

**Meeting Summary**  
**MetroGIS Policy Board**  
**Room 1A, Metropolitan Council's Mears Park Offices**  
**July 27, 2005**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

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

Members Absent: Jim Kordiak (Anoka County), Randy Johnson (Hennepin County), Dan Cook (School Districts - TIES), and [vacant] (AMM - Large City Rep.).

Coordinating Committee Members Present: Nancy Read (Chairperson), David Arbeit, Rick Gelbmann, Jane Harper, Brad Henry, and Randy Knippel.

Visitors: Mark Vander Schaaf (Metropolitan Council), Dennis Welsch (City of Roseville), and David Bauer and Steve Lorbach (Ramsey County GIS Users Group).

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Steve Fester.

**2. ACCEPT AGENDA**

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

**3. MEETING SUMMARY**

Member Egan moved and Member Pistilli seconded to accept the April 20, 2005 meeting summary, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

**4. GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION**

The Staff Coordinator introduced David Windle and the demonstration topic. To David's surprise, Chairperson Reinhardt then presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation for his decade of leadership to the Twin Cities geospatial community. David will be moving shortly to his homeland of Australia.

Mr. Windle began his demonstration of the Ramsey County Online Maps and Data application by briefly explaining that the Ramsey County GIS Users Group pursued this application to provide easy access to countywide data with enough functionality to be useful, but not so much as to overwhelm the average user. He noted cost savings that the user group participants are realizing due to a significant reduction in calls for information that can now be readily acquired via the application (30+ percent reduction in Roseville). Ramsey County is also benefiting from improved data as a result of many new users identifying anomalies in the data. Windle also commented that the regional Planned Land Use dataset created via MetroGIS's efforts and the Council's regional existing land use dataset also play important roles in support of the application in addition to imagery, planimetrics and parcel data produced by Ramsey County and zoning data produced by the cities. He also noted that The Lawrence Group (TLG) had granted the User Group permission to use their street centerline data in such a way as to allow street intersections to be geo-referenced and located via query in the same manner as addresses to support public safety needs.

Windle then provided a live demonstration of many of the information query and viewing functions supported by the application. The User Group maintains both Intranet and Internet versions of the application. The primary difference is that the Intranet version supports queries by property owner name,

whereas, the Internet (public) version does not. The handouts from this presentation can be viewed at <http://www.metrogis.org/teams/pb/meetings/windle.pdf>.

Member Egan asked a question about the accuracy of the data and how the user can be reasonably assured that the data are reliably represented. Windle commented that a disclaimer visible on all pages of the application encourages the user to read the metadata (data about data) that are provided for each dataset to learn about the data's characteristics (accuracy, currency, etc.). The disclaimer also stipulates that the data being viewed are a representation of reality and that it is the user's responsibility to determine if the data are suitable for the intended use.

Another member asked about the accuracy of the buffer tool, e.g., can the generation of mailing list for properties within a 350-foot radius of a specific property satisfy code requirements? Windle replied that the GIS buffering function is, in fact, more accurate than manual methods to identify properties within the desired distance. That said, he also stressed that users need to speak with someone from the organization that administers the rules to make sure use of a GIS will meet all of their requirements. Member Schneider concurred.

Chairperson Reinhardt thanked Mr. Windle for talking time out his last days with Roseville to share this application with the Policy Board and wished him and his family well in their relocation to Australia.

## **5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **a) Regional GIS Project Funding Proposals**

Coordinating Committee Chair Read introduced all three proposals for funding as Regional GIS Projects and summarized the Committee's respective recommendation, noting that each satisfies the prescribed guidelines. She then introduced a representative for each proposal to explain the key points of the information provided in the agenda materials.

#### **(1) Common Application Design for Web-based Data Queries**

Randy Knippel, Coordinating Committee member and lead author of this proposal by the County Data Producers Workgroup, noted that the proposed application would provide a common look and feel for access to the regional datasets, whether via applications hosted by MetroGIS, the counties or others, as well as to other data such as those currently supported by the Ramsey County GIS Users Group. He emphasized that although the core functions would be the same for all installations of the proposed application, each host would have the ability to add functions that others may not need or want but that there would be no substantive difference in the general appearance from one installation to another – the user would simply have one or more additional buttons (tools) available to them on the more sophisticated sites.

Knippel explained another important objective is to permit all of the hosts to share expertise and resources to manage the sites, potentially resulting in significant efficiency improvements for the producers/hosts in addition to improved ease of use by the users. He concluded his remarks noting that the cost is not expected to exceed \$16,000.

