



RAMSEY COUNTY GIS USER GROUP

An alliance of communities sharing Geographical Information Systems

Monthly Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2009

Location: Shoreview City Hall, 4600 Victoria St. N

1. Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

Mike Goodnature – Ramsey Conservation Dist.	Deb Jones – Falcon Heights
Carrie Mack- Ramsey Washington WD	Ger Pha – St. Paul
Jolinda Stapleton – City of Roseville	Chad Bergo - Maplewood
Dave Kotilinek – North St. Paul	Joel Koepp - Roseville
Curt Peterson – Ramsey County GIS	Carla Coates – Ramsey County GIS
John Moriarty – Ramsey County Parks & Recreation	Kristine Lampert - VLAWMO
Jan Vanderwall – Roseville Area Schools	Brian Corcoran - VLAWMO
Kevin Byrne – MCAD/St. Mary’s University	

Meeting was called to order by Mike Goodnature

2. Additions or Corrections to the Agenda – Mike, Carrie – Carrie suggested reinstating ‘Educational Opportunities’ as presented by Jan Vanderwall to ‘Continuing Topics.’ Approved, so changed. Mike Goodnature motioned to add several topics to ‘New Items’ and move it to item number 4 ahead of ‘Continuing Topics.’ Approved, so changed

3. Approval of December 2008 Meeting Minutes - Carrie – No suggestions. Approved by consensus.

4. New topics

a. Synopsis of 2008 – Mike

- i. Enterprise GIS small group was formed, drafted a proposal supporting centralized database Enterprise System in Ramsey County. This document was given to Dan Falbo, ESRI employee and interim GIS Manager for Ramsey County to review.
- ii. 2008 Aerials and Pictometry – proposed contribution for the latter.
- iii. Roseville continues to host website (www.ramseygis.org).
- iv. Steve Lorbach continuing as webmaster as User Group Secretary manages updates of minutes and agendas each month.
- v. Mission statement updated for 2008 and posted to website.
- vi. Topic based agendas incorporated as part of meetings when possible.
- vii. Proposed map library to compile member projects – not completed in 2008.

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viii. 3 new members: Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Org (VLAWMO), Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) as paying affiliate, and Capitol Region Watershed District. Total 24 members to date.

b. CivXplorer Interest Survey. Mike proposed doing survey of User Group members and non-members, including the general public, who use the online mapping program in order to gauge user satisfaction with the current system. A review was given of the presentation Jim O'Loughlin, President of Allied Information Systems gave at the December 2008 meeting (see December minutes for more on this). No formal quotes have been requested from Allied Info to convert the program to ArcServer and incorporate certain upgrades discussed at the last meeting. Mike proposed and other members seemed to agree that it would be good to assess if the upgrade/transition is necessary based on current user satisfaction and the possibility of having an entirely different mapping program through the future Enterprise GIS.

Though present consensus was that a great number of non ArcView users in the municipalities and in the public are using this, an official web statistics system is not currently in use. Joel Koepp stated he thought Steve Lorbach had set one up long ago and offered to check to see if it was working. The following comments were made about the current system

- Carla added that she often manages calls from the public asking for help with the CivXplorer, showing her that it is being used although the interface may be difficult for those not familiar with mapping programs. She would be interested in looking for options other than the CivXplorer upgrade.
- Deb commented that she sees residents using it for applications including submitting site plans for construction/remodeling projects.
- John Moriarty had made some short user manuals a while back, but with increasing functionality of other mapping systems such as Google Maps/Earth etc. he feels that there is less need to train people on CivXplorer.
- Jolinda stated that the current CivXplorer system procedures for posting new data were cumbersome due to multiple conversions and transitions required to follow Allied Info's requirement to host the data.
- Curt added that many questions brought up at and after last month's presentation were answered by Suzanne. He also suggested that having an IMS web server physically near the Enterprise GIS would be far easier to maintain especially considering the large



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quantity of digital data that would need to be transferred as more data/photography is acquired.

- John stated it was a quick and easy way to make maps, but annotations have to be hand drawn.

