

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools

Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 26, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.

Northeast Service Cooperative Building

President Charlie Baribeau called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

Roll Call of Board:

Present: **Charlie Baribeau (City of Virginia)**; Cyndi Worshek (ISD 2711-Mesabi East); **Barb Kalmi (ISD 319-Nashwauk/Keewatin)**; **Dale Adams (City of Grand Rapids)**; **Glenn Anderson (City of Babbitt)**; Bob Berrini (Morse Township); John Champa (City of Chisholm); Shane Hoff (City of Silver Bay); Jennifer Hoffman-Sacoman, City of Hibbing; **Paul Kess (City of Ely)**; Orlyn Kringstad (City of Tower); **Stu Lehman (City of Buhl)**; **Philip Medure (Great Scott Township)**; Kim McLaughlin (ISD 701-Hibbing); **Pat Medure (ISD 318-Grand Rapids)**; **Ron Pittman (Cherry Township)**; **Cal Saari (City of Nashwauk)**; Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township); David Zins (City of Hoyt Lakes)

Absent: IDS 701-Hibbing (Supt Assn); McDavitt Township; ISD 2909 Rock Ridge (Supt Assn); IDS 2909 Rock Ridge; City of Aurora

Also Present: **Ida Rukavina, Executive Director**; Costin Group-Jeff Anderson; **Kristen Kranz, RAMS Adm Assistant**; Jeff Burgess (Mesabi East Superintendent)
(Persons highlighted were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

Moved by Adams and supported by Lehman to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried.

Introductions:

Director Rukavina and Admin Asst Kranz introduced themselves to the Board.

Approve Meeting Minutes:

Moved by Vice President Worshek and supported by McLaughlin to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held May 27, 2021. Motion carried.

Moved by Secretary/Treasurer Kalmi and supported by Lehman to approve the minutes from the Special Meeting held June, 24, 2021. Motion carried.

Appearances:

No appearances. Director Rukavina will secure appearances for the next meetings.

Director's Report:

Director Rukavina highlighted her activities during the month of August:

- A. Working on setting up the office. Tech Bytes came in to reset passwords and train her and Kristen on updating the website.
- B. Sent out greetings to Mayors, Membership, Corporate Memberships.
- C. Starting to do visits: Went to Grand Rapids to meet with Mayor, City Administration, Pat Medure.
- D. Attended a few broadband meetings
- E. Sent out a recent notice about a broadband meeting (regional meeting) happening in September.
- F. Met with Hibbing Superintendent Aldrich

- G. Attended IRRRB meeting about the American Rescue Plan. Sent out a PowerPoint about some of the grants that are available and beneficial to our Members. Economic Adjustment Assistance (82.7 M in our region) is available for infrastructure, technical assistance, planning, and revolving loan programs.
- H. Met with Twin Metals and wants to set up a meeting with the board. Guest should present virtually or in person with two presenters (about 45 minutes) for the Board at a Regular Meeting.
- I. Tour with Cliffs HBI plant in Toledo, Ohio Aug 31-Sept 1. Going with Rep Lislegard, Rep Sandstede, and two Reps from the cities that are on the Energy Committee. There may be plans for them to come to the Range to look at solar manufacturing plant and US Steel as well. Great to build these relationships! Cliffs will be paying for flight, RAMS will pay for the hotel. Moved by McLaughlin and supported by Kess to approve expenses not covered by Cliffs. Motion passed. Director Rukavina will check into a virtual tour for Board Members.
- J. Better in our Backyard Coalition asked for help distributing a letter they wrote to Gov Walz in support of Polymet. Link will be shared to the Membership.
- K. Infrastructure plan passed by Senate on Federal level, on to the House. Will be voted on by September 27. Senate bill includes \$65B for broadband (potential game changer). Many Republicans want to keep it at 25/3 for speeds, progressives want to push it to 1G, so they met in the middle at 100/20. Keep in mind this could change at the House level. Of the \$65B, \$40B would be going directly to the States, working with localities to improve networks. There is \$1B in Middle Mile which helps defray the cost of getting that last mile to people's homes. There is \$2B for USDA Reconnect Program. There is \$14B for the monthly subsidy (\$30/month) for lower income people to afford broadband (hoping to make permanent with this bill).
- L. Congressionally Directed Spending requests (earmarks) have not been decided yet.
- M. Moved by Pat Medure and supported by Adams to write a letter to the legislature (both Senators and Rep Stauber) in support of higher speed (1G) broadband. Kess stated that it is a good move to support the high speeds. Motion passed.
- N. StarBase on the 148th Fighter Wing reached out to RAMS about kids camp. They would like more kids from the Range to attend camp. They focus on STEM skills. They would like to invite the Board down in the future to tour the facility.

Old Business:

- A. No old business.

