

VERMONT CENTER FOR GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Minutes of Meeting – 8:30 AM on March 18, 2014

Executive Director David Brotzman called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The membership was represented as follows:

Richard Boes (Agency of Administration)	Present
Aaron Worthley (Private Sector – GIS Community)	Present
Peter Fellows (Regional Planning Commissions)	Present
Thomas Hurd (Agency of Transportation)	Present
VACANT (Vermont House of Representatives)	Absent
Sen. Elders French (Vermont Senate)	Absent
Jarlath O’Neill-Dunne (Higher Education – UVM Spatial Analysis Lab)	Present
Melissa Prindiville (Agency of Commerce & Community Development)	Present
Peter Telep (Agency of Natural Resources)	Present
Bruce Urie (VT Municipalities)	Present
Scott Roper (Higher Education – Castleton State)	Present
Beverly Wemple (Higher Education – University of Vermont)	Absent

Executive Director David Brotzman and Steve Sharp represented the staff. Business Manager Eve Dubois was also present.

Corrections to Minutes of Prior Meetings

Minutes from December. Beverly Wemple was not listed as a Board member, but she was absent, so she will be added to the list as absent. The amount of VCGI’s state appropriation should be \$378,700.

Melissa Prindiville made a motion to approve the minutes with these corrections. The motion was seconded by Scott Roper and was carried unanimously.

Minutes from January. Motion to accept was made by Thomas Hurd and seconded by Scott Roper. Melissa Prindiville questioned the letter referenced as attached. David Brotzman will make sure letter is attached to the copy in the board book. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

Income Statement

Project income is 87% of year-to-date budget amount. Subcontracts are down by 2 or 3%. It’s mostly due to VCGI being down on time spent on projects due to David Brotzman’s time not being spent as much on projects. Indirect labor and costs are low. Direct costs: labor/tax/benefits are high.

Balance Sheet

Total current assets \$377,000. Total liabilities \$170,000. Shows VCGI has money in the bank.

Budget

No changes recommended. VCGI is going along similar to what was projected. Project income is 87% of year-to-date budget amount. Subcontracts are down by 2 or 3%. Buy-ups brought more expenses.

HRA expense is higher. People are using the HRA.

DB asked for comments on the budget. No one had any comments.

Operational Review

Open GeoData Portal

Steve Sharp led the discussion. VCGI has had a leadership role, working in collaboration with state, municipal, regional, federal, and nonprofit partners. Have hosted a portal since the 1990s. Working with state's Enterprise GIS consortium over the past year to set up a workgroup. Plan for state to foster effective management and use of GIS information. Strategic plan key objectives listed on handout. EGC set up workgroup, which meets monthly, to address objectives. Technological changes over time—what should we do?

Strategic alignment with VCGI's strategic plan per handout. EGC represents most of large agencies in state that have interest in geodata. Also have external partners, such as USGS and VAPDA. Engaged UVM and private sector to participate in workgroup in order to meet needs of GIS community beyond state government operations. VCGI as conduit for data.

RB asked what groups are represented in workgroup. SS responded it includes agencies listed on EGC list plus more. Members choose to be as active as they wish, and all receive invitations and updates.

Workgroup has created a vision statement and competitive analysis. Came up with list of off-the-shelf products, analyzed, and chose three to test. Completed testing of Socrata and CKAN. GeoPortal Server is undergoing testing. Have requirements, know who stakeholders are. Shall we build SOW, or should we wait to harmonize with state plan to create open data portal? EGC charter gives members voting rights. Multiple choice voting. 8 members, 6 voted. 5 voted to do it now. 1 voted to wait.

EGC is partner with VCGI. EGC is saying to move now. Coming to VCGI's Board of Directors with information. Need to allocate funds, about \$30,000. Put out to pre-approved contractor list so we don't need to create RFP.

Peter Fellows questions what other states are doing and what they found. SS responded that some states had multiple portals (open data, geodata) with a common interface, but for geodata, visitors are told to "click here" and are taken to a separate interface. Data.gov, for example, (federal environment), harvests metadata from current data warehouse. Range of options. What is better for user? Arguable either way. Maybe better to have one interface. Some platforms have difficulty handling geodata.

RB—are some states using existing federal data sources? SS—one requirement is that must be able to communicate with federal.

PT—When accessing through data.gov, does it send you back to VCGI? SS—right now it sends you to VCGI's website. Intention to update so people go directly to the data they want.

JO—Do organizations on pre-approved contractor list have the skills to work with open data? SS doesn't know. VCGI personnel would work with GIS data.

