

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday January 20, 2025

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Kathie Pautsch, Kris Bjerkness, Andy Ubel, Karen Manske, Tom Duffy

Electronically present: Bill Brown, Jan Guenther, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Jeff Olson, Yuri Gusev

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown

Absent: Chris Morley, Mike Mandli

Guest: Rachel Frydenlund (Birkie Green), Connie Meek (Birchleggings Club), Alex Clark

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

Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2024 meeting: Ubel move. Manske second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Our next meeting is Monday March 17, 2025. We will not have a meeting in February.
- Jeff Olsen (attending virtually) was introduced. He is nominated to replace Madelaine Rekemeyer as our Bayfield County Representative for the ABSF BOD. He is on the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors. He is retired from the DNR after a 22-year career working as a Good Neighbor Authority and Forestry Supervisor and has skied the Birkie.
Motion: Move to confirm Jeff Olsen as our Bayfield County Representative. Ubel Move. Manske second. **Approved** unanimously.

- Board members are asked to stay after the meeting to make calls to inform potential donors about the final phase of our MTV Capital Campaign, as well as to thank former donors.
- Discussed forming a committee to review and update our current committees. No action taken today.
- Alex Clark (attending virtually) was introduced. He lives in the Twin Cities and runs a consulting practice focusing on non-profit organizations. He is interested in learning about the ABSF board and committee opportunities.

Birkie Green: Rachel Frydenlund

- Rachel (attending virtually) was introduced. She has been our events logistics manager for two years. An email was sent out prior to our meeting detailing the proposed new waste/recycling bins. These are custom branded with Birchleggings Club and Birkie Green logos with space for an additional sponsor logo.
- Birchleggings Club and Birkie Green are partnering together to fund these bins at all our venues as well as Birkie aid stations and finish line.

Staff Update:

- Jim Sokuć has resigned effective January 1, 2025, after 7.5 years with ABSF staff. He will be missed. Ben has stepped into his role in the interim. The Trails Manager, Facilities Manager, as well as both full-time and part-time grooming staff reported to him.
- Ronda Tworek is retiring on January 31, 2025. She will also be missed. Jane Flygstad has been hired as our new Volunteer Coordinator.
- The Sponsorship Director position is open. Current applicants do not live in the Hayward area and are looking for a remote/hybrid opportunity which is not felt to be ideal for this position.

- Mike also discussed opening a Schwab account for the purpose of accepting FEAB donations and securities. The process is simpler than with Enterprise and incurs no added cost. Board approval is needed.
Motion: Move to permit CFO (Mike Brown) to open a brokerage account with Charles Schwab Financial Institution for the purpose of accepting devoted securities. Ubel move. Bjerkness second. **Approved** unanimously.
- Two new events (Trail to Fat Bike and Stride de She) require board approval today. Insurance has been reviewed and felt to be appropriate for all our events and needs.
Motion: Move to approve the addition of Trail to Fat Bike and Stride de She events. Ubel move. Pautsch second. **Approved** unanimously.
- FYI: In mid-October we will need to upgrade our software to Windows 11 which will require a capital request to be added into our budget. More information on this to come.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.
- Staff are busy and doing a fantastic job. Our third weekend of winter events is coming up.
- Income streams are down due to another poor snow year. We are staying close to budget due to strong savings by the staff.
- Various options are being considered for Birkie 2025. A meeting is scheduled for January 27 to make decisions based on snow conditions. Snowmaking will resume at that time if needed.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The Finance Committee met earlier today to finalize the end of second quarter. Mike sent out detailed P&L and YTD Balance Sheet as well as Financial Report through December 2024. Bottom line is that we are in a good place.

- Highlights from Financial Report:

Total Revenue \$4.235M Budget \$4.308M

Total Expenses \$1.692M Budget \$1.796M

Net Income \$2.543M Budget \$2.420M

Cash Balance \$142K (as of 1/20/25)

A/R \$213K (as of 1/20/25)

Operating Revenue \$3.408M Budget \$3.481M

Operating Expenses \$1.636M Budget \$1.740M

Adjusted Net Income \$1.772M Budget \$1.649M

(Operating revenue adjusted for Restricted Revenue and Fundraising and other Telemark Expenses.)

