

Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

March 22, 2017

Blazing Star Room, Ground Floor, Centennial Office Building

658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Attendees

Members Present: Brad Anderson, City of Moorhead; Andra Bontrager, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Jeffrey Bloomquist, US Department of Agriculture; David Brandt, Washington County; Scott Freburg, MN.IT @ Dept. of Education; Kari Geurts, MN.IT @ Natural Resources; Madeleine Kerr, University of Minnesota School of Nursing; Andrew King-Scribbins, Hennepin County; Len Kne, University of Minnesota; Mark Kotz, Metropolitan Council; Philipp Nagel, City of Waseca; Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County; Ben Richason, St. Cloud State University; Cory Richter, City of Blaine; Dan Ross, MnGeo; Gerry Sjerven, Minnesota Power; Alison Slaats, MN.IT @ Agriculture and Board of Animal Health; Annette Theroux, Pro-West & Associates; Michelle Trager, Rice County; Danielle Walchuk, Region Nine Development Commission.

Members Absent: John Mackiewicz, WSB & Associates; Blaine Hackett, RESPEC.

Non-Members Present: David Bendickson, MN National Guard; Mike Dolbow, MnGeo; Brad Henry, University of Minnesota; Jamin Johnson, MNIT Services; Mike Koutnik, Esri; Geoff Maas, MetroGIS; Brad Neuhauser, MN Office of the Secretary of State; Nancy Rader, MnGeo; Sally Wakefield, MnGeo.

Meeting slides are online: http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/councils/statewide/GAC_slides_20170322.pptx

Call to order (Chair) and Introductions

Kotz called the meeting to order.

Introductions

Members and attendees introduced themselves. Kerr was provided an opportunity to relay her interests in the Council and spatial technologies, including its relation to health and environmental health.

Approval of agenda

Kotz called for a motion to approve. Sjerven offered a potential update for his topic to add LiDAR/Elevation/Hydrography notes. A motion to approve with Sjerven's addition was made and seconded, passed unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Kotz called for a motion to approve. A motion was made and seconded, passed unanimously.

Review of Committee and Workgroup Summaries

Kotz noted that the Emergency Preparedness Committee has provided a summary in handouts, and called for a review of all committee/workgroup contents and questions. A motion to accept all contents was made and seconded, passed unanimously.

Approve updated EPC Charter

Kotz noted that the Emergency Preparedness Committee created a new charter under one of the new templates, including a change that the EPC reports to the GAC. Kotz called for a motion to approve. A motion was made and seconded, passed unanimously.

Review/approve committee and GAC work plans

Kotz noted that the work plans begin on page 9 of the handout. He asked for recognition that the work of the GAC is by and large done by the committees, which do much of the heavy lifting. For example, the EPC has presented at seven conferences over the past year. This new structure of accomplishments and work plans is now implemented for 2017, which is basically a small adjustment to previous processes. He called for a discussion of the EPC's work plan.

Richter noted that she shares responsibility with a few others (Anderson and Todd Lusk from Dakota County) on a subcommittee regarding damage assessments. Kotz noted that change will be included in a motion to approve the work plan.

Brandt noted that he is glad that the EPC's work is diversifying beyond the US National Grid efforts that it has focused on in the past. Richter noted that the group is also making headway on the Common Operating Picture efforts. Anderson noted that the damage assessment subcommittee has met three times since January, and that they have to focus on the data standard as the first step. There are many current models being used within the state and the group is looking towards combining those to propose a standard.

Ross noted that there will be a major event next winter: the Super Bowl. That will be an opportunity to focus the Common Operating Picture efforts. He has reached out to Minnesota HSEM to inquire about coordination efforts.

