that changes in MetroGIS's governance could impact the broader community, potentially reducing the value received by the other stakeholders.

Vice Chairperson Kordiak called the question. Motion carried, ayes all.

d) Non-Government Forum Results & Partnering Guidelines

Member Schneider provided an overview of the November 15, 2005 forum hosted by MetroGIS to identify potential collaboration opportunities with the non-profit and for-profit sectors. He noted that the results of the November forum, together with the Geospatial Technology Possibilities Forum proposed for this spring by the Coordinating Committee, should provide a strong foundation for dialogue at the pending Strategic Directions Forum.

Member Schneider commented that he was very pleased with the enthusiasm offered by the participants and the number of ideas offered. He also shared that he believes a key to moving forward on these opportunities will involve the attendees organizing themselves to communicate as a collective voice with MetroGIS leadership and that he had encouraged those in attendance to begin thinking about how they might do such. He noted that he was encouraged that those in attendance eventually came to understand that an exchange of value would be central to successfully partnering with public sector interests.

Finally, four proposed principles listed in the agenda report were offered for comment. Their purpose is to provide a framework to guide talks toward achieving ideas offered by the forum attendees. Other than a suggestion from Alternate Member Harper to expand the options identified in Principle # 3 by adding “but not be limited” after “of”, Board members were comfortable with the principles, as proposed.

Motion: Member Schneider moved and Member Fiskness seconded that the Policy Board:

- 1) Support the Coordinating Committee’s recommendation to host a “Geospatial Technology Possibilities” forum this coming spring in preparation for the pending Strategic Directions Forum.
- 2) Approve the following principles to guide pending talks with non-government interests who wish to further examine collaborative opportunities with government interests in addressing common geospatial needs:
 - a) Value-added to public sector assets is encouraged provided it does not detract from the public sector objective.
 - b) Contribution of assets to a collaborative solution assumes all parties view the transaction as equitable and relevant to their needs.
 - c) Contributions can be comprised of, but not be limited to, funds, data, equipment and/or people.
 - d) Equity is defined on an organization-by-organization basis and exists if the collaborative solution is more efficient than pursuing the solution on one's own.

Motion carried, ayes all.

e) Strategic Directions Workshop and Business Plan Update

Chairperson Reinhardt shared the following revised timeline and expectations for the Strategic Directions Workshop and subsequent Business Plan Update process, as presented in the agenda report:

- Set a tentative target timeframe of fall 2006 for the MetroGIS Strategic Directions Workshop.
- Resolve questions raised about MetroGIS’s governance (in the Council’s October 2005 Program Evaluation and Audit Report) before hosting the MetroGIS Strategic Directions Workshop.
- Examine the realm of geospatial technology possibilities in preparation for the Strategic Directions Workshop at the same time that MetroGIS governance preferences are being discussed.
- Set a tentative target of the Policy Board’s April 2007 meeting to receive an updated MetroGIS Business Plan.

Motion: Vice Chairperson Kordiak moved and Member Egan seconded that the Policy Board affirm the four proposals as outlined the agenda report pertaining to preparations for MetroGIS’s Strategic Directions Workshop and Business Plan Update initiatives.

Motion carried, ayes all.

f) Letter of Support Requested for Federal Grant Application

Coordinating Committee chairperson Read explained that a request has been received for a letter of support from the Policy Board for a federal grant for which several MetroGIS stakeholders have elected to apply. The proposed project involves development of a web-based application protocol intended to standardize the look and feel of geospatial-related web portals hosted by multiple organizations for varying business needs.

Johnson commented that this proposal, if successful, offers an opportunity to partner with another regional geospatial collaborative on a need common to both groups. He stressed that understanding more about such region-to-region collaboration possibilities is important to achieving the vision of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), and as such should improve the application's competitiveness. Such opportunities are also important to MetroGIS from not only a resources perspective but also concerning research on what it takes to collaborate on application development.

Alternate Member Brown commented that the federal government is serious about partnering with local units of government. The projects vary ranging from procurement of imagery to funding grant proposals, such as that proposed, to better understand elements necessary for successful collaboration.

Coordinating Committee Member Gelbmann also spoke on behalf of the proposal concurring with an earlier comment that if funded this project would provide a valuable research opportunity to learn more about what it takes to successfully collaborate on common application needs as well as leverage federal funding.

Motion: Member Fiskness moved and Member Harper seconded that the Policy Board authorize Chairperson Reinhardt to sign a letter in support of the subject FGDC grant application with the understanding that any and all concerns raised are resolved to the satisfaction of all affected parties. Motion carried, ayes all.

6. MAJOR PROJECT UPDATES

No discussion

7. INFORMATION SHARING

No discussion

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2006.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Prepared by,
Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator