

Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Policy Board
Metropolitan Mosquito Control District Offices
January 17, 2007

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Jim Kordiak (Anoka County), Scott Simmer for Randy Johnson (Hennepin County), Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County), Molly O'Rourke for Dennis Hegberg (Washington County), Roger Lake (Metro Watershed Districts), and Tony Pistilli (Metropolitan Council).

Members Absent: Tom Workman (Carver County), Tom Egan (Dakota County), Joseph Wagner (Scott County), Terry Schneider (AMM- City of Minnetonka), and Dan Cook (School Districts - TIES)

Coordinating Committee Members Present: Rick Gelbmann, Chet Harrison, Ned Phillips (Vice Chair), Nancy Read, Sally Wakefield, and Mark Vander Schaaf.

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Christopher Kline

Visitors: Alison Slaats (Manager MetroGIS DataFinder and member Metropolitan Council GIS Unit) and Jeff Heegaard, Executive Director - 1000 Friends of Minnesota.

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

Alternate Member O'Rourke moved and Member Lake seconded to approve the proposed agenda, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

3. MEETING SUMMARY

Member Kordiak moved and Member Pistilli seconded to approve the October 18, 2006 meeting summary, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

4. GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION

Effective Decisions Through Effective Data Distribution

Nancy Read, Member of the Coordinating Committee, introduced the topic and provided a brief summary of prior GIS Technology Demonstrations and the rationale behind having them. She explained that demonstration planned for this meeting was designed to explain how data obtained from MetroGIS DataFinder by non-governmental entities is being used to improve decision support in their respective arenas. She introduced Chet Harrison, Senior Associate with CB Richard Ellis and a Member of the Coordinating Committee, who presented the first of two demonstrations.

Harrison noted that specializes in land sales, site selection and large acreage land assemblage and uses Geographic Information System (GIS) applications to efficiently find and evaluate sites. He also noted that CB Richard Ellis's is the largest real estate brokerage firm in the world. He then presented a case study, which earlier that day had been awarded the Land Transaction of the Year Award for the Twin Cities, to illustrate how he had used data obtained via MetroGIS DataFinder to assist him locate a developable parcel for a major land development client of at least 230 contiguous acres located as close as possible to center of population for the Twin Cities. Using the IDS Center in Minneapolis as an assumed center of population and using GIS technology, a 17.9-mile buffer was created which included over 40,000 candidate sites. Harrison then explained that through the use of a subtractive methodology carried out through a series of queries using GIS technology, to narrow down the number of candidate sites to seven. He then explained how he used an additional series of GIS queries together with other supplemental information gained from digital orthoimagery and other sources, to select the development site most compatible with the clients' needs, which is located in Hassan Township, along I-94, to the northwest of Minneapolis. (Editor's Note: A copy of Mr. Harrison's presentation has been requested and will be posted when available.)

Members asked several questions following the presentation, including:

- How much time did the analysis require? *Response: The analysis took one day; the standardization of parcel data across the seven county area provided through MetroGIS's efforts allowed the process to be relatively simple as compared to how it was in the past and is currently the case in other parts of the country. The availability of a standardized Planned Land Use dataset through MetroGIS's efforts for the entire seven- county area was specifically mentioned as an outstanding product that played an important role in the analysis and saved an enormous amount of time.*
- How do MetroGIS's efforts to implement standards, web services, and efficient data access tools compare with efforts of others around the country? *Response: There are other organizations, but the quality of their data is generally poorer from a multiple jurisdiction perspective due to the lack of standardization. Harrison also noted that the existence of DataFinder is saving him time and effort. He also made a point of thanking MetroGIS for deciding to publish a large number of web services via DataFinder because he no longer has to save the data internally, rather he is able to automatically access the most recent version when he starts his internal applications. He also commented that the amount of standardization of data in this area has and will continue to encourage development of tools that run on the standard data witch in turn further improve efficiencies. He mentioned that having to pay for parcel data is not a major issue for CB Richard Ellis but noted that it is for others and that he suggested that the Policy Board revisit the value of potential benefits that could be gained from permitted free access and compare that value to the revenue currently received. He guessed that offering free access would generate more overall value.*
- How were the assumptions in the analysis determined? *Response: Experience in the local market and the client's preference for a location as close as possible to the central core drove the assumptions.*

(Note to reader: The following day, Mr. Harrison submitted the comments listed in Attachment A and asked that they be passed along the Policy Board which will occur when this meeting summary is submitted to the Policy Board for approval.)

Sally Wakefield, GIS Coordinator with the 1000 Friends of Minnesota and Member of the Coordinating Committee, introduced herself and provided a brief overview of her organization's work, which involves proving assistance to citizen planners – persons generally with low-level GIS skill sets and limited budgets, mostly located in low population communities on the fringe of the seven-county region. They teach how to use Google Earth, a free public access browser, as a means to utilize geospatial data available via DataFinder. Through assistance of the 1000 Friends organization, these communities are visualize their community's resources, development constraints, and alternative development scenarios and as a result are better positioned to as they prepare their comprehensive plans and respond to development proposals.

