

# MnGeo Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council

## January 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Blazing Star Room, Centennial Office Building, 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155

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### Attendees

**Members:** Jeff Bloomquist, Farm Service Agency; David Brandt, Washington County; Will Craig, University of Minnesota; Marcus Grubbs, Headwaters Regional Development Commission; Kari Geurts, Dept. of Natural Resources; Jon Gustafson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Blaine Hackett, Flat Rock Geographics; Cory Richter, City of St. Paul; Andrew King-Scribbins, Hennepin County; Mark Kotz, Metropolitan Council; John Mackiewicz, WSB & Associates; Chad Martini, Stearns County; Trisha Nelson, Dept. of Transportation; Joshua Pankratz, Mayo Clinic (via video); Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County; Ben Richason, St. Cloud State University; Dan Ross, MnGeo; Kurt Schneidawind, Minnesota School Boards Association (via phone); Gerry Sjerven, Minnesota Power; Michelle Trager, Rice County; Kody Thurnau, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Tim Wotzka, Itasca County.

**Non-Members:** Chris Buse, MN.IT; Brad Henry, University of Minnesota; Geoff Maas, Metropolitan Council; Nancy Rader, MnGeo; Sally Wakefield, SharedGeo; Ron Wencil, U.S. Geological Survey

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### Welcome

Ross called the meeting to order. Participants introduced themselves.

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### Minutes of September 24, 2013 Meeting

**Motion** to approve the September 24, 2014 [council meeting minutes](#) (Kotz/Wotzka). Motion carried.

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### Legislative Hearing Update ([slides](#) 4-7)

As announced at the September 24, 2013 council meeting, the Minnesota State Legislature is reviewing all state government boards and councils to assess which ones should continue and which should be disbanded. Ross reported on the testimony about this council before the Legislative Commission on Policy, Fiscal Planning and Analysis on September 30. See the slides for a list of questions for which Ross prepared answers. Two meeting handouts summarized these answers as well as feedback that council members provided him on this topic after the last council meeting. These handouts were for internal discussion only. Dan along with John Eichten, MN.IT's legislative liaison, presented the testimony; there was no time during the hearing for additional discussion with the legislators.

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### Approved Standards Update ([slide](#) 8)

Ross reported that three standards (codes for Minnesota counties; codes for cities, townships and unorganized territories; and positional accuracy) have gone through the new approval process and have been signed by the State CIO to become official state agency standards. For more information, see the [Standards Committee webpage](#).

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### Council Mission, Guiding Principles, and Member Roles ([slides](#) 9-15)

Kotz presented suggested revisions to this council's mission, guiding principles and expectations for members. These revisions were made by the six members (Craig, Geurts, Hackett, Kotz, Reinhardt and Sjerven) who had volunteered to review these materials.

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The group had first reviewed the council's mission in [legislation](#):

*advise the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office regarding the improvement of services statewide through the coordinated, affordable, reliable, and effective use of geospatial technology*

*provide recommendations*

- *for improving the operations and management of geospatial technology within state government*
- *and also on issues of importance to users of geospatial technology throughout the state.*

Their suggested wording for the mission statement revised the legislative wording to keep its meaning but make it more succinct and active. They used the word "statewide" to cover all constituencies rather than listing every sector, and added the word "support" to emphasize action and the goal of being champions for high priority efforts.

**Draft mission:** *Advise, support and make recommendations to MnGeo to improve services statewide through the coordinated, affordable, reliable, and effective use of geospatial technology.*

Members agreed that this mission fit the current council. The only suggestion was to change "to improve" to "for improving".

#### **Draft Guiding Principles:**

*The following guiding principles form the foundation for the council's activities and priorities:*

- 1) *Promote effective investments in geographic information*
- 2) *Promote geographic information as a shared public resource*
- 3) *Support the establishment and use of geospatial standards and guidelines*
- 4) *Champion collaboration among geospatial practitioners and related stakeholders*
- 5) *Educate policymakers related to the use of geospatial technology*
- 6) *Provide a forum for ideas and issues to be shared and acted upon by the geospatial community*
- 7) *Encourage all SWGAC sectors to contribute to the state geospatial infrastructure*
- 8) *Encourage all SWGAC members to communicate outcomes with relevant stakeholders*
- 9) *Encourage geospatial education at all levels*

Members agreed that these principles fit the current council and made the following comments:

- For principle #5, they added "value and" before "use of", since policy makers need to know value in order to support geospatial activities.
- For principle #5, they added "and inform" after "educate".
- For principle #9, they discussed whether "at all levels" implied a narrower interpretation of "at all levels of the academic education system (K-12, university)" instead of a broader interpretation that would include other avenues for education. The broader interpretation is what is meant. Consensus was to leave the wording as is.
- Kotz noted that "Guiding Principles" are not the same as "Action Goals". The principles are general ideas that the council should keep in mind when setting priorities and developing action goals.

