Range Association of Municipalities & Schools
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 24, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.
Northeast Service Cooperative Building, Mt Iron, MN

President Kalmi called the Meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Roll Call of Board:

Present: **Barb Kalmi (ISD 319 Nashwauk/Keewatin); Steve Biondich (City of Biwabik); Shane Hoff (City of Sliver Bay); Bob Berrini (Town of Morse); Rick Blake (City of Grand Rapids); Angela Campbell (City of Ely); Ryan Davies (Harris Township); Dirk Davis (Morcom Township);** Cathy Erickson (City of Two Harbors); **Jim Fisher (Town of McDavitt); Justin Fosso (City of Hibbing); Matt Grose (ISD 318 Grand Rapids Supt); Jed Holewa (City of Chisholm); Sheila Jensen (City of Nashwauk); Chris Koivisto (ISD 2412 St Louis County); Lisa Kvas (ISD 712 Mt Iron/Buhl); Renee Loeffler (City of Buhl); Dan Manick (City of Cook); Ron Pittman (Town of Cherry); John Rauzi (City of Eveleth); Noel Schmidt (ISD 2909 Rock Ridge Supt); Warren Stolp (Nashwauk Township)**

Absent: Great Scott Township; ISD 2711 Mesabi East

Also Present: **Paul Peltier, Executive Director; Kristen Kranz, RAMS Admin Assistant; Laurie Mesedahl (Ellsburg Township); Loren Mesedahl, Ellsburg Township; Shawntel Gruba (Iron Range Tykes); Staci Gilpin (Rural Pathways)**

(Names in bold were present in person; others were via Zoom.)

Review and Approve Agenda:

President Kalmi amended the agenda to add item 9.8 Consider approval of professional services . A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Fisher and supported by Biondich. Motion passed unanimously.

Approve Consent Agenda:

A motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from May 28, 2026, and RAMS Letters of Support for Impaired Waters List, Gas Permitting, Virginia HRA Application, US Trade Representative petition regarding foreign steel dumping and beneficial tariff application, New Range Federal Application, and RAMS Press release Opposing Mining Ban was made by Holewa and supported by Campbell. Motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee Report:

Hoff reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on June 24, 2026.

1. Expenditures for May 28 – June 23, 2026, totaling $16,661.55.
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is 54.5%.
3. Balance Sheet as of June 23, 2026, is $641,725.62.

Hoff reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on July 23, 2026.

1. Expenditures for June 24 – July 22, 2026, totaling 26,167.01
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is 65.5%
3. Balance Sheet as of July 22, 2026, is $618,857.31

Hoff reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on August 27, 2026

1. Expenditures for July 23 – August 26, 2026, totaling $21,743.39
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is 74.4%
3. Balance Sheet as of August 26, 2026, is $599,794.82

Hoff reported on the Finance Committee Meeting held on September 24, 2026.

1. Expenditures for August 27 – September 23, 2026, totaling $18,759.92
2. Profit and Loss Budget vs Actual is 82.3%.
3. Balance Sheet as of September 23, 2026, is $673,022.42.

A motion to approve the Finance Committee Report was made by Pittman and supported by Koivisto. Motion passed unanimously.

Appearance:

The Board was joined by Shawntel Gruba (Iron Range Tykes) and Saci Gilpin (Rural Pathways) to discuss the economic impact of the lack of childcare and its effects on the Taconite Assistance Area businesses and communities. They discussed the current employment market where there are currently 1.6 job openings for every job seeker. They also discussed the fact that there are 2,163 children across the TAA with no stable care arrangement and that there are zero infant openings within a 30-minute drive of the new plant in Nashwauk. Rural centers run at a loss, and infants are the hardest to serve as they need the most staff per child. They propose a refundable state credit that is open to every employer. The RAMS Board was thanked for carrying childcare on its legislative agenda for years.

Director's Report:

Executive Director Peltier gave an update on some of his activities over the summer: see directors report

- Housing meet ups
- Member Connections
- Executive Coaching sessions
- Wild Rice Sulfate
- Brownfields

Old Business:

- None.

New Business:

- Discussion was held on the 2025 RAMS Audit performed by Fort & Co. A motion to approve the 2025 RAMS Audit was made by Holewa and supported by Loeffler. Motion carried unanimously.

- Discussion was held on a possible donation to the Permanent School Fund Constitutional Amendment Campaign. A motion to make a $25,000 donation to the Permanent School Fund Constitutional Amendment Campaign was made by Manick and supported by Jensen. The motion carried 20 – 2, with Kalmi and Blake voting no.
- A motion to approve the RAMS Comments on Mile Post 7 West Railroad Relocation, Dam Progressions, and Stream Mitigation Project was made by Biondich and supported by Hoff. Motion carried unanimously.
- A motion to approve a Letter of Support for City of Virginia housing application to IRRR was made by Koivisto and supported by Blake. Motion carried unanimously.
- Discussion was held on a resolution regarding childcare tax credit. A motion to approve RAMS Board Resolution 26-02 "Childcare Tax Credit" was made by Grose and supported by Kvas. Motion carried unanimously.
- Executive Director explained the Mineland Vision Partnership video project. A motion to make a $1,000 donation to the Mineland Vision Partnership video project "Reclamation" was made by Howela and supported by Biondich. Motion carried unanimously.
- A motion to Close the meeting as permitted by section 13D.05, subdivision 3 for labor negotiations was made by Kvas and supported by Loeffler. Motion carried unanimously.
- A motion to Open the meeting was made by Davis and supported by Fisher. Motion carried unanimously.
- A motion to engage in professional services for employment contracts, payroll review, and remediation was made by Grose and supported by Fisher. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Member Updates/Member Floor Privileges:

- Davis: Requested a presentation to the Board on data centers
- Holewa: RAMS should invite Barrett Ziemer from the Chisholm Hibbing Airport Authority to present to the Board

Next Meeting:

- The next meeting will be on November 19, 2026, at the Northeast Service Cooperative Building
- Annual Meeting on December 3, 2026, at the ITMEC, Virginia

Other:

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.