# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, May 28, 2020 – 6:00 P.M. Northeast Service Cooperative Building

**Call to Order:**

President Medure called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Richard Aldrich (Supt Assn); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Stu Lehman (City of Buhl); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); Gail Baribeau (ISD 706-Virginia); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk)

Absent: ISD 2711-Mesabi East; Supts Assn – 1 member; City of Chisholm; City of Grand Rapids; City of Hibbing; City of Ely; Great Scott Township; City of Mt. Iron

Also Present: Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant; Costin Group-Jeff Anderson

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

President Medure requested the addition of two items to the agenda: A letter to Governor Walz regarding the CARES Act and the Directors Report.

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Fisher to approve the additions to the agenda, as requested. Motion carried

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by Pittman and supported by Berrini to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held April 23, 2020. Motion carried.

**Appearance:**

None

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi provided a highlight of the activities for the month of May, as follows:

* There have been a lot of broadband activities, including the Iron Range Broadband Community Project, speed test and county projects. Itasca and Koochiching Counties have signed up for speed tests. Things are progressing well with St. Louis County, with over 6200 tests completed. He is trying to get something going in the Crane Lake/Kabetogema areas. A demonstration on the broadband map will hopefully be done with the RAMS board in the future.
* Regarding the legislative session, he has been following up with our lobbyists. The legislators did not have any success on providing funding through the Federal Cares Act. A good meeting was held with the Iron Range mayors and a letter was sent to Governor Walz and the leadership in the House and Senate, but no response has been received.

**Old Business:**

1. Membership Update

Director Giorgi noted Biwabik Township, Crane Lake Township and the Minnesota Building & Trades Labor Council joined RAMS. Membership dues have not been received from the Crosby Ironton School District and he will follow up on that. Potential members include DSGW Architects and Carlton County.

1. School Trust Fund Letter

Director Giorgi recommending waiting to publish information on the School Trust Fund in the MSBA newsletter until the pandemic slows down.

**New Business:**

a. Legislative report

Jeff Anderson, Costin Group, provided a legislative update. Governor Walz is scheduled to extend peacetime emergency powers until June 12. It appears a special session will be called to discuss the bonding bill, tax bill and education. In the meantime, the legislature has been meeting. There is a tentative agreement in the House and Senate on a $1.3 billion bonding bill. The Energy Committee will be reviewing a proposal with the rural development funds.

1. Range Mayors Letter – RAMS Board letter?

Director Giorgi stated the Iron Range Mayors sent a solid message to Governor Walz to initiate an equitable process to distribute funds through the Cares Act to the local governments to assist with financial pressure during the Covid 19 pandemic. He expressed his disappointment in receiving zero response to the letter. The Range Mayors will be holding a conference call with Governor Walz next and will hopefully address this issue. Director Giorgi will ask the Mayors if RAMS Board members can listen in on the conversation.

1. Broadband update – speed tests.

Director Giorgi stated the speed testing continues to grow and will cover Northeastern Minnesota. Fiber is being installed in the ground in Cherry Township. Ron Pittman stated there have been some repercussions due to the Covid virus and the contractors and vendors. The environmental review was also delayed. He hopes that fiber will be installed to businesses and residences this Fall. Director Giorgi stated the Iron Range Community Group has hired a consultant and held multiple Zoom meetings. A survey has been prepared and will go out next week to current broadband users, with surveys due back on July 4th. The survey included twenty questions to obtain knowledge and interest of current users on broadband. Using the survey results, a feasibility study and cost analysis will be prepared for broadband expansion. The Federal government has designated $1.5 billion for an economic development broadband grant program. Director Giorgi has been looking at all possibilities to access this fund. The RAMS website includes a link to broadband and includes a lot of good data from the broadband speed test. Locations can be easily identified that would qualify for the block grant funds.

1. Letter to Governor Walz from RAMS Board regarding Cares Act Funding.

Moved by Fisher and supported by Kalmi to approve sending a letter to Governor Walz from the RAMS Board requesting distribution of funds from the Cares Act to assist local governments with financial assistance due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Motion carried.

**Board Member Updates:**

Rich Aldrich, Superintendent, Hibbing Schools, provided an update on collaboration discussions with Chisholm, Floodwood, Nashwauk/Keewatin and Hibbing School Districts. The schools districts are working on collaborations efforts to improve opportunities for students and operate more efficiently. Conversations in the past did not work, and they are starting at a grass roots level and obtaining public opinion from residents and businesses. Over 1,300 responses have been received through a Google survey that went out in all four communities. The survey included the following questions:

* What school district do you reside?
* Do they have children that attend school?
* Do you support school districts pursuing opportunities to collaborate? (over 80% said yes.)
* What areas would they consider looking at to collaborate? (37% said in all areas. 4.8% don’t want any collaboration.)

The next step will be to inform the four School Boards, who overwhelmingly support these discussions. They have been working with the IRRRB and Steve Giorgi on an RFP. The RAMS mailing address will be used for the RFP’s. They hope to hire a consultant that would take the discussions to the next level.

Director Giorgi stated these are exciting conversation and he looks forward to next level of participation, when more in depth conversations can be held with the communities to see what can be done with the four school districts. Superintendent Aldrich stated St. Louis County Schools have also been involved in the discussions since the beginning.

John Champa was absent from the meeting and his report on the City of Chisholm downtown business re-opening will be added to the June meeting.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Charlie Baribeau reported on the Finance Committee meeting held on May 28, 2020, and reviewed the following reports:

1. Expenditures (April 23-May 27, 2020), totaling $13, 221.56.
2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual.
3. Balance Sheet.

Moved by Fisher and supported by Zins to approve the financial reports. Motion carried.

**Other:**

Barb Kalmi discussed Director Giorgi’s interest in running for the Mt. Iron Mayor position and questioned if there is anything in the RAMS Bylaws that would prevent him from doing that. It was the consensus of the board that, if Director Giorgi decides to run for the position and is elected, the RAMS By-Laws Committee would review the by-laws and determine if anything would need to be changed.

**Next Meeting:**

The next RAMS Finance Committee will be held in person at 5:30 PM on Thursday, June 25th,  as the 2019 Audit will be presented. The RAMS Board will meet at 6:00 PM on June 25th and be held as a Zoom meeting.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.