

# MEETING MINUTES

## DEKALB COUNTY/CITY OF AUBURN GIS COMMITTEE

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**Meeting Date and Time:**  
04-30-99 @ 1:00 p.m.

**Meeting Type:** Work, Partial Committee

**Meeting Location:**  
Kosciusko County Court House, Warsaw, IN

**Members Present:**  
*DeKalb County:*  
Stump, Brad – Building Commissioner, Plan Commission

*City of Auburn:*  
Schweitzer, Chris – Planner, Dept of Building, Planning, and Development

**Others Present:**  
Holder, William – GIS Director, Kosciusko County  
Mitchell, Sue Ann - Special Projects Coordinator, will be Auditor, Kosciusko Co  
Richard, Daniel - Planning Director, Kosciusko County

**Meeting Minutes By:**  
Brad Stump

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### Items Discussed

1. We discussed the Kosciusko County GIS "department" structure and organization. Their department is organized somewhat along the lines that we envision in that it is to basically be a virtual GIS department when it is mature although the GIS department will do the data entry for a few of the other departments. At present it consists of a GIS Director assisted by an individual from the Auditor's office who appear to be a permanent member of the GIS team. The GIS department budget is currently within the Commissioner's budget but it will be split out separately in a year or two. The GIS Director has the same status as a department head which could aid in the resolution of disputes relating to the GIS system.
2. We asked about the problems and concerns that Kosciusko County had experienced. This was the crucial part of the meeting as we hope to avoid the pitfalls that other have experienced. After discussing these items, Chris and Brad felt that our GIS Committee had already addressed many of the problems and had discussed the remaining concerns with the other members of the Committee or with GIS vendors. The concerns that were discussed and what our GIS Committee has done to address them are as follows:
  - 2.1. Data maintenance is crucial! According to the Kosciusko County representatives this has been their biggest problem. Even during the initial startup phase there is a need for maintenance since there are changes to the tax map which occur in the time between when the map is sent to the GIS vendor and when the digital map is received from the vendor in a format that can be maintained locally. The time lag could be several months. The individual(s) responsible for the local maintenance must then work to catch up the digital map so that it is current with the existing tax maps. Members of our GIS Committee have discussed this with ASI representatives and we believe that we have the basis for a method by which we can more easily maintain the maps. We are planning on making two sets of the parcel maps which we would be sending to ASI or another vendor for conversion. After sending one set to ASI, the second set would be maintained in house in order to keep a current record of the changes. Once the digital map comes back, it should be simple to identify what changed on the parcel map in the interim.
  - 2.2. Kosciusko County's Database stores all of the information about a parcel in such a way that it is not linked to their day-to-day parcel maintenance software so it is basically "hard coded" into the GIS system. Their parcel ownership information resides in a separate database which is not linked to the GIS system. When the parcel information was originally entered into the GIS system a "snapshot" of the information as it existed at that time was dumped into the GIS system but there was no mechanism in place to maintain it. Since they did not have the manpower to maintain both their current system information and the GIS system information, the parcel owner information in the GIS system was not be maintained. This means that the parcel owner information in their GIS system is now potentially several months or more out of date and a new full system update may need to be done to make the GIS system records current before it can be used. An alternative method as suggested by both ASI and by the Kosciusko County people is to identify a property within the GIS system via a unique parcel ID (which we currently do with our Sidwell numbers) and then link the various databases together via the parcel number. This will allow the parcel attributes to be updated in whatever database is most appropriate and then, via the parcel ID link, import the necessary data into the other systems that will need it. Our committee has already discussed this as a potential problem and Bruce has suggested that we will need to determine where the parcel owner information should most efficiently reside.

One option would seem to be for the information to remain in the existing AS400 system then be linked to the GIS system as described above. Another option which does seem to have some serious potential would be for the data to reside in the GIS system and then, around March 1st at tax record time, a ownership snapshot of the data would

be dumped into the AS400 for taxation purposes similar to what is done internally in the AS400 at this time with the Change file information being moved into the Assessor file (and the Assessor file is dumped into the Tax Duplicate file). In this scenario, the GIS system might replace our existing Change file and its functions.

