

RETS Workgroup Meeting Minutes

April 18 – 20, 2007

Austin, TX

Minutes prepared by:

Gina Accawi,

Alex Choi,

Paul Stusiak

Final Agenda

Wednesday, April 18th

09:00 – 16:30 RETS2 MLS Payloads Detailed Review

13:00 – 16:30 Compliance Testing

13:00 – 16:30 Plugfest

16:30 – 17:30 RETS Exhibition

17:30 – 19:00 Reception

Thursday, April 19th

08:30 – 08:45 Opening Remarks and Agenda Review

08:45 – 09:15 RETS: Development and Governance

09:15 – 11:00 RETS Issues

11:15 – 12:00 RETS2 MLS Payloads Detailed Review

11:15 – 12:00 Marketing Forum

13:00 – 14:30 RETS2 MLS Payloads Detailed Review

13:00 – 14:30 Implementation forum

14:45 – 16:15 RETS2 MLS Payloads Detailed Review

14:45 – 16:15 RETS.ORG website

16:15 - 17:15 Summaries and Day 2 Wrap-up

17:15 Adjourn

Friday, April 20th

08:30 – 08:45 Update on Governance

08:45 – 09:00 Next Meeting Location

09:00 – 10:00 Opening Remarks and Agenda Review

10:30 – 12:00 Update Workgroup



10:30 – 12:00 Compliance Workgroup

13:00 – 14:30 Security Workgroup

13:00 – 14:30 Update Workgroup

14:30 – 14:45 Wrap up

14:45 Adjourn

Minutes

Day 1 - Wednesday, April 18th, 2007

RETS2 MLS Payload Detailed Review

Paul Stusiak, Falcon Technologies

Gina Accawi, Falcon Technologies

Paul and Gina presented a refactored RETS 2.0 Payloads based on work that was started by Paula O'Brien and Jeff Brush. The refactoring work included:

- Changing the design pattern from 'Russian Doll' to 'Venetian Blind'
- Remove duplicate definitions
- Correct inconsistencies in elements and attributes
- Formalize the documentation to have reference text in the annotation-documentation element.
- Formalize the documentation to have example data in the annotation-appinfo element.
- Create an automated process to generate instance documents (XML samples) for each of the schemas with industry information.
- Apply a common naming scheme for schema names and type definitions.
- Add a UML Context Diagram which provides a artificial grouping of schema elements.

Participants were expected to have reviewed the schema and have comments and suggestions to apply to the schemas. A brief introduction explained the rationale behind the effort since the last meeting and described the extension mechanism. After the introduction, the floor was opened for discussion.

Colby Ackerman asked the question "what is the purpose of the RETS2 Standard? Is the goal to have a single standard listing? Is the goal to have a definition that encompasses all possible listings? Paul Stusiak answered the question with the statement that in a perfect world there would be an agreement of a "standard" listing. One class of application software could use this across different systems without change. A second class of application software would use the system specific information that would be extended by the MLS or system vendor as needed.

Colby asked how different systems could create their own property types and should they even be allowed to create their own property types. Paul answered that the creation of

additional property types was possible by using an existing schema and extending it. The second question was left open.

Steve Clarke stated that the enumeration of property type is one area of issue to be standardized.

Peter Spicer stated that there is a push from the brokers to have one standard of listing, bedroom and other elements. It is important to have unified representation of definition.

Steve: This would be “raise of the bar for” RETS standards when adopting a unified representation of MLS definition. If we are going to be forced to do mapping and aggregation, we should be clear in stating this.

David Harris pointed out that there are legal concerns and the MLS has their own business drivers. If the goal is to have the MLS more involved with RETS, we need to think of a way to engage them. An MLS deals with local interests in mind. If another MLS uses another vendor’s data, then perhaps the data broker may need to understand a MLS data context. Therefore, data may not be ready to use by the data broker.

Peter: The data usage rules and data structure should be separated. People who consume the data don’t know about the data structure. There may not be a strong client application development community; however, metadata-aware is not adopted though.

Sergio Del Rio made the point that the schemas are extensible as they are designed.

Paul: The base schemas should be agreed upon and extensions should be allowed. The goal is to make the base set as large and full as possible. Large means many elements, full means not just modification timestamps, but also much of the common information that may be difficult to reach agreement on.

Peter: Client writers tend not to have strong RETS knowledge; how can we make the data more readily usable for them? Whatever is done should be done with the consideration that the data is easily used.

Paul: Data aware clients are available but are not fully data independent. Some human intervention is needed to interpret the information to build the application software. They are also not well documented where the code is open source and available.

Peter: Because the technical level with these third parties is very low, there is a real cost involved in trying to help them out. There is also a lot of concern with the image that this leaves their customers with regards to the usability of the data. Perhaps the data consumers should be given a client or API to easy broker development cost.

This led into a discussion of what is available as open source. CRT resources were mentioned and a longer discussion of the MRIS client application Conduit occurred. It was noted that Conduit does not do photos and doesn’t provide any semantics, but it does

grab the data and does it fairly well. It was mentioned that the software is being revised to retrieve photos as part of Conduit.

Gregg Petch stated that Conduit was developed to give a simple tool to brokers. Certain parts of Keystone, the MRIS data entry application, have been published to RETS.org. Although information is there, brokers need to understand metadata and how to use it properly.

Mike Wurzer asked for a plan:

- What are the goals?
- What is the process?
- What are the payloads?
- How can we complete the work?
- How are changes made and suggestions accommodated?
- How can others participate?
- Who participates?
- Do we split them up? Do we split the responsibility?
- When can this be done?

Mike proposed August 2007 as a date for having this done. We as a group should be soliciting help rather than delegating to a small group.

Paul: Right now, the goal is to create a set of schema that we have agreement on name, type and structure against the schema names provided. These names are not the definitive list. As we work through this, we should be mindful that there may be other payloads identified that will lead to the creation of additional standard payloads. The process is for interested parties to review the schema and send comments by email. Additional resources have been created to help interested parties work with the schemas. An example is the PDF versions that were provided for comment to the group. It is an open issue of how do we publish it for everyone to comment.

The schemas are modified following feedback. Usually, this has several people making a common request, occasionally, this is a single comment that clarifies existing elements and types or identifies missing information. The schema are then passed to an ANT (build tool) script that generates documentation in a Javadoc style format as well as creating instance samples that are then transformed to use the annotation-appinfo example data elements. The Javadoc style uses the annotation-documentation to express the documentation.

Matthew McGuire asked if the schema were under version control. He also suggested that we could use a version control system to manage the commenting of the schema by direct modification of the schema and then submitting the changes to the VCS.

Paul: What is the process of review and commenting of documents? A document should be available for comment then someone adds a comment. Others can read it then comment it. A comment can be rejected by consensus. This suggestion may not work for

the non-technical people. It would also be difficult to understand where the schema is at any point in time.

Matthew: Since we are the maintainers we control who can change the documents. Others can contribute. RETS could take an Open Source approach in that the work is open for comments and review. RETS working group can discuss, accept, or reject comments.

Mike: As a suggestion, consider software that permitted, from the tree view that was created from the xsd using the transformation described, clicking on an element from the tree and see the comments that have been made and then make new comments in time order. Mike would like this funded and taken on as a project.

Gregg wanted to know if we can use the rets.org wiki for this? Having a Wiki like process to help the RETS community to view RETS payloads that would be beneficial. If this product doesn't exist then RETS working group should build it. While the existing Wiki may not be sufficient, it is possible that the solution is to use the infrastructure of the Wiki for the tool.

Steve wants to know how to build a server that can have a one to many mapping between residential properties.

Gregg indicated that his opinion was that this was an implementation detail.

Steve wants sample code how a client would query the standard payload and the extended payloads.

Paul suggested that a solution to the question be prepared before the August meeting and offered to help.

Shawn made the point that we don't want to make the same mistake as in 1.x. We want to ensure that if the work is put into the standard names they are used.

Matthew, Eclipse project and plugin may have tool to collaborate on RETS working group documents.

What infrastructure do we have to help everyone to contribute?

Who is the target audience to use these collaboration tools?

Almost all people raise their hands to have read and commenting on RETS payloads.

Paul asked what the reviewer found difficult with the existing resources.

Mike stated that the PDF format is not easy to record comments.

Peter Spicer asked the question if we at a point in time to now break the RETS work to break the group into smaller groups to tackle the larger RETS issues.

Gregg Petch asked if the RETS.org Wiki could be used for this.

Paul: The RETS2 work was not ready to break up in Dec 06. RETS payloads has been reworked to resolve some issues. People wanted to vote on it but the RETS2 schemas are not ready.

Mike would like the RETS2 process documented from start to finish.

Steve Clarke: RETS 1.x took a 2 pronged approach: Metadata managed and Standard names fields. The two were not mixed. Are there a minimum number of metadata fields and a practical way of RETS2 to work? How are the native systems going to map to these data.

RETS2 consistency

Steve Clarke and Shawn Meissner:

Somewhere we should define when querying for a Residential property if it accepted to return what the vendor wants? Some of the client vendors stated that they would prefer it not to be permitted, consistency is more important. Those vendors noted that Standard Names are not use consistently throughout the server vendors meaning that additional work was needed to attach to a particular system.

Moving forward, allow a 1:1 mapping; data aggregation is not mandatory.

Paul asked about the Javadoc style documentation, specifically if it was of use to anyone since it takes on the order of six hours to generate. Shawn stated that he found it useful and would like to continue having it available.

Paul noted that some of the naming conventions are not sensible. For example, using the element or complexType name of 'Type' is bad. Type is a property and a name of an attribute. Anywhere RETS uses 'Type' should be changed to rename these elements/complexType definitions.

Matthew: Flattening the name space separates the context from the business rules. This may not be useful.

Current RETS issues:

Matt: Are we trying to define a RETS query or a data model? At the query level, what is use most of the time? Optimizing it would be good. RETS 1.x returns huge dataset when a client maybe interested in 5 listings.

Paul: The current RETS2 schema definitions have bad usage, specifically, the date definitions have separate type definitions for all fields. An example is ...date="<date>" type="startDate" instead of startDate="<date>". This leads to type bloat. The group

agreed that all time and date will use a timestamps. Where the time is not known, it will be normalized to 00:00:00. The additional type definitions will be removed.

While we have been concentrating on more complex schemas and their definition, we should remember that there is a design principle to provide a lighter-weight definition of the important schemas. All the attendees agreed with this. We can define a RETS payload for full implementation and RETS light-weight without typing and with fewer elements for constrained implementations like IDX.

Robert Gottesman: There are different classes of RETS consumer. One system may not solve everyone ones needs. So having different RETS (data definition?) would be appropriate.

Frank Tadman: We have listing history defined but not office and other types of history. For the history, he does not believe that the full record is required, only the changes.

This led to a discussion of how much detail should be contained in the history. Should the history permit the recreation of the item, only provide versioning, capture the change as deltas, or be a complete snapshot? No conclusion was drawn by the group as a whole, but the general sense was that delta change was the most common among the group.

A short discussion was to permit the request to select a shallow or deep (RETS) tree at request (RETS query) time.

A discussion about ‘What is an identifier (ID) to a RETS client?’ followed. Client applications generally ask for all of the data but then each uses only a portion. The ID is general defined as a string. It is an abstract representation to identify an object. It can be a URI, IRI, URN, a unique value within a context, or a physical computer location.

Dan: They use the listing update action to return a full payload. An Office update is issued one a week, and Agents update is issued one a day. This keeps servers requests down.

Steve Clarke: felt that Compact Data format would still be useful in RETS2 and that the IDX payload is a good idea.

RETS2 Primitives

The primitives are an attempt to identify a set of fundamental types within the domain. One issue that has occurred is that it can be difficult to provide for the null-ability for data types other than string.

The solution to the issue of nullability of data types other than string has been to define it as a union of the type and the type of zero-length string.

Libor brought up the case of difference between not having the data and security rules not allowing the client to obtain the data.

Gina mentioned that the elements are optional, and that if a server does not have that data field the element should not be returned at all. If the server has the field, but it is null, the element should be returned empty. Also, business rules are better specified using some other mechanism, like a business rules document that may take the form of a Schematron.

Shawn expressed concern that unless it was made perfectly clear how to handle each situation, servers may implement differently.

RETS Compliance

Paul Stusiak, Gina Accawi: RETS defined standard is a contract. RETS2 will allow extending. Question was asked whether elements could be removed in the schema definition and would that be compliant? The answer is that no subset is allowed. This would affect interoperability. Extending RETS schemas is allowed. Restricting would break the contract.

Paul Stusiak: At this point, compliance does not rely on anything other than the System schemas.

Two questions were raised: Wouldn't it make sense for there to be a master document and it is up to implementation to define what the slimmed down set is? And also, what will be the benchmark for compliance? Must all the payloads be supported? A subset?

In order to address the need for a thin, or slimmed down version of the data, either the IDX payload or the ListingSummary would fulfill that role. Also, that the IDX payloads would be identical no matter which server was being hit against. The concern was expressed that there are a lot of differences even between the simple IDX payloads.

Paul stressed the point that if there are schemas that have too much in them, or if there are some that are specifically not needed it would be better to trim them or eliminate them if they are not useful.

As for compliance, all that is required at this point are the System ones.

The question was raised on levels of compliance. The discussion ensued regarding how vendor level compliance is not as helpful as actual server level compliance which has been discussed many times.

Who understands the mapping the RETS Vendor or the MLS? This has been an aged old issue. It is a huge undertaking for the RETS servers. The RETS client not sure or is removed from the business side. The MLS knows its business terms and definitions.

Paul reviewed the core concept of the standard payloads which are provided for consistency across MLSs and the custom payloads are encouraged for specialization. The custom payloads provide a way to create special broker reports, or other regional or MLS specific documents.

Steve Clarke made comments on how field selection with the compact data would fill the role of the custom payload but would be client chosen rather than server driven. In fact, this being available will discourage the use of custom payloads and in a way makes the custom payloads unneeded or unused. So then, why not make field selection easier so the vendors don't have to create custom payloads? There may be too many possible permutations on the payloads to ever cover them properly with customization. Field selection gives complete flexibility.

It was then discussed how the idea is to provide as much as possible within the core, that should then minimize how much needs to be in a custom schema.

Steve Clarke pointed out that someone has to do the mapping. Would that mapping be done by the server vendor for each and every account? Would the mapping be done by each MLS themselves?

Shawn Meissner asked the age-old question - So, is the work done on the client side or server side? Either way, it is not a trivial exercise. Perhaps the servers will say the client should do it and vice versa.

Paul pointed out that there is some pressure coming from the MLS side to provide standardization on the representation of the data. This pressure is coming from business reasons - data that is standard has value.

Paul then stated that if a baseline or starting point is never clearly defined which can be given to MLS, there will never be any mapping done. If there is a definition provided to the industry, those who know the data best can provide correction and guidance. Without it, there is no starting point.

Steve Clarke: Nailing a schema is one issue. Defining a field and what it contains is another issue. It would be preferable to go to the halfway of what fields there are, and not go to what the meaning is or to enumerate possible values.

Paul: Without some data, how can we place it in front of someone to evaluate? Those values provide context and value for the purpose of mapping.

Sergio Del Rio: Defining a term is a MLS mapping issue. We can always find a way to extend a list.

Steve Clarke: If we don't make it easier, all that will happen is field selection and compact format which is what is being used in RETS 1.

Sergio: Perhaps it was because the fields in standard names were a fraction of what people want. This payload effort is covering a whole lot more of what people want. People will then be more inclined to use it.

Mike W: A RETS standard is important otherwise there are current efforts to do this outside of RETS. If RETS community doesn't step up and be a part of it, there is a real risk of becoming irrelevant.

Colby: This does need to be done. Who, what when where how needs to be defined.

Steve I: We do need a RETS standard and take it back to the business.

Matthew: Too much information can be overwhelming. We need to be mindful of what we take to them for review. Perhaps the focus should be on defining the names and meanings of the fields, forgoing what the types are and enumerations are at this time. Not saying we don't do it, but that we do it in stages.

Gregg Petch: This data mapping issue was caused by MLS not the vendors. Now the operators are trying to help the RETS work group to define a standard. This work is driven from the businesses that want consolidation. The marching orders are coming from the customers to get it fixed.

Paul: This group is should take this back to the RETS work group and discuss with the business people to iron out issues. There is a lot of interest in this, if RETS community can give them a starting point we will be more likely to succeed.

The session was recessed for lunch and resumed after lunch.

Paul: Within the definition of XML Schema, enumeration cannot be changed on the fly. This includes extensions. Paul clarified this: it is a restriction of XML Schema.

Matt: Validating email and phone numbers. Use REGEX to validate within XML schema. This can force a validation method. It may be better leave the data validation to outside of RETS. We don't really care if an email address is valid or not. Further, we don't want to exclude MLS who may have invalid data. We should loosen restrictions.

Michael Wurzer: In South America, the phone exchange number has increased from 3 to 4 digits. The same is true in Europe, the telephone number sizes have increase.

Chris McKeever: Is validation intended on upload, download, or both?

Paul Stusiak: It would be good on upload, but could be also done on download. XML can be validated or not validated, there is always a choice. It wouldn't be necessarily done all the time, but hopefully it will always be done by the MLS vendor on input.

A brief discussion ensued regarding cases where data was being stored that was legitimate phone numbers, but would not automatically fit into the fields for the phone number without mapping. And, that the data without making changes to fit into the structure would be invalid as XML. But, if type information is not included in the XSD, we would have chosen deliberately to abandon the largest benefit of going with XSD – type information. Additionally, there may be ramifications in toolkits if we do not define types in the XSD.

Steve Clarke: So, if a phone number allowed a suffix string of ex123 that would need to be defined in an extension to the standard fields? So, there may be some 600 fields in an extension. Then, gradually as the MLS starts to conform then those fields would move to the standard payload and be dropped from the extensions? If a data vendor has data that doesn't conform to the RETS payload format then the RETS format should allow them to slowly change over.

Paul S. There are benefits to improving data quality. Better data typing provides more value for the data itself. Does the group think strong data typing is valuable? This takes time and effort to create, is there enough need to drive doing this work?

Matt: less strict, better to have data that is malformed than error at the transport level.

Greg P: Bringing good data integrity. This is the way it should be. If we don't move this way, we aren't setting the right example. If you want to play, you need to improve your data.

Michael W: This RETS wg can lead the MLS to improved data. A lot of people are crying out for that, and we can help them get there.

Frank Tadman: There is a conflict. You would like to define the data types as tightly as you can, but there is a lot of historical data that nobody wants to throw away. There's historic information that MLS want to keep and may not conform to RETS. How to represent it? Can we flag this old data? Is this possible in schema?

Ed: How far do we want to take the specificity of the data? Where does the effort end? And, the answer is that there was a focus on going as far as makes sense for fields that would be most likely to search on, and not so much on others. For example, a phone number would be useful for searching but it is unlikely that anyone would want to search on the extension. And, there was some interest in keeping things flexible enough for Canadian or other international markets would not be completely excluded. A part of the point is to discuss in this meeting whether we have gone far enough or gone too far?

Frank: If we are after internationalization, there may be some non-ASCII characters that cause problems or are problematic. There may be regex that includes those characters, such as accented.

Matt: Allowing validated and invalidated data to exist in the RETS payloads. This allows the MLS industry to migrate their malformed data over.

Paul: The way that XML tools work, the entire document is validated, it does not attempt validating at a child element level or within a XML document.

Matt: Having some data that does not fit the model does not invalidate the entire payload. An example would be a phone number for a given region always has extensions, and this is known.

Paul: As a standard, having a given element be invalid means the entire payload is questionable. It may be that it is desired to validate on an element level, but in reality the entire document is validated or not. The process of validation is not done at an element level.

Matt: MS XML parser will crash if a document is not valid. It will stop parsing with an error. This is a problem of handling when validating the document that has malformed data.

Gina: The parser will not do that unless you are validating the document in the first place.

A discussion was then had regarding inclusion of an attribute flag (indicating invalid or legacy data) and when it would be required: all elements, only those with regex, any of the elements with type definitions more specific than the builtins, etc.

Steve Clarke: In order to maximize the effectiveness of the payloads, loosen the validation of legacy data for a starting point or create OR definitions that allow either good OR legacy data. This way, MLS can map their fields to begin and then get cleaned out over time. Examples:

```
<phonenumber>555-555-5555 don't call after 10pm</phonenumber>  
<phonenumber>(555)-(555)-5555 </phonenumber>
```

are both valid in our current databases. The information is still valid and shouldn't be lost.

Ed: We share data with an aggregator who started rejecting because of a zip code change in MN. Also, they started rejecting records because there were no bedrooms or bathrooms for some lake cabins, which are legitimate but unusual. The system cannot restrict those out of existence.

Paul: Aren't those business rules?

Ed: Yes, one of those was a time conflict of when they updated their zip code information, and the other was a conflict in business rules.

Paul: Those were both business rules. We are not talking about adding that level of data constraints or about restricting a value for a number of bedrooms can't be zero or negative number. Can you have a negative number for bathrooms? This is a business rule.

Ed: We have to watch about going too far in data types, such as to non-negative integer. This also could include things like the flooring type example, wood bamboo discussed earlier where we want to allow passing a value outside of the enumerated list.

Paul: Historical data may have enumeration of values that don't match the modern RETS2 standard.

Mark: Why validate the data? Paul: some vendor do like to but not mandatory. It's great for apps that want to transform the data after validation.

Colby: Vanity Phone numbers. Can the RETS payload handle it?

Paul: The way the XSD are currently defined, we do not handle it. We could do something to handle it though if really needed, since the vanity strings do actually map to a phone number. We'll make a note of it.

Matt: One way to handle this would be to allow XML schema to support transitional and strict conforming types.

Paul: It may be confusing. What is conforming and what is not. It would be preferable to aim for where we want to be, since those documents tend to live out there for a long time. We wouldn't want there to be RETS 2 transitional documents in five years from now.

Gina: A validating parser should not crash if a document is invalid, it should only stop parsing if it is not well-formed. It will throw validation constraint exceptions, but the code calling should handle those and continue processing. Validation failures are not fatal errors.

Chris Mc: Field validation is good in general, but perhaps we need to get there at the end.

RETS2 can be validating if you want to by running a XML field validation. Otherwise don't run a XML field validation.

Steve C: Does this have implications for compliance?

Paul: Not at this time.

Sergio: Is there a way to validate the structure and not the content from a validation point of view?

Gina: Well-formed is a completely different matter, and very rudimentary level not what we're after.

Brief discussion on whether we are checking for well-formed documents in compliance checking at this time, and we are not explicitly doing so.

Michael W: These issues won't be resolved in a day. An outline of a plan can help.

The group agreed to discuss a RETS outline to progress to the next steps.

There has already been work to bring the schemas to a level of consistency of quality ready for group input. Moving forward, help is needed in certain areas.

Work completed:

1. Smaller payloads, grouping like with like.
2. Bundling them under same namespace.
3. Globally defining reusable complex types, but not all types are global.

There is more help needed, assuming no issues found with the refactoring work that has already occurred. This help extends to:

- Semantic information needs to be added to the schemas annotations elements.
- More people need to attend the monthly meeting - first Wednesday of each month.
- Wikipedia product for the RETS working group to publish and collaborate.

RETS Schema Goals:

Michael Wurzer: Set a goal like a date for a vote, and then work backwards. What are the pieces to be done? Schedule, end date, project, resources, assign tasks and people.

