# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes

# Thursday, March 22, 2018 – 6:00 P.M.

# Northeast Service Cooperative Building

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

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: Paul Kess (City of Ely); Dennis Zinter (McDavitt Township); Ben Hawkins (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Dale Christy (City of Grand Rapids); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dave Lislegard (City of Aurora); Ray Marsnik (ISD 696-Ely); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Mark Skelton (City of Hoyt Lakes); Carlene Perfetto (City of Silver Bay); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); Jim Varda (City of Chisholm); Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East) Al Stanaway (City of Mt Iron); Pat Garrity (City of Hibbing); Ione Tomasetti (ISD 695 Chisholm);

Absent: City of Buhl; Great Scott Township; ISD 695 Chisholm; Stacey Sundquist (ISD 706-Virginia); City of Babbitt; David Pace and Gregg Allen – (Superintendent’s Association)

Also Present: Commissioners Tom Rukavina and Michael Jugovich; Rolf Weberg – NRRI

**Review and Approve Agenda (action)**

Moved by Berrini and supported by Marsnik to move item 7b (St Louis County resolution) to the top of the agenda, as presented. Motion carried.

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by Christy and supported by Varda to approve the minutes from the following meeting:

* Regular Meeting held February 22, 2018.

Motion carried.

**Discussion on St Louis County resolution:**

Bob Berrini distributed a hand out that provided County taxes paid by Commissioner District. Of the 7 districts, Commissioner Rukavina’s pays the most taxes or 42% of County tax amounting to $25 million plus in taxes. His district also includes the highest market value at 24.25% and 25% of the total county taxable market value. The question is are those tax dollars being equally distributed within the district or are they disproportionately subsidizing district in Duluth? Motion by Berrini, seconded by McLaughlin to request a report from St Louis County on the distribution of tax dollars within the County along with an analysis of job distribution of County employees by county district(s) over the past 10 years. Motion passed unanimously.

**Appearance:**

Director Giorgi introduced Rolf Weberg, the Executive Director of Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI).

Rolf informed the board that he was celebrating his 4th anniversary with NRRI this week after 25 years with DuPont. NRRI has two separate physical locations one in Duluth that employs about 100 people and the other on an old US Steel site in Coleraine. The site in Coleraine is large enough to allow for extensive mineral technology research and it is where a separation of ilmenite to an end product of titanium oxides was developed. The Coleraine site has the capacity to model large tonnage mineral separation processes which greatly enhances their standing with the mining industry nation wide.

The mission statement of the institute is “Deliver research solutions to balance our economy, resources and environment for resilient communities”.

The research focuses on three main priorities: (1) reduce waste; (2) broaden the portfolio; (3) resources stewardship.

Rolf went on to discuss a number of very exciting and interesting research projects that the institute is working on and the need for Federal funding to move the research facility to the next level of achieving big solutions for some of the major problems facing our region and state today, like reduction of sulfate, higher grade mineral extraction, bio-renewable product development, and sustaining and maintaining our high quality fresh water supply.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi indicated that most of his activities involved trips to St Paul to testify at both House and Senate hearings on wild rice/sulfate bills as well as working with Gary on other legislative matters.

**Old Business:**a. Public Comment on PolyMet.

Director stated that the public comment period had ended for both the DNR and the MPCA. Letter in packet was sent to both the DNR and the MPCA along with 17 resolutions from various communities and school districts. A few petitions have been filed calling for a contested hearing with the DNR, and they have a comment period until April 16 on that matter. It will be up to the Commissioner of the DNR to decide if a contested hearing is conducted.  
b. Update on St Louis Co resolution.

Issue already discussed – Director will send a letter to the County reflecting the RAMS motion on this matter  
c. Recap of meeting with Antofagasta.

This meeting held in Minneapolis included board members Lislegard, Kess and Mayors Chuck Novak and Andrea Zupancich, along with a compliment of board members from Jobs for Minnesotans and Frank Ongaro from Mining Minnesota. Very informative meeting with the CEO who offered to provide us with more information on their copper mine operations in Chile and to be available on the Range when necessary.

d. Follow up on Dig Once resolution.

To date only the city of Mt Iron and the MI-B school district have passed resolutions. Really need a few more communities to adapt the resolution before bringing to the County board. Virginia will be discussing at their next council meeting.

**New Business:**

1. Legislative Update:

Director included a written summary in the packet and went through some of the more prevalent issues taking place at the Capitol. Legislation on the limitations placed on the MPCA regarding enforcement of the sulfate standard. Expansion of the TAA, seems to have been avoided with an amendment that would allow Nett Lake school district to qualify for funding from the IRRRB but would not require expanding the boundaries. Effort still being made to modify the Municipal Tax formula to include the escalator clause is ongoing with Metsa and Tomassoni on board. Funding for NK Lone Pine wastewater project seems on track; bills have been introduced for Silver Bay, Two Harbors, Ely trailhead, East Range water projects, Grand Rapids Rec Center, Babbitt campground, Virginia projects and other regional request. Hill Annex Mine appears that it will stay under the DNR authority through 2019 fiscal year, with a gentlemen’s agreement to fund through 2021.

1. PolyMet land exchange – federal legislation.

This was not included in the appropriation bill in Congress this week which is a concern as without this land exchange, the MN agencies will not issue permits for the PolyMet project. Letters were sent this week to both of our US Senators and confirmation that they were working with the Democratic leadership to have it included was shared by their local staff, but more efforts will be required to get this land exchange completed so PolyMet can continue to move toward construction.

**Board Member Updates:**.

1. Kim McLaughlin – Hibbing Schools.

Kim reported that the District has taken steps over the past year to bring in more administrative positions including principals, vice principals and has had to replace two long term positions with Joe Arthur – head of maintenance and grounds retiring as well as school finance director Scott Wirtanen. The remodeling of the school auditorium is nearing completion (October ’18) and will culminate the $3 million dollar project. Grants, local contributions, fund raisers have all helped to pay for this project. The school is now working on safe school issues securing entrances and classrooms in a number of buildings spending about $1 million on this issue.

1. Dave Lislegard – Aurora City

The city is excited to know that there will be #12 million in new investments coming into the city in the next year or two with Lakehead Constructors building, a new Co-op bank the recent opening of a new café the Hive and Andrea Zupancich opening a realty office in town. PolyMet is still the beacon of hope for the city and optimism is growing in the community.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Charlie Baribeau reviewed the finance reports, as follows:

1. Expenditures.

**Moved by Baribeau and supported by Perfetto to approve expenditures, at a total cost of $13,029.33, for the period February 22, 2018-March 21, 2018. Motion carried.**

b. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual as of March 21 2018.  
c. Balance Sheet as of March 21, 2018.

**Other:**

Director Giorgi reported on the following items:

* There are three new corporate members: RMS Road Machinery Supplies; Vic’s Crane & Heavy Lift; Arcelor Mittal Minorca Mine.
* All logos have been obtained from the corporate sponsors, so they can be included on the RAMS banner.

**Next Meeting:**

The next RAMS Board Meeting will be held at 6:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 26, 2018.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.