

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 28, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

Vice-President Glenn Anderson 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); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Ryan Davies (Harris Township); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Dan Goette (City of Aurora);** Richard Aldrich (ISD 318 Grand Rapids); Jim Varichak (French 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 Virginia; City of Sliver Bay; City of Ely; ISD 2711 Mesabi East; Great Scott Township; ISD 2412 St Louis County Schools;

Also Present: **Paul Peltier, Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Admin Assistant; Phil Larson, Pulsar Helium;** Jeff Anderson; **Dirk Davis (Morcom Township); Elizabeth Caple (Ellsburg Township)**

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

Call to Order:

Vice-President Glenn Anderson called the meeting to order at 6pm.

Review and Approve Agenda:

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

Approve Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from February 22, was made by Kalmi and supported by Stolp. Motion carried.

Finance Committee Report:

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on March 28, 2024.

1. Expenditures for February 22 – March 27, 2024, totaling \$14,007.93.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is at 28.2%.
3. Balance Sheet as of March 27, 2024, is \$ 473,871.19.

A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Adams and supported by Berrini. Motion carried.

Appearance:

The Board was joined by Phil Larson from Pulsar Helium. The helium supply near Babbitt was found on accident in 2011. The first analysis of the helium showed one of the highest concentrations ever found in the wild at 10.5%. Pulsar Helium believes they will have close to zero greenhouse gas emissions, along with the possibility of selling off the CO2 byproduct as a coproduct.

Helium is used in semiconductor manufacturing, as a coolant in MRIs, for high integrity welding, and in space flight and satellite infrastructure. The global market for helium was \$4.6B in 2023.

Director's Report:

Executive Director Peltier gave an update on his activities in March. Peltier highlighted the EMS bill, the Minnesota Permitting Reform Report (a session to be held in Chisholm), the RAMS legislative dinner and lobby day in St Paul, and broadband meetings.

New Business:

1. Jeff Anderson gave the Board a midsession legislative update. Over 5,000 bills have been introduced. Budget targets were revealed - \$477M (on top of last year's budget). This includes \$109M for the Tyler v. Hennepin settlement and \$16M for EMS. Bonding – The House is hearing projects next week in committee (possible first draft in April). Federal earmarks – applications are not open yet.
2. Jeff Anderson and Peltier discussed the list of bills that have been chief authored by members of the Range delegation.
3. A motion to approve a conversation with and a letter of support for Great Plains Institute (hydrogen and green steel) was made by Fisher and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.
4. A motion to approve RAMS engagement with Chamber Permitting Reform was made by Warwas and supported by Fisher. Motion carried.
5. National Day Without Childcare – NE region will help to send daycare providers to St Paul
6. EMS Lobby Day – Peltier will work with Jeff Anderson to find the right day

Board Member Updates:

1. Berrini – 21 people voted in the election, everyone was voted back in, levies stayed the same

2. Kalmi – the school is coming along; a bus is going to the Capitol on April 3 in support of Build Mesaba Build Itasca
3. Adams – Grand Rapids is expecting \$50-55M on projects this year
4. Saari – Nashwauk has three priorities: Mesabi Metallics, EMS, bonding bill
5. Geotte – Industrial Park on the west side of Aurora (\$15M project)
6. Stolp – supporting Mesabi Metallics and EMS
7. Tuorila – Calumet Reclamation Co, Cleveland Cliffs, Mesabi Metallics, Mag Iron are all working on projects in the area; Hill Annex State Park has shut down tours, but the museum is open; the County will redo County Road 84 (\$1M project)
8. Weikum – Biwabik will work on campground (\$1.3M) and MnDOT will fix the main street
9. Warwas – Thanks to RAMS for the support with broadband, grant was awarded; Paul Bunyan will start in 2024, CTC will finish in 2025
10. Fisher – Fire Department closed, will cost \$60-70K for new equipment; getting broadband
11. Pittman – Blacktopped and expanded the Fire Department parking lot (\$50K); working on lights for the ball field; learning experience going to the Capitol
12. Anderson – Pulsar Helium widened a forestry road; \$2.5M for infrastructure, only one house for sale in Babbitt
13. Pat Medure – Finalized ISD 318 budget (24-25): cut \$1.5M; Kudos to Rep Lislegard for the bill to reduce tax on local property owners and to Peltier for testifying
14. Zins – Hoyt Lakes is looking at the water treatment facility that is approximately 70 years old

Other:

RAMS merchandise is in! MN Housing Partnership will have an event in Virginia in May at ITMEC.

Member Floor Privileges:

Dirk Davis – (Morcom Township) \$2.93M bonding request for new community center

Elizabeth Caple - (Ellsburg Township) just moved into new fire hall

Next Meeting:

The next RAMS Board Meeting will be held on April 25, 2024, at 6:00pm, at the Northeast Service Cooperative Building. The May meeting will be in Nashwauk.

Adjournment.

A motion to adjourn was made by Fisher and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.