Wakefield then used a case study to demonstrated how 1000 Friends of Minnesota collaborated with the City of Dayton to develop a comprehensive plan using Google Earth and a wealth of data obtained via MetroGIS DataFinder, including critical natural resource areas, wetlands, conservation corridors, and proposed regional parks and trails, to assist them in their effort to design a plan to accommodate the 15,000 new residents they expect to live in their community in the next 30 years.

Members asked several questions including:

- Where does Google Earth obtain their image data? *Response: Google Earth obtains its data through private vendors via license agreement, similar to what MetroGIS does with street centerline data.*
- Does the data currently available from MetroGIS meet your needs? *Response: Yes. DataFinder is an excellent resource for the work of 1000 Friends because the data are current, work together, and the one-stop shop provide by DataFinder saves a great deal of time.*

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) 2006 Accomplishments

Coordinating Committee Member Read introduced the topic and informed the Policy Board that the Coordinating Committee had accepted the listing of major accomplishments for 2006 and the suggested theme (how the existence of MetroGIS is making a difference and facilitating e-government solutions while doing so) for the 2006 MetroGIS Annual Report, as outlined in the agenda materials.

Read then highlighted several of the major accomplishments, including hosting the “Imagining Possibilities: The Next Frontier for Geographic Information Technology” forum on June 1st, reaching agreement with The Lawrence Group (TLG) to continue to provide access to the TLG Street Centerline Dataset including the first view-only public access to the dataset, and a proposal to the Board of Soil and Water Resources concerning maintenance of water management jurisdictional boundaries.

Chairperson Reinhardt called for any revisions or comments regarding the listing of accomplishments.

Member Pistilli asked for more information about progress made to grant non-profit interests access to licensed parcel data, without fee. The Staff Coordinator explained that to his knowledge the members of the County Data Producers Workgroup had agreed in principle to recommend to their leadership to follow Hennepin County’s lead and allow community-based, non-profit interests to receive free access to parcel data but decide on a county-by-county basis which interests would qualify for access without fee.

Member Pistilli, commented that he would like more information about the rationale behind the current practice of charging a data development cost recovery fee to non-government interests for access to parcel data, noting the development project used as case study in the GIS Technology Demonstration opens the question whether free access would not be a better policy as amount of revenue received through cost recovery may be substantially less than the economic and social benefits of allowing free access.

Chairperson Reinhardt asked Member Simmer about Hennepin County’s pilot testing of policies regarding non-profit access to parcel data. Simmer noted that he had not been involved in the discussions and suggested that this information be requested from William Brown, Hennepin County Surveyor, who is more familiar with the topic. He did however note that he believed that Mr. Brown was in conversation with the county attorney about the possibility of converting to a much simpler (shrink-wrap) licensing process as the current process is extremely labor intensive for the user as well as the county.

No additions or modifications were suggested to the listing of accomplishments or suggested theme for the 2006 Annual report.

b) 2006 Annual Performance Measurement Report

Coordinating Committee Member Read introduced the topic, informing the Policy Board that the Coordinating Committee had accepted the 2006 Annual Performance Measurement Report, as presented in the Policy Board’s agenda packet. She noted that the metrics and analysis show that usage of MetroGIS DataFinder had increased and the demand continues for data accessible via DataFinder, despite the absence of the Café component for several months during its upgrade process.

Motion: Member Pistilli moved and Alternate Member Simmer seconded to accept the 2006 Annual Performance Measurement Report, dated December 21, 2006, together with conclusions and recommended actions therein. Motion carried, ayes all.

c) Beyond Government Users – Partnering Opportunities

The Staff Coordinator commented that the Policy Board, at Member Schneider’s suggestion, had recommended that MetroGIS explore potential partnerships with non-governmental entities to address common needs. The Beyond Government Users workgroup was formed to foster this collaboration. The Staff Coordinator then summarized each of the five suggested partnering opportunities that had been identified by the Workgroup, as outlined in the agenda packet.

In response to a comment by Vice Chairperson Kordiak inquiring as the amount of revenue involved from data sales, the members agreed that it would be helpful to know the extent the counties are currently relying upon revenues gained from cost recovery of parcel data development costs. The members also concurred that it may be time to revisit current cost recovery policy. Member Pistilli agreed with Vice Chairperson Kordiak, that these data were developed for a public purpose and that the tax payer might benefit more from value added to the data by others and economic development resulting from use of the data if it were more widely available. Member Pistilli concluded the discussion with the rhetorical comment “where is the harm in offering the private sector access to data that they can utilize to enrich their businesses?”

The Staff Coordinator agreed to draft a request for Chairperson Reinhardt’s signature to send to the county representatives to the Coordinating Committee with a copy to the Policy Board requesting an estimate of how much revenue is received annually from data sales (not including any added value by staff to produce derivative products) together with an estimate and how much it costs to support the data sales procedures.

d) Preparations for Strategic Directions Workshop

Chairperson Reinhardt introduced the topic, noting that the workshop is planned for February 8, 2007. She then encouraged the members to speak with staff and colleagues at their respective organizations before the workshop about the “starter kit statements” listed in Attachment C of the agenda packet to make sure any issues or concerns are identified at the Workshop.

Member Pistilli asked if cost recovery policy questions surrounding parcel data, raised previously in the meeting, should be addressed before the Strategic Directions Workshop. The Staff Coordinator stated that in his opinion, there is no need to address the cost recovery policy matter before moving forward with talks on a host of other topics important to the success of MetroGIS. He encouraged the members to offer general direction at the Workshop for the appropriateness of MetroGIS engaging and, if so, provide general direction as to the desired outcome but there is no need to attempt to decide any specifics at the Workshop.

Coordinating Committee member Read, who is a member of the Workshop Planning Team, commented that she hopes to hear from Policy Board members at the Workshop what they are running into in their participation other boards and commissions regarding data and technology needs that may be appropriate for MetroGIS to address.

e) Modify Bylaws - Executive Committee of the Board, and E-voting Procedures for Coordinating Committee

Chairperson Reinhardt introduced the topic noting that the matter had been tabled at the last Board meeting for an opinion whether MetroGIS is subject to the Open Meeting Law. She reported that although it is not subject to the law that the Board has always conducted its business as it is subject to the law. She then summarized the Committee’s recommendation that it be permitted to use E-voting as it is comprised of staff and not elected officials. She then outlined a suggestion that the Board create an Executive Committee comprised of three members that could be called upon to decide matters between Board meetings in circumstances where:

- a) A matter is deemed urgent by the Chairperson who then calls a meeting of Executive Committee to consider the matter. If none of the Board members objects to the Executive Committee considering the matter, the Executive Committee may meet and consider it. If there is an objection, the matter would need to be brought to the full Board.
- b) The Policy Board, at a meeting, delegates a topic to the Executive Committee to resolve.

Member Pistilli recommended that the Executive Board’s decision should be unanimous on any matter that it considers or the matter must be forwarded to the Policy Board for decision. The membership concurred with the suggested language change.

Motion: Alternate Member O'Rourke moved and Alternate Member Simmer seconded to amend MetroGIS's Operating Guidelines, as presented in Attachment A of the agenda report, dated January 4, 2007, authorizing the Policy Board to create an Executive Committee and the Coordinating Committee to use E-voting to decide urgent, non-policy matters between meetings, subject to changing the proposed language to require a unanimous decision for motions to be approved by the Executive Committee, that is all three members must vote in favor to approve a motion. Motion carried, ayes all.

6. MAJOR ACTIVITY UPDATES

There was no discussion of the topics listed in the agenda report.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

There was no discussion of the topics listed in the agenda report.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2007. Staff was asked to include on the agenda welcoming to the Board of Commissioner Workman from Carver County, who was appointed to the Policy Board earlier in the month but was unable to attend this meeting.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Prepared by:

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MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

and

Christopher Kline
MetroGIS Support Team

Attachment A

Comments submitted to the Policy Board following its January 17, 2007 meeting from Chet Harrison, Senior Associate, CB Richard Ellis, Land Services Group:

“Here are a few thoughts I would like to pass on to the Policy Board. Each quarter I spend roughly 16 hours tracking down parcel data from each of the seven counties with which I have subscriptions. It is a drain on my time, worth more than what I pay for the data, and on theirs, especially considering the MetGIS has the technology and already in place to deliver it to me in real time with no human interaction. Apparently the barrier to private access of MetGIS data is legal. I would propose that the counties use the most aggressive data agreement, most likely Hennepin, and make this service available to private entities.

I would like to see MetGIS push standards beyond the 7 metro counties. They have done a great job of using dialog not mandate to drive evolution. I will continue to use MetGIS as an example of the efficiencies realized from collaborative standardization as I expand into other regions of the country. We anticipate working with approximately 350 counties in the major real estate markets by 2008.

While my presentation may seem threatening to slow / no growth communities it should appear exciting to the communities looking for economic growth and real estate tax base. The Lake Elmo's of the world wish to be left in a rural state while the Woodbury's welcome development. This information can be captured spatially and incorporated in to the types of analysis I perform for clients. Nobody wishes to waist a lot of time pushing a project in a city that doesn't want growth.

One more specific suggestion I think would be easy to implement is to request a consistent address format for the OwnerAddress and TaxPayerAddress fields. Some counties use both, others use one or the other. The address info is distributed inconsistently across the three address fields as well.

Keep up the good work,”