



# Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

P.O. Box 166  
Bovey, MN 55709



RECEIVED

January 14, 2021

JAN 28 2021

CITY OF COLERAINE

City of Coleraine  
Briana Anderson, Clerk  
P.O. Box 670  
Coleraine, MN 55722

Re: Annual Membership Letter

Dear Clerk Anderson:

In 2020, the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board met monthly, except for pandemic-related changes, and continued advancing priority objectives defined by the membership. Some activities and results during the year included:

- Major Board priorities were (a) developing support for addressing the issue of rising water in the Canisteo and Arcturus to Hill Annex open pit mine groups, (b) establishing a more sustainable future for the Hill Annex Mine State Park, and (c) developing support and resources for major upgrading of Highway 169 as the major public transportation corridor through the western Mesabi corridor.
- Despite pandemic-caused changes in state legislative focus and manner of operation, state legislators were able to obtain approval of \$2 million in bonding funds plus \$442,500 in agency funds to support DNR activity to address the issue of rising pit water in the two legacy open pit mine groups, with emphasis on the Canisteo area where the risk of uncontrolled water outflow is greater;
- Bills were introduced in the state legislature by local legislators that would create DNR policy changes with regard to sustainability of the Hill Annex Mine State Park until such time as active mining resumes there and to provide funding to begin work toward major improvement to highway 169. The pandemic-related change in legislative focus resulted in these two issues not advancing in the 2020 legislative regular and special sessions. Board members testify at the state legislature when required and as opportunities arise.
- However, the Board and its members had presentations from and worked with MN DOT regarding safety improvements to the existing two lane portion of Highway 169, for which construction is expected this summer.
- Members observed and shared information as two major projects in the Western Mesabi Corridor, the Mesabi Metallics project and the new Prairie River Minerals LLC project that received permits and erected a demonstration plant during the year.
- The Board had a presentation from Itasca Economic Development Corporation regarding support programs that had been created in an attempt to deal with economic and employment impacts resulting from

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**A Joint Powers Board**

Arbo Township  
City of Bovey  
City of Calumet  
City of Cohasset  
City of Coleraine

City of Grand Rapids  
Greenway Township  
Itasca County  
City of Keewatin  
City of LaPrairie

Lone Pine Township  
City of Marble  
City of Nashwauk  
Trout Lake Township

**Officers:**

Leo Trunt, Chair  
Greg Tuttle, Vice Chair  
Cal Saari,  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Staff:**

R.D. Learmont, Coordinator  
Deb Rantala, Recording  
Secretary/Treasurer  
e-mail to: dlearmon@2z.net

pandemic-related issues, and from Community and Economic Development Associates regarding their development efforts and ideas.

- The Board maintained contact with state and federal officials on issues of local interest and importance. Some legislators or staff members attended Board meetings during the year to provide updates and discuss local interests and concerns.
- WMMPB was regularly represented in the Laurentian Vision Partnership, now renamed as the Mineland Vision Partnership, which has regional planning objectives including developing information and planning tools related to the iron mining corridor and other mining activities. There was also coordination with Range Association of Municipalities and School Districts on some items of mutual interest.
- WMMPB’s Advisory Committee actively supported the Board in developing information, suggesting ideas, recommending actions, and pursuing and supporting Board priorities and objectives related to the Western Mesabi corridor.
- The Board advises the county regarding disposition of tax forfeit lands in the western Mesabi corridor, and reviews, advises Board members, and responds on matters such as strategic and critical minerals policies and possible conflicting use of lands within the corridor such as a pumped storage proposal to the federal government.
- The Board developed ideas and has been formulating plans for 2021 beyond the continued efforts for advancing the three 2020 priorities.
- The Board gathered data, discussed, and agreed upon an updated member contribution structure intended to provide financial sustainability for the Board based upon contribution levels that more equitably reflect the size and ability to contribute of Board members and benefits that are received.
- The Board serves as a forum for sharing information about minerals and mining activities and actions or developments that may impact minerals and mining within the western Mesabi corridor.