Kotz called for an approval of the EPC work plan. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Kotz called for a review of the Outreach work plan. Kne noted that they presented at 3 conferences in the past year, and that the group has had a good year so far, focusing on open data. In addition to presentations, they conducted a survey and study of counties and completed a report. Now they are gathering testimonials on the benefits of open data. Plans for the coming year are a new survey of cities on open data, with a goal of presenting the data by the fall. Geurts noted that the same conferences might be presented at this year. Freburg noted that he performs a lot of outreach to school districts and teachers to discuss GIS and getting teachers involved. He is encouraging teachers to ask data producers at counties for data in order to continue the conversation from different perspectives.

Ross noted that he's been asked to talk at the League of Minnesota Cities conference this summer about how cities might leverage geospatial data and technologies in providing their services to citizens. The focus of the presentation will be around broadband, NG911, and open data. Brandt noted that the Association of Minnesota Emergency

Managers has also asked him to present about MnGeo and how it relates to emergency management. Unfortunately, that presentation is currently scheduled for the same day as a GAC meeting.

Reinhardt noted that the League of Minnesota Cities is a good group to present to, and generally the message to townships runs through counties. She noted that many changes have taken place in the state since the last time we hosted a Super Bowl in 1992. It's good to know that the emergency managers are recognizing how critical the spatial information is, and how important it is to share it when it's practical and helpful.

Kotz agreed that a new focus on cities is a good development. He asked for clarification of the chair situation, and Kne replied that he and Geurts have always co-chaired the committee. He noted that open data is a key priority of the GAC and asked if there was anything else the GAC could do to support the committee. Kne noted that getting in front of decision makers is the most important way that the GAC can help. Also, having access to MnGeo resources is important, such as being able to post information to the web.

Ross asked if Kne could provide some of those testimonials before he presents to the League of Minnesota Cities this summer. Reinhardt noted that one of the ways the information was distributed to counties was via her contacts at the Association of Minnesota Counties, and the same should happen with the league. A special outreach effort to the Metro Cities may be required given the disparity in resources. That survey should go out before Ross is scheduled to present.

Ross noted that sometimes understanding who the technology leads are in the cities is one challenge we currently have. Kne noted that contacting the county administrator and county board chair was helpful on the county effort – it created awareness and connections within the county. He suggested a similar approach with the cities.

Bontrager asked if social media has been leveraged by the Committee, and Kne noted that would likely be an effective addition to the strategy. Kne also noted that their booth at the AMC conference was particularly effective.

Rader added that there is a [list of city GIS contacts](#) on the MnGeo website that can be expanded as people discover newer city contacts, and that there is a resource on the Commons on [county open data policies](#).

Kotz called for a motion to approve the Outreach Committee work plan. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Kotz noted that the Standards Committee has a draft work plan submitted in an old format, which is fine for this purpose. He noted that the expected time commitment for the Committee chair should likely be increased in the work plan, especially if a standard has been proposed. He also noted that the Committee needs a functional state agency standards approval process, asking Ross if that has changed; Ross replied that it has not. Ross noted that there is a process for getting a standard approved for state government, but that MnGeo is still trying to determine how to create a state government standards governance group, because governance for MNIT has been changing under directives from the executive level. Reinhardt suggested that bringing business leaders together to approve something they don't have much knowledge of could be difficult, and suggested a conversation with the MNIT Commissioner. Ross noted that agency Chief Business Technology Officers have been brought together to work more on governance for MNIT.

Kotz called for a motion to approve the Standards Committee work plan. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Kotz moved to the work plan for the GAC itself, which is focused on organizing committees and subcommittees and supporting their efforts. He noted again that much of the work happens through the committees, but asked for

more feedback. Ross asked for an item around improving relationships with user groups around the state. Kotz noted that a specific item should be added. Draft language was proposed by Kotz and Ross as an addition: "Increase coordination and communication with GIS user groups throughout the state."

Kotz called for a motion to approve the GAC work plan. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Kotz asked if Maas had any additional notes on the Standards Committee. Maas noted that the parcel standard underwent an extensive public review period with extensive comments. He got some feedback from a northeast user group, and plans to meet with Pine to Prairie in April. He opined that if this is done well and right, we might not have to do it again. He challenges users to really understand the full range of an organization's needs for a parcel data set. He believes a white paper for the "address" piece of several standards might save everyone some work.