#### **(2) Fill in incomplete fields in Regional Parcel Dataset**

Coordinating Committee member Gelbmann commented that this proposal would be pursued in two phases: a research component in fall 2005 that is not expected to exceed \$500 and a data capture/refinement component in 2006 that could involve \$22,000+. He stressed that the component planned for 2005 needs to be completed before a reliable cost can be determined for the 2006 component but, more importantly, that the 2006 funding is not requested at this time. The 2006 component would be considered along with any other proposals that might be submitted for those funds. Regardless of whether the project moves forward in 2006, the research proposed in 2005 would be valuable.

Gelbmann commented on the significant progress that has been made in the five years since MetroGIS implemented the initial regional parcel dataset and began efforts to normalize data produced by each of the counties for the specified descriptors (attributes) of parcels. He commented

that over this period the number of attributes has grown from 9 to 66, with an increase from 25 to 66 in 2004. So far, 13 of these 66 attributes are produced by all seven counties and normalization strategies are in place to permit “apples to apples” comparisons across the seven county area. Gelbmann then talked about the range of current completion for the remaining 53 attributes and the general strategy anticipated to accomplish this proposal and commented on some of the reasons for the missing information (e.g., differences in how the respective counties organize their data, some can be easily be added when identified, and others require further investigation to determine whether they can be cost-effectively filled.) He emphasized that no county will be asked to support any data management activities for which they do not have a business need. The thought is that there may be several one-time projects to convert or capture data that the counties would agree to support once the initial acquisition is complete.

Policy Board member Pistilli asked if the 2006 funding component is included in MetroGIS’s budget request that was submitted to the Council in April. Gelbmann confirmed this is the case.

### **(3) MetroGIS DataFinder Café – Update Proposal**

Coordinating Committee member Gelbmann commented that DataFinder Café currently is utilized for 25 percent of the data downloads via DataFinder, with an upward trend. He summarized three capabilities available to Café users that are not available if the users are downloading data through the other method (FTP). These capabilities are the ability to: clip data for user specified areas, bundle multiple data themes in a single download, and acquire the desired data in several formats “on the fly.”

Gelbmann also noted that Café is three years old and that several of its software and hardware components need to be upgraded, which is the basis for this proposal. He commented that a survey of users is in progress to make sure that the design team is well aware of user preferences before deciding on a plan of action. He also commented that the Coordinating Committee has directed the design team (assuming the Board concurs this is a worthy project) to identify a broad architecture for not only data distribution but also for Internet querying and viewing of commonly needed data and to define how Café fits within the broad architecture. The goal is to complete the design work in time to complete the project or enter into a contract by year-end.

Board members discussed the relative merits of all three proposals. There was general concurrence with the Coordinating Committee’s conclusion that upgrades to DataFinder Café should be the highest priority. The notion of shifting all of the available project funds to Café was considered but ultimately the Committee’s suggestion to fund all three proposals was accepted by the Policy Board with the understanding that if a project cannot be fully funded, then whatever component(s) is funded must provide a value equal or greater to the amount invested. In other words, partially funded projects that would serve little or no purpose until additional funding is available are not to be initiated with the subject funds.

A question arose about the Policy Board’s role as advisor to the Council relative to expending the subject \$22,000 that are included in MetroGIS’s 2005 budget for this purpose. Mark Vander Schaaf, representing the Council, stated that he sees merit in all three proposals as potential complimentary components to an e-government initiative currently underway at the Council but that more information is needed to determine how the components would fit together. There was a brief discussion related to the Policy Board’s authority to authorize expenditure of funds that are part of MetroGIS’s approved budget. Member Pistilli, the Metropolitan Council’s representative to the Policy Board, commented a recent shift in preferences by Council management pertaining to MetroGIS’s affairs may warrant elevating the governance-related discussion to a higher level.

**Motion:** Member Pistilli moved and Member Egan seconded that the Policy Board:

- 1) Conclude that all three 2005 Regional GIS Project proposals, as cited in the agenda materials, have merit that warrants preparation of detailed design, cost, and phasing options for further consideration,

with the understanding that if a project can not be fully funded that whatever component(s) is funded must provide a value equal or greater to the investment funds via MetroGIS.

- 2) Authorize use of up to \$1,700 for upgrades to DataFinder from funds previously donated<sup>1</sup> to MetroGIS.
- 3) Forward recommendations to the Metropolitan Council that it authorize allocation of:
  - (a) Up to \$16,000 of the budgeted \$22,000 to Proposal A: (Joint Web Application)
  - (b) Up to \$500 of the budgeted \$22,000 to Proposal B: Parcel Attributes (only 2005 component)
  - (c) The remaining portion of the budgeted \$22,000 (at least \$5,500) to DataFinder upgrades, in combination with budgeted maintenance funds (\$10,000), special grants (\$15,000), and donated funds (\$1,700).

