# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, April 25, 2019 – 6:00 P.M. Twin Metals Office, Ely

St. Louis County Commissioner Paul McDonald welcomed RAMS to the City of Ely and the Twin Metals Office.

Mayor Chuck Novak, City of Ely, also welcomed RAMS to Ely and noted Twin Metals is widely supported by Ely residents. Mayor Novak encouraged people to get educated on the Twin Metals project and stated they are serious about the following the environmental process.

Dean DeBeltz, Director of Operations, Twin Metals Ely office, introduced Julie Padilla, Chief Relations Officer, and James Devine, who oversees the operations in the field. Mr. DeBeltz gave a presentation on the project, as follows:

* Twin Metals Minnesota, LLC, is a Minnesota mining company, formed in July, 2010.
* Twin Metals focuses on designing, constructing and operating an underground copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, gold and silver mining project in Ely.
* Twin Metals has two offices (Ely and St. Paul). They began operations in Ely in 2006, with their new Ely headquarters opened in 2011 and a core storage facility opened in 2013.
* Total investment to date, including contractors, infrastructure, personnel is $432 million. Nearly 4 billion tons of ore are located with Twin Metals deposits.
* Will mainly focus on deposits at the Maturi location, which has 1.5 billion tons of resources.
* Process/mining rate of 20,000 tons of ore per day.
* Underground mine minimizes impact on surface.
* Approximately 50 percent of tailings will be returned underground as cemented tailings backfill.
* Producing concentrates for sale to market:
  + 275,000 tons per year of concentrate
  + 50,000 tons per year of copper contained in concentrate
  + 11,000 tons per of year of nickel
* Non-acid generating tailings.
* They are designating efficient and compact underground mine, minimizing impact to surface land.
* Tailings sulfur content will be less than .15percent. (Anything under 2 percent is non-acid generating.)
* Tailings will be disposed by mine backfill or tailings storage facility.
* Currently conducting baseline studies to support mine design efforts and various state and federal permitting requirements.
* Permit sites for wells will be obtained to allow continual monitoring through the project.
* Exploratory borings may be temporarily sealed for 10 years, or a variance will be obtained.
* Economic investment: 650 direct mining jobs; 1,300 spinoff jobs in other industries.
* Permanent school trust fund: Rents/royalties from mineral leases are primary revenue source from school trust assets. (In 2017 – $15.13 million total distribution to Permanent School Trust Fund. $11.6 million mineral leasing/royalties.)
* Next steps:
* Submit mine plan of operations to agencies.
* Continue to collect information.
* Evaluate potential environmental, social and economic effects.
* Formal environment review will be required by Federal and State.

Following the presentation, discussion was held on how RAMS can help Twin Metals. The RAMS membership could provide support for any public hearings. It was suggested that Twin Metals share information to Director Giorgi, who can disseminate to the RAMS membership, to provide factual information on the project and help dispel rumors. It was also noted that Twin Metals is preparing a video to introduce themselves to the public and is willing to make presentations to any entities.

**Call to Order:**

President Medure called the meeting to order at 6:45 P.M.

**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); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Dale Christy (City of Grand Rapids); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Paul Kess (City of Ely); Stuart Lehman (City of Buhl); Ray Marsnik (ISD 696-Ely); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); David Pace (Superintendent’s Association); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk); Al Stanaway (City of Mt Iron); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); Stacey Sundquist (ISD # 706- Virginia); Jim Varda (City of Chisholm); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora)

Absent: City of Hibbing; Great Scott Township; City of Silver Bay

Also Present: Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant; Chris Koivisto (St. Louis County Schools #2154); John Eloranta (Congressman Stauber’s office); Gerald Tyler (Up North Jobs); Angela Campbell (City of Ely); Nick Wogum (City Echo/Morse Township); Twin Metals Minnesota, LLC: Dean DeBeltz, Julie Padilla; James Devine

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

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

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved Varda and supported by Fisher to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held March 28, 2019. Motion carried.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi provided the following update on activities during the month of April:

April 2 Attended session at Gilbert school on the new proposed career academy.

April 3 Attended Broadband Lobby Day in St. Paul with the Rural Minnesota Broadband Coalition. The House file provides $70 million over the two year funding cycle and the Senate file provides for $30 million over two years.

April 5 Attended meeting with District 26 and 27 Superintendents to hear updates on the Hibbing career academy; Iron Range School collaboration and Virginia/Eveleth/Gilbert academy.

April 9 Traveled to St. Paul to attend Range Party.

April 11 Met with Janelle Geschner, IRRRB.

April 15 Traveled to Ely to meet with Dean DeBeltz at Twin Metals to check out meeting arrangements for April Board meeting.

April 16 Attended Minnesota Compass seminar in Grand Rapids. Minnesota Compass compiles information on populations, employment, age groups, trends that can be separated out for use by communities, locations, counties, school districts or regions.

April 17 Hosted the Range Mayors meeting, with 18 mayors in attendance. Senator Tomassoni was in attendance to give an update on legislative issues, Mesabi Metallics, gas tax and other issues. Mayors agreed to send a letter to the Governor requesting a meeting to discuss the Line 3 pipeline project and Mesabi Metallics.

April 23 Attended Itasca CAP meeting in Grand Rapids.

April 24 RAMS Finance Committee met.

**Old Business:**

1. Update on Rural Broadband Resolutions.

Director Giorgi reviewed the entities that supported the rural broadband issue by providing letters and resolutions of support. Cherry Township is eligible for a Federal Grant, which could connect over 900 homes to fiber network.

1. Ranger Party –Report.

Jim Fisher and Director Giorgi attended the meeting. Director Giorgi stated it is a worthwhile event to talk to legislators in a less formal setting.

c. Broadband Lobby Day Report.

Director Giorgi stated speakers began at 9 AM on Broadband Lobby Day, which was followed by time to speak with the legislators. There was a hearing on the Broadband Bill in the Senate Agriculture Committee that afternoon. The amendment to increase the funding from $30 million to $70 million failed.

**New Business:**

1. Legislative Update – Easter Recess.

Director Giorgi reviewed the legislative report received from Gary Cerkvenik, as follows:

* Mandatory end of session on May 20th.
* Governor and House have proposed significant increases in spending through federal tax conformity, 20-cent increase in gas tax, extension of health care provider tax. The Senate has not included these items, therefore, the two main parties are apart significantly on budget over next two years.
* Representative Lislegard got the taconite municipal aid in the tax bill, which increases the aid to the 1983 levels, adds an annual escalator and get rid of the reduction in aid provision when production drops below the 40 million tons. This has moved to the Conference Committee.
* The House Environmental Finance Bills includes a specific appropriation to keep the Hill Annex mine open as a state park.
* Funding for the Caniesto mine, Hill Annex mine and St. James pit water diversion project did not survive in the House or Senate omnibus bills. $200,000 is included in the House bonding bill for the Western mines only, specifically leaving out the St. James pit.
* The House appropriated an additional $30 million for Local Government Aid, and includes a one-time grant of $5.4 million for the City of Virginia to finish payment for the Highway 53 project.
* The RAMS initiative to provide additional money for older school buildings did not get into the House or Senate Education finance bills.
* $802,000 was included in the Senate Education Finance bill for the six-month school summer program. Hopefully, this will come through the Conference Committee.
* The RAMS proposal to mandate US Highway 169 four land construction project in the MNDOT ten-year plan did not get a hearing. Talks continue with MNDOT to advance funding for this project.
* The new Commissioner of Health and Human Services did not support the funding for the renovation of the Buhl School for a crisis center for the youth. According to Buhl Mayor Klarich, they will continue to try to move the project forward.
* RAMS fought off efforts by St. Louis County to take five cents per ton from the Iron Range school account and efforts to appropriate $5 million for the DJJ Fund for a scholarship program for area community colleges.
* A bill to create an advisory committee moved through the Senate, but did not get a hearing in the House. A recommendation came back to continue to have an advisory task force. Conversations will continue with the eleven tribal nations on wild rice standards.
* The Governor proposed a $1.2 billion bonding bill, with no local projects. The House released their bonding bill at $1.5 billion. The Senate has not held any bonding hearings this session. Hopefully, there will be a small bonding bill agreed to at the end of the session.
* Both the House and Senate have appropriated large sums of grant money to continue to build the ATV trail system from the Quad cities to Voyageurs National Park to Ely and Lake County.