RB—current data portal decade old. What are the costs of maintaining that as opposed to maintaining a new system? SS—right now we have a home-grown solution built around Cold Fusion and SQL Server along with

lots of customization. Not streamlined, labor intensive, a bit clunky. Will keep running as long as you have people who know how it works since it's very customized. PF \$30,000 for training and then take over? SS yes. TH--\$30,000 doesn't include software? SS—open source means no cost for software. CKAN is primary used by feds. CKAN is big internationally. Socrata is dominant in U.S. TH—impact on budget? DB—normally would be internally decided, but with the financial situation of VCGI in the coming year, he felt he needed to bring up to Board. Smart and good recommendation from EGC. DB cannot recommend right now. 6 months would be better time frame to make decision.

PT—Socrata pilot was already delayed. VCGI as a recognized data source. Top function needs to be addressed, also in relation to user functionality. Maybe wait 2 months would be okay.

RB—Suggested moving on to discussion of legislative action re: VCGI status

JO—state status re: open data? Can we wait and work together with state and Burlington?

RB—managing open data pilot with Socrata. Expect to evaluate in August time frame. Keep moving forward with Socrata, do something else, or abandon in November. Some efforts have already succeeded early on, but not enough to determine if cost of Socrata would be justified.

DB—legislature discussion focused on November report, mostly with appropriations. Ended with knowledge that Govopps needed to take up H516. No driver for action. Chair of appropriations said she would take up with Govopps. Govopps took it up and called DB, RB, Kate Duffy, and Tom Kennedy, and Jonathan Croft, and others. Testimony on Thursday, what VCGI does and other material discussed last year, HR process. Friday morning, discussion continued. Adjourned for lunch. Decided to bring in others: JC, Karen Horn, Dan Currier and perhaps others outside of organization to testify. DB emailed person who supports committee. H516 is hanging, committee is bound to floor, and they'll pick it up when they pick it up.

RB was sending emails to DB. Committee had instructed DB not to show up and then on Friday morning asked, "Where is he?" Discussions with administration. How do we prevent layoffs? Increase appropriation, bring into state government. Will be no increase in appropriation in governor's budget. Governor would not support, nor would others. Need to bring VCGI into state government or combine with other unit in order to reduce costs. Waiting for committee to decide, hangup is growing state government by 6 positions. They're having to increase state government in other areas and don't like doing that. Before going to floor, they polled committee—some members support (just over 50%) and 2 others said they wouldn't oppose if the committee felt it was necessary.

PF—not completely new positions because they're already funding. RB—if you add positions to state government, you never take them away. Funding is not the same as having those positions within state government.

RB—House Govopps is one of many committees this needs to get through. Approps is also reticent to add new positions to state government. Don't know if it will go through

AW—if we get through Govopps tomorrow, how likely is it to get through the rest? RB—can't predict.

RB—currently a stand-alone bill. Could get added to another bill. AW no advocate. Would be helpful to have supporters in legislature.

AW—legislature in past supportive of appropriation increase. RB—if not in governor’s budget, legislature won’t add.

RB—appropriations is dealing with \$14M deficit. Need to cut things in order to send to Senate, so not in a mood to be adding things at this point.

BU—transportation is adding positions. How is that happening? TH lost a position.

PF—if you need help from us, please let us know. RB--Tom Kennedy wrote letter supporting VCGI, he also said it should be General Fund supported rather than through property transfer tax. No one wants to change the formula of property tax credits. Adds a complication to worry about funding source. Created consternation about making General Fund bigger.

DB—back to SS proposal re: Open GeoData Portal. SS—now that you have the context and EGC’s recommendation, what message should I bring back to EGC? PF—ability/capacity among pre-approved GIS contractors? Conditional approval RFI or RFQ asking whether contractors are comfortable with work and if so, go ahead? Still need to operate as an organization. AW—Is Socrata pilot being done in-house? RB—Socrata does most of the work (paid-for service). No development effort. Loading data sets and manipulating data. AW—which way to go?

SS—each solution has pros and cons, e.g. Socrata has visualization tools, shape file can’t filter, do symbolization. Only way to add info is through Excel spreadsheet. Can’t load every data set to Excel. RB—Socrata intends to focus on improving GIS functionality over the next two years, but who knows what that means. SS confirmed same information. No release that tells what enhancements are targeted.

DB --if we were going to contract out, what would be the would contractor recommend or choose? SS—ask workgroup for recommendation. May also ask contractor for recommendation.

RB—money question. \$30,000 guess. Can it be off by order of magnitude? What are the parameters on your guess? SS—could be off by \$10K - \$15K. Depends on ranked list of requirements and how many are addressed. Can adjust to core set to make price affordable. There is a risk factor. If viewed as enterprise solution for state that’s used by other agencies, hypothetically, they could contribute. Have been doing that with Geocortex with some partners for a number of years. If VCGI provides seed, maybe we can convince key stakeholders to participate. DB—can adjust to match budget. TH—RFP/Contract cycle can take months. Suggest we go ahead—see what’s there and what the cost will be. Come back to the Board with more info.

