

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 27, 2023 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

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

Roll Call of Board:

Present: **Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids);** Richard Aldrich (ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn); **Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Gary Friedlieb (City of Virginia);** Jennifer Hoffman-Sacoman (City of Hibbing); **Dan Goette (City of Aurora); Pamela LaFrenier (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); Julie Lucas (French Township); Philip Medure (Great Scott 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); Cherie Grams (City of Hoyt Lakes)**

Absent: City of Silver Bay; City of Ely; City of Chisholm

Also Present: **Steve Giorgi, Interim Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Admin Assistant; Jeff Anderson; Paul Peltier; Kristi Kane (ARDC)**
(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

The agenda was amended to remove 7a and add 8g-approve executive director contract and 8h-Stauber hearing. A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Fisher and supported by Adams. Motion carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from March 23, 2023, and special meeting minutes from April 6, 2023, was made by Kalmi and supported by Saari. Motion carried.

Appearances:

The Board was joined by Kristi Kane from the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, specifically the director of the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging.

The Agency has 4 primary roles:

- 1) Access (Senior LinkAge Line)- Medicare Part B counseling, referrals to transportation services, assistance in signing up for programs at no charge
- 2) Administrative (Home and community-based service)-\$2.6M in funding last year in Arrowhead region, includes AEOA and Legal Aid
- 3) Advocacy (state level)
- 4) Development-Fill gaps in service provision. Transportation, chore services, and affordable housing

Some of the services that are funded by the Intrastate Funding Formula are nutrition, transportation, chore services, caregiver services, and health promotion classes. These programs are designed to help people stay in their homes longer, so they don't have to spend down to long term care. The Arrowhead region receives 9.03% of the state's funds. Kathy Chavers is the only representative for the Arrowhead region on the MN Board of Aging.

Kristi asked for a letter of support from RAMS and individuals for a new formula that best serves all people living rural in MN. Public comment is open until May 3. See greaterminnesotaaging.org for more information.

The Board was joined by Board member Julie Lucas, on behalf of Mining Minnesota. The lawsuit by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness vs MN DNR was filed in 2020. They are claiming that the regulations for

nonferrous mining are inadequate to protect the Rainy River headwaters watershed. The lawsuit claims that the rules are not protective enough. Within the RR watershed is Twin Metals and the Mesaba Deposit. The DNR decided to take public comment and then decide if the rules are adequate.

Julie asked for a letter of support from RAMS in support of the current rules.

Director's Report:

See the Director's report that was included in the packet.

Old Business:

A. Dues Committee met and looked over possible options. Discussion will continue next month.

New Business:

A. Legislative report from Jeff Anderson:

a. Senate and House are debating tax bills = \$4M in tax cuts over 4 years, exempts some people from tax on SS (about 75%).

-LGA/County Program Aid increase \$100M (H)

-Construction sales tax exemption for municipalities and school districts (H)

-LGA/CPA increase \$40M each (S)

-Public Safety Grant \$325M for communities-one time (S)

-Rebate checks \$275/person + \$275/kid (H); \$279/person + \$56/kid (S)

-Fifth tier income tax of 10.85% on single filer above \$600k, married above \$1M (H)

-Multinational corporations = new tax (S) (H)

- Mineral Article extension of nickel production tax (S) (H)

b. Earmarks for schools, transportation, \$5M for Canyon Waste project, Silver Bay, Chisholm, Crane Lake, Biwabik

c. Bonding- 2022 bonding bill passed by the House in March but stalled in the Senate. Another bonding bill is in the works.

d. May 22 is the adjournment date, could be earlier.

e. Conference committees will start to meet next week.

f. Education- Funding increase 4-5%/year for two years; investment in special education. These may come with mandates (unemployment for food service, bus drivers, etc.; provision allowing teachers union involvement in class size)

B. Discussion was held on the correspondence on MERA-DNR lawsuit. A motion to approve the letter was made by Friedlieb and supported by Warwas. Motion carried.

C. Discussion was held on the correspondence on Intrastate Funding Formula. A motion to approve the letter was made by Kalmi and supported by Fisher. Motion carried.

D. Discussion was held on correspondence on continued ERDAC funding. A motion to approve the letter was made by Friedlieb and supported by Warwas. Motion carried.

E. RAMS purchased a new 5-month CD at 5% in Hibbing = \$75K. An old CD will mature on May 18 = around \$80k, which will balance out.

F. A motion to accept Ida Rukavina's notice of resignation was made by Fisher and supported by LaFrenier. Motion carried.

