



Membership Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, June 15, 2022
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The mission of the IREA is to create a collaborative environment for economic prosperity in Northeast Minnesota by providing leadership, fostering partnerships and employing professional economic development strategies.

Name	Company/Organization	Name	Company/Organization
John Bennett	U of M Extension	Whitney Ridlon	Dept. of IRRR
Betsy Olivanti	City of Hibbing	Ida Rukavina	RAMS
Linda Jurek	Cook Co. Chamber/Visit CC	Tamara Lowney	IEDC
Tom Lambrecht	Great River Energy	Amanda Lamppa	IEDC/Innovate218
Kate Ferguson	Duluth Seaway Port Authority	Beth Pierce	IRTB
Laurie Kramka	St. Louis County	Karl Schuettler	Northspan
Max Peters	City of Cohasset	Char Conger	Entrepreneur Fund
Brad Gustafson	St. Louis County	Jeff Borling	Great River Energy
Rachel Loeffler-Kemp	Senator Klobuchar's Office	Brad Dolinski	North Itasca Electric Cooperative
Melissa Bahr	Blandin Foundation	Beth Drost	Cook Co/Grand Marais EDA
Craig Wainio	City of Mt. Iron	Laura Kircher	Enbridge
Carson Gorecki	DEED	Jennifer Wainionpaa	Park State Bank
Mark Phillips	Dept. of IRRR	Matt Shermoen	APEX
Jeff Stollenwerk	DSPA	Brenda Nyberg	Carlton County
Rep. Jen Shultz	MN House of Rep.	Stephanie Skraba	City of Chisholm
Janelle Greschner	Dept. of IRRR	Amber Lewis	LMN Fellow, Northspan
Jim Zerban	Virginia Plastics	Lisa Mrnak	City of LaPrairie
Vicki Hagberg	Northland SBDC	Shayla Drake	DEED
Scott Sundvall	Dept of IRRR	John Fedo	Ely EDA
Ryan Malich	Dept. of IRRR	Tony Sarago	Northern State Bank
Chris Ismil	Dept. of IRRR	John Eloranta	Rep. Stauber
Ian Vincent	APEX	Teresa Applewick	Laurentian Chamber of Commerce
Shari Marshik	Upper Midwest Film Office	Tony Jefferies	IRTB
Claire Peterlin	MN Power	Miriam Kero	Northspan
Roy Smith	Dept. of IRRR	Mark Rudolph	Grand Rapids Chamber
Amanda Gross	White Township		

- 8:30** **Networking**
 Coffee & Donuts
- Review Member Roster
 - ID Upcoming Priorities & Projects

- 9:00** **IREA Administrative Business**
Minutes from February 16, 2022
Financial Report
 Motion to approve – Tamara Lowney, Supported by – Tony Jefferies, passed unanimously

Welcome new Members/Guests

New Board Member

- Motion by Kate Ferguson to seat Claire Peterlin from MN Power an Allete Company, supported by Tamara Lowney, passed unanimously

Save the Dates for 2022:

- September 21, 2022
- November 16, 2022

9:05 Welcome

Mark Phillips, Commissioner, Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation

Legislative agenda items – water infrastructure at Giants Ridge for snow making and fire suppression, didn't make it through the session and will require a special session; Discovery Center needs some real estate improvements to preserve the campus

Funding for the Dept. of IRRR comes through taconite production taxes paid in lieu of property taxes so funding for this year is from 2021, payable in 2022 and available for FY2023. Do not have the ability to levy for additional funds so need to maintain budgets that are more level and create savings to smooth out the peaks/valleys.

Going to continue doing work in Downtowns, EDA Partnerships, BER, and have seen expansions at ASV and DMR. Workforce continues to be an issue as Iron Range businesses and organizations continue to struggle with hiring and attracting qualified candidates so, the IRRR has bumped up their training program dollars. Budget has been released for FY2023

9:25 Member Updates

John Eloranta (Congressman Stauber) – earmarks came in for a couple of local Virginia projects. Watching the Superior National Forrest topic

Tamara Lowney for IEDC –\$2.16MM has been raised for the Forge with many partners and will open up this fall in a repurposed building, boosting Thrive Up North program which is a workforce recruitment offering \$2k to incentivize folks to move to Itasca Co.

Tony Jefferies – IRTB serves 12 communities and leisure travel set an all-time record in 2022, higher than ever since 1970, there are some new facilities in the area so we're working on a Sports marketing campaign and a conference campaign

Beth Pierce - Executive Director of IRTB. Seeing that folks are still planning to travel and getting marketing going for the summer season. Did a welcoming communities event in Hibbing and offered out grants to communities for FY2023 to do more of them. VEMA is working on some outdoor activity marketing campaigns. IRTB will be at the State Fair and offered up the booth to various communities to staff it and get the word out.

