**Range Association of Municipalities & Schools  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 28, 2019 – 6:00 P.M.**

**Northeast Service Cooperative Building**

**Call to Order:**

President Medure called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); Gregg Allen (Superintendent’s Association;) Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Dale Christy (City of Grand Rapids); Dennis Zinter (McDavitt Township); Tim Harkonen (City of Hibbing); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Carlene Perfetto (City of Silver Bay); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk); Gail Baribeau (ISD # 706- Virginia); Jim Varda (City of Chisholm); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora)

Absent: City of Babbitt; City of Ely; City of Buhl; Great Scott Township; ISD 696-Ely; One Rep-Supts Assn; City of Mt. Iron

Also Present: Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant; David Zins, Dr. Noel Schmidt

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

Moved by Varda and supported by Perfetto to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried.

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by Varda and supported by Baribeau to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held January 24, 2019. Motion carried.

**Appearance:**

Dr. Noel Schmidt, Virginia School Superintendent, gave a presentation on the Cooperative School Building Project for the Eveleth/Gilbert and Virginia School Districts.

* As of today, both School Districts voted independently and unanimously approved taking this to the voters. A vote on the levy will be held on May 14, 2019, in both school districts. The levy must pass in both school districts, or the IRRRB will pull the $98 million funding.
* Dr. Schmidt recommended that entities use surveys to determine what their citizens and communities want.
* Approximately 24 months were spent on community sessions. Over 100 cooperative meetings were held, along with 12 joint school board meetings.
* Meetings were held with the students, who helped design spaces, building and workshop concepts.
* Every adult determined the current buildings cannot be used for academy style teaching.
* Too many students are being sent to four year colleges, when the jobs are in the vocational field.
* Approximately $2.5 million is spent annually to maintain the old elementary schools, which is above the State average.
* Construction would start in about one year, with the project completed in three to five years.
* School would partner with the YMCA for a community pool.
* Estimated cost to maintain and remodel the current schools is $163 million. Estimated cost to replace the schools is estimated at $181 million.
* Tax impacts were reviewed. With collaboration, 36 percent of the funding to build new schools would come from the IRRRB; 44 percent from the State and 20 percent from tax payers. Without collaboration, the taxpayers would be responsible for renovation costs to existing facilities.
* Site B has been identified as the preferred location for the new high school, which is along Highway 53 and south of Bourgin Road
* Over 90 percent of teachers support the new school project.
* Once the election is held, talks about consolidation would begin. Jobs would only be reduced through attrition, other than the Superintendent or other internal office positions – some of these positions could be eliminated with consolidation.
* The former Midway School site was discussed and could possibly could be used for ballfields.
* For the $180.5 Million bond issue, Eveleth/Gilbert taxpayers would be responsible for $31.5 M in bonds and Virginia taxpayers responsible for $149 M in bonds. The tax impact would be the same to taxpayers living in either district, because of population and tax capacity.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi provided an update on his activities for the month of February, 2019:

* 27 communities have adopted resolutions in support of the broadband project and he will continue to pursue getting on the agenda for the St. Louis County board to gain support for the broadband project.
* Attended a conference on February 1st, hosted by Mesabi Range Community College, on aligning curriculum with our regional industries needs for employees. Attendees included mining officials, business leaders and college staff.
* Attended a Broadband Feasibility Meeting on February 4th to look at a possible project in Cherry Township area utilizing the NESC middle mile fiber and partnering with CTC from Brainerd.
* On February 6th, spent the day with the CEO of Easy Energy Systems, who is looking at the Ainsworth building in Grand Rapids.
* On February 7th, attended a special meeting with the Eveleth City Council and Superintendents from Virginia and Eveleth/Gilbert to discuss the proposed new career academy and the impact on the City of Eveleth.
* On February 8th, spent the day in Duluth discussing the new study on Regional Rail and how to improve and enhance rail access for local industries.
* Traveled to St. Paul on February 11th to attend the RAMS Delegation dinner meeting to review the legislative priorities.
* Hosted the Range Mayors Meeting on February 13th. A presentation was given by Peter Clevenstine of the MN DNR Lands & Minerals on mining taxes, mining reserves and tax forfeited land management.
* Met with IRRRB Commissioner Phillips on February 15th to discuss our Lobby Day booth and other items of interest.
* On February 18th, reached out to Commissioners MacDonald and Jugovich to try to get on the agenda for the St. Louis County Board agenda for February 26th, as Chair Boyle has refused to allow him on the agenda. St. Louis County has allowed him to attend a Committee of the Whole meeting on March 12th.
* Traveled to St. Paul on February 20th to sit in on two legislative hearings to hear the testimony in the Senate on the proposed Iron Range School collaboration in Buhl and the hearing on broadband funding in the House.
* Attended a breakfast meeting on February 21st on Governor Walz, Senator Bakk and Mayor Larson.
* Held a RAMS Legislative Committee meeting on February 22nd to review the legislative bills and make a recommendation to the RAMS Board on bills we should support or oppose.
* Attended the CAP meeting on February 26th in Grand Rapids to hear another presentation by Peter Clevenstine and an update on Mesabi Metallics and decertification action by the DNR. Also received an update on the solar garden by the Grand Rapids PUC and Minnesota Power.

