# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, May 30, 2019 – 6:00 P.M. NESC Office Building – Mt Iron

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by President Pat Medure.

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia); Gregg Allen (Superintendent’s Association); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Tasha Connelly (City of Grand Rapids); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Paul Kess (City of Ely); Ray Marsnik (ISD 696-Ely); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk); Gary Skalko (City of Mt Iron); Gail Baribeau (ISD # 706- Virginia); Jim Varda (City of Chisholm); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora)

Absent: ISD 2711-Mesabi East; City of Babbitt; City of Hibbing; City of Buhl; Great Scott Township; Superintendent’s Association; City of Silver Bay; Nashwauk Township

Also Present: Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant; Bill Manney, City of Chisholm; David Zins, City of Hoyt Lakes; Mike Jugovich, St. Louis County Commissioner; Paul McDonald, St. Louis County Commissioner

President Medure expressed condolences to the family of Dale Christy, in the loss of their son, and to Ron Pittman, in the loss of his sister.

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

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

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

**Moved by Varda and supported by Connelly to approve the minutes from Regular Meeting held April 25, 2019. Motion carried.**

**Appearance:**

Senator David Tomassoni was present and reviewed the highlights of the legislative session:

* Congratulated Dr. Noel Schmidt, Superintendent, Virginia Schools, on getting the referendum passed for collaboration of the Eveleth/Gilbert and Virginia School Districts.
* Approved two percent tax on health care providers to fund Minnesota Care, which was scheduled to sunset in 2019. If sunset, this would have been a $666 million hit to the general fund.
* Approved $543 million in new dollars for funding schools, including an increase in per-pupil funding, and restored funding in Pre-K and special education.
* Approved $40 million in broadband funding.
* Health and Human Services nursing homes were fully funded. Increase in MFIB insurance plan for assisted living facilities.
* Higher education was funded an additional $150 million this year. Tuition cannot be raised more than three percent over the next few years.
* Tax Bill:
* Federal conformity raised $660 million.
* One-quarter percent decrease in middle income tax bracket to 6.08 percent.
* Tax break for Social Security.
* Local government aid increased to 2002 levels.
* Increase of $30 million in County Program Aid.
* Increase in Taconite Municipal Aid.
* Approved one percent sales tax for City of Virginia.
* Approved reimbursement of $5.4 million to City of Virginia, to be paid August 1, 2021.
* Environment Bill includes lot of funding to Northeastern Minnesota.
* Settled two year budget of $48.3 billion.
* Named the Virginia bridge after Tom Rukavina.
* Opioid Bill was passed to include $20 million from registration fees imposed on opioid manufacturers. Insulin charge reduction was not approved.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi reviewed the highlights of events held in May, 2019. It was a quiet month, but many discussions were held to monitor the legislative session

**Old Business:**

1. Update on Rural Broadband Projects

Director Giorgi stated Cherry Township held an open house to provide answers to community members on the broadband grant. Over 100 people attended the open house. If the broadband grant is approved for Cherry Township, construction would begin in 2020. The City of Aurora may submit a grant request for their area and hopes to get a feasibility study done before September.

b. Range Academy Referendum.

Director Giorgi stated the referendum passed in Virginia by two thirds and in Eveleth/Gilbert by 57 percent. This was a tremendous victory for kids on the Iron Range. Dr. Noel Schmidt gave credit to the volunteer group that was so energized. Another key factor was the support of many major organizations, including RAMS. A Partnership Agreement between the two school districts will be done in early June and the pathway to consolidation will begin. Gail Baribeau, Virginia School Board Member, stated the referendum passed with the amazing leadership of Dr. Schmidt.

Kim McLaughlin stated the Hibbing School District has posted for a new superintendent and are looking at sharing services with another district.

**New Business:**

a. Lunch & Learn – Legislative Report with Rep Lislegard & Gary Cerkvenik – June 12 ???

Director Giorgi stated a meeting of the Iron Range Mayors will be held on June 12th, with Representative Lislegard and Gary Cerkvenik attending.

1. Lunch & Learn – What do you know about Fiscal Disparity? Film Making in Minnesota – June 26

Director Giorgi stated a tentative date of June 26th has been set for this Lunch and Learn.

St. Louis County Commissioner Paul McDonald was present and stated northern St. Louis County has been awarded a four year grant, $80,000 per year, for suicide prevention. This is the first step in helping solve the opioid crisis.

Kim McLaughlin asked if there has been any thought in funding an expansion of the UMD medical school to increase resources in specialized psychology. It was suggested that this idea be brought forward to Gary Cerkvenik for inclusion in next year’s legislative session

**Board Member Updates:**

Mayor Gary Skalko provided an update on the City of Mt. Iron:

* Heliene Solar Plant will be hiring a third shift of employees, bringing the total to 100 employees.
* Construction for a 70 unit market rate apartment building will begin in July, behind Walmart.
* County Road 103 will be overlaid.
* Working on a Fire Service Agreement with the City of Virginia.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Charlie Baribeau provided the report on the Finance Committee Meeting held on May 30, 2019:

**Moved by Baribeau and supported by Fisher to approve the expenditures for the period April 25 to May 29, 2019, in the total amount of $15, 197.67. Motion carried.**

**Moved by Baribeau and supported by Varda to approve the Profit & Loss, Budget vs. Actual Report. Motion carried.**

**Moved by Baribeau and supported by Fisher to approve the Balance Sheet as of May 29, 2019. Motion carried.**

**Other:**

**Moved by Fisher and supported by Pittman to suspend the RAMS Board Meetings until September, with that meeting held in the City of Hibbing. Motion carried. (Location for the September 26th meeting will be determined at a later date.)**

Director Giorgi reviewed the following information:

* A Special Meeting will be called before September, if needed. The RAMS Finance Committee will meet monthly to approve the finances.
* Reviewed legislation to modify the taconite municipal aid and tax law. Information was included in the packet to show estimated amounts for 2019 and 2020.
* Reviewed letter from Joe Balash to the Assistant Secretary for Land, Federal Government, in response to reissued leases to Twin Metals.
* Noted the IRRRB will be holding a Community Development Resources & Partner Funding Workshop at the Mt. Iron Community Center on June 5, 2019, from 10 AM to 3 PM.
* Attended seminar for Polymet. All permit have been acquired, including wetlands. Polymet is offering stock to eliminate. Current shareholders will be given an opportunity to purchase two shares for every share they hold at 38 cents per share. Any shares not purchased will be purchased by Glencore, who provided the financing. $400 million has been invested locally to date. Asbestos abatement will be done this summer.

**Member floor privileges.**

All projects for the 2020 bonding bill must be submitted by June 14, 2019.

**Next Meeting:**

**The next RAMS Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 26, 2019, in the City of Hibbing.**

**Adjournment:**

**Moved by Fisher and supported by Varda to adjourn at 7:15 P.M. Motion carried.**