# Range Association of Municipalities & Schools Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, June 25, 2020 – 6:00 P.M. Northeast Service Cooperative Building

**Call to Order:**

President Medure called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Roll Call of Board:**

Present: **Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids); Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia);** Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); Glenn Allen (Supt Assn); **Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt)**; Bob Berrini (Morse Township); John Champa (City of Chisholm); Dale Christy (City of Grand Rapids); Jim Fisher (McDavitt Township); Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay); Jennifer Saccoman-Hoffman (City of Hibbing); Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin); Paul Kess (City of Ely); Stu Lehman (City of Buhl); Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); Ron Pittman (Cherry Township); Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk); Alan Stanaway (City of Mt. Iron); Stacey Sundquist (ISD 706-Virginia); Dave Worshek (City of Aurora); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)

Absent: Supts Assn – 1 member; Great Scott Township; Nashwauk Township

Also Present: **Steve Giorgi, Executive Director; Lois Roskoski, Administrative Assistant**; Costin Group-Jeff Anderson and Gary Cerkvenik; **Representative Dave Lislegard**

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

**Review and Approve Agenda:**

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

**Approve Meeting Minutes:**

Moved by Zins and supported by Christy to approve the minutes from the regular meeting held

May 28, 2020, with Cal Saari added to the list of those present. Motion carried.

**Appearance:**

Representative Dave Lislegard, District 6B, was present to give an update on legislative issues.

Covid 19 virus wiped out all normalcy at the legislature during the session and Governor Walz was granted emergency powers. The State of Minnesota did an outstanding job in keeping the number of Covid cases extremely down.

A select committee was formed to make recommendations to reopen businesses. This was not the Governor’s committee. Democrats and Republicans collectively worked together to make recommendations to carefully reopen businesses. Representative Lislegard served on the committee to open up Greater Minnesota and pushed the Governor hard to reopen our area, with a focus on protecting healthcare workers and long term care facilities. The committee heard from hospital CEO’s, who had advised the Governor to stop elective surgeries, even though the businesses lost money. Representative Lislegard noted that FEMA has been taking the PPE supplies and ventilators from Minnesota and distributing to other states that need them, which is legal.

Regarding the CARES Act, Representative Lislegard stated there was a deal agreed upon by the Senate and House, but the deal never got done as certain legislators thought the funds should go to hot spots. Federal funds had already been allocated to those hot spots. The CARES Act funding was finally released and delivered, as it was originally agreed upon.

There is still a lot of business to take care of, including the bonding bill to fund critical projects with extremely low interest rates. Representative Lislegard is extremely proud of the House bill and is working hard with lobbyists and colleagues to bring our projects up front.

Representative Lislegard stated there will be a second special session, which will include a lot of discussion on the Governor’s executive powers. Lobbyist Gary Cerkvenik stated if the Governor and Legislature do not agree on a package before July 14th, they will be back in session that day. When the Governor’s emergency powers are extended, the State receives $50 million monthly in financial aid. Unless there is a leadership agreement with the Democrats and Republicans on the Governor’s powers, it will be difficult to stop someone from terminating them.

Discussion was held on the letter sent to the legislators from the Superintendents in Region 7 to reopen schools based on region, rather than state wide. Representative Lislegard stated he believes in the regional approach, but doesn’t know what the Governor will do.

Representative Lislegard stated the Range Delegation has done a great job in fighting for our area.

**Director’s Report:**

Director Giorgi stated the Iron Range Mayors met on June 10th and held a conference call with Governor Walz that focused on the CARES Act Funding, Enbridge Line 3 project and reopening the State. Governor Walz stated he would not consider the reopening the State regionally.

**Old Business:**

1. Membership Update

Director Giorgi stated the Crosby-Ironton School District sent their membership dues, so all the membership dues have been collected for 2020. DSGW has joined RAMS as a new corporate sponsor and Carlson County has given a commitment to join.

b. Letter to the Governor on CARES Act funding

Director Giorgi stated the Governor’s office acknowledged they received the letter, but we did not receive a response.

**New Business:**

1. PolyMet Update

Director Giorgi stated it is good news that the Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal and we are hopeful that they will address the rulings by the Appellate Court and allow the regulatory agencies, DNR and MPCA, to be the authority on issuing permits for these projects. No time line has been given for the process.

1. Legislative report – Jeff Anderson/Gary Cerkvenik, RAMS Lobbyists

Gary Cerkvenik stated the local governments are frustrated with the bonding bill process, as it has been two years and no decisions have been made on a bonding bill. Cities put in a lot of work to prepare their requests for bonding bill projects. Gary noted how difficult it is to get things done in times of crisis and is working hard to get the legislature back on schedule.