Dolbow asked if the standard focus was still on attributes, asking about whether or not issues of duplicate geometries or duplicate PINs in parcel datasets have been addressed. Maas replied that there are opportunities to demonstrate resolutions on those issues with a best practices guideline on how to best meet the standard, especially when attempting to provide data that is well suited for other users' business cases.

Reports on sun setting committees/workgroups

Kotz noted that we have three groups to sunset: the Digital Elevation Committee, the Hydrography Committee, and the Metadata Workgroup. The Digital Elevation Committee accomplished a great deal of work to fund a statewide LiDAR collection. A combined Elevation and Hydro Committee is proposed as a potential successor to that group and the Hydrography Committee. The handout includes final reports from each group. Dolbow noted that workgroups are typically predetermined to be a defined effort with a purposeful end, and usually committees are ongoing; although they may be sunsetted if they are no longer active.

Rader noted that there is a new DNR Data Governance group that is working with the DNR to look at managing metadata specifically for the agency, and how to measure its effectiveness both internally and as it is exposed on the Minnesota Geospatial Commons.

Slaats asked about how to tackle remaining issues on a sunsetted Committee, such as those identified by the Metadata Workgroup. Rader replied that if those issues turn out to be of significant business importance, then the Metadata Workgroup could be reconstituted. Kotz also noted that a lot of metadata work also took place under the Standards Committee, and that it can continue to be done under the Standards Committee if necessary.

Nagel asked if the Minnesota Metadata Editor (MME) is open sourced, and Dolbow replied that it is, on GitHub. Rader noted that when EPA contracted for the development of the tool, it was specifically open sourced. Bontrager noted that she is interested in helping the Standards Committee with metadata in the future.

Kotz called for a motion to approve the sunset of the two committees and one workgroup. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Break

Geospatial community calendar & discussion forum, GIS/LIS Board feedback

Kotz noted that this topic was broached at a previous meeting and delegated to Sjerven to discuss with the GIS/LIS Board, and noted that Sjerven also wished to discuss work on a combined elevation and hydrography group.

Sjerven noted that he and Sean Vaughn have a plan to move forward. Vaughn is writing a plan for a charter that will create a combined committee. In addition to a new charter, they plan some recruitment of new members. He hopes that they can plan an actual meeting before the next GAC meeting if possible. Kotz thanked Sjerven for pursuing that. Geurts asked how new members will be recruited, and Sjerven replied that Vaughn is working on an e-mail. After an initial group is convened, they plan to try and identify if any groups aren't represented. The goal is to keep the initial committee membership small if possible.

Sjerven noted that the Consortium is working on an effort to redesign their website. Funds have been set aside for this year and a timetable is established with their consultants. The goal is to achieve the redesign between now and mid-June, having it in place after Spring Workshops and before registration for the Fall Conference, which is a short implementation window.

One item to move forward is community news and blog capabilities. Sjerven noted that there are many separate elements among the news, blog, and calendar. He'd like to have one "feed" for the website's front page. He hopes that the blog will become a more regular place to go to for testimonials and other long-form stories, similar to our old newsletter. He'd also like to see a simple posting form for members to be able to post things via a single entry and just one approval. They are likely to avoid the use of a listserv. If small parts of existing communications such as the GAC Yak can be replicated into the blog, it could be useful.

Sector Report

Kotz called on Slaats and Geurts to report on the State Government sector. Slaats noted that summarizing the efforts within a sector is a good exercise. She noted that GIS data is broadly used across state agencies, supporting general requirements such as legislative mandates. It's difficult to measure how much GIS is used at state agencies. 19 agencies buy in to the Esri Enterprise License Agreement (ELA). There are other GIS software packages in use as well, in many agencies such as the DNR and MPCA. There are several thousand Esri GIS desktop licenses.

