

# Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

P.O. Box 166  
Bovey, MN 55709

DATE: February 4, 2021  
TO: Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board Members  
FROM: Leo Trunt, Chair  
SUBJECT: February 11, 2021 meeting, Marble Community Hall at 6:00 PM  
(health protection protocols are to be followed)

## MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Agenda approval
3. Approval of January 14, 2021 meeting minutes
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Bills
6. Correspondence
7. Speaker: Tamara Lowney, Itasca Economic Development Corporation
8. Unfinished Business:
  - A) Priority items: status, planning
    1. Hill Annex Mine State Park, rising pit water, highway 169 improvement
    2. Field trip
    3. Other Priority item planning for 2021
  - B) Critical and Strategic Minerals
  - C) DNR regarding Board involvement in local minerals decisions
  - D) Tax Forfeit Property Land Classification Recommendations
  - E) Other unfinished business
9. New Business
  - A) Bank account authorizations and designations
  - B) Updates about minerals/mining industry, projects or new developments, issues
  - C) Member reports and updates
  - E) Community input
  - F) Other new business
10. Adjourn

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A Joint Powers Board			Officers:	Staff:
Arbo Township	City of Grand Rapids	Lone Pine Township	Leo Trunt, Chair	R.D. Learmont, Coordinator
City of Bovey	Greenway Township	City of Marble	Greg Tuttle, Vice Chair	Deborah Rantala,
City of Calumet	Itasca County	City of Nashwauk	Cal Saari,	Recording Secy/Treasurer
City of Cohasset	City of Keewatin	Trout Lake Township	Secretary/Treasurer	e-mail to: dlearmon@2z.net
City of Coleraine	City of LaPrairie			

Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board  
Marble Community Center  
January 14, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Leo Trunt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. AGENDA APPROVAL: One item was added to the agenda: 9(F) release and waiver for Nyberg Center. Motion by Al Guddeck, seconded by Merry Lee and carried to approve the agenda as amended.
3. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 10, 2020 MEETING MINUTES: Motion by Guddeck, seconded by Edith Dorry and carried to approve the meeting minutes as submitted.
4. TREASURER'S REPORT: The December financial report was sent to Board members prior to the meeting. Motion by Dorry, seconded by Guddeck and carried to approve the Treasurer's Report.
5. BILLS: The following invoices were received and submitted for payment approval:
  - Solutions and Strategies Group-Coordinator fees and expenses for December 2020 - \$390.74
  - Deb Rantala-Recording Secretary/Treasurer fees and expenses for December 2020 - \$197.30
  - APG Media-legal notice publication - \$76.48
  - Scenic Range News Forum-legal notice publication - \$27.25Motion by Cal Saari, seconded by Guddeck and carried to approve payment of the bills.
6. CORRESPONDENCE: A letter was received from Itasca County Land Department notifying of the meeting of the county Land Classification Committee on March 9, 2021 and seeking recommendations.
7. PROJECT UPDATE: PRAIRIE RIVER MINERALS: Larry Sutherland and Johann Grobler provided an update about the Prairie River Minerals (PRM) project. PRM has constructed an ultra high density heavy media demonstration plant west of Coleraine in Arbo Township to produce iron ore from existing stockpiles. PRM has commitments from the railroads for transportation of ore via the railroad near Taconite and Bovey, and to transport products. The company reports having had no safety incidents. The technology to be used by PRM will be wet, will be environmentally safe, and will result in no airborne dust. The PRM demonstration plant employed about 30 people this fall and a commercial operation could employ up to 300 people, plans are being made to reconfigure and use Plant 4 from the former Magnetation operation. PRM has been discussing the route for lowering water in the Canisteo Pit with DNR, in part because DNR plans involve routing Canisteo outflow water very close to the PRM demonstration plant area. Commercial shipments would comprise both lump and sinter products, samples of which were passed around for viewing by Board members. The Chair thanked PRM

for the presentation and suggested that at some time the Board may be interested in a tour of the PRM facilities, arrangements for such a trip could be made with the Board coordinator.

