

## NYS GIS Association, Regional Committee Meeting, November 3, 2021

### Attendees

Ross Baldwin  
Jim Daly  
Liz DeGironimo  
Eileen Allen  
Steven Pollakov  
Gerry Engstrom  
Karyn Tareen  
Alan Leidner  
Sheri Norton  
Jason Baum

### Notes

Ross and Alan suggested that the meeting should be used to brainstorm priorities for the coming year. They stated that the work done by the Reg-Com over the prior 18 months which centered on the GIS response to COVID was highly effective leading to improvements in the approach to the Pandemic by both State and local governments. NYSGISA and GISMO collaborated on a submission to the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) of innovative approaches to COVID which were incorporated into a Health Concept Development Study and a Phase 1 Health Data Model. Additionally, the Health CDS was an important input into a Federally funded 2021 Disaster Pilot addressing Landslides, Flooding, and Pandemics. Additionally, funding has been secured for a second phase of this project in 2022. A GISMO team won a \$16K grant from DP-21 to develop a pilot based on the use of voice recognition software, a geocoding application, and AI. The intention is to capture information for those caught in a disaster area at a time when 9-1-1 emergency response systems are overwhelmed.

Alan provided an overview of GISMO initiatives including sponsoring legislation to amend the City Charter to mandate the hiring of a GIO, the formation of a GIS steering committee, and the development of a GIS strategic plan. He also described developments in projects to develop an underground infrastructure data model (OGC MUDDI Model), and a NYU-GISMO project to map underground infrastructure in portions of Midtown East and Sunset Park. Called UNUM, this project, under the leadership of NYU Professor Debra Laefer, won a \$1M NSF grant.

Ross again asked attendees to brainstorm project ideas that the Committee could address over the coming year.

Jim Daly then said that the spatial line work of census tracts did not line up with the address points, parcels, and other geographical layers at the state, county, and municipal levels. He said

that this created many problems especially related to getting comprehensive census counts and subsequent redistricting. It also complicates the integration of demographic and housing data from the census used in GIS applications and analytics. Additionally, it makes relating the Social Vulnerability Index of the CDC to the location of COVID cases. Jim described the consequences of misalignment of census lines as having many “tentacles” that impeded GIS use. Ross said that Jim had been bringing this issue up for more than a decade. Alan said that this was a matter of needing to better integrate critical framework layers. All agreed that this was both a local and national problem.

Jim went on to say that the timing for this kind of initiative was good because of ongoing redistricting and that it addressed the need for improvements in data science and data granularity so that GIS analytics could be made more effective and precise. He noted that there were areas in Suffolk County where census lines and cadastral were so bad that it was almost impossible to relate one with the other. Liz DeGeronimo said that NSGIC has also raised issues about Census lines not being harmonized with other framework layers. There was agreement that a collaborative relationship with Census would be beneficial to dealing with these issues.

Alan said that this issue was something that affected all NYS regions, counties, and municipalities and could be an effort that brought Regional members together. It could also be used to bring attention to the more general issue of getting more visibility for GIS at the executive level and with elected officials. He noted that every additional person counted in the Census yields \$500, or more, in annual Federal assistance.

**Jim agreed to provide examples of misalignment between census lines and cadastral and other framework layers.** Other Regional Committee members would also be asked to provide examples in their jurisdictions. It was thought that this issue could be leveraged to encourage the development of a State Health Data Service.

Jim said he had problems communicating his concerns with Census and getting feedback. (Note: Alan is aware that there is a history of NYC Planning Department working closely with the City based Census office to get a better fit between census lines and City street centerlines.) **It was suggested that a Census representative be asked to speak at a future Regional Committee meeting. It would also be useful to identify all the Census offices located in NYS [New York Region \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/new-york-region). There must be more offices than the one in Lower Manhattan.**

(Note: There was a GISMO webinar on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2021 at which Gregory F. Hank Jr., Deputy Chief Geography Division of the U.S. Census spoke as part of the World Population Day celebration. See: [Past Events – GISMO....a GIS hotspot \(gismonyc.org\)](https://gismonyc.org) 2<sup>nd</sup> item down. Also, on October 28<sup>th</sup>, Stephen Wolkwitz of NYC Planning spoke at another GISMO webinar on the subject of NYC 2020 Reconfiguration of Census Statistical Geographies. Go to [www.gismonyc.org](https://www.gismonyc.org) for the notice of this meeting – the recording has not yet been posted to the “Past Events” folder.)

Gerry Engstom of the State GIS Office (works with Frank Winters) said the State was that GIS capabilities were not fully utilized during the response to COVID, including Census information. He suggested that we **get in touch with Steve Romalewski (CUNY Grad School)** who is a Census expert.

Ross announced that Regional Committee meetings would be held on a monthly basis. He asked for any additional ideas about possible initiatives. Generally, there seemed to be satisfaction that the alignment of census and local framework lines would be an excellent issue to move forward with and would resonate nationally as well.