- Kotz also noted that these principles apply to the council as a whole. So, it doesn't mean that each council member needs to be active in all nine areas.

**MOTION:** Accept the following revised mission statement and guiding principles for the Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council:

**Mission:** Advise, support and make recommendations to MnGeo for improving services statewide through the coordinated, affordable, reliable, and effective use of geospatial technology.”

**Guiding principles:**

- 1) Promote effective investments in geographic information.
- 2) Promote geographic information as a shared public resource
- 3) Support the establishment and use of geospatial standards and guidelines
- 4) Champion collaboration among geospatial practitioners and related stakeholders
- 5) Educate and inform policymakers related to the value and use of geospatial technology
- 6) Provide a forum for ideas and issues to be shared and acted upon by the geospatial community
- 7) Encourage all SWGAC sectors to contribute to the state geospatial infrastructure
- 8) Encourage all SWGAC members to communicate outcomes with relevant stakeholders
- 9) Encourage geospatial education at all levels

(Kotz/Bloomquist) Motion passed without dissent.

**Member Expectations:**

The group is not yet ready to propose a complete set of member expectations, but provided this first draft:

- Be an active participant in advancing the Council’s mission
- Prepare for, attend and be active in Council meetings
- Represent your designated sector
  - Reach out to organizations and individuals in the sector you represent to obtain input and information regarding geospatial activities and opportunities
  - Serve as an ambassador representing your sector at Council meetings and carrying Council messages and concerns back to that constituency
  - Provide input, advice and guidance to MnGeo regarding issues of importance to your sector

**ACTION ITEM:** Before the next council meeting, the group will send a completed draft of member expectations to council members for comment.

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**Committee and Workgroup Update**

The chairs of the following three committees have submitted draft revised charters and workplans:

- Emergency Preparedness
- Parcels and Land Records<sup>1</sup>
- Standards

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<sup>1</sup> previous names: Digital Cadastral Data Committee; Land Records Modernization Committee

Council members were given these materials and were asked to review them.

There was time during the meeting to begin discussing the Standards Committee materials. Kotz started the discussion since he has served as committee chair for a number of years. An important question is how active should this committee be? In the past, the committee has largely waited for groups to propose standards. The committee has then assisted these groups in finalizing the proposal, has coordinated the public review process within the geospatial community (the groups coordinate review with any other stakeholders outside the geospatial community), and has taken standards through state government's final review and approval processes. The committee is considering becoming more active, finding more opportunities to engage with groups to see what standards may be most needed.

Members made the following comments:

- In order to support a common operating picture, there is a need for a standard list of high priority data created and maintained by counties and agencies. Public safety priorities would be a major business driver for this. Resources would be needed, however, to do this.
- Approved standards must be followed by state agencies. They cannot be mandated for anyone outside state government; however, their use can be encouraged and any organization is welcome to adopt these standards as either their own standard or best practice.

**ACTION ITEM:** Council members review the draft charters and workplans submitted by three committees (Emergency Preparedness; Parcels and Land Records; Standards) and send any comments to Rader. Rader will compile and forward to Ross and the committee chairs.

**Deadline: Friday, January 24**

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**Hot topic: Open Data Sharing** ([slides](#) 18-56)

Geoff Maas, MetroGIS Coordinator, gave a presentation titled, "Free & Open Geospatial Data: Realizing the Benefits to Governments, Businesses and Citizens in Expanding Data Availability." He began by describing what MetroGIS is, then what "free and open" data means, and concluded with a number of examples and benefits. He listed several "foundational statements":

Open sharing of data between interests and agencies

- reduces their operating costs;
- identifies and eliminates redundant effort;
- saves tax payer money;
- ensures that data comes from the authoritative source

He concluded with these thoughts:

- GIS data is a public investment for the benefit of all; enhancing access maximizes that investment.
- The on-going investment in developing and maintaining GIS data is justified by government business processes.
- Government entities can proactively collaborate to distribute the costs of GIS data; (e.g. data development, maintenance of data clearinghouses).

See the slides for more details. Additional materials are on the [MetroGIS Free & Open Data Resource Page](#).