1. Fall out from letter on HF 2736.

Director Giorgi stated he sent out a letter to Representative Mary Murphy regarding RAMS opposition to House File 2736. The letter included the misuse of a word that was not appreciated by the Representative; therefore, a letter of apology was sent out.

**Board Member Updates:**

1. Ron Pittman provided an update on Cherry Township:

* Cherry Township launched its new website, which includes a lot of good information.
* He is very proud of Cherry Township’s baseball/softball complex. With the help of donations, two electronic scoreboards were installed. They are currently in the process of obtaining funds and are working with Lake Country Power to get lights installed on one of the fields. They are also in the process of enlarging another field to accommodate the 14 and older kids.
* Installed two dugouts on t-ball field with a grant received from the Minnesota Twins.
* Improvements made to Cherry Township buildings: Blacktopped and striped the Town Hall parking lot; installed new roof on the Fire Hall and out buildings; painted benches.
* Purchased a used fire ladder truck, 4 x 4 rescue vehicle and a new brush truck/plow.
* Currently in the process to bring broadband internet to Cherry Township and the surrounding communities. Representatives from CTC will be holding a meeting on May 7th to inform Cherry Township residents of the internet broadband project.
* Property values in Cherry Township are on the rise, which he contributes to the Cherry school system.

b. David Pace provided an update on the Greenway Schools:

* Waiting for legislative session to end, prior to finalizing the school budget.
* Programs are being added to the curriculum, especially at secondary level, that focus on natural resources and geo systems. Next year, businesses programs will be added to the curriculum.
* They are in the third year of a school collaboration that includes Greenway, Nashwauk and Grand Rapids. The curriculum incudes Capstone courses that focus on career pathways for manufacturing, health care, agriculture, business and education. Students will be placed in some of those fields to obtain hands on experience in the fields.
* They are considering doing a facility review to look at indoor air quality.
* The Greenway and Grand Rapids School Boards have set a tentative joint meeting on May 8th.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Cyndi Worshek reported on Finance Committee Meeting held April 24, 2019:

**Moved by Fisher and supported by Varda to approve the expenditures, in the total amount of $15,773.78, for the period March 28-April 24, 2019. Motion carried.**

**Moved by Anderson and supported by Lehman to approve the Profit & Loss, Budget vs Actual report, which shows 30.2 percent of budget expenditures have been spent. Motion carried.**

**Moved by Christy and supported by Pittman to approve the Balance Sheet, as of April 24, 2019. Motion carried.**

**Other:**

Director Giorgi reviewed additional items, as follows:

* A letter was submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on behalf of RAMS in support of the proposed revised Water Quality Standards.
* The Range Mayors sent a letter to Governor Walz asking for a meeting to discuss the Enbridge Line 3 project and Mesabi Metallics projects. The Range Mayors expressed disappointment in the Governor’s position on the Enbridge Line 3 project and implored him to halt the legal challenge and allow Enbridge to proceed with the line replacement. Regarding the Mesabi Metallics project, the Range Mayors do not support any further extensions on the state leases. They fully support debarring Essar from conducting business in Minnesota. Director Giorgi did receive a call from the Governor’s staff after the letter was sent. Hopefully, RAMS can facilitate a meeting with the Governor and local leaders on these two issues.
* A letter to Governor Walz from Itasca County and entities on the west end of the Range regarding the Mesabi Metallics project was discussed, which includes opposition to the disbarment of Essar. President Medure suggested that all the parties meet to discuss how to approach Governor Walz on a united front on the Mesabi Metallics project.

**Moved by Fisher and supported by Pittman to send a letter from the RAMS Board to Governor Walz requesting a meeting to discuss the Mesabi Metallics mine project. Motion carried.**

* Summer meeting schedule will be added to the next agenda.

**Next Meeting:**

**The next RAMS Board meeting will be held on Thursday, May 30, 2019. Note: This is a change from the regular meeting day of the 4th Thursday of the month.**

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.