- 2.3. The GIS Coordinator must keep everyone current as to the status of the project and as to agreements with vendors. Effort must be made to retain the GIS Coordinator in order to maintain continuity within the project, especially during the implementation phase. A coordinator should be brought in from the start to learn the offices, their functions and their processes and the more knowledge that the coordinator gains, the better. If the offices input and maintain their own data then it will help ease the coordinator's load and allow the coordinator to focus on specific problems/projects but this will not replace the need for a coordinator.
  - 2.4. They have had problems with their main Cadastral conversion vendor which is MSE out of Indianapolis. In addition to project delays, there have been invoicing/payment conflicts because of poorly worded language in the contract. We feel that we have addressed that issue with our current contract that allows us a review period before invoices are required to be paid. During that review period, we can reject the deliverable as unsatisfactory should problems occur. Kosciusko County contracted with MSE before MSE was purchased by ASI. You may recall that it was raised as a concern during our GIS Committee meetings that we would prefer to have ASI Colorado do the work rather than ASI Indianapolis (MSE) because of previous negative comments that we had heard.
  - 2.5. They bought hardware and software very early in the process rather than buy it on a planned basis when it was needed. This resulted in an expenditure of funds far earlier than reasonably necessary. Initially they bought three specialized DEC workstations at \$17,000 each to run their system (Windows NT and UNIX capable) yet today we have equally powerful desktop PC's available for \$2,500. Additionally, the specialized expensive systems bought by Kosciusko County were unable to function as standard desktop PC's so they could not fulfill office needs for uses outside of the GIS system unlike the multiple-use PC's that we are purchasing today. With the continuing increases in computing power, we will be able to buy more powerful PC's tomorrow for the same cost of a less-powerful system today. Also, it seems like GIS software is continuing a migration to the Windows family of operating systems including the Windows 95/98 software which reduces the need for high-end workstations and makes it more available to the end user at their desktop. Because of these factors, and by implementing a plan for gradual phased procurement on an as-needed basis, we should be able to limit expenditures to those necessary and only when necessary.
  - 2.6. They did not totally have their parcel ID numbering system in place when they began their cadastral conversion process. Additionally, they did not have unique parcel ID's for each parcel of land and in some cases they had more than one ID number per parcel. We have a very mature parcel ID numbering system within the County.
  - 2.7. As of this date, several years into the process, they have yet to network their GIS data between departments or to even deploy copies to more than a limited number of departments. This may be because they are not done with the cadastral conversion or it may be because of the fact that they have done only a limited amount of GIS software training. We will need to have a good deployment plan in place and to ensure that we have adequate funds for training. Kosciusko County does not have a network connecting the offices similar to what DeKalb County now has with the AS 400 so we should have more in-house network experience through our Data Processing Department.
  - 2.8. Additionally, in a conversation with Joyce West of Sidwell held after our Kosciusko County visit, Joyce mentioned that she had met with the Kosciusko County Assessor and found that they had "rubber-sheeted" their parcel maps to the orthophotos which has generated some errors. Joyce did not know how extensive the problem was. Chris and I did not get a chance to ask Kosciusko County about this problem. Kosciusko County does not appear to have had either the opportunity or the ability to do the research that we have done. This is partially due to the fact that they got into the game at a time when there were not many GIS systems in operation in this area and information was less available. Also, they started developing their GIS system 2 - 3 years ago when the software and computer technology were not as developed as today. It is encouraging to note that many of their problems are concerns that we had already discussed as a GIS Committee and, in some cases, have already resolved.
3. Kosciusko County's research with offices in Ohio did show that once the information is deployed on a network within the Courthouse accessible to the public (public terminals) and on the Internet, it does free up staff time by reducing the number of citizen requests for average day-to-day information.
  4. They are thinking about scanning deeds and other records and tying them back to the parcels however, like us, they are only discussing the possibility.
  5. All things considered, it was a very good meeting and well worth the time spent making the trip. We feel that the meeting indicated that our Committee is on the right track and is asking the right questions.

#### **Action Items**

1. **Report meeting notes to County-City GIS Committee**

#### **Upcoming Meetings**

- May 6<sup>th</sup>@ 1:00 PM– Commissioners Court