

## Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

### Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 31, 2023 – 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); Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids); Bob Berrini (Morse Township); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Gary Friedlieb (City of Virginia); Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman (City of Hibbing); Paul Kess (City of Ely); 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); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)**

Absent: ISD 701-Hibbing, Supt Assn; City of Silver Bay; City of Aurora; ISD 2711-Mesabi East; City of Chisholm

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

#### Review and Approve Agenda:

The agenda was reviewed. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Weikum and supported by Kalmi.

Motion carried.

#### Approve Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from April 27, 2023, was made by Warwas and supported by Stolp. Motion carried.

#### Appearances:

The Board was joined by Jeff Anderson from Costin Group, MN to give a recap of this year's legislative session.

- This was a big year for the volume of bills and the level of activity from day one
- 22 major bills were passed and signed into law
- June 16 is the deadline to get new applications in for consideration for the next round of bonding
- **TAXES:** Sen Hauschild was on the tax committee in the Senate, Rep Lislegard was on the tax committee in the House; Both served on the tax conference committee
  - A. Social Security: 80-85% Minnesotans will be exempt from tax on Social Security (Married earners making less than \$100k/annually, single head of household making less than \$78K/annually)
  - B. Direct rebate checks of \$260/person, with an additional \$260/dependent (up to three) will reach more than 2,562,300 Minnesotans
  - C. Child and working family tax credit: up to \$1,750 per child which will impact more than one million families and could reduce child poverty by 1/3
  - D. LGA/CPA: each program will receive an additional \$80M per year
  - E. Homestead Credit Refund was expanded (a one-time property tax refund increase) and an increase in funding and modernization of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes to help northern MN counties
  - F. Film Production Tax Credit: expanded to \$25M per biennium and extended until 2032
  - G. The Mineral Articles in the tax bills were authored by Rep Lislegard and Sen Hauschild and include several provisions for NE MN including sales tax exemptions for school construction, it

authorizes the Commissioner of the IRRR to provide additional funding for school construction in several school districts, and funding for numerous projects on the Iron Range

- H. Sen Hauschild and Rep Lislegard included many one-time grants (\$6M) to local communities and non-profits from the Homestead account

**BONDING:**

- A. The last bonding bill was signed in October of 2020, after 5 special sessions
- B. Super majority needed for general obligation bonds
- C. A deal was made the Friday before the end of session
- D. On Sunday they passed the Capital Investment bill (general obligation and cash bonding)
- E. Included in the bill for NE MN was ATV trails, community centers, St James Pit and Canisteo Pit, water infrastructure, Giant's Ridge, statewide nursing homes, plus many more.

**OTHER FUNDING:**

- A. Legacy Bill: Voyageurs Nat'l Park clean water project \$2M
- B. Environment Bill: St Louis and Koochiching County ATV Trail development \$1.45M (dedicated account), Get Out More Grants (Crane Lake, Silver Bay, Redhead Mountain Bike Park), St Louis County Canyon Waste Campus project \$2M, and more
- C. LCCMR: Redhead Mountain Bike Park \$1.6M, Biwabik Recreation Facility \$1.3M, Silver Bay Trailhead \$1.97M, and more
- D. Transportation Bill: St Louis County HWY 53/Rock Ridge \$6M, Aurora Hwy reconstruction (\$3M); Lake County HWY 61 Two Harbors reconstruction (\$11M)

**MINING:**

- A. Some anti-mining bills were introduced but didn't go anywhere.

**TRANSPORTATION:**

- A. Gas tax increase
- B. Increase in motor vehicle sales tax and annual car tab fees
- C. Delivery fee for deliveries over \$100

**EDUCATION:**

- A. The legislation will inject \$2.2B additional dollars into the state's PreK-12 schools over the next biennium.
- B. 4% increase to the base per pupil aid in 2024 and 2% increase in 2025, with successive years linked to inflation with a cap of 3%
- C. \$300M a year in special education funding
- D. \$60M a year to offset the cost of a recent mandate that hourly, seasonal workers are eligible for unemployment during the summer

**LABOR:**

- A. Paid Family Medical Leave: Begins 1-1-26, 12 weeks family, 12 weeks medical-20 week annual cap, \$700M to seed the program, payroll tax to be split between employers and employees
- B. Safe and Sick Time passed.