**Old Business:**

a. Broadband Coalition Meeting – St. Paul

The meeting was cancelled, due to inclement weather. Bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate and there seems to be support.

**New Business:**

a. Report from RAMS Legislative Committee:

Discussion was held on the action taken by the RAMS Legislative Committee on February 22nd to support, oppose or remain neutral on specific legislative bills that are significant to the Iron Range.

Bob Berrini questioned why the committee took no position on Senate File 245, relative to taxation of social security and asked to remove the bill from the RAMs list for further discussion. Mr. Berrini stated Minnesota is one of five states that pays taxes on social security. Our lobbyist cautioned us on getting involved in this issue, as the General Fund would take a significant hit with the proposed bill. President Medure stated board members may support the legislation individually, rather than having the RAMS Board take a stance.

Gregg Allen questioned why the committee took no position on House File 882, relating to education finance and increasing the general education basic formula allowance by three percentage points per year. It was noted that our lobbyist was concerned about linking future increased to the rate of inflation.

Moved by Christy and supported by Baribeau to approve the RAMS Legislative Committee’s recommendation to move the legislative issues forward, unless a board member pulls an issue. After discussion, the motion and support were amended to remove Senate File 245 from the list. Motion carried, as amended.

Moved by Berrini and supported by Pittman to include Senate File 245 on the list of legislative bills, as originally proposed. Motion carried.

1. Report from RAMS Constitutional Review Committee:

Director Giorgi stated the RAMS Constitutional Review Committee met today and recommended changing the language in two areas, as follows:

**ARTICLE II-Definitions, Section 5:**

The term “alternate” shall mean the substitute member for an elected board member who shall have full board privileges while filling in during the absence of the elected board member. An alternate must “be an elected official” and have been selected by the governing body of the elected Board member’s organization.

**ARTICLE VIII: BOARD MEETINGS-Section 2:**

The Association shall hold an Annual Meeting of the membership each year following the general election in November and before January 31st, for the purpose of reviewing the activities of the prior year, ~~to elect the new officers~~ and “elect the” directors of the Board for the coming year, and to conduct whatever other business that may come before the meeting. The time and place of the meeting shall be designated by the Board which shall also present a proposed agenda for the meeting ~~and a recommended slate of officers and Board of Directors for the consideration of the membership~~.

Director Giorgi stated the RAMS members should take action at a board meeting to appoint an alternate at the beginning of the year and notify RAMS of the appointment.

President Medure asked the board members to review the Constitution and By-Laws and send any recommended changes to Director Giorgi before the end of March. The RAMS Constitutional Review Committee will meet again and submit any other recommended changes to the RAMS Board, prior to formally approving changes. All changes would be recommended to the full membership at the Annual Meeting.

c. Resolution of support for proposed Academy.

Director Giorgi stated the board could take a position on the Virginia and Eveleth/Gilbert School Districts school collaboration project, as it is a regional effort.

Moved by C. Worshek and supported by Varda to send a letter in support of the collaboration project of the Virginia and Eveleth School Districts. Motion carried.

Director Giorgi stated he will draft the letter and share with the board members before it is sent.

**Board Member Update:**

a. Calvin Saari gave an update on the City of Nashwauk:

* Congratulated the Greenway hockey team on their trip to the State tournament.
* Nashwauk is concerned about the future status of Mesabi Metallics/Essar project and hopes to find a company that pays its debts, creates revenue and puts people to work. Governor Walz stated he is working on ways to minimize the length of the mining permitting process.
* A public hearing was held on the proposed community center concept in Nashwauk. In March, he hopes to convince the City Council to move forward with a plan and work on obtaining State bond funds.

b. Kim McLaughlin gave an update on the Hibbing School District:

* Hibbing School District had a great academic year and completed the safe and secure entrances in three of the four schools. The auditorium renovation project is complete and turned out wonderful. They are currently in the process of adding a Stage Manager/event Coordinator to help bring events to the auditorium.
* Implemented the concept of Professional Learning Communities.
* Recently named three members to a joint committee of the City of Hibbing and Hibbing School District to discuss collaboration efforts.
* Opened registration for the new Career Academy Program this week.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Cyndi Worshek reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held February 28, 2019:

Moved by Perfetto and supported by Varda to approve the expenditures for the period January 24-February 27, 2019, in the total amount of $17,765.96. Motion carried.

Moved by Saari and supported by Stolp to approve the Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual Report as of February 27, 2019. Motion carried.

Moved by Varda and supported by Perfetto to approve the Balance Sheet as of February 27, 2019. Motion carried.

**Other:**

Director Giorgi provided the following information:

* Mining Minnesota will hold their Annual Meeting on May 2nd at the Hibbing Park Hotel. If board members are interested in attending, they should let Director Giorgi know and he will sign them up.
* Tom Rukavina will be honored at Ranger Day in April in St. Paul. Director Giorgi will provide information to the board members on the event.
* A conference call will be held at 9 AM on March 14th to discuss the Mesabi Metallics/Essar project. Board members interested in participating in the conference call should notify Director Giorgi.
* The April RAMS Board Meeting will be held in Ely at the Twin Metals site.
* Tentatively, the August or September RAMS Board Meeting will be held in Hibbing to tour the Mineview.

**Next Meeting:**

The next RAM Board Meeting will be held at 6:00 P.M. on March 28, 2019.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M.