

Meeting of the NYSGISA Regional Committee January 15, 2014 11am to Noon

**Attendees**

Arlene Owen – Putnam County  
Robert Wills – Dutchess County  
Eileen Allen – Northern Adirondacks  
Eric Ennis (for Lisa Warneke): Syracuse Region  
John Barge – Northern Adirondacks  
Heather Weller – Southeast Adirondacks  
Mickey Dietrich – Tug Hill (Western Adirondacks)  
Chair, Alan Leidner – GISMO

**Attendees who called in on the different line**

Julie Tolar – NYSGISA President  
Sam Wear – Westchester County  
Verne LaClair – Rome/Utica  
Jacob Needle – Buffalo, Erie, Niagara: WNYGIS  
Doug Schuetz – Rockland County

**Minutes**

Everyone on the call introduced themselves. Mickey joined the call and let me know that the original invitation I sent out contained a different call in code than the one we were on. We tried to get those who were on the different line to recall but were not successful. Alan agreed to individually call all those who did not join the main discussion.

Alan welcomed everyone and discussed the importance of regional GIS groups and stated that improving collaboration between the State Association and the regional and local associations was a top priority. Alan noted that NYSGISA attendance was at an all-time high of about 525 and that we were financially healthy. He reiterated that the purpose of the Association was to provide “member value” and mentioned that Association committees were hard at work providing services including the Summit Committee and the Conference Committee. He reviewed the possible areas where the State Association might be of assistance to local GIS groups – as listed in the original memo calling for the meeting - and said that the State Association was also looking for local groups to advocate membership in NYSGISA. Attendees then discussed current status of their organizations and possible initiatives.

**Arlene Owen, Putnam County:** Putnam is relatively inactive with only a handful of county GIS staff and no network of GIS personnel at the municipal level. Arlene is in touch with the

Westchester County user group and has attended their events in the past. **She was interested in getting a listing of State Association members from Putnam based on zip code.** Alan said this was possible.

**Robert Wills, Dutchess County:** Reports that most GIS activities happen within County Government where there is a great deal of networking and data sharing . There are a limited number of users outside of County Government. Dutchess has a GIS Committee but does not have a formal GIS user group and does not see the need for one. County GIS users do take advantage of the resources of the State Association. Bob agreed that webinars were useful. He also thought that **use of a webpage** on the State Association site might have value.

**Eileen Allen and John Barge, Northern Adirondacks:** Not too much has been going on. Given the large size of the region it is difficult to get together. Thought that having a web page on the Association's website would be useful. Knows that Carol Zollweg has offered to post content sent to her but Eileen thinks some **coaching on how to put together that content would be useful. Believes that getting the Association's membership listing for Adirondacks counties would be useful.** There is good contact with north country academic institutions and state agencies but not so much with municipal government and the private sector. **Access to Survey Monkey could be useful. Also, having access to conference call and webinar capabilities.**

Discussed the particular challenges faced by rural counties. Economic issues due to slumping local business and jobs. Local officials wear many hats and don't have the time to focus on GIS. Few can afford full time GIS staff but having staff who are GIS knowledgeable is highly desirable. No IT department to support GIS initiatives with many services being contracted out. **Inability to attend conferences. There is really no business case for use of GIS in rural counties that identifies GIS advantages for their particular needs.** Also, the services the State GIS Association has are not widely known. Pointed out the importance of school districts as local entities where GIS can be employed.

**Mickey Dietrich, Tug Hill:** Agreed with the issues raised by Eileen and John. Tug Hill has brought in resources from outside for talks (John Van Hoosen of Green Mt. Community College Vt.). Also Mickey has initiated the GeoTech Institute in Tug Hill, providing in person training. Thinks hands on workshops are a good way to go. Getting local government involvement is a challenge. Providing K-12 GIS services to schools and working with school districts is a challenge because curriculum is overwhelmed by meeting standards. No spare time. Class time cannot be sacrificed. But there is an opportunity to get local High Schools engaged with Local governments on GIS projects. Often rural counties do not have high end users. There is also

high turnover of elected and appointed officials. Educational materials and methods need to be crafted to deal with these situations.

**General Discussion:** There was agreement that GIS issues facing the Adirondacks also faced other rural counties in the Catskills, Finger Lakes, Syracuse Region, Southern Border and Western areas of the State. Agreement that these issues should be brought to the NYS Geospatial Advisory Council (GAC) for discussion. **Agreement that a document identifying GIS benefits for rural counties would be useful.** Also agreement that the GAC should consider recommending to State Education leaders that time be set aside to **discuss GIS in the classroom** and that GIS be an **element in teacher professional development and become part of the common core standard.** It was also suggested that the GAC encourage the State to **recommend that counties and municipalities allow GIS interested staff to attend local GIS meetings as well as State approved GIS Conferences and Summits.**

**Heather Weller, Southeast Adirondacks:** Agreed that getting some **guidance about use of the State Association's website** would be useful including content, graphics, etc. Perhaps develop a submission form. Would be very interested in having a **speaker come out to address a meeting,** or at least on a conference call. Alan said that the Association would try to help get someone and might be in position to provide **travel money** for a speaker to make it easier. Some funding for **meeting refreshments** was also a possibility.

**General Discussion:** Agreement that Bill Johnson's presentation on Robert's Rules of Order was very useful. A regional meeting organized around the replay of Bill's presentation would draw a wide variety of local people and get them interested in the Association. Meetings that include panel discussions and dialogue about local issues and GIS benefits would also be a strong draw. Often, non GIS officials show up at meetings including town officials, etc. In fact, membership in the State Association is not restricted to GIS professionals: NYSGISA welcomes those with simply a strong interest in GIS. At such local meetings it would be useful to have a pamphlet that describes Association services and how to join. **It was suggested that there be a NYSGISA webinar that focuses specifically about the issues of rural NYS counties.**

**Conclusion (Alan L.):** Although we missed having the participation of those who were misinformed about the correct dial in number, we had a lively discussion that generated quite a few interesting recommendations. I will distribute these draft notes, incorporate changes, mail it out to the full committee and then initiate one on one conversations with those members who were not able to attend.

**Following the Conference Call Mickey Dietrich added the following thoughts:**

I would like to see developed material or information that could be handed out to newly elected officials about the usefulness of geospatial technology in local government, by allowing them to make informed decisions.

Maybe the NYS Association of Towns could work with us to put on a webinar related to this toward the beginning or end of January after newly elected town officials are in office. They could advertise it to the towns. Same could be done for villages and cities.

**Lisa Warneke provided the following comments on the meeting minutes:**

Sorry not able to participate. Great to read over minutes...would you please add my suggestion sent to you yesterday and discussed with Eric before call about (1) advocacy to state government to facilitate GIS awareness and institutionalization in local governments (does Governor, etc. know that GIS can help with modernizing locals?), and (2) clarity about regional groups.

Mickey's idea is great - but isn't it needed in several audiences? Some counties needing help are not rural. Cities, towns, school districts, and others also. Great to do with statewide associations. Would help to know more about status of conditions and challenges in locals statewide to reveal needs. One idea is a buddy or mentor system? Could pair up electeds as well as staff.