Some government agencies have large GIS teams, such as at DNR, MPCA, and DOT. Other agencies have smaller teams, sometimes with dedicated staff. And some other agencies are only supported by MnGeo, which acts as the centralized resource for GIS at the state. As IT has consolidated at the state under MNIT, MnGeo has had more opportunities to support and share resources and services such as the MN Geospatial Commons. There will be more opportunities to increase efficiency in the future.

The GAC has tremendous benefit to the state sector, and the guiding principles are very important. In particular, two are important: 1) promoting GIS information as a public resource, and 2) the establishment and use of standards and best practices. The primary benefit of the GAC is that the state often relies on other sectors for their data, notably addresses, street centerlines, and parcels from local governments. The outreach work on open data helps open up those data sharing conversations. Committee work that is conducted via the GAC as a vehicle also provides a lot of value.

Slaats noted that communicating the work of the GAC to the sector can be challenging, as we don't have a firm grasp of who uses GIS at the state. They utilize an internal mailing list of about 900 people, where they distribute a "GAC Yak" newsletter. They also utilize the state's Yammer site for additional communications, and reach out to state agency "Points of Contacts" to see if any communications need to be brought to the GAC or heard at the GAC. Slaats and Geurts also co-chair a state agency collaboration group that is less formal than prior groups of a similar nature.

Geurts noted that the GAC Yak and collaboration group are improvements over past efforts on communicating between the GAC and state agency stakeholders. Koutnik noted that there are some trends in state government that he is noting; for example there are over 1400 ArcGIS online "named users" for Minnesota State Government, and that number is growing.

Legislative update

Ross noted that there are some minor administrative changes to legislative language in the current legislative session, namely changing the spatial data sharing location to the MN Geospatial Commons, and then to specify that not just metadata, but data, be shared out of Legacy Amendment funds. These have only been through one committee hearing at this point. So far it has been well received.

Updates on MN GAC priority projects and initiatives

Kotz noted that we have had a standing agenda item in the past around MnGeo priority projects and initiatives, but that now needs to be transitioned to the GAC priority projects and initiatives. (With links to MnGeo projects as needed.) He asked for contributions from members as available.

- **Free and Open Data.** Discussed previously in the meeting.
- **Imagery Service and funding model.** Ross noted that the service continues to be funded by the General Fund, but we still need to figure out how to manage the number of layers available. Kotz noted that the GAC has sent a general signal that we expect some layers to be retired at some point.
- **Improvements to MnGeo Imagery Services (HTTPS, tiling, etc).** Kotz noted that the Met Council has been trying to move just about all of their web work to HTTPS. One exception is the Metro Transit map with MnGeo imagery, and Dolbow noted that he can field questions about that.
- **Statewide publicly available parcel data in standard form.** Ross noted that an internal layer has been developed for 86 counties and standardized. He appreciates the GAC's efforts to push open data. He offered that a discussion should take place around producing a service of the 23 open counties for public sharing. Slaats agreed that such a service would be very valuable. Ross noted that MnGeo is attempting to refresh the state's data collections every 6 months, but that the most current data is always going to be with the counties.
 - Reinhardt noted that many counties need to see how this effort is completed. Now that we have counties from other parts of the state, it's not just that it should be done, but that you have other counties to contact to ask questions. Providing a name and contact information can be very useful.
 - Ross noted that perhaps we should publicize the open data map more frequently.
 - Dolbow noted that two of our most recent counties are in the south, adjacent to Trager's area, and Reinhardt agreed that such neighborly conversations are very useful. Ross noted that also publicizing county contacts is important.