The House came in with a big bonding bill, but it did not pass the floor of the house. It was too big and they would not give their six votes unless the Governor ended his emergency powers. They are working on a compromise to limit the Governor’s power. Once that is agreed to, there is broad agreement on the $1.3 billion bonding bill. Lots of local projects are in play. Trunk highway bonds are above the bonding bill. There is an agreement on the general obligation portion of the bonding bill. The LCCMR bill has basically been agreed to, except for a standoff on a project in Melrose to removing an existing dam.

Regarding the criminal justice reform movement, Gary stated a caucus was formed in the House and Senate. The caucus will not be voting on a bonding bill until they vote on criminal justice reform, which will complicate closing the special session.

Gary noted the special efforts that both Representative Lislegard and Senator Tomassoni made by touring the sites that were damaged from the riots in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Jeff Anderson reviewed the formula for governmental entities to receive funding through the CARES Act. Entities must certify expenditures between March 1-December 30, 2020, for expenses related to Covid, in order to receive the funds.

Regarding education, a policy bill was approved during the special session that would impact schools for mental health training for teachers and pre-K programs. The House Education Policy Committee was meeting today to hold a hearing on the school year and what it will look like.

Jeff encouraged RAMS to continue to contact the legislators by email, letters or phone calls to express positions and concerns of the RAMS membership. The legislators should be made aware on the importance of the bonding bill and the large amount of time and energy that it takes to submit a project. It is also important to note the importance of getting back to the normal operation of the legislature, which allows for public input and democracy.

c. Letter on Line 3 Enbridge project

Director Giorgi stated the Mayors were not pleased with the Governor’s response to the Enbridge Line 3 Project. The Mayors followed up with another letter and the PUC Commission met and voted to support the certificate of need, which will allow the project to move forward.

**Board Member Updates:**

John Champa provided an update on the City of Chisholm:

* Introduced April Fountain as Chisholm’s alternate.
* The City of Chisholm bought out the last seven years of the lease for the Iron Trail Campground and the overnight camping has been opened up. They may be asking the museum if the City can use a portion of their land for tent camping.
* They are hearing a lot of positive reports on their Red Head Mountain, mountain bike trail, in Chisholm.
* Businesses are starting to reopen.
* The former Country Kitchen has been purchased.

Jennifer Hoffman-Saccoman provided an update on the City of Hibbing:

* Hibbing is working on reopening slowly and methodically. The race track, Mineview, parks and golf course have reopened with social distancing. The Library has curbside service pickup. The Memorial Building continues to be closed for emergency use only.
* The police has a new canine unit and several items were donated.
* A Blue Task Force has been formed to address racism.

**Finance Committee Report:**

Charlie Baribeau reported on Finance Committee Meeting held June 25, 2020:

1. Expenditures (May 28-June 24, 2020) in the total amount of $13,703.55.
2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual.
3. Balance Sheet.

Moved by Saari and supported by Kalmi to accept the financial reports, as presented. Motion carried.

1. 2019 Audit

Director Giorgi stated Christine Towner, Fort & Company, presented the 2019 audit to the Finance Committee. One adjusting entry was made in 2019 for depreciation, in the amount of $218. There were two significant findings due to lack of segregation of duties with only two employees. The auditor will prepare Form 990, as revenue exceed $200,000. Copies of the audit will be distributed to the RAMS Board when we meet in person.

Moved by McLaughlin and supported by Allen to accept the 2019 audit. Motion carried.

Kim McLaughlin commended the Finance Committee for reviewing the financial information thoroughly.

**Other:**

Al Stanaway thanked RAMS and the Board Members for the donation to the American Heart Association in memory of his father, Lloyd Stanaway.

Director Giorgi provided an update on the Iron Range Broadband Community Program. A survey was sent out with 20 questions and over 500 surveys have been returned. The consultant hired was impressed with the great response. A meeting will be held with local ISP providers to look for grant eligible areas that are unserved.

Director Giorgi stated the speed testing in St. Louis County is still running. Koochiching County has been an active group and Itasca County are complying with test. Carlton County should be coming on board soon.

Director Giorgi has been working the Central School Collaboration Group, which has been expanded to six districts (Hibbing, Chisholm, Nashwauk-Keewatin, Floodwood, St. Louis County and Mt. Iron/Buhl). They received a $15,000 grant from the IRRRB. Ann Glumack has been selected as the facilitator for phase one. RAMS has been the conduit for the group and is willing to help wherever possible.

**Next Meeting:**

Moved by Sundquist and supported by McLaughlin to forego the July RAMS board meeting. Motion carried.

The next regular RAMS meeting would be scheduled for Thursday, August 27, 2020. Director Giorgi will work with the NESC to determine if the building will be reopened by that date.

**Adjournment.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 P.M.