



RAMSEY COUNTY GIS USER GROUP

An alliance of communities sharing Geographical Information Systems

Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2010
Shoreview City Hall, 4600 Victoria St N

1. Introductions

Carrie Mack, Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District
Steve Lorbach, Saint Paul Water
Matt Koukol, Ramsey County
Ger Pha, City of Saint Paul
Joel Koepp, City of Roseville
Curt Peterson, Ramsey County
Liesa Miller, MnDOT
Mark Andrie, City of New Brighton
Matt Baker, City of Shoreview
Mike Goodnature, Ramsey Conservation District
Deb Jones, City of Falcon Heights
Connie Bernardy, Active Living Ramsey Communities
Chad Bergo, City of Maplewood

The meeting was called to order by Carrie Mack, Chair of the User Group at 2:05 PM.

2. August 2010 minutes

The August 2010 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

3. Discussion about Nonprofit Membership to User Group

The User Group recently received two requests for group membership. The Twin Cities Community Land Bank initially showed interest, but decided not to pursue membership once they received the quoted price. District Energy of St. Paul is the other organization that would like to join the User Group.

Carrie Mack spoke to both Washington and Hennepin Counties about their policies for giving nonprofit organizations access to GIS data. Curt Peterson offered some background about how Ramsey County developed its policy, which has been to refer interested nonprofits to the User Group, where they can get data at a reduced fee based on the population of the area they serve. He recalled that a group representing St. Paul's Rondo Neighborhood had inquired in the past about getting access to data on behalf of several community groups.

Chad Bergo confirmed that some years ago the St. Paul Community Trust had gone as far as receiving a formal quote for group membership. He then talked about the intent of the current language in the Group's Joint Powers Agreement and possible future changes to it. Currently, nonprofits pay at a rate of 7.5% of their population factor, which is a big discount from the municipality 100% rate. He suggested that one alternative could be looking at a nonprofit's budget and setting the fee in accordance with their ability to pay.

Chair

Carrie Mack
carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

Vice Chair

Matt Baker
mbaker@shoreviewmn.gov

Secretary

Joel Koepp
joel.koepp@ci.roseville.mn.us



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Carrie Mack passed out a copy of District Energy of St. Paul's financial statement, and suggested that the group could hire an attorney to revise the JPA's terms about nonprofit membership.

Chad Bergo, Curt Peterson, and Deb Jones responded to Matt Koukol's questions about the origin of the current fee structure, that it was designed to raise approximately \$90,000 over a 3 year span to pay for aerial imagery and physical features data.

Matt Koukol asked if in the future the User Group might plan out what activities they intend to fund, and then set fees according to how much those projects will cost.

Deb and Curt recalled that the last fee increase was used for some special projects like development of the online mapping application interface and digitizing some old historical aerial imagery.

Carrie shared documents from the Hennepin County GIS User Group about nonprofit access and its cost. Curt wondered if there would be a lot of nonprofits seeking access if it was made free, and what the associated workload would be. Chad Bergo suggested that nonprofit membership/access could be taken out of the JPA altogether and dealt with in a separate approval procedure. Matt Baker asked what kind of criteria would be used to approve or reject organizations in that scenario.

There was a discussion about the feasibility of sending organizations seeking access to parcel data to the MetroGIS quarterly dataset. Another future change to nonprofit access to consider would be requesting their output back as a data product if it was useful to the Group, or having the nonprofit come give a presentation to show how they used the data.

Without enough voting members to act on the membership request, the Group agreed to take it back up at the October meeting.

4. Asset Management Application Demonstration: Steve Lorbach

Due to technical problems, the demonstration on the overhead projector was not possible, so Steve described the purpose and functionality of his application.

St. Paul Regional Water Services has a number of legacy applications that store data in separate databases from their GIS. Connections are needed from within a GIS application to these older databases to pull tabular data and display it. For example, a property can be selected in GIS, and extra information is retrieved behind the scenes from MSSQL or Oracle databases.

The application he is developing will allow not only read access, but the ability to push data back into the legacy application databases, as in the case of users out doing field inspections. The next phase of development will allow a user to choose assets from the map, authenticate to the external database, and create work orders. The program refreshes cached data daily to remain functional in case of lost network connectivity.

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carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

Vice Chair

Matt Baker

mbaker@shoreviewmn.gov

Secretary

Joel Koepf

joel.koepf@ci.roseville.mn.us



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Steve clarified that the application allows editing of tabular data only, not feature geometry. It can update symbology based on attributes—for example, hydrants that have been flushed get a different colored marker than hydrants that haven't been flushed.

5. Ramsey County Updates: Curt Peterson and Matt Koukol

Curt Peterson said that the monthly data update on disc was done using a file-based geodatabase instead of a personal geodatabase at Roseville's request, because it works better in the ArcGIS 10 basemap feature that allows seamless panning and zooming. Liesa Miller noted that file-based geodatabases aren't supported by MapServer in case anyone is using it.

Curt and Matt had a meeting with ESRI about multi-modal routing, and have started adding relative elevation to their centerline database to account for grade separations (-1, 0, 1, etc).

The 1991 aerial imagery is back from the vendor that digitized it, and will be put on a portable hard drive for Roseville to install on the ArcIMS site. There was a slight problem getting the JPEG images back with correct coordinates for projecting properly, and they are talking to ESRI about a fix. For now, the large file size TIFF images will go into online mapping.

Matt Koukol has been setting up new internal ArcSDE databases, identifying GIS data needs among the most frequent GIS users in the County's departments, and will plan to come back to the User Group for a discussion about data and attribute needs.

6. Community Announcements

Chad Bergo told the Group that Maplewood is using GPS to do a city-wide park and street boulevard tree inventory. They will have 3 seasonal staff people recording information on a basic form for tree species, diameter, health, and notes. Part of the reason for the project is to prepare for the arrival of the emerald ash borer. Deb Jones said that Falcon Heights already has plans to cut down all its ash trees.

Steve Lorbach said that St. Paul Regional Water Services is about to start a three year project to replace 94,000 water meters, which will employ a GIS application to track progress.

Joel Koepp and Carrie Mack talked about the differences between ArcPad 7 and ArcPad 10. North St. Paul is upgrading to ArcPad 10 and has activated an account with MnDOT for use of their real-time VRS network for positional correction in the field.

Connie Bernardy of Active Living Ramsey Communities spoke about a recent meeting with MnDOT about sharing their GIS attributes for ped-bike systems with the engineers. The new Complete Streets law requires facilities to be built in a way that accommodates all possible users, so Active Living would like to provide their information to be included in designs. Anyone interested in being kept up to date on Active Living's activities in the ped-bike area should contact Connie at connie.bernardy@co.ramsey.mn.us to get on the mailing list.

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carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

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Curt Peterson thanked Roseville for its cooperation in preserving the County's horizontal and vertical benchmarks during a trail construction project. He also let everyone know that their intern who is working on the park facilities project now has a GPS-enabled camera for recording the positions of all the features being added to the database. They are creating a set of about 40 recreation symbols for use in ArcGIS that will be shared with the DNR, NRPA, and the Three Rivers Park District.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:31 PM.

Minutes submitted by Joel Koepp, Secretary

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