- **Address points.** Kotz noted that MetroGIS had an address standard and that group has agreed on a combined standard for NG911 that complied with the national and NENA standards, which will be proposed as a state address standard. Ross replied that MnGeo is trying to standardize and aggregate that data. Approximately 77 counties had address points, and 67 of those had gaps where their cities were, which is why connecting with cities is important. MnGeo may consider rolling out an address points editor as part of the NG911 effort. Right now that information (addresses and centerlines) is not being shared outside the NG911 community.
- **Street centerlines.** Kotz noted that centerlines are also being worked on in a similar path as address points.
- **Emergency Management Damage Assessment.** Richter noted that the subcommittee is active and that Brad Anderson is the project owner, and Todd Lusk is the champion. Anderson noted that one of the challenges is having a place to share documents, to do phone conferences, and video conferencing. Anderson asked if a page could be added to the MnGeo website for the developing standard.
- **Minnesota focused basemap service.** Ross noted that we only have an internally available imagery tile cache, which is being tested by DNR via field applications. MnGeo will work on other basemap services as resources allow, which will likely be driven by internal projects.
- **Geocoding service.** Ross noted that we still are focusing on internal geocoding services right now, with no current plans to make it public.
- **Parks & Trails standards.** Ross noted that there are 3 different standards available, and MnGeo is still in a comparison stage for that. The current plan is to have one standard for a developing website, and then other data sets will then be transformed into that standard in the future. Most of that is based on parks & trails of regional significance. Brandt noted that MetroGIS is working on a more robust standard within the area. Ross noted that the two groups should remain aware of each other.

MnGeo Boundary Data Update and Alignment Project

Wakefield noted that she and Ross have been working on this project over the last few months. It is a large effort that will likely take quite a bit of time, and MnGeo would like input from the GAC. The overview provided in the [handout](#) is a summary of the problem: as boundary layers have been updated, the individual layers have lost alignment with each other. For example, the public land survey (PLS) boundaries, and where those are coincident with municipal boundaries and county boundaries. Various organizations have been stewards of these datasets. Outside of the “CTU” layer, which is maintained by MnDOT, there is no official steward of these layers. There is an interest at MnGeo to make these datasets more accurate.

Organizations in charge of land units, such as local governments and the Bureau of Land Management, have conducted surveys and made adjustments to local boundary layers. It’s not happening consistently throughout the state. MnGeo has an interest in working with those organizations in establishing a statewide data set. The federal government is looking to update the PLS data nationwide, but the result hasn’t been satisfactory to the local users.

Wakefield and Ross have been working on documentation of the issues and identifying the stakeholders. Understanding what data is available and who is willing to share it is also been a focus. Some counties have surveyors, others do not. Additional meetings with state agencies and local GIS user groups have taken place or are scheduled, in order to attempt to identify an attribute- and geometry-focused standard. A product may be a white paper or business plan to address this issue in the future. Some local governments are well-funded, with good relationships between surveyors and GIS users, but other local governments do not have the same situation.

Several open questions remain, such as what users need out of boundary layers, what boundaries should be coincident, and how to resolve disputes between adjacent local stewards. The goals on the back of the handout identify potential next steps to pursue. At this point, producing updated datasets is out of scope due to all the challenges that remain. MnGeo is likely the appropriate organization to take the lead. The first deliverable is likely a project plan, similar to the one that was put together for parcels, to identify steps, processes, and partnerships to move forward.

Ross noted that one impetus for approaching this issue now is the data collection efforts around NG911. There are places inside the state where there are no official boundaries that include structures which might require an emergency response. Surveyors in northern Minnesota are making progress towards resolving some of these issues.

Reinhardt noted that when MetroGIS started, much of the initial challenges to resolve were similar to this. She asked if the standards would be a big part of this, and Ross affirmed that it was. When data needs to be leveraged across boundaries, standards are important. The federal government even recognizes that state boundaries don't match up with each other.

