



REQUEST FOR RAMSEY COUNTY BOARD ACTION

10.3

Type of Agenda: Policy Consent Public Hearing
 Administrative Information Ordinance

Requesting Department: **Information Services**

Committee: _____
Committee: _____

Meeting Date: _____
Meeting Date: _____

County-Wide Ramifications
or
Affected Commissioner District(s) #: _____

Board Meeting Date: **2/11/2014**
Board Meeting Date: _____

SUBJECT: Free and Open Public GIS Data

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Ramsey County, along with most other counties in Minnesota, has implemented a fee structure for the acquisition of its Geographic Information System (“GIS”) data by external entities. This fee schedule was established in the 1989 when the GIS was relatively new to the County as a means of capturing some of the costs of developing and maintaining this new asset. However, since then changes in technology, legal landscape, and views on the value of public data have converged with a decline in revenues and recognition of other costs associated with collecting fees for data. As a result, there is a trend across the country towards granting free and open access to public GIS data. For an in-depth overview of these developments, see the attached document, *MetroGIS: Free & Open Access to Data: Research & Reference Documents* prepared by the MetroGIS (See Attachment 1).

(The Executive Summary is continued on the following page.)

ACTION REQUESTED

1. Authorize implementation of public access to public GIS data in a commonly recognized and easily produced form without fees or user licenses, subject to a data disclaimer.
2. Authorize County Departments to continue to charge fees for fulfilling customized requests such as development of specific maps, applications, analysis, or customized versions of the data as governed by applicable language in the Data Practices Act.
3. Direct the Department of Information Services to coordinate with other counties, cities, and governmental agencies to simplify and consolidate access to public GIS data.
4. Authorize the County Manager to make budget adjustments and Fee Report changes as needed to reflect the elimination of fees for GIS data consistent with above requested actions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Continued

In October 2013, the MetroGIS Policy Board, the governing body for the MetroGIS collaborative of government, non-private, private and academic partners, and of which Commissioner Reinhardt is a member as appointed by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, passed a resolution to support the concept of Free and Open Public GIS Data and encourage local governments within the Metro Area to adopt policies and practices consistent with this approach to data access. In keeping with this resolution, the Chair of the MetroGIS Policy Board sent a letter to the Ramsey County Board Chair on November 20, 2013 (See Attachment 2).

Recent revenue generated by charges for GIS data has been relatively insignificant; estimated revenue for 2014 from this source is \$3,000, all of which is collected by Public Works. Public Works is confident this loss of revenue can be absorbed within its current budget.

The Ramsey County GIS Manager contributed to the MetroGIS report and supports its findings. Management staff in both Public Works and Property Records and Revenue, the two departments with the most GIS public data, also support the transition to a free and open public GIS data practice. While there may be several methods eventually implemented for data access, the first and most simple would be accomplished by making a downloadable GIS file accessible via a link on the Ramsey County public web site.

This Request for Board Action is intended to establish Ramsey County's support for free and open access to public GIS data through the elimination of fees, and the removal of requirements for licensing agreements on the users of public GIS data. As a result of this action, the County is encouraging public access and use of this information, thereby maximizing the value of a publicly funded asset.

SUBJECT: Free and Open Public GIS Data

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Free & Open Access to Data: Research & Reference Documents (This 75-page document is on file with the Chief Clerk.)
2. Letter to Ramsey County Board Chair

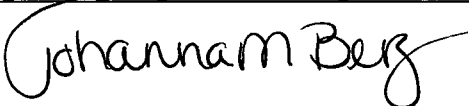
PREVIOUS ACTION:

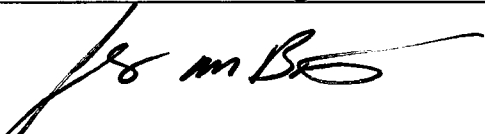
None


COUNTY MANAGER COMMENTS:

A similar resolution is on the Hennepin County Board agenda for 02-11-14. Other counties are expected to approve similar action in the weeks ahead.

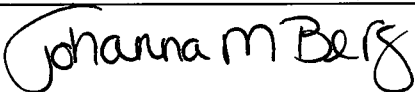
SUBJECT: Free and Open Public GIS Data

Originating Department Request – Authorized Signature	Date
	2/4/14

Finance – Authorized Signature	Date
	2-5-14

County Attorney – Authorized Signature	Date
	2/4/14

Property Management – Authorized Signature	Date

Information Services – Authorized Signature	Date
	2/4/14

Other – Authorized Signature	Date

1 **DRAFT RESOLUTION**

2
3 WHEREAS, Ramsey County creates, maintains and possesses valuable geographic
4 information systems (GIS) data to support its various business purposes; and
5

6 WHEREAS, Ramsey County recognizes that this GIS data is also a public resource
7 and there are significant benefits to making this data freely and openly available; and
8

9 WHEREAS, In October 2013, the MetroGIS Policy Board, the governing body for the
10 MetroGIS collaborative of government, non-private, private and academic partners, and of
11 which Commissioner Reinhardt is a member as appointed by the Ramsey County Board of
12 Commissioners, passed a resolution to support the concept of Free and Open Public GIS
13 Data and encourage local governments within the Metro Area to adopt policies and
14 practices consistent with this approach to data access; and
15

16 WHEREAS, The emergence and continued refinement of new information
17 technology has dramatically changed the way citizens search for and expect to find,
18 consume and utilize information, and such technology can aggregate ever larger quantities
19 of data and allow government to provide information to the public with increasing efficiency;
20 and
21

22 WHEREAS, Ramsey County can leverage this technology to meet the public
23 demand for information, enhance public access to government data and make government
24 processes transparent in order to promote public trust; and
25

26 WHEREAS, Ensuring the quality, consistency and availability of such data is a core
27 function of government and is essential to maintaining the data's value and utility; Now,
28 Therefore, Be It
29

30 RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes
31 implementation of public access to public GIS data in a commonly recognized and easily
32 produced form without fees or user licenses, subject to a data disclaimer; and Be It Further
33

34 RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners authorizes County
35 Departments to continue to charge fees for fulfilling customized requests such as
36 development of specific maps, applications, analysis, or customized versions of the data as
37 governed by applicable language in the Data Practices Act; and Be It Further
38

39 RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners directs the Department
40 of Information Services to coordinate with other counties, cities, and governmental
41 agencies to simplify and consolidate access to public GIS data; and Be It Further
42

43 RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners authorizes the County
44 Manager to make budget adjustments and Fee Report changes as needed to reflect the
45 elimination of fees for GIS data consistent with above requested actions.
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