

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 28, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

President Cyndi Worshek called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Roll Call of Board:

Present: **Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); ; Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Bob Berrini (Morse Township);** Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay); Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman (City of Hibbing); Norma Jean Jofs (City of Aurora); Stuart Lehman (City of Buhl); **Philip Medure (Great Scott Township);** Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); **Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk);** Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); **Stacey Scholz (ISD 2909 Rock Ridge);** David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)

Absent: ISD 318-Grand Rapids; ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn; McDavitt Township; City of Ely; City of Calumet; ISD 2909 Rock Ridge (Supt Assn); City of Chisholm

Also Present: **Ida Rukavina, Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Adm Assistant; Julie Lucas (French Township Supervisor);** Jeff Anderson; **Gordon Ramsay; Ron DeGrio**
(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Zins and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Scholz to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held March 24, 2022. Motion carried.

Appearances:

The Board was joined by Jessica Johnson, Community Outreach for Talon Metals. The Tamarack Nickel Project is in Aitkin County and is the only current, high grade nickel project in the US. There is one operating high-grade nickel mine in the US, in Michigan, which is set to close in 2025. The main goal of the project is to provide a domestic source of nickel for US made electric vehicles.

In three years, Talon Metals has expanded from 6 employees (including management) to 83, with 65 of those on site. These employees represent the drilling team, geologists, safety and field operations, business administration, environmental geophysics, engineering, and community engagement.

Since exploration drilling has started, over \$8M has been spent on state mineral leases and over \$9M has been spent on local goods and services within a 30-mile radius of the project.

She spoke of environmental protections and studies, health and safety, the exploration process, and the community engagement. The Tesla contract was also discussed, which requires production by 2026.

The Board was also joined by Arik Forsman from MN Power. He asked to Board for a letter of support for the integrated resource plan, with the deadline for comment being April 29, 2022. The plan is to keep the Boswell Plant in Cohasset open until 2035. The proposal retires Boswell 3 off coal in 2030 and retire Boswell 4 off coal in 2035. MN Power feels they need this time for grid reliability and to give communities time to plan for the transition.

Director's Report:

Director Rukavina highlighted her activities for the month of April 2022.

1. Busy hosting broadband meetings in local townships with IRRRB and St Louis County. (Lavelle Township joined RAMS after Rukavina reached out about broadband! City of Orr is also a new member!) The meetings have been going very well and she also testified at the Capitol. Rep Ecklund sponsored our bill increasing the broadband cap to 75% match and from \$5M to \$10M. The House has only approved \$25M for the border to border, the Senate is looking at more.
2. Rukavina testified at the Capitol for the Highway 169 improvements.
3. Rukavina attended the Governor's State of the State and made some good connections.
4. Letters of support
5. Polymet hearing is next week.

Old Business:

The Rural Ambulance Service Meeting went well and was well attended: 75 in person and 25 online. There is a lot of interest in moving forward. Pat Medure helped with the zoom end of the meeting. RAMS will host another meeting that will look for solutions. Saari suggested to form committees at the next meeting.

New Business:

1. Annual Dinner dates and venues were discussed. A vote will be held at the May meeting.
2. Jeff Anderson with the Legislative update:
 - A. This week has been the passing of omnibus bills. Both parties have criticized these because leaders of both houses have combined a lot of smaller bills and putting them into bigger bills, where things are necessarily related.
 - B. \$500M frontline worker bonus/\$2.7B unemployment insurance reached a tentative agreement.
 - C. Criminal Justice bill (Tough on Crime) passed bipartisan in the Senate. House will debate tomorrow.
 - D. House passed \$225M Legacy spending bill (partisan vote), the Senate has a \$159M Legacy bill.
 - E. House passed omnibus bill for transportation (\$225M), state government(\$77M), pensions(\$400M), and veterans(\$43M) (bundled).
 - F. A large omnibus bill includes state government and election initiatives, allows the Governor to declare a peacetime emergency for a cyber-attack, designates June 19 as Juneteenth (a state holiday), design new state flag and seal, establishment of a legislative task force on aging, allowing property owners to install and maintain managed natural landscapes. It also includes election security (absentee ballots).
 - G. House passed education bill \$1.15B (2023) and \$2B (2024-25). (Special education)
 - H. Natural resource bills (LCCMR) have passed both houses.
 - I. Bonding Bill: House is putting theirs together (tomorrow or next week?). Much smaller than anticipated, but still larger than the Senate bill. A supermajority is needed.
 - J. May 23 is the last day of the session. There will be no special session.
3. A motion to approve \$1000 donation to Discovery Center 7th grade STEM program was made by Kalmi and supported by Scholz. Motion carried.
4. Director Rukavina's 6-month review was done by Worscheck, Kalmi, and Pat Medure. They all agreed that she was the right choice. She has worked on getting new memberships and has gone out and about to meet with members of RAMS. A motion to increase the monthly car allowance to a total of \$600/month and to accept the 6-month review was made by Baribeau and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.
5. The Polymet hearing is next week. There are 3 days of hearings about water quality concerns from the Fond du Lac Tribe. Rukavina will testify as well as Jofs. Asking for more people to call in and testify.
6. Concerning the Board seat that is open (Pitts), we received a letter of interest from Julie Lucas (French Township Supervisor). Julie introduced herself to the Board. A motion to appoint Lucas to the open Board seat was made by Kalmi and supported by Berrini. Motion carried.
7. Reviewed letters of support from RAMS.

Board Member Updates:

Board Member Bob Berrini gave an update on town of Morse:

1. Broadband company Treehouse collaborated with Morse Township to expand broadband to the area. Morse Township=\$250K, Treehouse=\$200K. Land is selling now after years on the market thanks to broadband being available.
2. The Fire Dept (1/2 owned by Fall Lake) has hired a few more locals
3. Mesabi Bike Trail will add 6 more miles this year and the ATV Trail is finished.
4. The ATV bridge connecting Embarrass, Babbitt, and Hoyt Lakes is costing \$1.8M
5. New Businesses: Welding shop and body shop
6. Still 2 feet of ice!!

Finance Committee Report:

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held April 28, 2022:

1. Expenditures for the period of March 24-April 27, in the total amount of \$11,881.71.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is on track (31.8%).
3. Balance Sheet as of March 23, is \$411,837.45.

*The Taconite Assistance payment was corrected.

A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Berrini and supported by Adams. Motion carried.

Other:

Gordon Ramsay spoke to the Board. He is running for St Louis County Sherriff. He has been in police work since 1993. He was Duluth Police Chief from 2006-2016. During this time serious crime was lowered by 15%. He was then Police Chief for Wichita, KS from 2016 until recently. His goals as Sherriff would be to reduce crime, build relationships, and recruiting good cops (retention and wellness).

Member Floor Privileges:

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the RAMS Board will be held at 6:00 P.M. on May 26, 2022, at the Northeast Service Cooperative office.

Adjournment.

A motion to adjourn was made by Baribeau and supported by Berrini. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:45.