

## Statement By Jack Eichenbaum, Founder of GISMO

Jack Eichenbaum, a Queens resident for many decades, is the founder of GISMO, New York's geospatial information systems and mapping organization. He now serves as the Queens Borough Historian. He was unable to appear before you this evening so he asked me to deliver the following statement:

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I, Jack Eichenbaum, began using Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) about fifty years ago in my Ph.D. research in Geography.

In 1982 I began working for the NYC Dept. of Finance. This agency was embarking on the implementation of a computer assisted system to appraise real estate value for property tax assessment. In 1987, when PC GIS software became available, I introduced its use to the agency. Today, GIS is essential to the collection of billions of dollars annually in property taxes.

In 1990 I started a user group named *GISMO* (Geospatial Information Systems and Mapping Organization) to facilitate communication among practitioners in NYC agencies. Soon, we agreed to expand the group to include GIS users from State and Federal government, academia, and individuals in both the non-profit and private sectors. GISMO now has over 400 members, and in 2020 it will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We live in a society dominated by *hierarchical* organizations- in industry, government and academia. Often people working on the same problems in different organizations do not communicate with one another nor do they share their data. Yet solving our problems depends upon cross-fertilization of skills, ideas, and information. Because GIS is capable of combining data from different organizations, breaking down silos, it facilitates cooperation between organizations in ways that create enormous value.

For example: GISMO members from many different agencies and organizations volunteered in response to the 9/11 and Superstorm Sandy disasters. They proved that GIS was a powerful collaboration tool.

For the City to continue realizing the benefits of GIS, which will only increase in the future, I strongly endorse the GIS Amendment to the City Charter now being proposed by GISMO.