

Conference Call of the Regional Committee of the NYS GIS Association

Date: February 14, 2018, 1pm – 2pm

Attendees:

Jim Jones, Western New York GIS
Ross Baldwin, Long Island GIS
Doug Schuetz, Rockland County
Jason Baum, Capital Region
William Ostrander, Southern Tier
Mickey Dietrich, Tug Hill
Star Carter, DANC
Warren Salo, DANC

Email Updates:

Stacy Standon, GIS/SIG
Paula Cutrone, Central Region
Eileen Allen, Adirondacks Region

Regional Reports

Jim Jones, Western NY GIS: WNYGIS held a social event last Friday at the Kissing Bridge ski resort. Jim reports great powder and no wind. WNYGIS expects to hold 2-3 socials and 2-3 educational gatherings this year. A spring event is being planned which will be an opportunity for members to show and tell what they are working on. A social event, the Jingle Mingle, was held at Buffalo State College in November. Jim reports WNYGIS has about 42 paying members and a contact list of about 250. The WNYGIS encompasses a large region and events are being planning in different parts of their territory to maximize participation.

Ross Baldwin, Long Island GIS: The LIGIS spring conference is scheduled for April 25th at Farmingdale State College. Speakers are being sought. LIGIS held a Fall conference at Stony Brook College. LIGIS continues to discuss charging dues and feels they are hampered by not having funds to support events. Thinking about gatherings that are more social in nature. LIGIS Steering Committee looking towards more initiatives.

Doug Schuetz, Rockland County: The Rockland County group is informal. Efforts to forge one Regional Group for the Hudson Valley as a whole haven't gotten off the ground. Believes the Westchester GIS event will be held again this coming Spring. Doug reports good GIS project momentum in areas that include emergency management, land use, permitting, etc. Doug continues to provide training to municipalities on GIS applications developed by the County.

Jason Baum, Capital Region: The Capital group is not very active. Socials have been attempted but were lightly attended. GIS users in Region dominated by State GIS workers who have not been easy to attract. Looking for a means to galvanize members.

William Ostrander, Southern Tier: Held a November meeting at which Mark Scott of ESRI spoke about ArcGIS Pro. There will be an April meeting in Ithaca, Tompkins County. The group does not charge dues and does not have a formal organization structure. They have a mailing list of about 100 GIS users. 12 GIS practitioners from Chemung County have been added to the mailing list.

Mickey Dietrich, Tug Hill: Conducted QGIS training with Cornell University. In upcoming months will be holding courses in Carthage and Syracuse. Looking towards also providing training in PostGIS. Will be bringing on board 2 interns for the summer. Looking to develop partnerships with colleges. Mickey is now working 50% on GIS and 50% as a municipal manager/circuit rider. Working with Pete Walesman, GIS training in the Village of will be recorded by WPBS for a video that will be the final deliverable for the Emerging GIS project of the NYS GIS Association (with funding from the Fund for the City of New York).

Star Carter, Development Authority of North Country (DANC): A regional meeting was held last year at Clarkson University. The group has not decided when/where the next meeting will be, but they would like to have another meeting this year. DANC facilitated a joint land use/compatibility study for the Ft. Drum area with information to be made available shortly over an internet portal. DANC experiencing challenges with keeping staff/staff turnover and new staff recruitment.

Alan Leidner, NYC GISMO: Reports that current GISMO membership is about 375. More than 50% of members are students who are not obliged to pay dues. GISMO pays for student membership in the NYS GIS Association. GISMO dues are \$20 annually for those who do pay. Incorporated into dues is \$10 for NYSGIS Assn dues, so all GISMO members are State Assn members. Money is held by the State Assn treasurer, Christa Hay, who cuts checks so that GISMO can pay expenses. GISMO held a successful Jobs Fair in the Fall that attracted fifteen organizations interested in GIS skilled employees and interns, and was attended by more than 100 job seekers with GIS skills. The Fair took place at Hunter College in Manhattan. The GISMO Board, on which seven of eight positions are held by women, is organizing a Forum to discuss Women in GIS, to be held in the Spring. GISMO has published a GIS Principles and Policies document. A forum on this topic is being planned for the Spring.

Stacy Stanton, GIS/SIG - Email Update: 'The 27th Annual Conference of GIS/SIG is scheduled for April 10, 2018 from 8am to 4pm at the Burgundy Basin. 'We are still looking for speakers so if anyone knows of someone that wants to speak, please have them fill out the form on our website (www.gissig.org) that is under the conference page, call for papers link.'

Paula Cutrone, Central Region – Email Update: 'The Central NY group continues to meet on a semi-regular basis, every other month or so. We participated in GIS Day activities again this past November at the Public Service Leadership Academy in Syracuse.'

Eileen Allen, Adirondacks Region – Email Update: 'Expects to contact John Barge in the next two weeks to see whether a meeting can be called. Several faculty members on campus have asked for introductory GIS training and I will try to set up a multi-day training session this spring and invite local government people to attend. The GISMO Policy Statement is very well written. It makes a great case for

why attention to GIS should not be a casual afterthought. Clinton County (includes Plattsburgh) has a good GIS team but I think some regions in the Adirondack Park are hard pressed for resources.'