Member participation is important to assure that member interests are known, discussed, and pursued. It is important for each member to be represented at every Board meeting. Every Board member benefits from WMMPB activities and accomplishments. As required by the joint powers agreement, each member government unit may designate up to two people to represent it at Board meetings and must indicate to the Board the names of its designated representative(s) if they are to be included in the meeting quorum and be allowed to vote. The joint powers agreement specifies that at least one of the local representatives for each member must be an elected government official (mayor, council member, town board member, clerk, or treasurer; or county board member or other elected county official); the second representative may be either an elected or a non-elected person from that jurisdiction. There are periodic changes in elected officials as a result of elections, and local government units may also choose to change who represents them. Please provide to the Board, in writing and as soon as possible, a list of the name(s) of your designated WMMPB representative(s) for 2021 and whether they are an elected official, a non-elected official, or an alternate for one of the main representatives, and any time there is a change.

Some Board activities are implemented with support funds from outside sources. However, local government members are responsible for sharing costs for which other funding sources are not available. Board members determine the annual contribution to fund Board activities and to leverage other funding sources. The updated 2021 annual member contributions are as follows:

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Arbo Township	City of Grand Rapids	Lone Pine Township	Leo Trunt, Chair	R.D. Learmont, Coordinator
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City of Calumet	Itasca County	City of Nashwauk	Cal Saari,	e-mail to: dlearmon@2z.net
City of Cohasset	City of Keewatin	Trout Lake Township	Secretary/Treasurer	
City of Coleraine	City of LaPrairie			

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Population 1 to 999 people:	\$450/year
Population 1,000 to 1,999 people:	\$600/year
Population 2,000 to 14,999 people:	\$700/year
Population 15,000 people or more:	\$1,000/year

An invoice for your 2021 member contribution with the new rate is attached to this letter, please issue and mail your check to the Board by the end of March 2021.

2021 is expected to again include activities that benefit and impact Board members, including priorities already identified and others that members identify. Success in accomplishing objectives depends upon member involvement through meeting attendance, working committees, legislative testimony, and sharing of ideas, information, needs, problems, and solutions. The Board meeting schedule for 2021 (on the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM at the Marble Community Hall) was established to minimize conflict with city council, county board, or town board meeting schedules. Your membership, participation, and attention to the items mentioned are appreciated.

Respectfully,

/ss/ Leo Trunt

Leo Trunt,  
Chair

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# Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board

P.O. Box 166  
Bovey, MN 55709



## Advisory Committee

### Meeting Notice and Agenda

DATE: January 27, 2021

MEMO TO: Members of the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board Advisory Committee

FROM: R. D. Learmont, Chair

SUBJECT: February 4, 2021, WMMPB Advisory Committee Meeting  
6:00 PM, Nyberg Center, Coleraine, Minnesota (note: health protocols will be observed)

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of October 1, 2020 Advisory Committee meeting minutes
4. Unfinished business:
  - A. 2021 Board priorities:
    - Hill Annex Mine State Park
    - Rising pit water: Canisteo/Hill Annex
    - Highway 169 improvements and support
  - B. Identify and recommend other 2021 priorities
  - C. Strategic and critical minerals designation and building on mineral resources
  - D. Educational/informational presentations for Board, schools, community
  - E. Project or permitting participation by Board, local government units
  - F. Project news or updates
  - G. Advisory Committee member retention and recruitment
  - H. Other unfinished business
5. New business
  - A. Election of officers
  - B. Other
6. Adjourn

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**WESTERN MESABI MINE PLANNING BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES – October 1, 2020**  
**6:00 PM, Nyberg Center, Coleraine, MN**

**ATTENDEES:** Doug Learmont, Chair; Tim Sullivan, Vice Chair; Kyle Bartholomew, Secretary; Melody Garza, Recording Secretary

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:06 PM.
2. The Chair called for approval of the October 1, 2020 meeting agenda. The meeting agenda was approved by consensus.
3. The Chair called for corrections to or approval of minutes from the June 4, 2020 Advisory Committee meeting. Sullivan noted a correction should be made to the ending line to note that the next Advisory Committee meeting would be August 6 and not February 6 as listed. There were no further corrections and Sullivan moved to approve the minutes from the June 4 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Learmont and motion was carried.
4. Unfinished business:
  - A) Board priorities and committees: The Chair stated that the three Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board priority items seem to be stalled in the state legislature as the legislature focuses on pandemic and related economic issues. Other than introduction of bills by all local legislators for all three priority issues, only the pit water issue has advanced. Mike Liljegren of DNR plans to talk at a forthcoming Board meeting about the issue.

As for ideas regarding Board priorities for 2021, the continued need for improved broadband coverage was mentioned. It was also noted that Board priorities do not have to be limited to items needing legislative action. Advisory Committee member ideas included 1) developing a primer and identifying opportunities for value-added mineral processing that could utilize local resources, 2) examining the economic impact of local mining production rate decreases and how to ameliorate them, 3) looking at the role and importance of suppliers of and need for products in our area, and 4) identifying new approaches of resource management, mineral resources development and others, that could result in new local projects. Discussion of new priorities is expected at upcoming Board meetings, with hope that Board members will bring new ideas to the next Board meeting for review, discussion, and priority setting.

B) Strategic and critical minerals designation and building on mineral resources: the Board has decided to defer follow-up action until after the November elections.

C) Educational/informational presentations for Board, school, communities: Discussion was deferred until more Advisory Committee members are present to participate.

D) Project or permitting participation by Board, local government units: It was reported that there had been no response from state agencies regarding a Board resolution and letter that had been sent requesting more Board and local government involvement in state activities related to mining and minerals in and near the western Mesabi corridor.

This also led to extensive discussion about activating existing projects, such as Mesabi Metallics, and closed mining operations, such as Keetac. Especially in the case of Mesabi Metallics, recent meetings by local government units with senior state officials, at which the state report indicated that there was little to no state progress and very limited state ideas regarding how to resolve issues related to Mesabi Metallics that would start moving the project forward while there was seeming unwillingness by the state to consider suggestions from knowledgeable people in the local area, including several specific areas where information should be either available or developed and pursued and promoted. Members also raised questions about whether WMMPB would be up to the task of being more involved if the state would provide more opportunities for Board involvement. Learmont asked what we can do for the Board as its Advisory Committee. Recognizing the current lack of state activity and lack of but need for more local involvement, Sullivan moved as follows:

The Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board Advisory Committee hereby recommends that the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board take a lead in organizing and establishing a select committee to reactivate and promote the Mesabi Metallics and other major mining projects within and near Itasca County, including assembly of key personnel and information that may be helpful in promotion and reactivation of the project(s).

Bartholomew seconded the motion and, following additional discussion, the motion was carried with all voting in favor.

E) Project news or updates: Learmont informed that the pumped storage permit application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) was discussed at the Board meeting and the Board had concerns with it, including concerns about limited ability to submit and respond to comments which in turn raised concerns about what might be going on but unstated.

F) Advisory committee member retention and recruitment: Bartholomew stated that he will reach out to one person who may be interested and Sullivan indicated that could also reach out to a possible new member. Learmont stated that we should also reach out to existing members who have not attended meetings regularly. All WMMPB Advisory Committee members should try to come up with suggestions for new members and contact them.

G) Other unfinished business: There was an update on discussion by the Board about its current membership payments and need for revisions to the payments or payment structures to more sustainably fund Board activities.

5. New Business: Bartholomew inquired about the Cleveland Cliffs/ArcelorMittal deal that was publicly announced. The Board should be aware of what this deal could mean to the western Mesabi corridor and the local economy with regard to local iron ore resources and also because Cleveland Cliffs would be reshaped from being a mining producer to a steel producer operation.

6. With the agenda having been completed, Sullivan moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Bartholomew, and with all voting in favor the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm

The next WMMPB Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for 6:00 PM on Thursday, December 3, 2020 at the Nyberg Center in Coleraine.