Proposed goals for the survey and results:

- Consider writing separate surveys for GIS users, non-users, county departments, and general public. Mike asked for help writing the survey: Carla volunteered. Joel stated he could add the survey to the ramseygis.org page and asked that an introduction be written to help surveyed users understand the purpose.
 - Determine immediate need and reference this to the expected time frame for Enterprise GIS.
 - Jan thought this survey and the resulting discussion would help focus what our vision for the Enterprise database system should be.
 - To help the User Group decide to keep the current system and wait for the Enterprise system to take over or upgrade the current version of CivXplorer.
 - Determine who is using it, how often and for what. Do they feel it is lacking in functionality, confusing, etc.?
 - Survey: how many/what programs in member organizations use it, and what they think of it
 - Jan: Data from survey could be relayed to Suzanne to determine if items reported as lacking could be included in an upgrade.
- c. Option to change meeting schedule** - Mike proposed restructuring the meeting schedule to every other month. Overall consensus seemed to show members appreciated the data and discussion exchange in a face-to-face format each month. Many thought moving to every other month would lessen that exchange. Another option offered was to take 2 meetings off the calendar; one in the summer near Independence Day, and another in October when the GIS/LIS conference tends to conflict. Members seemed to agree. Formal decision will be made as proposed cancellations near.
- d. Topic based meetings:** Mike asked for more ideas for topic based meetings and asked for members to volunteer to present or find presenters. He also suggested changing the meeting venue based on the member presenting or the member who arranged the presentation. Those present voiced approval. Meeting notice emails will indicate if venue is to change.



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5. Continuing topics

a. Pictometry Update – Jolinda reviewed past actions pertaining to the 2008 Pictometry. See archived minutes for details. Dean Larson from Pictometry wrote to inform that the corrected 2008 image library has been delivered to Ramsey County including orthophotography and both neighborhood and community obliques. Also included was an additional MRSID mosaic file for the entire Ramsey Co (file size >2G so Curt had not looked at it to date) John Jacobson from Ramsey Co. reported to Jolinda that the old erroneous data has been copied over to avoid any confusion. Once Ramsey has the new data loaded, the hard drive containing the imagery will go to St. Paul, then Roseville for distribution to the Metro-inet. Curt had seen the data and was very happy with the new product, saying a test view showed accuracy within 1ft. and the photography was vivid.

Pictometry is willing to do training in mid to late February if there is sufficient interest. A two-day training was suggested including one day for general users and a second day for more technical users.

Budget issues: The User Group was waiting on data repairs to commit to cost contributions. Mike asked if all User Group members have access to the new data. Jolinda said Inet users can connect that way. If not on the Metro-inet, a hard drive with the data can be borrowed if member organization computers have the storage capacity.

b. Enterprise GIS Update – Jolinda emailed Tom, interim GIS manager, provide him with RCGISUG background information and documents. Curt reported that Tom estimated the County would have the hardware and software installed towards the end of January. Curt is not sure which licensing tier Ramsey County has purchased. If it was the largest package each department will have ample GIS licenses.

c. Educational Opportunities - Jan provided handouts and encouraged members to get involved with students/teachers. Handouts included an outline for possible school staff workshop day presentations (“GIS for Elementary School Teachers.”), a list of ‘on-line GIS mapping applications,’ and a PowerPoint print-out of his presentation discussing the Demographics of School District Change. Jan uses these with teachers and students to explain what GIS means, how layers work, geography concepts, displaying data distributions, and how mapping programs develop into presentation data. He also encouraged the group to offer a tour of their worksite for a student GIS tour. Members are welcome to share/use Jan’s data



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presentations and alter them for our own use. He added that staff workshops are being proposed and organized now for August, so it is a good time to look to nearby schools to be involved with to volunteer time.

6. Ramsey County data updates – Curt P.

- a. Trail maps - Curt:** Curt brought large maps for review that include walking, pedestrian and bike paths in Ramsey County. He summarized the ongoing process with Active Living Ramsey County and various other agencies and individuals to improve non-motorized transportation. Similar programs are available online to map non-motorized transportation, but most of them rely on motorized-routes such as roads rather than incorporating trails such as the Bruce Vento and Gateway Trails. Curt asked that the group look at the hard-copy maps for errors/omissions. Changes can be reported directly to Curt or emailed in ArcView format. Curt suggested a future discussion should be had regarding adding bike/pedestrian/recreational trails and the city snow removal codes to database.
- b. 2009 Ramsey County Map – Carla:** Carla: Carla is still accepting repair suggestions from the 2007 maps to incorporate into the 2009 maps. Because a significant inventory of 2007 still exists, the new map will be printed later than expected. Anyone knowing of use/need for 2007 maps should contact Carla. Jan requested one box be sent to his school for educational purposes. When current edits are complete for the 2009 map, drafts printed by individual city will be sent to User Group members for review.
- c. 2009 Flight - Curt:** 2009 flight is scheduled to happen around April to obtain leaf-off conditions. Curt explained that the USGS helped cost-share for 2006 flight, but contributions were not fixed for this next flight. A complete physical feature update, including roads, buildings, water edges, etc will be done. October estimate for deliverables. Carla added that the request for proposal (RFP) is currently going through various processes of approval before posting it for submission.
- d. Physical Features – Curt:** In the half section maps, a glitch was found where the water backdrop did not show up. This has been corrected and reposted to the FTP site. Updates for this month include new CAMA data, and Sales and Permitting (as of December 30, 2007). The website and the FTP site have been updated, and members should contact Jolinda or Curt if they are having problems with the respective programs. John suggested that the work Vadnais Lake



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Watershed Management Organization has completed doing topological maps for various lakes might be of interest for the whole group.