**MARIJUANA:**

- A. MN became the 23<sup>rd</sup> state to legalize recreational cannabis
- B. 20% of taxes collected will go to local municipalities, along with licensing fees

**Director's Report:**

Interim Director Giorgi continued to monitor the legislative session. The May 4<sup>th</sup> Itasca County Housing Summit was well attended. There will be a webinar in June related to housing as well.

**Old Business:**

- A. Director Giorgi gave an update on the MERA lawsuit. There was a 74-page decision that sites the rules for nonferrous mining are largely protective but will investigate noise and light impacts around the BWCAW. This is considered a win for mining, stating that the rules for air and water are adequate. There will likely be a contested case hearing.

- B. Discussion was held on a potential dues increase. Director Giorgi sent out a letter to the RAMS membership asking for feedback on an increase and received two comments from corporate members.

**New Business:**

- A. Long Term Disability Insurance for new Executive Director: 60% of salary, \$3500/month, savings if annual premium is paid in full (\$1035.32). Life Insurance (\$100,000) is a term life policy, 25 year term: \$335.11/year for 25 years
- B. Discussion was held on the letters of support that were sent on behalf of RAMS. A motion to approve a letter of support for EV charging stations was made by Friedlieb and supported by Berrini. Motion carried.
- C. A CD matured at Boundary Waters Bank. It made \$1,323.55.
- D. The audit review with the Finance Committee was scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 5pm.

**Board Member Updates:**

Gary Friedlieb gave an update on the City of Virginia:

- Thank you to the Legislators and Lobbyists!
- Virginia Public Safety Project is the largest project happening right now, with demolition of the acquired properties taking place now
- Potential Marriot Hotel project next to the new Iron Trail Motors Event Center
- Downtown improvement grants: new restaurant, Social Haus Ax Throwing, the Tini Square building has been purchased by a developer with potential plans for retail and residential living space, along with grants for new doors, windows, roofs, etc
- The residential steam conversion is complete
- Street and alley projected are slated through 2024-2025
- The city has been approached by 2 housing developers seeking support for multi-unit affordable housing structures in the Midway area of Virginia
- The legislator awarded Virginia \$2M to offset the inflation to construction cost of the new Public Safety building, along with \$900K increase in LGA and \$365K sales tax exemption on the construction
- MN Task Force 2 Urban Search and Rescue team was awarded \$200K annual base budget for continued training as part of the public safety funding
- Silver Lake Trail improvement will commence this summer on the south side of the lake with the LCCMR funding
- US Steel has donated \$100K to fill the funding gap for a new Olcott Park arch entrance (Music in the Park every Tuesday)
- June 17-18 Land of the Loon

**Finance Committee Report:**

Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held May 31, 2023:

1. Expenditures for the period of April 27-May 30, 2023, in the total amount of \$13,677.79.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is far below at 30.7%.
3. Balance Sheet as of April 26, is \$425,856.72

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

**Other:** Director Giorgi attended the N/K school groundbreaking ceremony, very nice! NE MN Housing Forum Monday, June 12, 9am-noon via zoom. Wednesday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, Sec of State Steve Simon will be in the area meeting with businesses and community leaders at the RAMS office from 8:30-9:30am. The Stauber hearing was well attended. The incoming Executive Director Paul Peltier mentioned that he is excited to get started and offered his phone number, 218-431-1317.

**Member Floor Privileges:**

**Next Meeting:**

The next regular Board meeting will be on Thursday, June 29th, 2023, at 6pm at the Northeast Service Cooperative building.

**Adjournment.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.