Geurts noted that PLS boundaries ought to end at the state boundary, but Ross noted that sometimes DOT needs to be able to agree with an adjacent state about where a boundary is. Brandt noted that oftentimes standards haven't addressed geometry, and that with the centerline standard in the metro, using a uniform agreement on "who is in charge" at what boundary is important, but achievable. Geurts noted that having agreements on resolving ongoing conflicts will be important to have in place in advance of getting to a maintenance level.

Nagel noted that a previous employer (Sibley County) started building their GIS by starting with remonumentation, and passed an ordinance that all surveyors use the county coordinate system in surveys, and that the data gathered needed to be made available for free. He recommended the county assessor and county surveyor as potentially good contacts. It was a massive undertaking at the time, but made things a lot easier in the long run. It highlighted some issues but also resolved several others.

Geurts expressed support for MnGeo to pursue this effort and for the GAC to support it. Bontrager asked for a timeline. Ross said there isn't one at this time, as MnGeo is still trying to define the effort. We may have to make some decisions for NG911 at first, and then bring along other areas later.

Theroux noted that some rural counties will have to also make agreements with private surveyors as well. Ross noted that there may need to be legislation to come out of the process. Minnesota may need a state surveyor.

Kotz asked if this project could be updated at the next meeting, in particular if there's a role the GAC could play, such as a committee.

Reinhardt offered that she could be leveraged as a contact for county policy makers.

Nominations for the Governor's Geospatial Commendation award

Rader noted that each year the [Governor's Geospatial Commendation award](#) is open for nominations, and the GAC is responsible for evaluating such project nominations. The criteria for projects are available in the slides and on MnGeo's website, mostly around measuring if a project has had a large beneficial impact. The standards are high for the award, so it is not awarded each year. She expects some nominations this year by the May 31 deadline. An awards committee needs to be formed out of the GAC to make recommendations to Ross, then MNIT

Commissioner Baden, and then the Governor's office. The GAC work is usually done in June via e-mail. Kotz called for volunteers. The following members offered their services on such a committee:

- Kne
- Richter
- Nagel
- Trager
- Bloomquist

The award is usually given to an organization, typically in recognition of a specific project, but not always.

GAC Appointment/Re-appointment process

Rader noted that the current terms end at June 30th, so all members will need to re-apply for their seats if they wish to continue serving. More of the appointments process is automated online via the Secretary of State now. Applicants are encouraged to get materials in by May 5th. Information will be placed on the Council web page and sent via e-mail. Ross asked that the members work to continue to represent their sectors and to help get all of the seats filled.

Reinhardt asked how an applicant notes that they are a representative of a sector, and Rader noted that that requirement has been removed because it's not always clear how that is determined.

Announcements or other business

Kotz called for announcements.

Anderson noted that the International Water Institute recently won a Governor's Award.

Sjerven noted that the call for presentations for the fall GIS/LIS conference is out and due May 5th. The conference will be in Bemidji in the beginning of October (4th-6th). The presentations are likely to be determined earlier this year than in the past, and the deadline is not likely to be extended this year. He suggested combining panel presentations if possible.

Freburg noted that the GIS/LIS Board OK'd a new award called the "[Distinguished Educator Award](#)" that will be similar to the Polaris Award.

Richason noted that SCSU is applying for an NSF grant to establish a drone research education center.

Nagel noted that there is a new GIS user group forming for South Central Minnesota, which has had two meetings so far. See the [South Central Minnesota GIS User Group's website](#) for more information.

Kne noted that GIS/LIS workshops are scheduled for May 17th on the University of Minnesota campus. Registration should open by Monday. Remote sessions will not be attempted this year, but there may be an additional round of workshops delivered in Moorhead.

Reinhardt noted that GIS technology still appears "magical" to decision makers, and that more policy makers need to understand that staff deliver these products through hard work such as what takes place at this Council.

Koutnik noted that an ArcGIS user seminar is coming on Thursday, March 30th, 8-noon, at the Hyatt in Minneapolis. He has been working with the Lake Superior Reserve nonprofit and asked that members look for the Friends of Lake Superior Reserve on social media channels.