

**Range Association of Municipalities & Schools**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, March 24, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.**  
**Northeast Service Cooperative Building**

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

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: **Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids);** Richard Aldrich (ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn) **Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Jim Fisher,(McDavitt Township); Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay);** Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman (City of Hibbing); Norma Jean Jofs (City of Aurora); **Paul Kess (City of Ely); Philip Medure (Great Scott Township);** Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); **Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk);** Noel Schmidt (ISD 2909 Rock Ridge (Supt Assn); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)

Absent: City of Babbitt; Morse Township; City of Buhl; City of Calumet; ISD 2909 Rock Ridge; City of Chisholm

Also Present: **Ida Rukavina, Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Adm Assistant; Julie Marinucci (Director of Lands and Minerals); Julie Lucas (French Township Supervisor);** Jeff Anderson; Jeff Schanche (Town of French)

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

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

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

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by Pat Medure and supported by Fisher to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held February 24, 2022. Motion carried.

**Appearances:**

The Board was joined by Julie Marinucci, Director of St Louis County Lands and Minerals. She has worked with the county for about 4 years. She has also worked for Caterpillar and Cleveland Cliffs, did consulting, then went into government. St Louis County manages over 900,000 acres of land, from Duluth to the Canadian border.

Marinucci discussed 5 different topics.

1. Forest Management and Certification: SFI Certified, 5 timber auctions per year, planting trees, seed bank
2. Tax Forfeited Lands: Works with DNR to decide if keeping or selling, 3 online tax forfeited auctions per year (70% of which are selling; \$4 million in sales last year), Blight management
3. Recreation: Trails
4. Surface leasing: easements, cell towers, driveway easements
5. Mineral Development: 50 gravel pits, gravel sales

Marinucci recommended visiting the county land explorer website to view more info:

<https://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/departments-a-z/planning-development/enterprise-gis/county-land-explorer>

**Director's Report:**

Director Rukavina highlighted her activities for the month of March 2022.

1. March included one week vacation for Rukavina.
2. Ranger Party: Fundraiser for ALS. Fisher and Engebretson both attended as well. It was a full house with people from all over the state raising awareness for ALS and making connections.

3. Duluth St Louis County days in St Paul: Met with IMA, IRRRB, MN Power and MN Legislators.
4. Mine Permit (Tomassoni and Bakk introduced): Applies to metallic mining projects for which an environmental assessment worksheet or environmental impact statement is required. The purpose of this bill is to improve coordination, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. Pat Medure testified on RAMS behalf.
5. Broadband meetings with townships and providers trying to get their projects moving forward. Still no state funding for the border-to-border program.
6. Letter of support for the Canisteo Pit.
7. There will be a public hearing for Polymet in May. RAMS needs a couple people to testify.

**Old Business:**

Rukavina is working on setting up a meeting in April to discuss the Ambulance service issue. RAMS will host the meeting with a panel discussion.

**New Business:**

1. Larry Pits (City of Calumet) is moving and no longer eligible to sit on the Board. A motion to solicit member organizations for nominations for the opening (send in a letter in interest) was made by Kess and supported by Kalmi. Motion carried.
2. Jeff Anderson with Legislative update:
  - A. The MN House passed the ALS research bill (\$20M for research and \$5M for caregiver support). It will now go to the Governor for signature.
  - B. With redistricting/retirement, about 500 years of experience will be leaving the legislature after this session.
    - a. Retiring: Sen Tomassoni, Sen Bakk, Rep Sundin, Rep Lueck, Rep Schultz
    - b. Redistricting: Rep Ecklund/Sen Bakk and Rep Lislegard's districts grew in land size; Rep Sandstede and Rep Igo are now in the same district (both plan to run); Sen Eichorn and Sen Ruud are both in the same district (both plan to run).
  - C. There are 60 days left in the session and the Capitol is now open! There are limited days and times, by appointment only.
  - D. There is now a \$9.3B surplus. The Democratic Caucus wants to focus on tax relief and spending, while the Republican Caucus wants to focus on tax breaks.
  - E. The Progression of Bonding Bills: The House continues to hear bonding requests, while the Senate is not holding hearings at the moment.
  - F. 4,624 bills have been introduced in the House, 4,296 have introduced in the Senate. This session is 72 bills shy of a new record.
  - G. Rep Ecklund is carrying 73 bills, Rep Lislegard is carrying 51 bills, and Rep Sandstede is carrying 44 bills.
  - H. The Senate has passed Unemployment Insurance replenishment, the House is not ready for it yet.
  - I. Sen Bakk has introduced some bills of interest to RAMS: a \$90M increase in local government aid, looking for funding for a new regional landfill project, supplemental state aid for construction projects in Ely and Rock Ridge that are related to Covid, seeking \$1M for ATV trail development in northern MN, Social Security Tax repeal.
  - J. Sen Tomassoni has introduced some bill of interest to RAMS: \$100M Covid relief for businesses, school construction sales tax exemptions, \$150M bill for construction on Hwy 169 between Taconite and Penguilly, extend taconite tax that funds the school collaboration/consolidation account at IRRRB
  - K. McLaughlin testified on the behalf of the Boys and Girls Club in Hibbing.
  - L. Rep Sandstede-Canisteo Mine project
  - M. Rep Ecklund-Covid testing clinics at border crossing for unvaxed
  - N. Many bonding projects around the area that are still up for consideration.
  - O. LCCMR (Lottery money)-Senate wants to fund most of the projects in northern MN, the House has objections.

### **Board Member Updates:**

Board Member Cal Saari gave an update on city of Nashwauk:

1. Population=970, \$1.7M budget
2. Mesabi Metallics owns the land where Essar was. Essar owes \$1.7M in back taxes. If Cleveland Cliffs or US Steel wants to own the land, 100% support from the mayor. Nashwauk needs that mine to operate.
3. EMS has been an issue as of late. It was run as a volunteer service until about 4 months ago but was losing revenue (sometimes \$100K-150K a month) because no one was available to do transfers. Now we have 6 full time employees and hiring some part-time/on-call.
4. It will take \$15.5M to make public buildings compliant.
5. Referendum for new school passed.

### **Finance Committee Report:**

A. Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held March 24, 2022:

1. Expenditures for the period of February 24-March 23, in the total amount of \$13,408.60.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is on track (23.9%).
3. Balance Sheet as of March 23, is \$398,103.32.

\*A mistake was made by the county and RAMS was given the wrong amount of Taconite Revenue. This mistake will be corrected in the following week.

A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Fisher and supported by Baribeau. Motion carried.

### **Other:**

### **Member Floor Privileges:**

Saari noted that the city of Nashwauk signed a contract with the city workers after 18 months of negotiations.

### **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the RAMS Board will be held at 6:00 P.M. on April 28, 2022, at the Northeast Service Cooperative office.

### **Adjournment.**

A motion to adjourn was made by Fisher and supported by Phil Medure. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:45.