Chad brought up Dave Calypool's discussion from a few months ago regarding a suggested shift for physical feature updates to a 2 year cycle. The USGS is going on a 2 year cycle running even years starting in 2010 for photography and in 2012 doing both flight and physical features. He continued that a shift from a 3 year to a 2 year cycle would more quickly use up funds.

Carla stated that the 2006 aerial costs came in much cheaper, showing a possible trend in dropping prices. Jolinda asked that, considering the quality of Pictometry, if there was a real need for increasing the update cycle. Curt followed this by asking if Pictometry vendors could do physical features based on their imagery. Another suggestion proposed doing flights for imagery during odd years and sharing data with the even year flights contracted by the USGS.

Carla stated that 2008 NAIP aerial photography was released and is available through LMIC (Land Management Information Center, www.lmic.state.mn.us). Though the WMS delivery of these aerials omits portions of Ramsey Co., downloading the imagery manually removes gaps.

Curt brought up an issue discussed at the December meeting regarding member's interest in expanding the flight path to include regions outside of Ramsey County. After some discussion with Anoka and Washington Counties, it was determined that data sharing would be permitted. Requests for specific areas should be sent to Curt so a single request can be made to each county. Data will then be distributed via the FTP site.

Carla brought up the December FEMA meeting, stating that those who were not able to attend could contact the presenter at the DNR for more discussion. Contact Carla for her contact information. She added that the presentation was well attended by public officials, although a snowstorm and minimal advertising of the meeting likely caused poor public turnout.

6. Community announcements and reports

- a. Jan suggested that 'Community Announcements and Reports' be moved to the beginning of User Group meetings. General consensus approved the change. So moved.
- b. Carla summarized the December 16th meetings hosted by FEMA, the MnDNR, and PBS&J regarding the new "preliminary" Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMS). The meeting held at the Ramsey Co. Public Works building and titled "Ramsey County Flood Risk Information Open House" presented the information for Local Officials and provided computer kiosks and hard copy maps to view the data. Those interested who were not able to

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- attend can contact Ceil Strauss, Floodplain Hydrologist with the DNR Waters division for more details (email: Ceil.Strauss@dnr.state.mn.us or by phone at 651-259-5713). Carla added that the presentation was well attended by public officials, although a snowstorm and minimal advertising likely caused poor turnout for the Public Open House portion.
- c. Treasurer's report - Chad: User group budget was in a healthy positive at the end of 2008. Some of this surplus is dedicated to Pictometry, but no money has been transferred to date. Outlook for 2009 looked positive assuming update schedules remained the same (see item 5d above). If we are looking to upgrade to every other year flights, the budget should remain strong, but less so if physical features shift to every other year and Pictometry moves to annual update. Notices for outstanding JPAs were sent out prior to the meeting. An invoice for 2009 dues will go out later this month. No fees have changed or will change until a new census is completed. Curt brought up the topic of insurance coverage to which Chad explained that the League of MN Cities requires insurance for groups entering into JPAs as of 4 years ago.
 - d. Website update: Carrie sent an update request to webmaster Steve Lorbach. The ramseygis.com homepage was updated to reflect the 2009 officers and new members.
 - e. Deb asked if members were experiencing pressure from their organizations questioning RCGISUG membership fees in a time of budget cuts. One member commented that he had encountered these questions, but answered that costs to the city would be upward of \$70,000 to produce alone verses what the User Group produces through cost-sharing. Deb suggested a need to bring member organizations up to speed with what we do so an understanding funding can be evaluated with perspective.
- 8. Agenda for February 2009 meeting** – Feature topic presentation: Stormwater Exchange Standards – Mike Trojan, MN PCA.
- If you have suggestions for feature topics that you or someone else could present, please contact an officer.**
- 9. Adjournment** –Meeting adjourned at 3:54
- Next meeting will be on Thursday February 5, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at Shoreview City Hall.
- Minutes submitted by Carrie Mack, Vice Chair.