Areas for attention:

Event operations are below budget by \$240K as of 1/20/25. We have three events left for this year (Birkie Tour/Night Race, Epic Bike Fest, and Fat Bike Birkie). \$100K net needs to be acquired from these events.

Trail Pass Revenue is below budget by \$70K.

Membership is \$42K below budget.

Sponsorship Income is \$9.6K under budget (basically flat). We have eight unsigned sponsors, two who have made verbal commitments.

Trails and Facilities Capital Projects planned at \$147K.

Expense Management (including fundraising and other Telemark expense) is largely favorable due to payroll savings of \$82K. (Although we still wish to fill open positions.)

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- The campaign continues to make good progress. We are almost \$400K into the match. Board members will be staying after the meeting to make calls to past and potential donors to thank them for their support, answer questions about MTV, and to seek donations.
- Park at the Start and Birkie Bash are upcoming fundraisers that will generate income for the campaign.
- Ben noted that we currently have \$2.4M in pledges. Current balance is negative \$718K (as we are borrowing from operations to fund the campaign). We have \$1.8M in projects left to complete (including snowmaking, biathlon range, pond/ice skating, bathrooms, and pedestrian/skier bridge). Thus, it would be great to go above our current \$1M match.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Birkie One met with LCO staff and students to introduce Birkie One and size them for equipment, some of which came from the Nordic Kids program. Stay tuned for dates of the first on-snow sessions. Volunteer if you can!
- Birkie One is also partnering with New Moon Bike and Ski to start a two-week Nordic ski program in early March with the Hayward Middle School (sixth grade) and is working with physical education teachers to set this up. Volunteers are required to fill out a background check form before being allowed on school grounds. Reach out to Chris with questions.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- Updates to the Bylaws and Procedures Manual were presented at our December meeting and final versions sent out electronically prior to this meeting.

Motion: Move to approve the updated ABSF Procedures Manual. Ubel move. Duffy second. **Approved** unanimously.

Motion: Move to approve the updated Bylaws of the ABSF. Ubel move. Duffy second. **Approved** unanimously.

Team Birkie: Yuri Gusev

- CXC is invoicing ABSF a fee for managing Team Birkie. This agreement has been working well for the past two quarters.
- The future of Team Birkie (including relationship with ABSF and fundraising sustainability) needs to be further discussed. Currently we have a sponsorship agreement with Team Birkie. Discussed if Team Birkie should have their own LLC. Recommend developing a task group to collaborate with Team Birkie and Yuri about this, with consideration that ABSF staff should not be over-burdened with Team Birkie organizational needs. Marit expressed interest in being a part of this task group.

Old business: MTV campsites

- A copy of the proposed lease with Telemark Stays for a family-oriented campground on the MTV property was sent out electronically prior to this meeting. Andy Ubel has been working with Ben and Attorney Rasmussen on this proposal and has made proposed amendments (including completion of the campground bathrooms by summer 2026 and limiting the lease to 10 years with no auto-renewal).

Motion: Move to allow Ben Popp to incorporate the proposed amendments into the contact agreement with Telemark Stays, after

which he can go forward with Telemark Stays to complete the agreement. Ubel move. Manske second. **Approved** unanimously.

New Business:

- Andy Ubel presented an idea that could help to increase younger directors to the ABSF BOD. He proposes the creation of emeritus director positions (up to six) at the board's discretion. This would give an opportunity to current board members that are up for re-election to become an emeritus director, thus opening an opportunity for younger people to become board members. This is based on criticism that the board does not have term limits. Emeritus directors would have voting privileges, but not be counted toward the quorum.
- Our current committees include:
 - Executive Director Review and Compensation
 - Finance
 - MTV Capital Campaign
 - Birkie One
 - Documentation (with expansion to legal review)
 - Team BirkieProposed adding a new committee for grant-writing and fundraising.
Reminded that each board member should be on at least one committee.

Motion to adjourn: Duffy move. **Adjournment** at 4:30PM by acclamation.