

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday March 18, 2024

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Chris Morley, Jan Guenther, Kathie Pautsch, Mike Mandli, Andy Ubel, Sue Scheer, Yuri Gusev, Tom Duffy

Electronically present: Madelaine Rekemeyer, Karen Manske, Bill Brown, Kris Bjerkness

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown, Kristy Maki, Shawn Connelly (on-line)

Absent: none

Approval of Agenda: Duffy move. Ubel second. **Approved.**

Approval of Minutes from January 18, 2024 meeting: Ubel move. Scheer second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Birkie 2024 was incredible! Big thanks to the Birkie staff who worked very hard to make this 50th Anniversary an amazing event.
- There will be an upcoming subcommittee meeting to discuss staff turnover concerns. Mike Brown will be part of this meeting as well.
- Shawn Connelly is present on-line today and was introduced as our new Marketing Director. He has been on board since January and is part of the leadership team. He has already made a huge impact on our social media presence. His background is in radio and television, digital media

marketing, and leveraging data and analytics. His goals are to make the Birkie digital experience as good as our world class events, and to keep our brand strong for skiers while also attracting new people to our other events.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.
- Staff are currently working on an appropriations application with Senator Baldwin's office for an EIDL loan for small businesses that have been impacted by this unusually mild winter and low snowfall. If awarded, this would be used for snowmaking infrastructure. Four bullet points for this application are:
 - 97% of people come from outside the Cable/Hayward area.
 - 75% of people come from outside Wisconsin.
 - 65% of people come in groups.
 - The economic impact of the Birkie is \$4.3M in local spending.
- A proposal has been submitted for camping at MTV by Telemark Stays. The proposal is for a combination of campsites, RV spots, and camping cabins. A total of 10 sites with portable toilets have been approved by the county at this time. A revenue share lease is being considered, starting with a short-term lease. The goal is to have tent sites and RV/Sprinter Van sites available by Memorial Day and one camping cabin by the end of the summer. Long term goal (after a 5-year grace period of portable toilets only) is to expand and include a bath house. A formal proposal is being worked out. A suggestion from the board is to consider an LLC for our properties and discussing this with Attorney Hooley.
- ABSF membership will launch on April 8. Board approval for pricing is required. There will be three date-based pricing increases.

Comparing 2024 to 2023:

Registrations: 2023 11,256 vs 2024 13,120

Revenue: 2023 \$2.3M vs 2024 \$2.4M

Expense: 2023 \$1.5M vs 2024 \$1.25M

Despite low snow conditions, we had more finishers this year than last. Bussing expenses were much higher this year (15K bussed on Saturday alone).

Predictions for 2025 are 10.7K – 11.2K registrants with increasing expenses. Budgeted revenue for 2025 is \$1.94 – \$1.98M.

Motion: Move that board approval for Birkie 2025 registration fees is an urgent matter and needs to be addressed and voted on today. Ubel move. Scheer second. **Approved** unanimously.

Motion: Move that registration fees for Birkie 2025 start between \$185-\$200 and shall not exceed \$250 for the final price hike, with final pricing at the discretion of the staff. Mandli move. Duffy second. **Approved** unanimously.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The Finance Committee will provide a full report next month.
- Birkie Enterprises had a strong year and will be making a payment to ABSF for approximately \$99K. Considering charging BE for expo space, royalty for Birkie logo, and website development.
- As discussed earlier, we are applying for EIDL loan for small businesses that were negatively impacted due to low snow/draught conditions. ABSF was impacted due to decreased trail pass revenue, increased expenses related to snow making, and extra costs for the Birkie events. If granted, the loan could be up to \$2M, interest free for one year, then 2.75% thereafter.

- A staff retreat is planned for April 22-23 at Minnesuing Acres which will focus on working through a variety of tabletop exercises, teamwork, and communication. A half day leadership session will occur before the full staff arrive.
- Mike Brown is conducting a competitive line review for all big-ticket items/contracts that we currently use for our events.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown and Ben Popp

- We now have over \$7.4M committed to the campaign (donations and pledges), with \$3M to go. The donation match during Birkie week was successful. There is a strong prospect list for \$1.3M.
- Focus is now on high potential givers and the biking community. The committee continues to meet every Wednesday.
- Cash Balance is \$432.
- Base Camp now has a roof; windows are going in next week. Goal is to have New Moon, Trek, and Backroads Coffee in by June with a soft opening in July and Grand Opening in August.
- There have been over 71K Google Map searches for MTV!
- Staff will be working on completing the fitness park and working on snowmaking infrastructure over the next several months.
- The next phase of fundraising will focus on snowmaking with the goals of increasing water supply and power. A proposed budget is being developed for a snowmaking.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Ernie St. Germaine has informed Birkie One that the Charter School is now part of the LCO school system rather than LCO University.
- The current goal is to continue to expand Birkie One outreach. Discussed forming a subcommittee (to include some staff and board members) to focus on this. Recommended adding this to the agenda of the upcoming staff retreat. Wish list includes expanding the program to include younger children, providing gear, and having a dedicated staff member. Suggested looking to other successful programs such as the Loppet Foundation's program and the Skiku Program in Alaska.
- The run series starts on Wednesday May 1 at 5PM and will occur every Wednesday for six weeks. The distance starts at 1 mile and builds to 5K. Last year there were over 100 participants.

- **Documentation Committee:** Karen Manske

- The Procedures Manual has been updated by Andy Ubel and distributed electronically to all board members.
- **Motion:** Move to approve the updated Procedures Manual. Ubel move. Scheer second. **Approved** unanimously.

New Business:

- **Diversity:** After discussion, it was decided to continue our current policy which states that individuals register for events under the gender assigned on their government issued ID. The previously proposed motion in this regard is withdrawn and will be revisited if/when needed.
- **Team Birkie:** Yuri Gusev

Zach had his best World Cup season despite illness in the early part of the season, and Kevin had his second-best career year. Three new developing athletes will join the World Cup team next year and several others will join the marathon team.

A small group met with Attorney Mark Hooley to discuss housing for athletes. There have been 2 fundraising events so far for this purpose: an original Team Birkie Alumni Dinner that occurred prior to the World Cup in Minneapolis, as well as an event associated with the 2024 Birkie. \$47K has been raised that could be applied to a down payment on a house.

Yuri is searching for a residence in a safe neighborhood, with easy access to ski trails, that can accommodate 6-8 people, with a purchase price of \$350 - \$400K. Anticipated down payment is \$80K, which Yuri feels confident can be obtained by fundraising. Yuri estimates the cost to maintain the house to be approximately \$42K/year. The goal would be to continue fundraising to pay off the house quickly.

Discussion points:

- ABSF currently allocates \$30K annually to Team Birkie.
 - Is ABSF comfortable having the entirety of these funds go to housing vs other needs?
 - Recommend continuing to investigate the creation of an LLC for this purpose.
 - Maintenance concerns were brought up.
 - Recommended that Team Birkie come up with a proposal that includes how much per year would be required to maintain the house, with a plan to meet the additional revenue (over the current \$30K that ABSF currently provides), and a commitment of how much will be needed and for how long?
- A request was made for Ben to provide the board with an organizational chart of the staff along with pictures of the staff.

- Our next meeting is Monday April 15, 2024, 3PM at Birkie Headquarters.

Motion to adjourn: Duffy move. **Adjournment** at 5:20PM by acclimation.