G. Discussion was held on the final contract for Paul Peltier, the next Executive Director of RAMS. The contract starts on July 1, 2023, and goes through December 31, 2024. Base salary is \$80,000/annually. Health and Dental insurance was a challenge; a stipend was decided on which equals \$20,500/annually for Paul to purchase his own insurances. PTO is 30 days annually. He will also receive \$600/month for auto stipend, \$100/month for cell stipend, PERA, \$100,000 life insurance policy, and disability insurance. There will be a 90-day performance review. A motion to accept the contract was made by Friedlieb and supported by Fisher. Motion carried.

- H. On May 2, there will be a subcommittee hearing with Rep Stauber at the Mt Iron High school, at 1:30pm in the auditorium, enter through door 4. They will be examining the mineral wealth of Northern Minnesota. This a very unique opportunity. RAMS encourages a good turnout to this event.

Board Member Updates:

Jennifer Hoffman-Sacoman gave an update on the city of Hibbing:

1. The city of Hibbing currently has 60 outstanding loans to businesses totaling \$2.3M
-22 of these loans have 0% interest totaling \$850,000 (given during COVID)
2. K-9 Chase won \$30,000 in America's Top Dog contest for a new K-9 after Chase retires, plus another \$10,000 for the Range Regional Animal Rescue. The HPD added another K-9 to the force in 2022, and K-9 Dottie passed the electronic storage device detection training. HPD is the only municipality north of the twin cities to have a K-9 trained in this, as there are only three in the state of MN.
3. Hibbing has a \$12.1M bonding request for the Hibbing Public Safety Building.
4. Hibbing Fire Department purchased a fire engine in 2022 for \$593,000. It was just received last month. EMS run volume has been increasing every year.
5. Hibbing Publics works department plows 227 miles of paved streets, 27 miles of alleys, and 90 miles of gravel roads each time the plows are called out.
6. Sewer Line Project has lined over 20.6 miles of sewer at a cost of \$4.4M
7. City services project: Hull Rust Mine View. Construction will begin this spring on the new visitors center with a balcony overlooking the mine and a new exhibit hall with a gift shop and balcony. The cost is around \$2.4M.
8. New pickleball courts
9. Cary Lake Campground will have 39 RV sites with electrical and water hookups as well as 6 tent sites. A shower and restroom will be constructed as well as a dump station.
10. Range Regional Airport will close the main runway from May30-June18 for reconstruction. Cost of the project is approximately \$4.89M with majority of the funds coming from FAA, IRRR, MnDot, and Chisholm/Hibbing Airport Authority).

Dan Geotte gave an update on the City of Aurora:

1. Aurora has a new Administrator with experience in waste water industry.
2. A new splash pad was added to a small playground last year and has been very successful. The hockey rink was moved so a parking lot could be added.
3. New work done to the community building: floors, windows, appliances, A/C and heat.
4. Water plant= projected to be about 80% funded. Will produce a better water supply.
5. Sewer plant= working to meet mercury requirements: checked sump pumps and adding sand filters
6. Hired a new blight officer last year, adopted stronger ordinances to give more power to blight officer
7. The city bought 6 tax forfeit lots
8. HRA= 10 \$500 matching fund grants to homeowners for exterior work on homes; this year we are raising it to 10 \$1000 matching fund grants
9. Working on ordinances= wind and solar ordinances to keep uniform, edibles ordinances together with Hoyt Lakes, rent ordinance updates
10. New cell tower went up last fall. Today they were trying to get it up and running, but were having trouble with software
11. HWY 100 (main street) will be done in 2027
12. A group of citizens came forward and asked if they could raise money to repurpose the old basketball/tennis courts into pickle ball courts.

Finance Committee Report:

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held April 27, 2023:

1. Expenditures for the period of March 23-April 26, 2023, in the total amount of \$16,154.62.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is on track.
3. Balance Sheet as of April 26, is \$438,379.55

A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Warwas and supported by Pittman. Motion carried.

Other: Itasca County is hosting a housing summit at the Timberlake Lodge on May 4th. They are targeting mayors, housing developers, and economic development in your community.

Minnesota is close to passing legal marijuana. The House bill does not allow for local control, but the Senate bill does. It will be worked out in the conference committee.

Member Floor Privileges:

Next Meeting:

The next regular Board meeting will be on Wednesday, May 31, 2023, at 6pm at the Northeast Service Cooperative building.

Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.