Issues and Opportunities

Jim Jones, WNYGIS: Managing money is a pain point. WNYGIS is not incorporated and cannot collect or disburse money. Currently State Association collects dues. Recently received a check from NYSGISA for five years of dues collection. But WNYGIS does not have a bank account so money is kept "in a sock draw." Would very much like more flexibility in how money is handled and raised. It would be very useful if it were easier to spend money for food and refreshments during gatherings. Believes they would be able to attract sponsor support. Wonders whether there might be any financial support from the State Association. Jim knows that there is a page available on the State Association website for WNYGIS to use. Not very functional. Likes the look of the State Associations remodeled website. Wonders if WNYGIS can get more of a chunk of it for their own use. Would also like to maintain membership list. In general, WNYGIS is looking for more effective ways to manage administrative tasks.

- General agreement with these points from other regional POCs.
- **Proposed Initiative:** Work with NYSGISA leadership to see if more/better functionality can be carved out of the State Assn website to help regional groups. Ross, Jim and Alan to approach State Assn to discuss.
- **Resources from State Assn:** A theme throughout the meeting was whether the State Assn could make funds available for supporting regional groups and helping them grow.

Ross Baldwin, LIGIS: Looking into not-for-profit status. Would like flexibility to collect money and spend it to enhance events. Noted that having State Association collect regional dues was contingent on regional members also paying State dues. Ross leery of charging \$10 State dues on top of local dues. Afraid he would lose members. Proposes that he, Jim along with me approach State Association to find solutions. Would like to charge a conference fee to attendees to pay expenses and for speakers, but can't now.

- **Key point:** Financial management issues need to be solve to enable regional groups to flourish.

Doug Schuetz, Rockland: Multiple county departments manage and monitor land use processes including permits, complaints, subdivisions. Looking to develop a software solution. Working towards issuing an RFP. Welcomes thoughts and suggestions. Draft to be made available for circulation.

- **Alan asks:** Hasn't Robert Wills of Dutchess County developed an related application that tracks land use proposals?

Jason Baum, Capital Region: Does not charge dues and does not have formal membership. Maintains a mailing list and holds mixers. Wonders whether the State Assn would be willing to provide money to support Regional group events. Also, does the State Assn have extra swag from conferences which might be distributed to regional groups. How can the State Assn help regional outreach efforts. How can regional outreach efforts lead to great State Assn membership? Webinars are good...but won't energize Metro Albany area. Thinks that getting a speaker to discuss open software products would be valuable.

- **Alan suggests:** Maybe speak to Mickey D about getting speakers re: open software.
- **Alan to send link:** Jason unfamiliar with Emerging GIS material. Send link and follow up.

William Ostrander, Southern Tier: Zip code areas do not conform with State street centerlines, stream centerlines and census tracts. This problem has been voiced by others on GIS social media. Suggestion: conduct a survey to see how many others see this as a problem and then discuss with Frank Winters.

- **Work with Razy:** Survey to see whether zip code misalignment is a general problem and then bring up to State.
- **Suggestion for State Assn:** Suggests that the State Assn target a different professional group annually to raise GIS consciousness, spread GIS use and recruit new State Assn members. Send speakers to annual meetings. Examples could be Historians, public works associations, etc.

Mickey Dietrich, Tug Hill: Believes it would be useful to make funding available to Regional groups for a variety of activities including social and professional events, website development, training, speakers, etc. Alan mentioned that the State Assn has a fair amount of money in its bank account some of which could be used for regional group building purpose. Regions could apply for grants and describe how the money would be used. One of the purposes would be to increase State Assn and regional group membership.

- **Action:** Ask State Assn leadership to consider a grant program to regional groups. Regional groups would need to describe how money would be used and set membership targets.
- **Opportunity to increase regional and State Assn membership:** Within regional GIS groups the ratio between regional members who also belong to NYSGISA, and regional members who do not belong to NYSGISA is about 4 to 1. This suggests that with the right strategies it may be possible to attract many hundreds of new members into the State Assn. Regional groups should be seen as a key engine of State Assn growth.

Star Carter, DANC: Experiencing staff losses and difficulty hiring. Retaining GIS staff is difficult. Uses State government employment page. However, finds civil service restrictions a problem. GIS positions are not fully delineated. Erie County has its own GIS civil service titles, but provisions are considered antiquated. Are there model GIS title descriptions? Can the State Assn get involved in improving/modernizing GIS title descriptions?

- **GIS Titles Statement:** See initial Draft of Policy Statement on GIS Titles. Please provide edits and enhancements.

Discussion

Ross Baldwin, LIGIS: There are a number of regional GIS administrative functions including website development and maintenance, maintenance of membership lists, event registration, financial management. Is there a tool that can tie this all together and make it user friendly. Is WordPress a solution? What are other regional groups coping? Suggests working with Razy to put together a survey to see how other regional groups are managing various functions. Then, based on the results, push for a solution that would be available to all.

- **Survey:** Ross to contact Razy and help compose a survey of administrative methods and needs.

Draft GIS Principals and Policies Statement on GIS Titles, job descriptions and examinations

Suggested by Alan Leidner

The recruitment and retention of GIS trained staff is critical to spatially related government functions. Current GIS titles, job descriptions and examinations can be behind the times, and are often not appropriately differentiated from those of conventional information technology positions. We propose that an effort be made by State officials in collaboration with representatives of the NYS GIS Association, to examine current GIS jobs related titles, descriptions and exams and work together to bring them up to date and fully reflective of best practices. A good and fair job title structure will attract talented individuals to the GIS field, encourage long careers and helps cultivate professional growth.