

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 30, 2023 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

President Pat Medure called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Roll Call of Board:

Present: **Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids); Bob Berrini (Morse Township);** Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); **Gary Friedlieb (City of Virginia); Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay);** Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman (City of Hibbing); **Paul Kess (City of Ely);** Pamela LaFrenier (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); **Julie Lucas (French Township); Philip Medure (Great Scott Township); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township);** John Tourila (City of Calumet); Dr Rae Villebrun (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin Supt Assn); Cal Warwas (Clinton Township); **David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)**

Absent: City of Babbitt; ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn; City of Aurora; City of Ely; City of Nashwauk; City of Chisholm; City of Biwabik

Also Present: **Paul Peltier, Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Admin Assistant; Lee Peterson (Greenwood Township); Ellsburg Township; Bob Wagstrom (MN Dept of Revenue)**

(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Kalmi and supported by Adams. Motion carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from October 25, 2023, was made by Pittman and supported by Zins. Motion carried.

Finance Committee Report:

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on November 30, 2023.

1. Expenditures for October 25, 2023 – November 29, 2023, totaling \$16,401.65.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is on track.

3. Balance Sheet as of October 24, 2023, is \$ 397,933.88.

A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Friedlieb and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

Appearances:

The Board was joined by Bob Wagstrom from the MN Department of Revenue. He has been working with the mining production tax for nearly 40 years. The production tax is paid by mining companies on a 3-year average of tonnage (subtract moisture and additives). The tax rate is \$3.26/ton for 2023, which is about \$100M. There is also a state appropriation of \$0.22/ton that gets added to the pool of tax money that is not earmarked for anything.

There are many different funds that are fulfilled by the production tax. The funds are designated by state statute. For example, the City and Township fund receives \$0.045 per ton from each company.

The City and Township fund is split up based on where the taconite is mined and concentrated. If the mining and concentrating are done in two separate municipalities, the money is split evenly. There is also a Township fund for townships that are completely within the Taconite Relief Area, which is tied to inflation and is divided based on the township's population, with a cap of \$50K. There is a Taconite Municipal Aid account which considers population, tax capacity, amount of state aid in the past 3 years, how much the levy was in the past 3 years, and how much production tax they received in the past 3 years. The Mining Effects fund is for municipalities within 3 miles of a taconite operation. The Special City/Township fund is for the City of Kinney and White Township.

The School District fund receives \$0.0343 per ton and is divided up the same way the City and Township fund is divided, based on where the taconite is mined and concentrated. The Regular School fund receives \$0.2472 per ton and is given based on pupil units and tax capacity.

Director's Report

Executive Director Peltier discussed his activities for November.

1. Executive Director Peltier has been working with Costin Group on the RAMS Legislative Priorities.
2. The Industrial Decarbonization Conference was well attended.
3. The Range Superintendents sent a letter regarding cuts to Title 1.
4. The weekly RAMS hosted Housing meetups has 15 people meeting regularly via zoom.
5. Iron Tange Tourism Board is working on workforce recruitment and retention.
6. Attended Fairview Hospital community engagement meeting (they are short 100 positions).
7. Executive Director Peltier has begun hosting a monthly meeting of City Administrators via zoom.

Old Business:

1. The nominations committee is all set for the election at the Annual Meeting.
2. The finance committee recommends the 2024 budget for approval. A motion to adopt the 2024 budget was made by Friedlieb and supported by Pittman. The motion carried.

New Business:

1. Jeff Anderson reported on the 2023 Legislative Priorities that were successful, including opposing any legislation that would restrict exploration or development of copper, nickel, and precious metals in the Taconite Assistance Area (no hearings in over 6 years!), progress in eliminating Social Security Tax, record bonding bill, LCCMR \$65M for environmental projects, money for recreation trails, gains and increase in LGA, increase in education formula, and others.

For 2024: RAMS supports the reform of the distribution of the Occupation Tax, Permitting reform, EMS in Rural (Federal level), Rural School Aid, Housing, Broadband, mental health funding for schools, LGA for townships, and more. A motion to accept the 2024 Legislative Priorities was made by Zins and supported by Lucas. Motion passed.

2. Discussion was held on the new contract for Administrative Assistant Kranz for 2024 with a \$1,000 salary increase. A motion to approve the contract was made by Phil Medure and supported by Friedlieb. Motion carried.
3. Discussion was held on the Costin Group contract for 2024. A motion to approve the contract was made by Friedlieb and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

Board Member Updates:

1. Berrini: Joint Powers Legislative meeting on December 11
2. Friedlieb: the two Virginia Officers that tried helping a suicide victim are recovering from injuries
3. Lucas: The United Way will be holding a 2-day conference (attend either day) unmasking mental health on January 16-17
4. Kess: the next crisis facing our area will be law enforcement recruiting and retainment
5. Warwas: Clinton Township is on the agenda at the IRRR regarding broadband

Other:

Member Floor Privileges:

Next Meeting:

The next RAMS Board Meeting will be held on December 14, 2023, at 5:30pm, at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.