Kate Ferguson – Duluth Seaway Port Authority. There are supply chain investments going in to alleviate international supply chain issues. Container traffic is very strong in Duluth and new traffic is spinning up.

Laura Kircher – Enbridge, Line 3 is operating and it's due to the support of IREA and the partners to get through the 8 years of regulatory process. Would like to present a report to IREA at some future date on the economic impact of doing a large infrastructure project in rural areas in MN. APEX is working on the report and it will come out in early August. BBER at UMD is also working on the report and this will be a good IREA presentation

Brad Gustafson – St. Louis Co. wrapped up \$3MM of CDBG, HOME, etc. Also \$700k in COVID funding just wrapped up. Introduced Lauri who mentioned funding for the unhoused population and domestic assault victims for the 16k square mile multi-county area. Working hard on finding out what the needs are and get a good program together for the \$2MM of funding to be deployed. Report will go to public hearing and comment in the future. Steve Nelson and Michael Vidmar retired and new staff is being hired. Cirrus, DMR, and Heliene projects all received some funding.

Brad Dolinski with North Itasca Electric Coop – talked about the issues with the power grid and what the shift from coal to a green economy is doing to economic development projects. Rolling blackouts are a reality elsewhere and will happen here unless we take some steps individually and regionally to make some changes to usage and infrastructure - good IREA topic for a future meeting

Rachel Loeffler – Kemp – Senator Amy Klobuchur. Over 90 apps for the earmarks this past year such as an East Range water project. Encouraged folks to reach out with projects for next year on broadband, childcare, roads/bridges. Traveled to I’Falls to see flooding and starting to work with FEMA to start the assessment. Senator Klobuchur visits all 87 counties every single year so, connect with her office to schedule a visit and be sure to ask questions.

Report from Pete Makowski – Senator Tina Smith is holding housing meetings to talk through issues, have been surveying flooding (the worst in many years), and affordable housing and childcare are the issues that they’re hearing the most about, right now.

Karl Schuttler – Northspan is hiring to expand capacity and get ready for Bob Palmquist’s retirement.

Vicki Hagberg – Northland SBDC, the Foundation was successful in attaining the Downtown funding at about \$4.2MM, a third of the need identified. Process is being developed to help the current proposed project funnel to narrow down. New consultant hired named Katherine Lahti to replace outgoing staff.

Amanda Lamppa – Innovate218 has another pitch competition coming up in December to give away \$12k in prizes. Dots are being connected, projects are being developed, lots going on!

Char Conger – Entrepreneur Fund, staff has been added to the organization around the 17-county region and expanding to additional territory. Mentioned Stride – BIPOC programming for new projects

John Bennet - University of MN Extension Economic Impact of trails in St. Louis Co. and will be doing a similar report in Aitkin. Doing some research on Talon Metals and economic impact

Shari Marshik, UMFO – Two new projects coming for August and November. Also have quite a few projects that have wrapped up and should see Iron Range impact of \$2MM and \$4MM in St. Louis Co. and starting a pathway for youth to work in the film industry. One of the directors of a film just bought the Black Bear bakery after it closed, along with local partners

Roy Smith, IRRR/Minnesota North – merger is complete on May 23rd for the 5 colleges and 6 campuses into one. Each will keep their unique identity on campus; however, operations and staff are merged.

9:55 Legislative Updates

Representative Igo – on the environment and energy committee, hydro power is not listed as a renewable energy source, and it should be part of the strategy going forward, along with nuclear energy investments. Carbon sequestration could be big for MN due to the deposit found by Talon Metals that, when mixed with carbon, creates calcite (an inert rock). We need to bring the investment dollars here to develop the technology for sequestration. Has also worked on carbon credits to write legislation including forest management on the land used for these credits – potential IREA meeting topic

Representative Lislegard – served as Vice-Chair on the tax committee and they came up with bi-partisan bill that didn’t get done. 68% of all funding comes from 7 county Metro region. ALS bill did get done, along with a few other bills. If special session doesn’t happen so much work was left undone. Hopefully after August primary the special session will convene. Mining is solid right now; however, recession will affect it and consequently the IRRR funding stream.

Representative Schultz – has been in legislature for 8 years, on the tax committee, etc. In HHS passed a large bill investing ARPA dollars, on the tax expenditure commission and is interested in sitting down with folks to talk about tax incentive programs. Front line worker pay was rolled out and will range between \$750-1500/individual. Rapid COVID testing kits are available (4 per family). Resources for mental health crises, increasing grants, school support.

Representative Ecklund – Passed first ever veterans’ bill in MN (had previously always been part of other bills). Ag drought relief bill passed, plus \$5M for seedlings. Lots of bills and tax cuts were on the table and he encourages us to call the Senate Majority leader to advocate for a special session. Critical care hospitals with nursing homes attached – one in Cook County will save Northshore Health \$800k/year

Representative Sandstede – very pleased to replenish the unemployment trust fund in a session that left quite a few things undone. Front line worker pay did get done and make sure folks in your community know about the application. Broadband pilot program in very rural areas was part of \$210 million bill. If you have the opportunity to push out veterans bonuses have been added to those post 9/11 for housing.

11:00 Business Expansion Spotlight: Virginia Plastics

Jim Zerban, owner, & Supporting Economic Development Staff: Betsy Olivanti (technical assistance), Craig Wainio (City of Mt. Iron), Jennifer Wainionpaa (Park State Bank), Janelle Greschner (IRRR), Scott Sundvall (IRRR), and AEOA

11:20 Regional Chamber Updates

Hibbing Area Chamber - Board member Jennifer Wainionpaa – BR&E committee working on downtown survey to figure out what's going on and what the needs are. Responses were a representative sample so; the results will be used to move forward to determine what the best program will be. Great partnership with the city is developing, Hibbing Jubilee is coming up, membership was retained at 98% for 2022 with the new membership levels being rolled out. Community Chamber directory is coming out in the next month. Leadership program graduated 28 participants this past month. Testified for two different bills on the COVID funds. Starting to work on a housing summit.

Laurentian Chamber, Teresa Appelwick – moving to a tiered membership dues structure, annual dinner coming up on Oct. 6-7th bringing in a great speaker who will lead a work session on Oct. 7th on community identity. Toured with Congressional Western Caucus when they visited the area with Congressman Stauber, along with the rural legislative caucus from the State. Looking to build up the Business Development Committee to do some BR&E work and advocate for local businesses. Transitioning to Leadership Laurentian and some programming around leadership training. Working on a relocation guide for businesses and workforce.

Chisholm, Shannon Kishel-Roche – Bike MS is coming to Chisholm in July in 2022 bringing about a \$50k in economic impact to the community, all-class reunion in conjunction with the Doc Moonlight Graham Days is in August, EDA put out some spruce-up grants in the downtown area, some building rehab is getting going, as well

Grand Rapids Area, Mark Rudolph – Range expressway funding is necessary, Range Regional Airport (GR at 38%, Hibbing at 14% in usage) is essential to the region, working on a report with GREDA to enhance walkability in a split road downtown, working with IASC on paid internships for students and some funding is coming in from DEED and United Way, membership is up overall by 40 new members and projects are starting to move forward.

Aitkin Area, Taylor Erickson, Cook County, Linda Jurek and Beth Dross – the partnerships are key to making the work move forward between the EDA, SBDC, and others. It is a policy-based chamber and do a lot of work at the legislative session and is transitioning into working with the business community to do more engagement and networking. Pandemic was good for Cook County and economy is 80-90% tourism based. 6 new businesses launched in Grand Marais, need workforce and childcare in their communities. EDA just did a housing study and Visit Cook County is launching a tourism economic study to understand the impact. Sustainability is an ongoing focus year-round and launched a campaign – Leave no Trace.

12:00 APEX Update

Matt Shermoen & Ian Vincent – extremely busy with projects right now (17 new ones in 2022); however, Ian is looking for some new projects to engage with on the Iron Range. Ian testified on HF-4134, a workforce board bill to increase the funding available for each region with very little strings.

12:10 Lunch & Networking

- **Range Association of Municipalities & Schools: RAMS Legislative Update & Redistricting Snapshot**
Ida Rukavina, Executive Director

She will be sending out a link to the redistricting which could affect the IRRR Board, along with other representative bodies, Broadband is still a large priority for St. Louis Co, especially since nothing happened in 2022 with RDOF getting in the way. State Border-to-Border grants increased their matching in projects so there's a pilot program underway for very-rural projects. Application is now open, but pilot applications are not – stay tuned.

Tony Jefferies made a motion to send a letter to Governor Walz, Senate, and House to encourage the work of the session get done and convene a special session. Ida seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Tamara made a motion to adjourn, Karl S. seconded. Meeting adjourned for lunch at 12:03 p.m.

12:45 Optional Redhead Mountain Bike Park Hike – Bring Hiking Shoes