RB—recommends RFI process rather than RFP. Makes clear we’re not committing funds yet.

PF—core thing that VCGI does. Normally you would just do this. Only going through this process because of the budget issues.

AW—layoff in October if DII merge doesn’t happen. How does \$30,000 affect that? DB--\$30,000 is a month, in favor of gathering more information and using RFI so we don’t have to pull back money. Minimal cost. AW couldn’t support \$30,000. Would like to know more about long-term plan, how much would contractor be involved in long-term or would work be brought into VCGI personnel?

PF—when will testing be complete? Would be nice to have that info for the RFI. SS—could be completed in

April. Not necessary for RFI—could put out requirements, etc. RB—be as specific as possible to nail down closer price. DB—good list of requirements already, work has been done. RB—include operational costs. AW—don't want to through it all in the lap of the contractor. EGC and VCGI should take up conversation also about how long contractor involvement continues.

SS—VCGI has had to retain a degree of in-house technical capacity in order to maintain and provide services. This should be built and deployed in state, on-going relationship with contractor for core functions. Limit to technical expertise within staff. AW—top core function. This would be a priority for staffing considerations.

DB—asked if okay to move forward. Consensus to pursue RFI. PT—important for VCGI to continue to build technical capacity. Shouldn't be all project managers. Applaud bringing in EGC for guidance. Historically and still core mission. Don't always wait for EGC. No other agencies are doing it or want to do it.

DB—discussed waiting for EGC. EGC still in early stages, and show respect for effort. EGC is advisory. VCGI still has responsibility to act independently.

DB—could do this in-house. Much prefer doing with outside consultant—more expertise and more experience. If can't afford external solution, then need to use own labor to come up with internal solution. Rather more professional approach.

JO—may find no one on the list is more qualified than VCGI. No pre-approved list—just list of contractors who have done GIS work for the state in the past. Responded to RFP and were willing to sign a contract with the state with no \$ amount with the state's specifications. Just because they're on the list, they don't necessarily have expertise.

SS—can RFI be opened up to anyone? Group—yes.

RB—list of contractors that have already agreed to terms and conditions makes things go faster than if you have to negotiate the contract. AW—how many on the list? DB—last time he looked, there were 8. Some were not traditional. RB—no validation, no approval, just are you willing to sign a state contract?

DB—Eve and DB have talked and if VCGI doesn't get absorbed into state, we will sit down and look at budget. Will come to BOD in June with solution that includes H516 or doesn't include H516.

Operational overview

p.1 discussion about parcels. Hope to be involved when and if successful.

Emergency Management.

Created VLRI—allows to populate with road closures. PF—Ivan made excellent presentation yesterday. DB thanked RPCs

E911 not using services, Ag may pick up

Using LiDAR for solar sighting. Value about \$10K

NBRC grant—19 grant applications, great considering restrictions. Priority, no maps, old data, lack of funding are priorities. 11 towns will be supported to start. Don't know actual costs yet, may add more later.

RB—what does this mean to sustainability of VCGI? DB—no impact. We get less than 3% of funds.

DB—every town is different. PF confirmed enthusiastically. DB—should move forward anyway, will be really interesting.

NTIA moving forward. Still scheduled to end 9/30. No expectation that more money will come from that effort. PF—president recommending cuts including EGCM.

Imagery—all collected this year went out in January. Buy-ups successful. Will do on any contract we can. Every once in a while we get landowners who calls but need to do at least a town or RPC.

Data initiatives. Statewide parcel data. Hoping state moves forward, very needed.

Money still on table to fund statewide LiDAR. After FEMA for months. They stopped responding.

PF—thought couldn't use money for data collection but maybe, so continuing to push.

RB—new grant opportunities, sometimes unexpected. Are there any that might help stem off the flow. DB—FirstNet (public safety broadband network). We don't have to run it and don't want to, but expertise developed through broadband effort should be applied. Nothing else that we know of.

RB—limited amount of money from FirstNet being awarded. DB tried to get in on discussion, was promised to be included but hasn't been. RB recommended Frank Costantino. DB also talked with Chris Campbell and they're wondering why VCGI not included.

DB—DPS and VTA discussing continuing effort. Has proposed VCGI be active. DPS or VTA would fund.

Closing

Next meeting is June 17. Will meet in same place, will send out same materials. PF—please send group email if something dramatic happens.

Motion to adjourn, seconded, and passed at 10:08 a.m.