## 8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

### A. **Priority items: status, planning:** 1) Hill Annex Mine State Park, rising pit water, Highway 169 improvement:

1. The Coordinator distributed copies of the 2020 legislation regarding Hill Annex Mine State Park; no monetary appropriation was requested in that bill, which is focused on two policy matters, (a) the park would be operated and maintained by DNR until such time as active mining occurs, and (b) it would create a park advisory council (including Itasca County, Marble, Calumet, and WMMPB) which would each designate a representative meet periodically. The Board discussed and agreed on recommending one change prior to legislators re-introducing the bill at the 2021 legislative session. Mayor Tuorila spoke about the ongoing and recent vandalism of the park buildings, and concern about apparent inattention and lack of park management; Board consensus is to draft a letter to the DNR Commissioner for review at the next Board meeting expressing those concerns.
2. Regarding the rising pit water, copies were distributed of the law passed during the 2020 fifth special session which provides \$2 million to DNR for design and engineering of pit water projects at the Canisteo and Hill Annex mine complexes, in addition to \$442,500 for DNR from DIRRR. It was reported that a meeting was held recently by a WMMPB working group with Mike Liljegren of DNR to learn of and discuss project status, plans, and schedule, and to provide suggestions to DNR. The law that was passed does not contain enough funding for construction, local legislators indicated they are prepared to introduce a bill to request construction funds and need to do so before the end of February, however they need specific dollar amounts for the cost of construction. The law also requires the DNR commissioner to coordinate with WMMPB in a report to legislative leaders on February 15, however, no plan was laid out yet and Board consensus is to contact the DNR Commissioner for information.
3. Regarding major improvements to Highway 169 as the Cross Range Expressway, copies of the bill introduced at the 2020 session were distributed. That bill was assigned to a committee but progressed no further as legislative attention was focused on pandemic issues. Board consensus is to re-submit the proposed bill to legislators.
4. Other priority item planning for 2021: Interest was expressed in a Board tour this year, including Prairie River Minerals and possibly other sites or activities.

### B. **Critical and Strategic Minerals:** As requested at the December meeting, the Coordinator distributed copies of an August 2018 WMMPB resolution which recommends that several counties in northeastern Minnesota be federally designated as a Strategic and Critical Minerals district. The resolution had been sent to area state and federal legislators and key state department heads. Representative Stauber has expressed his support of the resolution, however, neither of the federal senators, no state-level legislators, nor any of the state agencies had responded. Another letter to area legislators will be drafted to reaffirm the past letter and invite the addressees to a meeting in the future.

**C. DNR regarding Board involvement in local minerals decisions:** The DNR offered a telephone conference in lieu of a Lands and Minerals staff member attending Board meetings due to state restrictions, but subsequently did not follow through with the telephone call. Board consensus is to draft another letter to DNR including a copy of the previous Board resolution containing the request for greater involvement.

**D. Board Annual Letter to Members:** The Coordinator distributed a draft letter for review by members present. A motion was made by Guddeck, seconded by Lee and carried to finalize and send the letter and annual contribution invoice with one minor change.

**E. Other unfinished business:** No other unfinished business was brought forth.

9. NEW BUSINESS:

**A. Board officer election:** The Chair turned the meeting over to the Coordinator to conduct the election of 2021 Board officers. The Coordinator named the Board officer positions to be voted upon and the voting rules as stated in the Joint Powers Agreement. Nominations were opened. Nominations were made for incumbent Trunt as Chair, incumbent Tuttle for Vice-chair and Saari for Secretary/Treasurer, all for 2021. Each nominee indicated he would accept the position if elected. Upon repeated call for additional nominations and there being no other motions or nominations, and upon a call for a motion for a secret ballot but hearing none, nominations were closed. A vote was taken and the motion was carried by unanimous voice vote for Trunt as 2021 Chair, Tuttle as 2021 Vice-chair, and Saari as 2021 Secretary/Treasurer.

**B. Updates about minerals/mining industry, projects or new developments, issues:** The WMMPB Advisory Committee recommended the Board take the lead in organizing and establishing the creation of a select committee to reactivate and promote moving stalled or new mining projects forward. Board consensus was that this recommendation needs more definition and information.

**C. Tax forfeit land classification recommendations:** The annual request was received from Itasca County Land Department for Board recommendations regarding property that has gone tax forfeit within the past year or for past tax forfeit property for which requests have been made to purchase. The Coordinator said that 42 tax forfeit parcels were listed, of which 24 lie within the Western Mesabi corridor. Board consensus is to request the Advisory Committee to review and make recommendations to the Board.

**D. Member reports and updates:** It was mentioned that Mesabi Metallics made a required payment that will benefit several local government entities.

**E. Community input:** None.

**F. Other new business/added agenda item:** The City of Coleraine asks WMMPB each year to sign a damage and fee release waiver for use of the Nyberg Center for meetings of the Board's Advisory Committee or for other Board purposes. Motion by Dwight Kessler, seconded by Lee and carried to sign the waiver and fee release.

10. ADJOURN: Chair Trunt adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

The next regular WMMPB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at the Marble Community Center.

#### ATTENDEES

Board Members:	Leo Trunt	Itasca County
	Al Guddeck	Marble
	Cal Saari	Nashwauk
	Merry Lee	Marble
	Jon Korpi	Lone Pine Township
	Dwight Kessler	Trout Lake Township
	Edith Dorry	Arbo Township
	John Tuorila	Calumet
	Nancilyn Meyer	Bovey
	Kory Cease	Itasca County
	Greg Tuttle	Cohasset
Others Present:	Doug Learmont	Coordinator
	Deb Rantala	Recording Secretary/Treasurer
	John Eloranta	Congressman Pete Stauber
	Larry Sutherland	Prairie River Minerals
	Johann Grobler	Prairie River Minerals
	Austin Miller	IEDC
	Kevin Krueth	

