# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, February 27, 2020 – 6:00 P.M. Northeast Service Cooperative Building

**Call to Order:** President Medure called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Greg Allen (Supt Assn); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Dale Christy (City of Grand Rapids); Tim Harkonen (City of Hibbing); John Champa (City of Chisholm); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Paul Kess (City of Ely); Stu Lehman (City of Buhl); Milan Luzaich (Great Scott Township); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk); Al Stanaway (City of Mt Iron); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); Gail Baribeau (ISD 706-Virginia); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)

Absent: ISD 2711-Mesabi East; City of Babbitt; One-Supts Assn; McDavitt Township

Also Present: Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant; Joe Abeyta; Shane Hoff

**Review and Approve:**

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Champa to approve to agenda, as presented. Motion carried.

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by McLaughlin, and supported by Lehman to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held January 23, 2020. Motion carried.

**Appearance:**

Director Giorgi introduced Dr. Noel Schmidt, who led the charge for the new school consolidation between Eveleth/Gilbert and Virginia. Voters approved $178.5 million levy for the new school project. Both school boards have approved the consolidation, but have voted to hold a special election on May 12, 2020, for the public to vote on the consolidation.

Dr. Noel Schmidt provided highlights on the new school project, as follows:

* The name of the new school district will be “Rock Ridge”.
* The names for the elementary schools in Virginia and Eveleth/Gilbert have not been decided, but will include Rock Ridge.
* The new elementary school in Eveleth will accommodate 650 students and will include an indoor play area.
* The School Board has started the eminent domain process on the ERATS charter school building. They are still negotiating that lease, so hopefully it will have a good outcome. They are also working to acquire the VEEDA building in Progress Park for expansion.
* Information on the new high school:
* An 825 people auditorium.
* Seating capacity of 500 in the pool area.
* The ground floor will have classrooms surrounded by a hands on learning area.
* The two upper levels will have a double classroom, regular classrooms that can be combined, smaller learning areas and an open area with books.
* The baseball and softball fields will be built on White Cedar Drive.
* Locker rooms are underneath the gyms.
* One main entrance will be utilized for security reasons.
* 215 students per grade are anticipated.
* Construction bids will go out early spring.
* If they cannot find anyone to buy the existing school buildings, they will be demolished.
* Square footage in the new school will be half of what they currently use.
* High school is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2023.
* School officials will continue to provide accurate information to the public.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi provided a written report for the month of February and provided the following comments:

* A well-attended press conference was held on January 31st at Carpenters Hall with Congressman Stauber and Representative Ecklund, local elected officials and labor to speak against McCollum’s bill HR 5598 to withdraw 234,000 acres and deprive Twin Metals and other companies from exploring and possibly mine precious minerals in the Superior National Forest. Representatives traveled to Washington, DC, the following week and Senators have not committed to carry a companion bill.
* A press conference was held in St. Paul on February 11th, which was well attended, in conjunction with PolyMet filing an appeal.
* Attended two meetings of the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband. The Task Force made a recommendation to the Governor to support an additional $30 million for broadband, if there is a supplemental tax bill.
* The annual meeting with the Range Delegation was supposed to be held on February 25th, but was rescheduled for Tuesday, March 10th. This will be a great opportunity, in a relaxed environment, to meet with legislators and discuss issues.
* An ad was placed in Hometown Focus mine edition and is included in the meeting packet.
* Broadband Day on the Hill will be held on Thursday, March 12th. RAMS can reimburse the $25 fee for RAMS Board members if they want to attend.
* A letter of support was sent to Rep. Gene Pelowski, Chair of the House Greater MN Jobs and Economic Development, to support HF 3029 to put $30 million in base funding for broadband.
* Rural broadband conversation will be held on March 24th at 6 pm at the NESC to discuss what can be done with rural broadband in communities.

**Old Business:**

1. Legislative presentation from RAMS.

Director Giorgi reviewed the legislative report from Gary Cerkvenik and Jeff Anderson, RAMS lobbyists, including Broadband, pit water levels, $65 per pupil for cooperating districts, capital bonding, mining, IRRRB/Taconite Taxes and summer school.

