

February 14, 2005

PaMAGIC Members and Friends:

Once again, I would like to thank all of you for your participation, ideas, and support for PaMAGIC over the past year. We have continued to lead and support coordination of GIS activities in the Commonwealth throughout 2004 and into 2005. The membership of PaMAGIC has enabled the organization to make great strides, and as PaMAGIC approaches its tenth anniversary, we can all expect the achievements to continue as we sustain our commitment.

GIS in the Commonwealth has continued to grow and provide challenges. These challenges have so far been met with a broad-based approach and coordinated efforts of several entities. PaMAGIC has worked with Jim Knudson, the State GIS Coordinator, and the Bureau of Geospatial Technologies to help them define and build their vision of enterprise GIS for the state and its' partners. We have also worked with the Geospatial Technology Council (GTC) at the state agency level, have continued our association with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and helped them with their GIS activities, and continued to work with the PAMAP program.

The PaMAGIC Board has focused on our three primary areas of influence: Policy, Technical, and Communications. We held a retreat shortly after the 2004 PA GIS Conference to discuss what we wanted to do, and decided upon several initiatives in these areas. These are described below.

Policy. PaMAGIC is working with the state Bureau of Geospatial Technologies to help develop a strategic plan to guide GIS communication and coordination across all levels of government. This Common Vision effort is expected to continue into 2006, and is being led by Board member Eric Jespersen of Rettew Associates. Those of you who participated in the November Town Meetings completed the first exercise of the Common Vision Strategic Plan. Additional input will be gathered at March Town Meetings, the PA GIS Conference, and future get-togethers.

The Common Vision Strategic Plan is not designed to be a strategic or implementation plan for any distinct or individual GIS programs. It is to guide how GIS agencies, departments, programs, and specialists will interact with each other across the multiple levels of government comprising and affecting Pennsylvania. There is a section of the PaMAGIC web site dedicated to providing more information about this initiative.

Technical. PaMAGIC is leading the effort to develop Version 2 of the Pennsylvania Geospatial Data Sharing Standards (PGDSS). PaMAGIC applied for and won a \$15,000 Cooperative Agreements Program grant from the USGS/FGDC, which was matched with \$15,000 from the state PAMAP Program at DCNR and the Bureau of Geospatial Technologies. These funds have so far supported the Town Meetings and compilation, publication, and distribution of PGDSS Version 1. Subject matter experts are now working with the additional layer sections. A second round of Town Meetings in March will enable the GIS public to review the first draft of Version 2.

The PGDSS has grown out of the Best Practices Handbook and the PAMAP Data Standards. The acquisition of the grant funds has enabled a focused effort to be applied to the standards so that we will be able to have a complete and final PGDSS version. The process has been long and sometimes trying. However, the results are now being used by other states as they begin to tackle the same issues that prompted PaMAGIC to go down this particular road. There is a section of the PaMAGIC web site dedicated to providing more information about this initiative.

Communications. Kathryn Reed of Allegheny County has done a wonderful job of gathering and disseminating GIS news of all types. The Board recognizes that communication out to the membership and the GIS community is vital, and we have begun to take some action steps. Kathryn has started the regular email newsletters to inform about PaMAGIC happenings, and also to serve as a forum for all types of GIS news. If you have information that should be broadcast, please provide it to Kathryn at kreed@county.allegheny.pa.us.

Our website (www.PaMAGIC.org) continues to be ably managed by the Webmaster, Blair Alegant, of the Philadelphia Water Department. We are investigating a migration of the site to the Dynamic Site Framework format that many of you are familiar with.

We will once again be sponsoring the PaMAGIC Info Swap at the PA GIS Conference in May. Look for this event at this year's new conference location; it provides a great opportunity for conference attendees to network and unwind. We will once again be contacting potential sponsors to help put on the Info Swap.

PaMAGIC Board elections will be taking place in the weeks leading up to the PA GIS Conference in May. Look for our election announcement. Think about who you'd like to see on the Board, and then nominate them for one of the open spots. Be sure to vote for the new Board members in the days leading up to the Conference, and meet the new Board at the Info Swap.

The last year has brought change on a professional front for me. I joined Advanced Technology Solutions Inc., establishing their State College office. In November of 2004, ATS competed for and was awarded the PAMAP Implementation Plan project, and I was installed as the PAMAP Implementation Manager. Even though I now have a self-interest in PAMAP, be assured that the PaMAGIC Board remains completely independent and free to comment on PAMAP as the Board and membership see fit. The Board, and PaMAGIC as a whole, have a long tradition of independent advocacy and have not been shy about sharing opinions.

I encourage each of you to renew your membership in PaMAGIC for 2005, and provide your voice to the organization. We will continue to follow the PaMAGIC mission and "lead, coordinate, and guide"; we will do this best with your input. The annual dues are still only \$25.00. Remember that multiple member discounts are available for those of you in organizations with more than one PaMAGIC member. In addition, membership and participation in organizations such as PaMAGIC provide points required for the Contributions portion of the GIS Certification Program. Finally, you get to indulge yourself at the Info Swap each year completely free of guilt!

Continue to attend the meetings, voice your opinions, and supply your energy and expertise. GIS in Pennsylvania is growing faster than ever, and we can all help it grow properly. On behalf of the PaMAGIC Board, I again thank you for your support in 2004, and ask for the same in 2005.

Thank you.



Chris Markel
President, PaMAGIC