August 2007 is a suggested deadline. Matt thought tat this is too soon.

RETS-ikipedia:

Steve Clarke: A place where the community and MLS can go to see the schemas, the work in progress and comment on it should be the goal. Then we can do the legwork to get the MLSs to participate.

Michael W: Javadoc like, with a tree. User can click on items in the tree and have some options for commenting on it. They don't have to look at XML or buy a tool like Oxygen They can see it in a browser, and drill down into the data and they can type in a box when ready to make a note. Then, people can see the comments, reply to them, engage, web 2.0 you know.

Paul: Requirements for the RETSikipedia would be great to have as an immediate short term goal.

RETS Wikipedia specifications. What is it? How is it used? Simple or complex collaboration tool?

Gregg Petch: A simple solution not a complex. Conference calls should be moderated, with close date for comments. Old revisions should be available, comments are there and history can be traced.

Bug tracking software provides similar functionality we are after. What is needed is like a wiki and a blog, whereas a wiki allows editing of the content directly blogs are a mechanism for others to comment on content written by someone.

In general, the idea is that MLS understands the data more than we do. We need to open it up to them to gain from their knowledge and engage them in the process.

Paul: We could be missing items and the stakeholders' needs to be brought in.

Steve C: We need a way for people to suggest additional field values to enumerations, such as a floor type. This way we define how the standard will evolve or develop over time.

Paul: We need to know how elements came to be added or removed from the schema. A history of what was done, by whom and why is necessary. But, having a document to start from is critical to begin the dialog.

Sergio: Can we go a step further and give the MLS a tool for mapping their data to the standard? We could all benefit from that.

Peter Spicer: There should be a group to discuss and moderate changes and aggregation of schemas.

Paul: This feeds back into governance. Where the architectural board, or data review board should be brought forward to handle this very real need. Maybe we should continue the work on the schemas, the RETSipedia, conference calls to bring together people and the group as a whole to continue concentrating on this work.

Michael W: We can't expect all MLS will be involved. But the better the information is available then more comments can occur. If everyone has had an opportunity to participate, the standard is not a mandate.

Paul: Data Board (Group).

We need to create a one or two page document to describe the collaboration tool by next week (April 27, 2007). Then agree on it.

Gregg: Have this tool in place by mid-year NAR in May? Or at least have a working model.

Shawn M: Is a smaller working group for Payloads needed to just focus on this? A smaller group may be able to accomplish more, and stay focused on only the payloads.

Steve C: Having a database of MLS' table structures would be valuable to help the group understand what to define in RETS2 payloads. But this would require MLS to allow exporting their data for this purpose.

Paul: A tool like Contivo could do this, and a schema could be described from the repository. All this information in one place could be very valuable.

The group agreed that the requirements should be posted to the RETS-dev email list. The requirements should include storage requirements. Data anonymity will be addressed.

Meeting will be held on May 1st, 2007 10am PDT/1pm EDT for one hour.

Hold a meeting at the NAR mid-year May 17, 2007 9:00 – 12:00. Gregg Petch offered MRIS' boardroom in case. MRIS HQ is 20 minutes away from the NAR convention.

Peter Spicer: There's an expectation in California that RETS2 will be finalized by June/July 07 then rolling out RETS2 products in 1st quarter 2008. There will be a lot of people looking to RETS.

Paul: Also, let's schedule a meeting for middle June. Let's target Agents, Offices, Media and parts of RETSCommons for completion by August. We should be able to vote on some of these payloads, simpler payloads, to get the momentum going.

We may not complete most of RETS2 payload by August but maybe further ahead.

Peter Williams: We need buy-in from more MLSs for these payloads. We need NAR leaning on people to participate.

Paul: We have a lot of participation at this meeting. We are getting a lot more traction.

Mike W: If this community doesn't do this, those processes that these groups are working on will continue anyway, RETS will be excluded if this is not pursued now. There is an opportunity, a window that will close if we do not pursue this now.

Peter S: The California Association of Realtors is considering creating their own of standard, so absolutely this is a concern.

Peter W: RETS has already helped in California by consolidating a couple of MLS. Pure RETS did what it was supposed to do, consolidation happened at the RETS level. They are migrating to RETS in one form or other.

Data board and architectural review

Paul: There should be three to five people better to have a conference call to do more leg work before the larger conference call. The smaller group can bring to the larger group condensed information.

Volunteer members

Shawn Meissner

Peter Spicer

Gregg Petch

Michael Wurzer

Rick Herrera of Move volunteered West Lake Village June 19 and 20 (T, W)

Paul asked the group if they had any issues with this not representing the group or community as a whole.

Gregg Petch agrees to hold a meeting at their offices

Peter Spicer stated that he has no concerns and applaud the groups effort to unify and solve RETS issues.

Paul: This group needs to define a process, and an appeals process. Also, transparency is important.

Gina: The people who would best job on the technical are not necessarily the same people to define the process.

Peter Spicer: Put the team together and see what process is needed later.

Frank: The progress will be greater if we have an agenda, and strictly adhere to it without getting sidetracked.

Paul: With the RETSipedia tool, this could provide a natural way to do that by going through the comments in a reverse chronological order.

Peter W: Definition of an escalation process cannot be overlooked. This group should reach out to the non-NAR affiliates to get their feedback.

Matt: Reference tools for RETS2.

Future Meetings:

- Thursday, May 17th, 2007. Rockville, MD during the NAR mid-year
- Tuesday and Wednesday of June 18 – 19, 2007 at Move Westlake Village.

Compliance Testing

Paula O'Brien, Ronin Technologies

DynaConnect obtained compliance certification for a combination server for RETS 1.5 and RETS 1.7.

Plugfest

Paula O'Brien

DynaConnect and Mathew McGuire of MarketLinx used the Marketlinx client to connect to the DynaConnect server successfully.

RETS Showcase

Mark Scheel, Siegent, Inc.

Mark once again served as host.

Three applications were demonstrated. Frank Tadman was voted most interesting with a data mapping tool.

Mark Scheel presented a very amusing application that involved bicycle parts and large capacitors. He did not win, although he got the largest laughs.

Day 2 - Thursday, April 19, 2007

Opening Remarks

Paul Stusiak

Announced the meetings scheduled between now and mid year for further MLS payload work.

Conference Bridge May 1

Mid Year at MRIS meeting Offices May 17 9:00 – 12:00

Gregg Petch will arrange bus

Move Offices June 19, 20 Westlake Village

Repeated the compliance results from yesterday, and the Plugfest

Reviewed the winner of the RETS Showcase, Frank Tadman's data mapping tool

An agenda change was proposed. The discussion on payload yesterday was useful but needs more time. The Transaction payload discussion will be deferred or combined with the continuation of the MLS payload discussion.

General Session

Real Estate Transaction Standard: Development and Governance

John Bigelow, SOA Software

John presented an assessment of RETS from a business focus. John has been involved with standards organizations such as OASIS and WS-I.

A summary of the general points are:

- Processes and procedures must be clearly defined and followed.
- Involvement assists in adoption of what you are working towards as group.
- The process must be transparent. OASIS is a good example of transparency. You can what each participant is offering what the group has done, next steps, and issues.

A series of telephone interviews were performed across the industry. While there were conflicting messages given, there were several common issues. A general comment was that RETS 1.x is on its way on becoming of a standard but not ready.

Some specific comments were

- Efficiency: A true standard has more must that may.
- Metadata can be slimmed down.,
- It could have 4 to 6 months to implement the standards. That is costly to most MLS companies.
- Standards: The 1.7 standard needs to work well, then you can have industry adoption. Getting 2.0 finished is like putting the cart (2.0) before the horse (1.x). The industry wants to have 1.x working well first. RETS2 can go on but 1.x needs to be working well to help drive the standards and adoption forward.

John made some specific recommendations.

- Concentrate on 1.x standard. Revise the business requirements. Fulfill the technical requirements of ease of implementation.
- Set reasonable timelines for work groups.
- Increase RETS memberships to include more professionals.
- Committees and work groups should be present at all segments.
- Suggestion to rename 1.x to change the perception.

John opened the floor to questions:

Q: Given the limited resources would the recommendation change based on RETS is a volunteer group?

A: Yes, if RETS membership increases like OASIS then it can succeed. RETS was to make MLS data easy to access.

Q: If we focus on 1.x then what should the RETS 2.x focus be?

A: Depends, if the 1.x is easier to update but it depends what the group wants to do.

A more general discussion occurred.

Mike W: We could rename 1.x as 2.0 and claim a lot of work has been done, and when.

Paul S: We do have an issue between what we are doing and the business accomplishments.

Steve Veba: Listings is a piece of MLS data and the industry wanted to carry more than that. There are vendors that have release products that do that (carry more payloads). Should the MLS leave the RETS standards to implement functionality.

John made the statement that there is a low industry adoption. Most of the audience disagreed with that statement. The question was raised how the survey was done and who was contacted. John stated that 20 different people had been contacted. He did not offer any names.

The discussion changed topic to discuss adoption. Dan Woolley made the observation that some of his MLS data providers do not use RETS to deliver IDX information. They are not comfortable enough to use RETS fully. Mark Lesswing suggested that there be a work group to study the adoption. Mike Bentson of the Spokane MLS offered up reasons why they don't provide RETS. There are issues with security violation. In their environment, there is a concern about the impact on server resources. He further made the observation that FTP feeds have low system resources requirements, and they have filter controls that limits the fields provided.

David Harris continued the discussion by observing that at his MLS, there is only two people to train other MLS staffs to understand RETS oriented system. In his case, it was simpler to set up a FTP feed to minimize time and support cost.

Rob Larson of IRMLS stated that they mandated RETS. They do not support FTP. They have had no serious backlash. RETS client adoption does take months. He wants to see 2.0 more forward now.

Chris McKeever made the observation that there is a group of people who are IDX type clients and they don't need a complex solution. Rob Larson agreed and said that the solution was to give brokers and agent a less technical RETS client to ease adoption. This will help with the fact that RETS standards is not followed to the letter. Jeff Brush noted that there are a lot of code and tools for the clients-side. He doesn't understand why people aren't using the existing tools.

Steve Verba asked about the fit of the names with Compliance. John Biglow thought that it was a good idea to set up a work group of three or four people and set a deadline then more forward. Gregg Petch stated that such a solution wouldn't work since you need to build a consensus.

Peter Spicer: I read the OASIS policies and there may be something to learn there. The real question is does the broker like it and can they build an implementation? The answer to that is open. Or is RETS providing the tools and information that the community can use a better question.

A member made the observation that there are toolkits available. More of the RETS issues lean toward compliance. Clients need to code around these issues. This what a client developer runs into.

Kristen Carr noted that at her MLS, they are developing toolkits for the users and not encountering issues. It's not the toolkit that causes the problem, but it is the RETS data format that is hard to understand and minimal documents are available.

Kevin McQueen made the observation that we're talking about things in the past. RETS was started by vendors to exchange data. We need to set up our governance. Current meetings don't accomplish as much as they could. We need our governance in place.

RETS Issues

Mark Lesswing, CTO and Senior Vice President, National Association of REALTORS®

Mark has been reaching out to brokers and vendors to talk about issues around RETS and to understand what their concerns and needs are.

One important thing that the group needs is a road map to tell people where RETS is going.

He suggested that we consider that it might be necessary to continue the existing standard with a 1.8 or a 1.9. Based on his feedback, this might include:

- Dropping some metadata
- Add update changes
- Turn some MAY requirements to MUST requirements

Brokers are interested in getting new customers. These changes may be a hook to encourage participation and adoption. Regardless of any further work on RETS1, we need executive level buy in as an intermediate step to RETS2.

On the topic of organization governance, Mark proposed forming a group of four or five people to put together what we need and then to both vote on the governance proposals and hold an election in August.

Mark opened the floor for questions and comments. The general consensus is that governance is the most important issue.

Several proposals resulted from the discussion.

Motion:

“A committee of four or five people to be appointed by Mark Lesswing be struck to put together a proposal for the governance process to be presented for voting by the attendees of the next RETS meeting in August.”

Moved: Mike Wurzer, FBS

Second: Ryan Bonham

Amendment to the Motion:

“Amend the motion to increase the number of participants to six.”

Moved: Mathew McGuire

Second: Gregg Petch, MRIS

Amendment to the Amendment:

“Amend the amendment to allow the number of participants to be set at Mark Lesswing’s discretion.”

Moved: Kevin McQueen

Second: Kirk Piegols

Discussion was held on the amendment to the amendment.

Voting, by show of hands:

For: Unanimous

Against: None

Amendment to the amendment carries

The amendment to the motion now reads:

“Amend the motion to allow the number of participants to be set at Mark Lesswing’s discretion.”

Discussion was held on the amendment to the motion

Voting, by show of hands:

For: Unanimous

Against: None

Amendment to the motion carries

The motion now reads:

““A committee of five or more people to be appointed by Mark Lesswing be struck to put together a proposal for the governance process to be presented for voting by the attendees of the next RETS meeting in August.”

Discussion was held on the amendment to the motion

Voting, by show of hands:

For: Unanimous

Against: None

The motion carries.

Motion:

“The governance committee of the previous motion be dissolved at the August meeting.”

Moved: Steve Clarke

Second: Sergio Del Rio

Discussion was held on the amendment to the motion

Voting, by show of hands:

For: Unanimous

Against: None

The motion carries.

Mark Lesswing thanked the group for the power to set the committee. He stated that appointees need not accept the duty entailed by the appointment and it would not reflect poorly on anyone who had to decline the appointment. Mark appointed the following individuals to the committee:

- Mike Wurzer, FBS Datasystems
- Matt McGuire, Marketlinx
- Gregg Petch, MRIS

- Ryan Bonham, Transparent Technologies
- Peter Spicer, REIL

All accepted.

Mark Lesswing added himself to the governance group. He will announce additions to the group as soon as possible.

Mark would like to see us break the serialization of the standard. He envisions a family of standards. He feels very strongly that we need to increase adoption and build broker recognition of RETS.

For the summer meeting, he will be setting up tools to webcast portions of the meeting. Sessions may include a segment on RETS tools, maybe the "Best of" for brokers to see a produced show to see what RETS can do. Other sessions that should be webcast are the presentation on the new governance and the opening and wrapup sessions. These sessions have broad appeal and can be very tight and scripted.

He sees NAR support regional gateways. He will be putting financial backing into this to encourage regional adoption.

He would like to have the governance group meet during this RETS meeting perhaps during lunch.

Paul Stusiak suggested including someone from the transaction vendors in the group.

MLS Payloads

Paul Stusiak, Falcon Technologies

Reviewed resources available on the ftc2 site.

1. Object diagram
2. Javadocs for xsd
3. Refactored transactions.xsd overview.
4. Reviewed purpose for rework.

The present Transaction Management System vendors were asked to comment on any impact the rework may have on existing projects. The response was that they will go back to their staff and return with more information.

Issues:

1. Does the definition of Id need to be expanded to accommodate URI?
2. Nullability.
3. Ranges / integer.
4. Specificity of validation rules? Should we be stricter or looser? New vs. legacy.

Paul suggested an instance document level attribute saying "don't validate" to resolve the concerns of bad data. Libor disagreed, and suggested that clients written against xsd will break if data is bad. He suggested that an xsd extension should be done to indicate that the data is different.

Can we represent a range and an integer?

```
<beds>3</beds>
```

```
<beds><min>3</min><max>4</max></beds>
```

This cannot be done with a union in XML Schema.

Sergio asked how can someone query against extension elements.

Colby: Do we maybe have a legacy payload and a new data payload?

The session was recessed for Lunch.

Afternoon Payloads

The session resumed and Mike Wurzer asked if the group had resolved whether we can extend enumerations. The answer was provided by Gina and it was that we can't extend enums. Paul made the observation that this pushes us to ensure we are as complete as possible with the content. As well, we have the element data values of other and unknown.

Steve Clarke: Perhaps we need a loose and a tight version. One without types/enums the other with.

Ed Newman: Could it be that the enums are actually local or specific to MLS.

Paul: How can we split the enums out?

Shawn Meissner would like the use of the practice of having the word 'present' as a general attribute rather than hasGarage. His company will send a list of elements that should have this common attribute.

A member pointed out that the 'new home' case is not covered as well as it needs to be. This means the fields as well as the semantics of what means "New Home". "Model Home", "Under Construction" means a lot of things.

The group agreed that State can be required as well as City in the address.

The group agreed that the standard should allow multiple addresses.

Libor has suggested that perhaps we should be programmatically determining what fields are missing from the standard, we should solve the problem of what this needs to be by using software solutions to do it.

Steve had previously suggested a database with the metadata for everyone involved in order to best aggregate what is needed.

Sergio had several question: Do the enums need to be secure strings? How is the `isgSecurityClass` to be used?

Paul answered the question: Fields that need to be secured use this attribute value to indicate that.

Paul: asked if we need KML or anything new or additional to cover geographic data?

Steve Clarke: There is additional data for geo coding, manual flag the consumer gathered the information, quality, source.

The group agreed that more schema extension examples are necessary and the question of how to handle the enums must be addressed.

Edward Price: Asked if there may be a need for internal schemas in the future.

RETS Marketing Forum

Mark Lesswing

Agenda:

1. Review how we got here.
2. What is wrong now?
3. How to spread the word about RETS.
4. How to help the more technical staff to come into the RETS community.
5. How to involve the brokers and MLS to adopt RETS.
6. New business

Review

The group was addressed by Steve Verba, Mark Lesswing and Kevin McQueen:

- Road map was developed and documented.
- Identified different use cases.
- Annual surveys have been done to measure adoption.

What is wrong now?

The tools and libraries are not easy to use. The end user wants easy to use software.

How to spread the word about RETS

Kevin made the suggestion that attending vendor and user group meetings is a good vehicle to spread the word. Kevin has been attending these and promotes RETS. One important consideration is that the RETS message needs to be more clear.

Participate in MLS Advisory meetings. There's a belief that RETS is too technical.

How to help the more technical staff to come into the RETS community

We need to show how easy it is to convert IDX servers to RETS. Something to showcase RETS client to agents. We need to remember to not focus on the technology.

Who are the target groups for marketing? Identify them and their objectives.

ROI may be a good angle for RETS adopt. Using collaboration and communication tools through a web cast might also help to attract people.

Mike Bentson: We have heard of RETS. There has been no document updated since 2005. The RETS website is too technical. An interactive demo will help people to understand.

A simple thing would be to change the 'Recommended IDX Policy' to adopt RETS. Michael Wurzer experiences a contractual item to supply a FTP feed because there is no transport specified in the NAR IDX Policy document.;

Kurt Piegols suggested a unified support system. Vendors don't talk to the MLS. Gregg Petch stated that MLS are afraid of supporting RETS. What about a NAR RETS support structure?

We need a standard client that conforms to the standard. Then it would be easy for agents to use RETS and determine which end is correct or compliance.

Steve V: There are many clients but none have been successful that can interoperate with all RETS servers.

Rick Herrera: We at Realtor.com have a RETS client that has a staff working on it. But every time a new MLS comes aboard our staff has to be change for each MLS customize RETS server. RETS Standardization is not complete, client need to be customized. This issue is still outstanding.

We could equate RETS to Courier providers. RETS gives you the data, how you open it is up to you. RETS is a just a transport.

Mike Bentson: The group seems to spending a lot of time on 1.x and 2.0 system and specification. Some MLS are waiting for major changes. MLS are too familiar with the too-frequent revision upgrade cycle.

We might want to consider defining and naming RETS version by roles to help clarify what each RETS version is intended to do.

Brokers saying they needs RETS 2.0 but why is there a perception for needing a RETS version. This appears to be a common topic. It seems that RETS 2.0 will have a standard payload and update feature. This is the most important feature for brokers. Brokers may be interested in RETS because it provides data format standardization.

It is suggest that the major brokers should be represented here.

There are more MLS at this meeting if we expand attendance to non technical people. Currently there are not many tracks for them.

Large MLS and brokers don't represent the NAR. Medium MLS and brokers are better representation of NAR.

The question was raised 'why not fix up 1.x to improve adoption?' The response was that the RETS Update Transaction implementation may be more political than technical. This can be mandated by policy. There's a fear that Update would take away centralized control from MLS.

From a broker point of view, they just want the data. Waiting four to six months for a change to vendor software is long time frame. RETS2 is viewed as the way to solve their issues.

As a community, we need to continue promotion of the value that RETS brings. Mark Lesswing had done a presentation in March 2007 that was well done.

Kevin McQueen has a marketing initiative document and can forward it. Please contact him.

An election was held to provide a chair for the Marketing group. Greg Larson and Steve Verba expressed interest in being the chair.

Motion: The marketing group will have co-chairs.

Moved: Kristen Carr, Regional MLS

Second: not recorded

Discussion

Not recorded.

Voting by show of hands:

For: 11

Against: 13

The motion fails.

Election of the chair

The two candidates presented their positions.

A vote by show of hands was performed. Greg Larson received the majority of the votes and was appointed chair of the group with a term to August 2007.

Kevin McQueen will forward a list of attendees to Greg Larson.

RETS Implementation Forum

Chris McKeever, CRT

RETS Implementation Forum had larger attendance compared to the last meeting. This meeting was lead by Chris McKeever from CRT. The discussion format was open.

Chris noted that there is no formal agenda.

The attendance is broken down as:

- Implementers: 10
- Vendors: 4
- Users: 8

Success stories:

- The group heard about using RETS as a syndication technology and aggregating from 3 sources then publish it for a vendor's client.

The forum welcomed newcomers.

One of the newcomers is TrendNet who is getting starting on RETS and wants to use RETS this year. They are starting to learn RETS. At this time they are trying to think about the choices to buy a RETS system, how to prepare a proposal, how to partner with a vendor. Like many other business getting start in RETS, they feel that there is not enough RETS information, not focused to RETS newcomers, information available is not well-structured, and tutorial on how to get started and setup a RETS system.

The following questions and comments were raised in this forum:

- What and where are the available tools
- Who is RETS compliance
- RETS client should issue efficient queries
- RETS servers should be more efficient

- Certify both RETS server and client
- Can NAR define minimum expected performance, Service Level Agreements, and/or system requirements
- Why does RETS have different interpretation to different people
- How does RETS address brokers wanting data replication
- How does RETS address users wanting to download all in one query
- The RETS website is not obvious to non-technical people
- RETS vendors or MLS should report if their products supports RETS standard as defined or not.
- Brokers and Agents trying to get setup in RETS turn to their MLS for solutions and answers.
- It was suggested that CRT and NAR should be involved with defining the RETS specifications and reference implementation.
- Does RETS require more business direction or continue as-is
- Should RETS 2.x have an explanation on how to migrate 1.x RETS usage to 2.x
- There's a perception that RETS 1.x is not active. NAR community who are not using RETS are waiting for RETS 2.0 is complete.
- RETS is confusing and needs to be de-mystified.
- Explain how the RETS server and client interact.
- How to support RETS for brokers, MLS, agents and so-on.
- Some CEOs do not understand what RETS solves.
- We need brokers to be present to explain use-cases better.
- MLS has the option of implementing and/or enabling RETS Update transaction but don't. Some brokers would like this feature enabled.
- We need a story for the Brokers. There are tensions between the MLS and broker.
- Brokers want to compete and would want to develop their own RETS system.
- But brokers don't want to be in the MLS business arena.
- Establish RETS training sessions.
- MLS don't know what RETS vendors offer.
- MLS and vendors are on the supply side and are holding up the migrations.

RETS.org Web Site

Chris McKeever

Chris started with some comments on the rets.info website: We couldn't support two websites. The solution was to combine the two and present it in the current site which will have links to explain what is RETS. The RETS website is an entry-point for developers. Other people will use the same site.

Once a broker understands what is RETS then to read the website in detail must require a developer mind set.

Chris is still looking for feedback on the website.

Some feedback already received:

- Establish a forum.
- Wiki doesn't get used.
- Wiki doesn't give any updates.
- Perhaps RSS feed to distribute changes.

We don't to receive emails that don't issue out of office notices.

Publishing Tools

A discussion around publishing and collaboration asked the question of how to publish and collaborate on documents. The answer offered was to use the MySQL website as a model.

The discussion led to a question of what are we looking for in RETS.org website? The group agreed that there were several groups: a broker audience and a developer audience. They would be looking for the following information:

Broker

- What is RETS
- Benefits per usage (role type).
- How to get started
- Link to vendor list. RETS Compliant vendor list.
- The Vendor list can contain the following information:
 - brief information
 - RETS version compliance, optional.
 - link to a RETS vendor's support list.

The group provided a definition of a vendor: It can be anyone including contractors, companies, service providers, consultants.

Changes to the website and any proposals should be shared with the RETS marketing group before action.

The Broker will include MLS staff and other business roles for now. An important point is to keep the Broker side business oriented and simple. A useful addition would be an example use case to illustrate RETS between each roles?

Developers

Wiki article to get going from how to prepare then the steps to get a listing from RETS.

Need to explain at a high-level: architectural, client-server interaction, and server component, list of requirements.

There are no books, resources, or training for developers.

CRT to bring over to RETS.org. Keith needs to be consulted. Can it show the high-level offering.

Maybe CRT can be reference as a vendor-like.

Mike Brentson: Disassociate from CRT because it hard to understand and work with. The products reference code base from other website that could change. This is a developer packaging issue.

RETS Support

- mailing list.
- No to working group mailing list.
- But have rets-users, rets-dev mailing group.

Community

- RETS-pedia
 - Present the high-level developer documents for broker consumption. This would be a link on the broker site.
- CRT resource.
- Basic information.

Matt McGuire has volunteered to document

Mike Brentson has volunteered to review write up for RETS.org.

Friday, April 20, 2007

Update on Governance

Mark Lesswing

The Governance committee met yesterday. At that meeting, the scope of the Governance committee has been scaled down. The group will not make technical decisions.

The group will review the structure of other reference groups like MISMO, W3C, RESO, OASIS and others. The previously submitted proposal for reorganization will also be reviewed.

Paul Stusiak cautioned the committee that the RETS group is attended by small number of companies with limited resources. The policies should reflect this fact and care should be taken to ensure that the organization is not too process oriented.

Future Meeting Locations

Paul Stusiak

The group discussed committing to meeting dates further out than the next trimester meeting. The following locations were suggested: San Diego, Palm Beach, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Scottsdale, Phoenix, San Francisco, St. Petersburg and Miami.

The meeting locations for the next two August meetings will be Chicago to take advantage of the NAR offices that will reduce the cost of the meetings.

This was unanimously adopted.

The group initially voted to go to St. Petersburg, FL for the December meeting. Several Florida residents were absent for the vote and felt that this would not be a good location because it is not particularly pleasant. The group then voted to go to Miami. Given that this is peak season; either or both may be too expensive. At the chair's discretion, the December meeting location will be deferred until the August meeting. Rough pricing for these locations will be obtained before this meeting to inform the group. The dates were fixed and those will not change.

The group also voted to go to Philadelphia for the April 2008 meeting.

The following meetings have been set:

August 8 – 10, 2007, Chicago, IL



December 5 – 7, 2007, Location TBD
April 2 – 4, 2008, Philadelphia, PA
August 6 – 8, 2008, Chicago, IL

Opening Remarks and Agenda Review

Paul Stusiak

At the last meeting, Paul Stusiak made the statement that current the effort targets the RETS2 specification suite. Based on feedback from the session yesterday, the group consensus appears to want to address some of the issues in RETS1. In particular, in 2004 at the New Orleans meeting, Sergio Del Rio had a large proposal for a RETS 1.8 Update feature.

To accomplish this, we need volunteers to look at Update and to review the existing RETS 1.7 specification and present change proposals to resolve any inconsistencies and issues.

Motion: A committee be formed to review the Update Transaction Proposals for possible inclusion in either or both of RETS1 and RETS2 and to provide recommendations and supporting proposals to the group for the August meeting by Thursday July 5, 2007.

Moved: Sergio Del Rio

Second: Gregg Petch

Discussion: None

Voting, by show of hands

For Unanimous

Against None

The motion passes.

Paul Stusiak called for volunteers to the committee. The following people volunteered:

- Sergio Del Rio, Templates for Business
- David Harris, FMLS

The group entered into a discussion of other possible areas of concern in RETS1. There is an impression that RETS 1 has deficiencies but there has been no technical review performed. Mark Lesswing stated that CRT has resources that could help with such work.

The discussion concluded that a technical review of RETS 1.7 would be a good thing. Comments were made that the specification has too many MAY clauses that could be changed to MUST clauses that would lead to resolving differences between RETS 1.x server implementations.

Paul Stusiak asked for review volunteers with the charter to review the document and provide recommendations on which RETS features need additional descriptive text, to

enumerate which MAY clauses should be changed to MUST clauses and to identify areas of the specification that are ambiguous.

Frank Tadman made the observation that there should be a clean up of the RETS 1 specification before adding any enhancements.

An observation was made that since there are existing implementations, the possibility of using addendums to the specification like OASIS would be a good way to attempt to resolve some types of concerns. These addenda could be in an errata document to clarify issues and ambiguities.

A further observation was made that some companies cannot afford to have two types of RETS sever, a 1.7 and a RETS2 server. We should be selling RETS and not dividing the community over which RETS is better.

A comment was made that RETS is broken. This comment was met with widespread disagreement. Several counter-points were made; people are using RETS successfully right now, the issues may simply be a perception issue and that improving the communications around RETS may be sufficient.

The comment led to a new discussion about the compliance process. The compliance process has been difficult. Testing the RETS client is one issue. Another compliance testing the server is a different issue.

A RETS client should test against other RETS server. Then if there is a problem then the client can raise this issue about the specs. This could be described as a self-reporting model. Assuming that a universal compliance tool will solve the problems around compliance is a poor assumption. Any universal compliance tool will be a difficult challenge. Comments were made that when a RETS vendor passes the compliance tool, that is one thing, but the real test will against a MLS RETS system which may raise compatibility issues due to data or interface. People like to raise issues from the production implementation rather than the test implementations.

People may perceive RETS is broken because a client goes against a RETS server and it works but connecting to others it doesn't. We as a group cannot do site audits but maybe help MLS to offer it.

Mark Lesswing made the statement that performing site audits on MLS systems are not within the agenda of NAR.

We need to control the communication better. We can perform a technical review – this is a reasonable part of a standards body. We should not announce that we are “fixing” RETS for many of the reasons discussed above.

The observation was made that the RETS community needs to revive the compliance group to address compliance issue immediately.

The discussion turned to formalizing the discussion. Several members began proposing motions to form a committee to perform a technical review. There were some proposals to nominate various people as chair of the committee.

Paul Stusiak stepped aside as meeting chair, passing the meeting chair to Gina Accawi. He made the statement that this should not be a popularity contest with names attached to committee and chair. The group should propose the formation of the group with a charter and then allow the group to form its own chair to report to the group as a whole. Paul resumed the chair, taking it back from Gina.

The meeting recessed for 20 minutes at 10:15 AM.

Motion: A committee be formed to review and submit a report of inconsistency and clarification in the RETS 1.7 document at the next meeting in August.

Moved: Jeff Brush, Ronin Technologies

Second: Gregg Petch.

Discussion

Frank Tadman. The wording of this motion shuts the door on new material. He would like the motion to allow an open change proposal to be reviewed by the group as a whole.

Paul Stusiak: His interpretation of the motion doesn't exclude proposals but it does require the group to write a report.

Stuart Schussler: He feels that the charter is too limited. Does this work use to feed changes into 1.5 and 1.7?

The comment was made that to open the door to 1.5 and 1.7 may be too much effort. There may be two tracks 1.x Next Doc and 1.8.

Amendment: The motion is amended to add that July 5, 2007 is the due date for the report of the committee.

Moved: Jeff Brush

Second: Gregg Petch

Discussion

No discussion

Vote on the Amendment, by show of hands

For Unanimous

Against None

The motion is amended.

Vote on the Motion, by show of hands

For Unanimous

Against None

The amended motion passes.

Paul Stusiak made a call for volunteers for the committee. The following people volunteered:

- Ryan Bonham - Transparent Technologies
- Sergio Del Rio – Templates for Business
- Jason Freed – FBS Datasystems
- Stuart Schuessler – Clarity Security
- Frank Tadman - REIL
- Andrew Tilman - CRT
- Libor Viktorin - Marketlinx

Following the creation of the review committee, another motion was placed on the floor.

Motion A committee be formed to define a series of non-technical sessions to create a RETS non-technical meeting track for the August RETS meeting.

Moved Kristen Carr, Regional MLS

Second: Ryan Bonham, Transparent Technologies.

Discussion

A short discussion occurred that focused on the needs of new attendees, particularly those from MLS staff who need more context to participate fully in RETS meetings.

Vote, by show of hands

For Unanimous

Against None

The motion passes.

Paul Stusiak called for volunteers to this committee. The following people volunteered:

- Kristen Carr, Regional MLS
- Kirk Piegols, Austin Board of REALTORS/ACTRIS.

Additional members of the committee will be recruited.

Kristen Carr gave a report on the RETS-in-a-box effort.

At the last meeting in December, Kristen ask for a couple of paragraphs on the benefits of RETS from ten attendees for RETS in a box information. This was good, but she could use more examples. She requested attendees to share their stories with her.

A discussion occurred around how RETS is used. This discussion pointed out that there is no information about how RETS is being used in the field. Information that may be

useful to help determine the direction of RETS like the data format requested, what are the queries requested and other statistical information. To work, we need MLS systems to provide this data.

Motion: A committee be formed to create a statistical distribution report of RETS usage and to solicit the raw data to create the report which is due July 5, 2007.

Moved Jeff Brush,

Second David Harris, FMLS.

Discussion

The group as a whole thought this was a good idea.

Vote, by show of hands

For Unanimous

Against None

The motion passes.

Paul Stusiak called for volunteers to serve on this committee. The following people volunteered:

- Jeff Brush,
- David Harris.

Compliance Workgroup

Paula O'Brien

Motion The group requests that Mark Lesswing approach the NAR policy committee with the suggestion that RETS site compliance be included as policy and to describe the benefits to the membership of such a policy.

Moved Ryan Bonham

Second Paula O'Brien

Discussion

Not recorded

Vote

Not recorded

The motion passes.

Update Workgroup Session

Sergio Del Rio, Templates for Business

There is a general consensus to strengthen update transaction as part of the standards instead of as an addendum. Sergio Del Rio has proposed an update change. At the last meeting, David Harris presented an Update client that has implemented the proposed transaction standard by Sergio. This means that there are two production systems using the methods described in the April 2004 Change Proposals.

The observation was made that some vendors have chosen not to implement the Update Transaction. Another observation is that the Update specification is more complete in RETS 2.0 than in RETS 1.0 and has used some of the concepts from the April 2004 proposals.

The group as a whole has provided a charter for the work group to review the Update Transaction as it stands today and propose changes for RETS1 and RETS2.

Sergio proposes an Update Transaction Review Charter to do this work:

- Review RETS specification version 1.5 and 1.7 and what is currently in use today and at what is in use today.
- Prepare a formalized RETS Change Proposal Document to improve the defined RETS Update Transaction that will work with RETS version 1.next and 2.0.
- The RETS Change Proposal must give a clear migration point for the next RETS revision point.
- Compare and document the implementation between 1.5 and 1.7
- Come up with a document for a change proposal based on the existing body of work.
- The change proposal is due July 5, 2007 for presentation by August 2007 RETS meeting.
- Membership is open.

A formal proposal was made by reading out the above charter.

Motion:

To form a committee to perform a review of the Update Transaction as described in the minutes of the May 20, 2007 meeting held in Austin, Texas under the title of 'RETS Update Transaction Review Charter:'

Moved Sergio Del Rio

Second David Harris

Discussion

A discussion of the motion was waved.

Vote (by show of hand)

For Unanimous

Against None

The motion carries.

The volunteer committee was extended by asking for additional volunteers. The following people volunteered to participate in the committee:

- Sergio Del Rio
- David Harris
- Jeff Brush
- Libor Viktorin

Review of the Sergio Update proposal is 60 pages long. The group agreed that it would not be good to perform a detailed review at this meeting. Instead, Sergio will describe the major elements of the proposal.

The Update Transaction Proposal requires display metadata.

Stuart stated that adding display metadata is not recommended.

Sergio noted that display metadata is a hint and not a requirement for a RETS client to display information as suggested in the hint.

Libor suggested that the group should wait for the group to address this as part of their mandate before deciding what else is needed. We won't be able to decide here. Stuart felt that the group would like to see the high-level points of Update.

April 2004 Update Transaction Proposal

Sergio presented the major points of the 2004 proposals and took questions about it in an open session.

Locale is the same as county to allow switching of pick lists, renaming fields, hiding fields for a given area. A suggestion was made to rename it to something else since Locale is something that has a specific meaning already – the formatting style used for numbers and dates. The group agreed that Regionalization was a good name.

Clients start by locating a record using the ForUpdate Search RETS Transaction parameter. Error code can inform when a record a lock. This allows pessimistic locking. The ForUpdate flag attribute is needed to inform the server that the record is going to be updated and that a lock should be applied to the data row. One of the audience noted that Server vendors may want to allow optimistic locking. Then this attribute can be dropped in that case.

A discussion occurred around the topic of locking. One of the concerns voiced was what about people locking all the records? The argument was made that the RETS 1.x doesn't

have role based security. Thus, this is a sever side implementation and feature. There's a fear that clients would lock records and freeze the database and application.

The group broke for lunch. During lunch, the committee met and elected a chair. The committee elected Sergio Del Rio as the chair.

When the meeting resumed, the group noted that it wasn't clear how the interaction between the steps occurs. Sergio will create a sequence diagram to explain the Update Transaction interaction to cover optimistic and pessimistic locking of data rows.

Change in increasing selected field sizes:

```
warning-response::=field:warning-num=user-response  
field::=1*32ALPHANUM  
waning-num::= 1*16DIGIT  
user-response::
```

The group agreed that a needed addition is to include ID as a unique identifier.

Additional changes were identified during discussion:

- Add MiminumLength extension
- Add well-know update name.

Metadata Update Type: New Attributes: AutopopRequired for auto-populated for pre-filling of data. Data will be returned. Hidden attribute: field will be hidden but it is updated.

Other elements discussed:

- DisplayOrder
- OverrideOnInsert
- OverrideOnUpdate
- Validation Expression
- ConditionalValue -
- Message
- Valudation Expression Types
- Validation Expression
- RestrictFields

Some of these items should be moved to a separate proposal.

Wrap up

Paul Stusiak

The next meeting is in Chicago. Future meeting dates are:

RETS Workgroup – April 2007 Trimester meeting

August 8 – 10, 2007, Chicago, IL
December 5 – 7, 2007, Location TBD
April 2 – 4, 2008, Philadelphia, PA
August 6 – 8, 2008, Chicago, IL

The meeting was adjourned.