

Proposal to Recast the **NYS GIS Coordinating Body** as the **NYS Geospatial Advisory Council**

25-July-13

Bill Johnson, GIO

The New York State GIS Coordinating Body (CB) held a special meeting on July 1 for the express purpose of reconsidering its longstanding role in light of the new ITS organization and establishment of a State Geographic Information Officer (GIO) reporting to the Chief Technology Officer (CTO). The CTO seeks to bring new levels of innovation to the State, and GIS, which cuts across many fields, is a key element of that broad vision. The challenge for the CB was to determine if and how it could support this new direction. During the special meeting the CB summarized its history and arrived at consensus regarding how to support the State going forward.

Members present at the meeting included Colin Reilly (NYC), Eric Herman (Thruway), Craig Cheeseman (Nature Conservancy), Sam Wear (Westchester Co), Todd Fabozzi (CDRPC), Austin Fisher (Fountains Spatial), Ann Deakin (SUNY Fredonia), Elisabetta DeGironimo (MVWA), Frank Winters (ITS/GPO), Glenn Cutter (Clinton Co), Sheri Norton (Ontario Co), and Bill Johnson, Chair. Participating by phone were Laura Feitner (Town of Smithtown), Jim Daly (Suffolk Co), and Jim Gilmer (Justice Ctr).

The CB has been discussing and contemplating its role over the past year as the State's IT organization has been changing. These discussions led to the decision to hold the special meeting on July 1. At the meeting, the group considered the history and past accomplishments of the Coordinating Body, beginning with its origin as a recommendation from the *Temporary Legislative Council on GIS* in 1996. In the late '90s and early 2000s the CB served an important role in offering a mechanism for stakeholders to have a voice and to help frame requirements which were implemented by agencies, including development of the NYS GIS Clearinghouse, establishing a statewide orthoimagery program, and creation of a standardized street/addressing network.

Concurrently during that period a State GIS Association was established and now has a membership of over 450 members (and growing). The Association launched the Geospatial Summit and has recently taken responsibility for hosting the NYS GIS Conference (NY GeoCon). They also provide opportunities for professional development, networking and advocacy. The Association comments on pending legislation affecting the profession, and is a venue for like-minded GIS professionals to share resources on an *ad hoc* basis.

In light of the fact that the State has reorganized IT with the creation of the Office of Information Technology Services, including appointment of a State GIO, the CB discussed its relevance, particularly since the State GIS Association has taken on many of the CB's previous roles. After discussion it was clear that there is strong rationale for the CB to continue to serve the State in an advisory capacity. Key points include: more structured nature of the CB compared to the State GIS Association, with a nomination process, specific sector representation, and term limits for those serving on the CB; the direction the State goes with GIS has a significant impact on non-State GIS users who rely on public-facing State GIS resources; the State needs to consider how State GIS activities operate within the broader network of GIS use regardless of sector; and the experience and varying perspectives CB members bring "to the table" are valuable to the State in formulation of policy and actions.

The CB further discussed details and logistics such as name, mission statement, meetings, member composition, and operating protocols.

The proposed new name is the **NYS Geospatial Advisory Council**.

The proposed new mission statement is for the Council to:

“Advise the State on effective use of geospatial technology resulting in tangible benefits to NYS.”

A Work Group comprised of Ann Deakin, Sam Wear, Craig Cheeseman, Todd Fabozzi, Eric Herman, and Bill Johnson will develop recommendations on the composition of the Council. Recommendations will include specific standing members (*ex officio*, or by virtue of the office they hold), as well as specific recommendations on representation for specific sectors and “at large” members. The State GIO will serve as Council Chair. The current procedures for nomination and appointment of Council members, length of terms (3 years), and term limits will be retained.

The proposed meeting schedule will be quarterly, plus an additional meeting every year in which the morning will be spent on an assessment of the past year’s performance in achieving progress on objectives and goals set forth in the prior year, and the afternoon on strategic planning to develop priorities for Council’s consideration for the upcoming year.

The CTO is interested in seeing GIS integrated broadly as part of the State’s innovation strategy, and not be treated as a standalone technology. To that end, the Council will be prepared to extend its advice and guidance as broadly as possible.

At the quarterly meetings, the Council will spend approximately half of the time on the agenda set by the GIO in consultation with the CTO and the other half on topics scheduled during the annual strategic planning session or that other members wish to bring to the table. Having agenda topics set well in advance will provide an opportunity to identify and invite outside speakers to the meetings.

The Council desires and expects to be actively consulted on relevant issues before final decisions are made, with the understanding that its recommendations are advisory in nature and in no way binding.