Director Giorgi will see if the Superintendents will submit a letter of support on the funding per pupil for cooperating school districts. Also, if communities have submitted a bonding grant, they should let Director Giorgi know and he will have the RAMS Lobbyists watch what is happening with the requests.

Regarding the School Trust Fund, Director Giorgi has reached out to Kelsey Johnson, Iron Mining Association, to discuss the impact of mining to all school districts in State. We may utilize the MSBA to distribute the information to the school districts. It was suggested that we bring in someone to make a presentation on the School Trust Fund.

b. Membership update

Director Giorgi stated the following new members have joined RAMS: Wuori Township, Greenwood Township, Enbridge, Kraus Anderson and the Minnesota Trade Labor Council. He will be reaching out to Biwabik Township.

**New Business:**

1. Appointment to vacant position on RAMS Board through December 31, 2020.

Three applications were received to fill the vacant RAM Board position, created by the resignation of Carlene Perfetto: Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay), Chris Koivisto (St. Louis County Schools) and Joseph Pollard (City of Coleraine). Shane Hof, Silver Bay City Council, was present and introduced himself.

Moved by Kalmi and supported by Christy to nominate Shane Hoff to fill the vacant position on the RAMS Board through December 31, 2020. Motion carried.

1. Committee Opportunities:
   1. Legislative Policy Committee. Dale Christy, Cal Saari, Pat Medure and Charlie Baribeau agreed to serve.
   2. Constitution and By-Laws Committee. Al Stanaway, Pat Medure, Charlie Baribeau and Stu Lehman agreed to serve.
   3. Finance Committee. Pat Medure, Charlie Baribeau, Glenn Anderson and Cyndi Worshek will continue to serve.

**Board Member Updates:**

1. Charlie Baribeau gave an update on the City of Virginia.

* Miners Memorial Complex and Event Center is a $32 million project. Demolition will begin in April, starting with Ewen’s Field. The new complex will be built north of the existing Miners, with construction beginning this summer. The current Miners will remain in place until the new one is complete and will then be demolished. DSGW are the architects for the project. If the RAMS Board is interested, he could invite the architect to a future meeting to discuss the plans. The new Miners Memorial Complex will include a 750 seat convention center and two full sheets of ice. The larger ice arena will hold 1,800 people. They are looking to hire an outside individual to bring events to the new building. The project will be financed through the voter approved/State authorized 1 percent sales tax, plus $12 million from state bond funds.
* They are currently reviewing their Assessment Policy.
* Hobby Lobby recently opened up at the Thunderbird Mall. Grants can be obtained through IRRRB for demolition projects.
* The new Public Safety Building made the Governor’s list for the bonding bill.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Charlie Baribeau reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held February 27, 2020:

Moved by Christy and supported by Zins to approve the expenditures for the period January 23 – February 26, 2020, in the total amount of $12,245.25. Motion carried.

Moved by McLaughlin and supported by Pittman to approve the Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual. Motion carried.

Moved by Champa and supported by McLaughlin to approve the Balance Sheet as of February 25, 2020. Motion carried.

Moved by Christy and supported by Lehman to allow the Executive Director and President to research options to reinvest the Certificate of Deposit that will mature on March 14, 2020. Motion carried.

**Other:**

Director Giorgi stated he will send a notice to the Iron Range Mayors, RAMs Board and community leaders to participate in a discussion with Congressman Stauber to discuss the cooper nickel situation. A tentative date of March 16th has been set.

Director Giorgi invited the RAMS Board to participate in a conference call at 1:30 P.M. on February 28th to discuss the Mesabi Metallics project.

Joe Abeyta was present and stated he will be running for the State Representative, District 5B seat, currently held by Sandy Layman.

**Next Meeting:**

The next regular board meeting will be held at 6:00 P.M. on March 26, 2020.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.