New Business:

- A. Legislative update from Jeff Anderson:

The Legislature has been out of session since the end of June, but possibly looking at a Special Session in September. There is \$250M set aside as part of the Frontline Worker Pay initiative. There is a group looking into how to disperse the funds and that recommendation is due by September 6. At that point, there will be a determination on whether to call a Special Session.

There will be bonding tours that are coming to Northeast MN in late September (Senate) and October 5-7 (House). Tour stops will include Duluth, North Shore, and Iron Range. If a community submitted an application through Minnesota Management Budget last spring, you are on their list and will be hearing from the committee.

LCCMR: Proceeds from the MN Lottery, usually between \$65-70M/year. Many projects in NE MN that have successfully received funds, such as the Mesabi Trail, Campgrounds, ATV trails. The LCCMR is in the decision period right now, debating which projects will make the cut this year. Several NEMN projects are "on the bubble" right now. People advocating for these projects are Sen. Tomassoni, Rep. Ecklund, and Rep. Lueck. Hoping for positive news for the next meeting!

Earmark requests are public and available on each Senator's and Congressman's website.

Reconciliation process (human Infrastructure) has a great deal of funding for health, education, childcare, Pre-k. This is an evolving situation, with more to come.

Encourage everyone to be in contact with your legislators!

- B. A motion to approve the contract to hire Kristen Kranz for the Administrative Assistant was made by Secretary/Treasurer Kalmi and supported by Medure. With no discussion, the motion passed.
- C. President Baribeau stated that the RAMS audit for 2020 went good. A motion to approve the audit was made by Lehman and supported by Anderson. Director Rukavina will send a copy of the audit to the board. The motion passed.

Board Member Updates:

President Baribeau updated the board on the Iron Trail Motors Event Center. Iron Trail Motors gave \$1.1M for the naming rights. Komatsu donated the new Zamboni. The project is scheduled for completion on September 21, 2021, with an open house scheduled for September 26. The center includes two full sheets of ice, a walking track above, and a 750-person seating capacity (with over 2,000 capacity using the floor space). In the space of the old Miners building, a new chain hotel will begin construction in March of 2022. The new hotel will have 100+ rooms, with around 50 of them being 29 day rooms, and it will also have underground parking.

Finance Committee Report:

- A. Secretary/Treasurer Barb Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held June 24, 2021:
 - 1. Expenditures for the period May 27-June 23, 2021, in the total amount of \$14,528.88.
 - 2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual. (43.7percent of budget has been spent.)
 - 3. Balance Sheet -\$376,876.34

Moved by Lehman and supported by Pittman to accept the financial reports. Motion carried.

- B. Secretary/Treasurer Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held July 22, 2021:
 - 1. Expenditures for the period June 24-July 21, 2021, in the total amount of \$27,400.69.
 - 2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual. (57.6% of budget has been spent.)
 - 3. Balance Sheet \$349,887.25

Moved by Saari and supported by Pittman to accept the financial reports. Motion carried.

- C. Secretary/Treasurer Kalmi reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held August 26, 2021:
 - 1. Expenditures for the period July 22-August 25, 2021, in the total amount of \$6,006.52.
 - 2. Profit & Loss Budget vs Actual. (60.7% of budget has been spent.)
 - 3. Balance Sheet \$343,748.21.

Moved by Vice President Worshek and supported by Pittman to accept the financial reports. Motion carried.

- D. Other expenses: New laptop for Administrative Assistant, Disability insurance for Director Rukavina, and new Quickbooks upgrade. A motion to approve these expenses was made by Vice President Worshek and supported by Anderson. Motion carries.

Other:

Paul Kess expressed appreciation to the local fire departments who have sent people to Ely and Babbitt to help. 25 structures in McDougal Lake were saved mainly in part by local departments. On a positive note, restaurants are super busy, and the City of Ely has sold thousands of gallons of jet fuel to the airplanes that are dropping water.

Glenn Anderson also expressed his appreciation. The Forestry Dept is turning the arena in Babbitt into a command center. The Red Cross has been given the gymnasium in the city building. Firefighters are working 16–18-hour shifts. Departments from Esko and Hermantown have been showing up every day. Planes from Hibbing and Ely come every day.

Director Rukavina brought up supporting legislation to help with wildfire mitigation or other ways to help.

Bob Berrini mentioned that his Fire Dept spent 10 days fighting fires on the Echo Trail and another 10 days on the Fernberg Trail.

Orlyn Kringstad expressed appreciation to Heather Kealy (Carousel Foundation) of Chisholm who brought water, drinks, and snacks to the firefighters in Tower. He also discussed how he and some other mayors around the area updated the local response and evacuation plans.

Vice President Worshek introduced and welcomed the new Superintendent for Mesabi East, Jeff Burdges.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the RAMS Board will be held at 6:00 P.M. on September 23, 2021.

Adjournment.

A motion to adjourn was made by Saari and supported by Lehman. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 P.M.