#### Highlights of member discussion:

- This is outstanding work that has enormous potential use.
- The [Wisconsin Geographic Information Coordination Council](#) has formed a data sharing workgroup; Wencil will provide these materials to them.
- The taxpayers have already paid for the data when it was developed and should not have to pay again to obtain it.
- Free data sharing would rob some rural Minnesota counties of revenue from customers who are willing to pay for data. The metro counties charged when they developed data in the past, so it is not fair to ask rural counties not to charge. Nothing is free and the money has to come from somewhere. Citizens and groups who are less able to pay, such as many nonprofits, can request data at no charge; these requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Revenue from selling data is less than it may appear, since it is reduced by staff time to fill the requests. It is difficult to police license agreements. There may be legal issues with treating some customers differently.
- These policies have evolved over time in the metro. The Metropolitan Council is saving money and getting the best data by increased sharing.
- Q: Has this presentation been given to Metropolitan Council staff? Data needs to be shared within the organization too.  
A: So far, it's been given to the Executive Committee, CIO and department heads.
- MetroGIS's QPV (Quantify Public Value) project attempted to assess the monetary benefits to counties if they provided data at no charge. The project wasn't able to do that; however, it did document numerous qualitative benefits. (See the [QPV final report webpage](#) for details.)
- New York City's [PLUTO project](#) is an example of free and open data sharing, in this case of land use and geographic data at the tax lot level.
- Conducting geographic medical research in SE Minnesota is an example projects that would be facilitated by having easier access to data. Currently, the logistics of getting data from 12-13 counties is daunting.
- Depending on the results of this metro-focused data sharing effort, this council could consider taking this idea statewide in the future.
- In the long term, this idea will take us to a better place. In the short term, however, we must be very aware of the burdens of producing this data and be aware of the producer/consumer relationship. Requests for data are skyrocketing; users are reporting errors and are asking for a timeline when the errors will be fixed. Many local governments do not have the resources to handle this greatly increased demand.
- This council can help shape ways to deal with these challenges and make it easier for the producers.

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#### Member Sector Reports

Four council members gave brief (7 minute) reports on selected projects from their sector. See the slides and a [handout](#) for more details on all four reports.

#### Jeff Bloomquist, Farm Service Agency ([slides](#) 58-63)

Discussion:

Q: Is the Common Land Unit (CLU) data ever going to be publicly available?

A: The existing Farm Bill does not permit FSA to distribute the CLU layer outside of the agency. It is yet not known whether the next Farm Bill will change this policy.

Bloomquist also clarified what the CLU polygon layer is and is not. CLU polygons outline fields that are participating in a USDA program. The CLU layer is NOT the same as a parcel data layer. The participant name is not necessarily the same as the property owner. The polygons do not include all cropland, and they include areas that are not cropland (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program lands).

**John Mackiewicz**, WSB & Associates ([slides](#) 64-68)

**Trisha Nelson**, Mn Department of Transportation ([slide](#) 69)

**Kody Thurnau**, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy ([slides](#) 70-81)

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### **MnGeo Priority Projects and Initiatives** ([slides](#) 82-94)

See slides and [handout](#) for descriptions and status of each of MnGeo's main priority projects (all projects are done in partnership with other organizations): Addresses; Air Photos; Geospatial Commons; LiDAR; Hydrography; Parcels; Street Centerlines; Altered Watercourse. The Altered Watercourse project is now complete and the data is available!

Ross also mentioned:

- The LCCMR's (Legislative-Citizen Committee on Minnesota Resources) FY2015 recommendations for legislative funding include two projects that focus on foundational geospatial data (see complete list of recommendations [here](#)):
  - [Drainage Records Modernization and Statewide GIS Database](#) (PI: Allan Kean, Board of Water and Soil Resources)
  - [Mapping Landscapes for Better Land and Water Management](#) (PI: Joseph Knight, University of Minnesota)
- Discussions are in progress with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) about an address dataset project to support Next Generation 9-1-1 beginning this year. Local governments would be the stewards of their information and DPS would likely be the steward of a statewide address layer. It has not yet been determined whether the addresses would be located at driveways or buildings (so far, most other states are using buildings).

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### **NSGIC Annual Meeting Highlights** ([slides](#) 95-96)

Ross referred members to the slides for information about the National States Geographic Information Council. Slide 96 provides links to materials from the annual conference in October and lists highlights of the midyear conference coming up at the end of February.

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### **Future Meetings**

**ACTION ITEM:** Rader will schedule the council's next two meetings.

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Meeting adjourned. Minutes by Nancy Rader.