MnGeo Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council
September 24, 2013 Meeting Minutes
Blazing Star Room, Centennial Office Building, 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155

Attendees

Members: Jeff Bloomquist, Farm Service Agency; David Brandt, Washington County; Will Craig, University of Minnesota; Marcus Grubbs, Headwaters Regional Development Commission (via video); Kari Geurts, Dept. of Natural Resources; Jon Gustafson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Blaine Hackett, Flat Rock Geographics; Cory Karsten, 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; Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County; Ben Richason, St. Cloud State University; Dan Ross, MnGeo; Dawn Sherk, White Earth Nation; Gerry Sjerven, Minnesota Power; Michelle Trager, Rice County; Kody Thurnau, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Tim Wotzka, Itasca County.

Non-Members: David Fawcett, Pollution Control Agency; Brad Henry, University of Minnesota; Joe Liebler, MN.IT; Geoff Maas, Metropolitan Council; Nancy Rader, MnGeo; Ron Wencl, U.S. Geological Survey

Welcome

Ross called the meeting to order. Participants introduced themselves. Each member spoke briefly about what they wanted to accomplish during their time on the council.

Minutes of May 29, 2013 Meeting

Motion to approve the May 29, 2013 council meeting minutes (Reinhardt/Kotz). Motion carried.

Council Mission, Guiding Principles, and Member Roles (slides 5-19)

This council needs to adopt a current mission and set roles, responsibilities and expectations for members. As a starting point, Ross reviewed the mission and guiding principles from the previous Governor's Council on Geographic Information (slides 6-8), asking members to consider which materials still fit and which need revision.

Members agreed that the materials need updating, and provided comments:

Mission Statement:
- Delete sentence 2 ("The council makes recommendations in areas including, but not limited to: policies, institutional arrangements, standards, education and stewardship") since that's what we do, it's not a mission.
- The mission statement refers to "efficiency" rather than "quality of life" or "what's important to do" or "benefit of state and its citizens". Once we determine what we want to do and why, then we can advocate for the resources to accomplish those things.
- Need something about who we serve, who we're providing recommendations to.
- The MetroGIS vision and mission statement, and the process by which they developed it, would be a good example to refer to.

Guiding Principles:
- The first two ("promoting efficient investments…" and "promoting geographic information as a public resource…") still seem to fit.

- For the third one ("support the establishment and use of geographic data standards and guidelines to better exchange and share information resources"), we could delete the word "data" since we need standards for more than data. We could also encourage a more active role in this area to pursue standards for parcels, street centerlines, etc. Standards have to fit together at different levels (local – state – federal) in order to realize efficiencies and to integrate data across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Consider adding a guiding principle specifically about collaboration.
- The GIS/LIS Consortium also has a role to "promote education and training in GIS" and we don't want to repeat what they do. Our audience would need to be different. Terms that might apply could be: "outreach and advocacy" and "educate policymakers".
- May be helpful to distinguish between "community" and "stakeholders". The community are those working in the GIS area who understand the technology. Stakeholders are those that need the information, for example, policymakers and business people. We need to know the needs and issues for both groups.

Ross then presented his thoughts on member roles and responsibilities and the importance of communication (slides 9-11).
- These may work best as expectations for the council as a whole rather than for individual council members.
- Geurts asked how the state sector representative could best communicate with the state agency GIS constituency. Sherk described her approach to the tribal government sector: contacting each group to find out who their GIS contact person is (see the Minnesota tribal government GIS contact list), and then working on periodic communication to engage them further. There is also a Minnesota county GIS contacts list. These lists provide a model for a similar list for state agency GIS contacts.
- The GIS/LIS Consortium is working on further developing its communication methods, and this council can continue to use these channels (e.g., e-announcements).
- The Outreach Committee could help with communication.

Ross concluded by suggesting that a small group be created to review and refine these materials and present to the council at the next meeting. The following members volunteered to serve on the group: Will Craig, Kari Geurts, Blaine Hackett, Mark Kotz, Victoria Reinhardt and Gerry Sjerven.

Review of Past Two Years of the Council (slides 13-20)
Dan summarized the feedback he'd received from members about the FY2012-13 years of Council operation – see the slides. He also noted that the new report templates will help communication with committees and workgroups.

Ross then announced that the Legislature is reviewing all state government boards and councils to assess which ones should continue and which should be disbanded. He has been asked to testify about this council before the Legislative Council on Policy, Fiscal Planning and Analysis on Monday, September 30. He expects the committee to ask some fundamental questions about the effectiveness of and need for the council.

He requested that members provide him with any insight, comments or perspective that they have regarding the council so that he can share the members' perspective with state legislators.

Membership ([slides](#) 20-21)
Ross reviewed the sectors that current members represent and asked whether we should add any additional sectors. He suggested several possibilities: the professional surveying community; geospatial user groups; the Association of Minnesota Counties; the League of Minnesota Cities.

Member comments:
- The professional surveying community currently has some input since Wotzka is a director of the Minnesota Association of County Surveyors, and Gustafson is a member of the Minnesota Society of Professional Surveyors.
- Other suggested sectors:
  o An elected official
  o The Association of Minnesota Townships
  o Healthcare
  o Emergency services, homeland security, law enforcement
- Participating on the council takes time and effort, so the meetings and tasks have to be of sufficient value for members.
- It may not be necessary to add members, but instead to communicate more widely and involve appropriate people with specific issues.

Governance ([slides](#) 23-25)
Ross described a diagram of the current geospatial governance (slide 24). In general, committees and workgroups advise, and the Geospatial Technical Committee (GTC) reviews and approves policies and standards for state government.

Comments made during discussion:
- We need to clarify what each body can or can't do, from sharing information and best practices to advocating a position. Examples:
  o Could the Outreach Committee publish an article or do they need permission first?
  o Could this council advocate a position or does that need to be done by individual members speaking on behalf of themselves or another organization?
  o What if the GTC disagrees with this council's recommendations?
  o Who can offer or influence legislation?
- The GTC must focus on the state role, but it can't function without the wider community. Our goal for all parts of the community is to work together.
- The State Government Geospatial Advisory Council (no longer in statute) could become communities of interest.

MnGeo Priority Projects and Initiatives ([slides](#) 26-38)
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; Street Centerlines.

Additional comments on the topic of **Addresses**:
- Kotz reminded members of the availability of a [web editing tool for address point data](#). The tool is intended to be hosted by counties and other organizations that want to facilitate the creation and maintenance of authoritative data for addresses, and is free for their use. There will be a presentation about the tool at the upcoming MN GIS/LIS Conference.

- Next-Generation 9-1-1 GIS data needs will likely drive the improvement of addresses statewide.
- Addresses are the #1 priority for the National States Geographic Information Council – see their Addresses for the Nation project.

Hot topic: Minnesota Geospatial Commons

David Fawcett provided an overview and demo of the Minnesota Geospatial Commons ("Commons") website that is under development. The project vision is to create a "single place we all go to find and share geospatial resources"; resources includes data, web services, applications, ideas and knowledge. Users of the site will be able to find, evaluate and share data, and collaborate with others in the community. The Commons is envisioned to replace several existing state agency data distribution sites (DNR's Data Deli, MnGeo's Clearinghouse, MnDOT's Basemap and MetroGIS's DataFinder). It will include more than state agencies and will aim to build community among all people who need and use Minnesota's geospatial information.

This project builds on earlier work done by the GeoCommons Workgroup, a collaboration between the MetroGIS Technical Leadership Workgroup and the MnGeo Standards Committee. Previous efforts were significantly under-resourced and could not be completed. The current project has some resources, a sponsor (Dan Ross), a project manager (Joe Liebler) and team of technical staff who have some dedicated time to the project, so it is expected to succeed this time. Anticipated public release is June 30, 2014.

The approach has been to leverage existing work that has been built and tested over many years:
- Infrastructure (DNR's Geospatial Data Resource Site approach to organizing standardized data and metadata so that it can be efficiently managed and kept updated)
- Data and metadata
- Standards (data, metadata, services) that are either the same or compatible with those from authoritative sources, such as the Federal Geographic Data Committee and the Open Geospatial Consortium
- Skills from each agency
- Open source portal software (CKAN) that the federal data portal (data.gov) and several other state portals are using

The project is being done in phases. The first phase, "Release 1", is intended to create a working site only for data in a **GDRS** from **state agencies**, and focuses on features that a **user** (someone looking for data) would need rather than a **publisher**. Only a few datasets have been added so far. Subsequent phases will extend to participants in other agencies and organizations, will explore methods other than GDRS, and will cover more features that publishers will need. Most of the work to date has been on the back-end of the system and thus invisible. Now, however, the front-end is becoming functional, if not pretty, using an out-of-the-box CKAN interface that the team is starting to customize. For the first time, the team can show you something! Development is not far enough along, though, to publicize the url.

Fawcett then demonstrated the system's current features, such as searching by topic, geography and participating organization.

He concluded by soliciting feedback with these questions:
- Will the Commons deliver valuable and useful features? Will it help you do your job?

- What features are of particular value?
- What's missing?
- What changes or new features would you suggest? (the team will document and prioritize them against current requirements for the site's development)
- What governance issues do you anticipate? (e.g., Who can participate? What level of data and metadata quality will be required?)

Member comments:
- Will all the data be free and publicly available?
  Yes. Data that is not free could be "advertised" by contributing metadata which then links to somewhere outside the Commons for distribution. In the future, it is possible that there will be ways added to provide secure access to private data. The main priority, however, will always be on public and free data.
- Who are the data stewards? Who makes sure the data is kept up-to-date?
  Each agency will have an administrator. To get into the GDRS, data and metadata will have to pass minimum requirements. More discussion will be needed to determine how to administer the site and keep it up-to-date.

Future Meetings
Several members suggested that the council meet earlier in the day to better avoid rush hour traffic.

Meeting adjourned. Minutes by Nancy Rader.