This recommendation acknowledges that the actual funding amounts may vary somewhat from those approved here after specific solutions for each proposal are developed. Requests to spend funds for specific solutions within these recommended projects may be sent directly through the Metropolitan Council to expedite the procurement process.

Motion carried, ayes all.

**b) Regional Parcel Dataset – Policy for Unlicensed, View-Only Access**

The Staff Coordinator briefly summarized the reason for requesting a one-year time extension for this policy proposal, as outlined in the agenda materials.

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

- 1) Affirm its July 2004 finding that a policy of unlicensed, view-only access to parcel data has merit for further consideration as a regional best practice.
- 2) Extend to July 2006 its sunset provision to achieve county affirmation that the subject proposal is consistent with their respective needs.

Chairperson Reinhardt commented on the importance of continuing to support the collaborative progress that has been demonstrated.

Motion carried, ayes all.

**6. MAJOR PROJECT UPDATES**

**a) County Data Producers Workgroup**

Chairperson Reinhardt encouraged the members to review the materials in the agenda packet.

**b) Business Information Needs:**

Randy Knippel, Coordinating Committee member and Chair of the MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup, updated the Board on the Workgroup's activities over the past few months. The two items of most significance have been the group's efforts to: 1) bridge the gap in the 911 GIS community's understanding of resources that are available from the GIS community and to continue to strengthen ties with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information and, 2) formalize a proposal for support of data important to the 911 community that engages local government officials in ongoing maintenance to ensure accuracy, completeness, and currency consistent with local government needs. This proposal is tentatively scheduled to be considered by the Coordinating Committee in September. There were no other project updates due to lack of time. Chairperson Reinhardt encouraged the members to review the materials in the agenda packet.

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<sup>1</sup> A program was established in 1998 through which the Council agreed to serve a custodian of a fund to manage donations to MetroGIS, the use of which to be determined by the Policy Board. Donations in excess of \$24,000 had been received through December 1999 from the sale of 1997 Council imagery and street centerline data by The Lawrence Group. No donations have been received since that time. In 2002, the Policy Board authorized an expenditure of \$21,750 toward implementation of DataFinder Café. In 2005, the Board has also authorized up to \$750 from this account for support of the proposed Strategic Directions Workshop.

c) Non-Government Perspective Forum: Preparations Underway

Member Schneider commented that an objective of this proposed forum is to identify opportunities to supplement or possibly replace reliance upon the Metropolitan Council to fund MetroGIS's collaboration function. He mentioned that he had originally proposed that MetroGIS host such a forum at the April Board meeting following several years of discussion about the funding resources for MetroGIS's efforts and that the proposed forum is needed to determine opportunities that may exist within the private sector. The focus would be on dialogue, not commitment.

Member Schneider also informed the Policy Board that Council management has asked the Staff Coordinator to postpone this forum, which is currently planned for September 29<sup>th</sup>, and the Strategic Directions Workshop until next spring 2006 to provide the Council sufficient time to digest the results of its internal evaluation of MetroGIS's efforts relative to the Council's needs. Member Schneider commented that he does not believe the Non-Government Perspective Forum should be postponed until spring, noting the information received would not lose validity. Consequently, he recommended that the Policy Board Chair should assume responsibility to set the forum date, following discussion with Council staff.

Chairperson Reinhardt asked if sufficient funds exist in MetroGIS's 2005 approved budget to support the Non-Government Perspective Forum, to which staff responded in the affirmative noting that much of the support would be provided by dedicated staff and volunteers.

Mark Vander Schaaf commented that he would not object to holding the forum earlier than next spring if the information received would not lose validity as noted by Member Schneider. Member Schneider affirmed this would be the case and that he preferred sufficient time to digest the results before the Strategic Directions Workshop.

**Motion:** Member Pistilli moved and Member Schneider moved to direct Policy Board Chairperson Reinhardt to set a date she believes would work best for all involved. Motion carried, ayes all.

Member Fiskness commented that after nearly ten years of operation it is important for the Policy Board to engage in strategic planning to evaluate all aspects of MetroGIS's operations, identify functions/policies that need improvement, and pursue appropriate courses of action to ensure continued effectiveness. He also concurred that the proposed Business Sector Forum should be held before the Board pursues its strategic planning exercise.

**7. INFORMATION SHARING**

David Arbeit, Director of the newly created state Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis, commented on the creation of this new office as a good thing as state leadership is now recognizing that everything has a geographic component and several related offices are now consolidated into one unit. He affirmed LMIC's programs that related to geospatial collaboration were preserved so that the past relationship with MetroGIS and with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information should be able to be maintained.

**8. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19, 2005.

**9. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Prepared by,  
Randall Johnson, AICP  
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator