

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 27, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

President Charlie Baribeau called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Roll Call of Board:

- Present: **Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids);** Richard Aldrich (Supt Assn); **Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt);** Bob Berrini (Morse Township); **Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township);** Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman, City of Hibbing; Angela Campbell (City of Ely); Orlyn Kringstad (City of Tower); **Stu Lehman (City of Buhl); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk);** Dr. Noel Schmidt (ISD 2909-Rock Ridge); **Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township);** Stacey Sundquist (ISD 2909-Rock Ridge); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)
- Absent: City of Chisholm; City of Silver Bay; Great Scott Township
- Also Present: **Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Costin Group-Jeff Anderson; Representative Dave Lislegard; Lois Roskoski, RAMS Adm Assistant; Mandy Huusko**
(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

Moved by Medure and supported by Anderson to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Lehman to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held April 22, 2021. Motion carried.

Appearances:

Jeff Anderson, Costin Group, Inc., provided a legislative update.

May 17th is the date the legislature is mandated to adjourn. There are a lot of politics at play, including the Governor’s emergency powers. Leaders needed more time to get things done, but some global budget agreements were reached. Deadlines were set for smaller working groups to meet goals and this Friday is the first deadline relating to budget bills. Special sessions are common and the legislature is looking at beginning the special session on June 14th, which coincides with extending the Governor’s emergency powers. The legislature must come to an agreement on thirteen omnibus bills.

The House position was to increase taxes on the wealthiest people, which was not supported by the Senate. With additional revenue coming from the Federal government, Republicans felt it should not be part of the budget and do not support a tax increase of any kind. There is also disagreement on education funding.

Regarding the LCCMR funding, the Legislative Citizens Committee recommended funding \$15 million in projects for Northeastern Minnesota from 2020/2021 cycle. These projects have been held up by the Senate in both years, due to clean car emissions. Senate Republicans have asked for a two year moratorium on the implementation of the projects, so funds can be released. If these projects are not passed, those funds will go away and entities would have to reapply.

Traditionally, odd years are not bonding years. There were hopes for a smaller bonding bill to help fund DNR projects, so they wouldn’t have to compete next year. The House wanted a larger capital investment bill, but the Senate has yet to have any formal proposal. A supermajority is required to pass a bonding bill. June 18th is the deadline to submit bonding applications. The form is available on the MMB website.

The Governor will have control over the \$2.8 billion that is available from the Federal government through the American Rescue Plan. It appears the schools would be allowed to utilize some of those funds.

Regarding LCCMR, funding would go away as of July 1st. Director Giorgi noted that RAMS sent a letter to Conference Chairs to avoid any further delays on the LCCMR funds.

Jeff Anderson stated the State government will shut down as of June 30th, if a State budget is not approved.

Representative Dave Lislegard was present to provide a recap of the legislative session. Representative Lislegard predicts the special session will last three days. If the Governor's emergency powers are extended, Minnesota will receive funding from the Federal government. Everything is in negotiations at the current time and budget targets have been provided. Minnesota is the only State with a divided government and Representative Lislegard noted it is important that we have balance. Regarding police reform, Representative Lislegard stated 25 legislators in the metro area are living in a turmoil world, with one murder occurring every week in their area. He feels the rhetoric is ripping everyone apart and that we need compromise or everyone will lose. He noted that 68 percent of all money generated in Minnesota comes from the seven county metro area and the Iron Range would pay very little when it comes to rebuilding the metro.

Representative Lislegard feels Covid will change the way we do business for the rest of our lives. Many people are working from home in the metro and their fear is that businesses will move out in the next 3 to 5 years to eliminate overhead costs. Our challenge is to work together to figure out how to get to the other side of this pandemic.

Regarding the RAMS organization, Representative Lislegard stated it means a lot to him. RAMS was floundering six years ago before Director Giorgi came on board. Steve Giorgi has gained respect across the State and built this organization to what it is now. His efforts cannot be understated. Representative Lislegard stated the RAMS Director position is not a part time job and pleaded with the RAMS Board to set their expectations high when it comes to hiring the next Executive Director.

Director's Report:

Director Giorgi highlighted his activities during the month of May:

- Attended the St. Louis County Board meeting held in Morse Township on April 27th. A presentation was given on the broadband projects in St. Louis County. Seventy percent of the county does not have good service. St. Louis County Commissioners were implored to take ten percent of the \$57 million in American Rescue Funds and earmark for broadband grant funds.
- Biweekly meetings are being hosted by GEO Partners, who began doing speed tests St. Louis County. They are now doing testing in eight other states.
- A meeting of the Iron Range Mayors was held on May 26th. It was reported that all communities have applied for CDS (Congressional Directed Spending) funds.
- A groundbreaking ceremony was held in Ely today for their school renovation project. Ely passed a \$12 million referendum to support their school district.

Old Business:

a. Latest investment update - (.3% for 15 months – Companion Account).

Director Giorgi stated the investment that matured on May 4, 2021, was reinvested at the Boundary Waters Bank of Ely in a Companion Savings/CD Account for 15 months at 0.3 percent.

New Business:

a. Letter from Steve Giorgi submitting resignation as Executive Director effective June 30, 2021.

Director Giorgi stated his final day has changed to July 2, 2021.

Moved by Lehman and supported by C. Worshek to formally accept the resignation from Steve Giorgi as Executive Director. Motion carried.

Pat Medure provided an update on the hiring process.

- The five member Hiring Committee met today at 4:30 P.M. and decided to utilize the same process that was used in the past to hire the new Director.
- Ad placed in newspaper on May 7th.

- Letters of interest and resumes were due on May 21st and were distributed to the Hiring Committee.
 - Five applications were received and four applicants will be interviewed: Lisa Perkovich, Ida Rukavina, Elizabeth Olivanti, Ben DeNucci.
 - Interviews will be held at 4:00 P.M. on June 14th. This will be a Special Meeting of the RAMS Board. All board members will vote by ballot following the interviews. The Hiring Committee will ask the questions of the applicants during the interviews. Board members will be allowed to participate in person or through ZOOM and required to vote following the interviews.
 - Interview questions were put together by the Hiring Committee. A questionnaire will also be sent to the four applicants. All the information will be forwarded to the entire RAMS Board.
 - 30 minutes will be allowed for each candidate, with five minutes for the candidate to ask questions.
- Pat Medure stated the past three Directors did not need health insurance and this could be a negotiated item for the new Director. President Baribeau stated the next investment that matures will be moved into the general checking account, in case it is needed.

Moved by Fisher and supported by Lehman to accept the process for hiring the Executive Director, as noted above, with interviews set for June 14, 2021, beginning at 4:00 P.M. Motion carried.

b. Letter from Lois Roskoski submitting resignation as Administrative Assistant, effective June 30, 2021. Moved by Kalmi and supported by Pittman to accept the resignation from Lois Roskoski as Administrative Assistant. Motion carried.

President Baribeau stated they will hold off on hiring for this position until the new Executive Director is hired.

c. Letter to EPA on Impaired Water List.

Director Giorgi reviewed the letter drafted to the Environmental Protection Agency expressing concern over their decision to circumvent Minnesota's regulatory process by adding 30 sulfate impaired waters to the Minnesota Clean Water Act. If these 30 bodies stay on the list, the MPCA will be forced to implement the standards and user rates would quadruple. He urged communities to modify the letter and send to the EPA by the June 30th deadline. A letter has been sent to the Mesabi Tribune regarding the issue and asking people to click on the link and send in a card. Wild rice standards have not been discussed at the legislature for two years. We need to compromise on this issue, or mining companies will be forced to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to meet a standards that is not supported by science.

Moved by Medure and supported by Fisher to approve sending a letter to the US Environmental Protection Agency objecting to mandating small rural communities to treat their wastewaters discharges down to the existing standard of 10 mg/L. and objecting to the inclusion of the 30 new bodies of water to the MPCA's impaired water list. Motion carried.

d. Governor's Task Force on Broadband.

Director Giorgi found out that his appointment to the Governor's Task Force on Broadband is not tied to RAMS. He plans to serve out the remainder of this year on the Task Force.

Moved by Fisher and supported by Lehman to reimburse Steve Giorgi for his expenses on the Governor's Task Force on Broadband through the remainder of 2021. Motion carried.

e. Annual RAMS Audit.

Director Giorgi stated the RAMS audit will be presented to the RAMS Finance Committee at 5:00 PM on Thursday, June 24, 2021.

Board Member Updates:

Warren Stolp provided an update on Nashwauk Township. The new playground, which was funded through fundraising, has been ordered and will be installed on June 8 or 9. They are also hoping to install a sand volleyball court at the pavilion. They will be hiring a new clerk, as the current clerk wants to resign.

Stu Lehman provided an update on the City of Buhl. They are working on a \$3 million USDA grant. Buhl received \$1.4 million in bond funds last year for new water and sewer infrastructure. Their whole City is dug up and the project should be completed by October, including new curb and gutter. The former school building was sold and is being utilized for training police dogs.

Finance Committee Report:

- A. Barb Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held May 27, 2021:
1. Expenditures for the period April 22-May 26, 2021, in the total amount of \$15,428.06.
 2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual. (36.3 percent of budget has been spent.)
 3. Balance Sheet -\$394,038.05

Moved by McLaughlin and supported by Saari to approve the financial reports. Motion carried.

Other:

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Lehman to hold a retirement party for Steve Giorgi and Lois Roskoski. Motion carried.

Orlyn Krigstad, Mayor of Tower, stated Tower continues to face challenges, but have some nice development projects in the works.

Next Meeting:

A special meeting of the RAMS Board will be held at 4:00 P.M. on June 14, 2021, to interview candidates. No regular meeting will be held in June.

Director Giorgi thanked the RAMS Board for their support and stated it was a pleasure working for RAMS. He found the position to be a great opportunity, as well as a challenge. He also thanked Lois Roskoski for her work as the Administrative Assistant.

Board members expressed their appreciation to both Director Giorgi and Administrative Assistant Roskoski.

Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M.