

Comments from the Pennsylvania Mapping and Geographic Information Consortium (PaMAGIC) prepared for the informational meeting of September 11, 2006 as called by the House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee. Written by Eric Jespersen (President) and reviewed by the PaMAGIC Board of Directors.

Major points

1. The mission of PaMAGIC is "*To provide leadership, coordination, and guidance to enhance the development, use, and access to spatial information and related services in Pennsylvania*". In pursuit of that mission, **PaMAGIC has been and continues to be a proponent of a Geospatial Coordinating Council whose role is to provide a forum for joint planning and shared decision-making.** PaMAGIC has:
 - been actively involved in data standards development in the Commonwealth,
 - participated throughout the Statewide Technology and Electronic Commerce Advisory Council's deliberations in 2003-04,
 - conducted a Common Vision survey during 2004-05 to understand the Geospatial Community's interests and advice regarding a Council, and
 - met specifically in November 2005 to provide community guidance to legislative staff regarding pending Council legislation
2. The "sense of the Legislature" embodied in HR 882 of the 2004 Session encouraged the Executive to engage in strategic planning and to involve all sectors in such planning. That resolution was the result of open dialogue and concerted effort by a broad cross-section of the geospatial community. PaMAGIC encourages the House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee to revisit the ideas of HR 882 in forming a Council. The current HB 2871 does not seem to address strongly enough the idea of an "*an equitable partnership among Federal agencies, State entities, including those not under the Governor's jurisdiction, and the Commonwealth's local governments and authorities*". **Specifically, PaMAGIC recommends creating a forum for shared decision-making among the various stakeholders that create, maintain, and use data, rather than a forum for discussion that empowers or binds no one as in the bill currently under discussion.**
3. The development of a modern digital base map for the Commonwealth is raising significant questions of privacy and security. The open availability of comprehensive and standardized data about land ownership, residency, and addresses seems innocuous when considered by itself. When combined with powerful systems and tools for data mining and database comparison the financial and legal security of citizens may be jeopardized. **A Geospatial Coordinating Council should provide a forum for open discussion and shared decision-making regarding the nature and types of data that should be published in electronic formats and published via the Internet or other mechanisms.** Although the risks are not strictly limited to geospatial data the proposed legislation is a logical vehicle to address these concerns, and to do so in a manner respectful to the rights of all levels of government.

Specific comments on HB 2871, P.N. 4455

Section 6404 General powers of council

Clauses a) and b) are more like goals than powers, and should be stated in Section 6403 describing the Council

Clauses c) through g) are appropriate powers. Final legislation would necessarily include how the plans and policies enumerated in c) and d) would be enforced and upon whom they would be binding. This is also affected by the share of decision-making authority vested in the various entities represented on the Council. Strategic planning should include investigation of models encouraging private investment in data development to augment government investment.

Section 6405 Discretionary powers

Clause b) allowing contracting assumes a large enough staff to perform the contracting function. The fiscal analysis from Appropriations will be important.

Section 6408 Composition and duties of committees

Clause a) describing the State Government Committee seems to ignore the existence of the Geospatial Technology Office in the Office of Administration, and the governance structure already created for Executive Agencies. Perhaps the judicial, executive, and legislative roles should be better defined.

The various committees described in clause a), b), and c) have no specific duty or charge described, only a description of who may be members.

The Mapping and Technology Advisory Committees described in clauses d) and e) respectively have more clearly defined duties than the various government committees and seem to provide a forum for other interests to advise the Council. Additionally, the following comments apply to these two committees:

- the technical prowess of public, private, and academic entities come together here to inform the policy and decision makers of the Council,
- one of these committees should ultimately house the data sharing standards efforts currently performed by PaMAGIC,
- the labor involved in the position of Committee Chair for these two bodies will be significant and will need to be supported by the Council staff (if any).

The Management and Operations Committee powers as in clause f) are relatively weak given its makeup of the various committee chairs. A committee of about this size could be the most effective component of the Council, depending again on the nature of shared decision-making powers and the authority vested in the Council.