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Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 23, 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); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt);** Richard Aldrich (ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn); **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);** Julie Lucas (French Township); **Philip Medure (Great Scott Township); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk);** Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); John Tuorila (City of Calumet); Dr Rae Villebrun (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin Supt Assn); **Cal Warwas (Clinton Township); Jim Weikum (City of Biwabik); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)**

Absent: City of Aurora; ISD 2711-Mesabi East; City of Chisholm

Also Present: **Steve Giorgi, Interim Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Admin Assistant; Justin Fosso (Alt City of Hibbing);** Jeff Anderson; **Jeff Schiltz, Ken Corbetz (ICS Consulting)**
(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

The agenda was amended to include 8.f. Stauber request. A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Saari and supported by Zins. Motion carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from January 26, 2023, was made by Kalmi and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

Appearances:

The Board was joined by Jeff Schiltz and Ken Corbetz from ICS Consulting. The company began in 2006 and helps their clients plan, build, and operate their facilities. They have 10 offices and employ 120 people. ICS has worked with Rock Ridge (pre-planning), Grand Rapids (elementary school, arena, and fire hall), Nashwauk/Keewatin, Hibbing, NLC, and Cherry (school).

Nashwauk/Keewatin has the oldest school in MN, over 100 years old, and it is known for its technical education programs. On February 8, 2022, residents approved \$48M to replace two 101-year-old schools with one Pre-K-12 school and wellness center. US Steel sold the city 40 acres of land for \$1, and the city of Nashwauk donated 27 acres for this project. Nashwauk/Keewatin collaborated with Grand Rapids to secure funding from IRRRB.

Bidding will take place in April 2023, groundbreaking in May/June, with completion coming in the spring of 2025. The new school will include common spaces, collaboration spaces, and a cafeteria.

Director's Report:

Interim Executive Director Giorgi discussed his activities for the month of February. He has been keeping up with the hearings taking place at the Capitol: with 2200 bills between the House and Senate, he goes through them and finds the ones that are relevant to the Iron Range. Lislegard is getting things done for the Range: he has introduced modifying the LGA (adding \$150M to the formula) and PILT formulas.

February 8-9 was spent in St Paul for the Duluth St Louis County Days. It was a casual event with Legislators. RAMS shared a booth IRRR and Iron Range Tourism.

The Range Mayors meeting had 6 new elected mayors. These meetings help to build bridges between mayors. They submitted letters about land withdrawal and the Huber project.

The Governor came up with a proposal to fund broadband, \$138M each year of the biennium. No bills have been introduced yet. Giorgi is working with legislators to get a bill going. Right now, the maximum allowance for a grant is \$5M, with a 50% match to qualify. We are proposing \$10M with 75%. Giorgi wrote a letter of support for CTC (low density grant).

As of today, we have two job applicants for the Executive Director position.

Old Business:

The 2023 Annual Meeting will be held at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center on December 14, 2023. No deposit was required yet.

The RAMS Legislative Dinner will be a breakfast this year. It will be held on March 2 at the Louisiana Café, from 7-8:30am. RAMS Board members are encouraged to attend.

The updated Code of Conduct was reviewed. A motion to approve the Code of Conduct was made by Warwas and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

New Business:

- A. Jeff Anderson reported from the Capitol. The snowstorm canceled the rest of the week (Wed-Fri) at the Capitol.
 1. 2200 bill have been submitted but most won't make it to committee
 2. The Senate passed two bills: driver's license for all and restoring voting rights for felons; both are on the way to Governor Walz
 3. The House passed three bills: Safe and Sick time, banning conversion therapy, and stricter penalties for catalytic converter thefts; they are on the way to the Senate
 4. Bills that have passed: Unemployment insurance for Northshore and Babbitt employees, a Lands bill, funding for the Attorney Generals office, 2040 energy bill, a bill providing for matching funds for infrastructure IJA federal funding, making Juneteenth a state holiday, codifying reproductive rights, federal tax conformity
 5. DFL Bonding bill: \$1.5B in general obligation bonds and \$391M in general fund cash appropriations. DFL projects include funding for Vermilion Community College, Lake Vermilion State Park, Canisteo Pit, St James pit, Gitchee Gumee Trail, road and infrastructure in Biwabik, Community Center in Aurora, curling and ice arena in Chisholm, Giant's Ridge, and land conveyance in Two Harbors. The bill needs 7 Senate Republicans to get the supermajority needed to pass.
 6. LCCMR (\$65-70M/year from the lottery): The bill that has been passed out of committee in both the House and Senate includes the trailhead project in Silver Bay, Biwabik campground, and trail development at the Redhead Mountain Bike Park.
- B. Ads have been placed in multiple newspapers across the region and on social media for the open position of Executive Director. Two applications have been received. The Executive Board met and recommended keeping the posting open until interviews begin. Interviews will take place on April 6. The Board will meet at 5pm for dinner, review the process at 5:30, and begin the first interview at 5:45. There will not be a zoom option for the Board, and 13 Board Members are needed for a quorum. Information regarding the applicants will be sent out around March 27.
- C. Congressman Stauber sent a request regarding a bill he is introducing about permitting. He would like to add RAMS to the list of supporters. The bill puts time restraints on permitting and limit legal recourse after a permit has been issued to a time frame. A motion to add RAMS to the list of supporters was made by Weikum and supported by Warwas. Motion carried.

Board Member Updates:

Cal Saari gave an update about the city of Nashwauk.

- The city donated land that will be used for the entrance to the new school. The school district was able to get more money from the state by using the city as a fiscal agent.

- The wastewater program collaboration with Nashwauk and Keewatin is about 95% complete. Could be complete by this spring.
- Mesabi Metallica paid their past due taxes 100% in full and are in regular communications with Nashwauk.
- Paul Bunyan internet is installed in the city's rec building.
- Public utilities have electrical projects to update.
- Western Mesabi Mine planning board (Cal was elected Chair last month)

Legislative agenda: Highway 169, Canisteo Pit, Hill Annex Mine

Bob Berrini gave an update on Morse Township.

- Broadband is going in on the south end of Ely.
- Mesabi Bike Trail is finished going to Ely.
- ATV trail is finished and has been very busy.
- Ambulance board purchased a building with Ely and Fall Lake for approximately \$460K. Funding for \$1.3M came in and they will be adding on next door to the building they have.
- The owners of Twin Metals will be visiting Ely soon.

Finance Committee Report:

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held February 23, 2023:

1. Expenditures for the period of January 26 – February 22, 2023, in the total amount of \$14,441.38
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is on track (8.3%).
3. Balance Sheet as of December 21, is \$390,910.78

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

Other:

Justin Fosso, alternate for the city of Hibbing, attended the meeting to observe.

Interim Executive Director Giorgi went over some of the letters of support that have gone out in the last month.

Cal Warwas expressed gratitude for assistance from local organizations regarding broadband in his area.

Member Floor Privileges:

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the RAMS Board will be held at 6:00 P.M. on March 23, 2023, at the Northeast Service Cooperative Building

Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.