

MINUTES
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
May 8, 2009

Committee Members Present: Margie Ritter, Mike Ives, Jake Goering, Shane McKellep, Dale Adams, Rick Utech, Steve Arbour

Advisory members present:

Present via Conference Call:

Chamber Staff: Bud Stone, President.

Jake Goering called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Frank Allen made a motion to approve the May 1, 2009 meeting minutes. Steve Arbour seconded the motion. Motion carries.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

STATE CHAMBER CONFERENCE CALL

Items addressed included a report on the Tax Conference Committee who seems to have changed course regarding K-12, Special Education, Nursing Homes and Hospitals by introducing appropriations, which had no dollar amounts. Also included in the bill is the 4th tier tax bracket on married couples earning over \$250,000 per year and an increased tax on alcohol. The bill should go to the Governor today and will more than likely be vetoed.

Also addressed was the Environment Finance Bill where \$7 Million a year was added due to an increase in permitting costs. That provision was eventually removed but the amendment regarding environmental permit streamlining was retained.

The Omnibus Energy Bill is in Conference Committee at the present and it still has an amendment that supports nuclear energy plants in Minnesota.

The K-12 Bill missed the deadline to get out of committee by midnight last night. Higher Education has some interesting items in it including an amendment that would totally fund COBRA. The State would pay 35% and the Federal Government would pay 65%.

The Transportation Bill is signed and done. Revenues are down to an amount equal to the amount that MN/DOT had prior to the gas tax increased that was passed last year as people are driving less now.

The Governor vetoed the Economic Development Bill and sent it back to Conference Committee.

What's going to happen with the State Budget is anyone's guess. The Legislature and the Governor have entirely different ideas on how to balance.

ACTION: There will be another State Chamber conference call on May 15, 2009.

CONFERENCE CALL WITH SENATOR SAXHAUG AND REPRESENTATIVE SOLBERG AND TONY KWILAS

Senator Saxhaug, Representative Solberg and Tony Kwilas called in for a legislative conference call.

Several items were discussed including the Upper Mississippi Forest Project, PILT being held harmless, the potential close of the Minnesota Shooting Sports Center, \$10 Million dollars for a windmill blade manufacturing facility on the range and the status of the bills previously mentioned in the MN Conference call segment.

ACTION: There will be another conference call on May 15, 2009.

MEMBER UPDATES

Discussion was held regarding Terex/ASV, the State Budget and the possibility of having a Mid-level Dentist position created in order to provide better dental services in the State.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 7:30 a.m. on Friday, May 15, 2009.

Meeting adjourned.

Meeting minutes submitted by Bud Stone, President, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce.