

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday March 17, 2025

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Kathie Pautsch, Tom Duffy, Chris Morley, Mike Mandli, Jeff Olson

Electronically present: Bill Brown, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev, Kris Bjerkness, Andy Ubel

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown, Jane Flygstad, Jeff Tumbleson

Absent: Jan Guenther, Karen Manske

Guest: Paul Thompson (Birchleggings Club)

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

Approval of Minutes from January 20, 2025 meeting: Mandli move. Morley second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Our next meeting is Monday April 21, 2025.
- Staff members Jeff Tumbleson (Senior Race Manager) and Erik Blow (Trail Manager) recently represented ABSF in Switzerland for the Engadin Ski Marathon and World Loppet meeting. They were treated very graciously and given a behind the scenes look at the management of the event. Jeff presented a recap with pictures to the board. Highlights: The racecourse is in a beautiful valley and mountain range. Expo is outside in the downtown area with excellent signage. Race finishes at a Swiss Air Base with a train station to shuttle racers from finish area. The Swiss Government helps finance the race. Each

municipality along the course “owns” that section and takes responsibility for aid stations. Bib pick up process is similar to ours. 13K registered for marathon. They had twenty-nine waves with alternating starting lanes. Woman had separate waves from men. Jeff and Erik took part in a 17-kilometer night race earlier in the week. They saw lots of Birkie hats and gear bags!

- Jane Flygstad was introduced as our new Volunteer Coordinator replacing Ronda Tworek. She has been on the ABSF staff for one year as a retail associate. She has lived in Hayward for 11 years with her family and has two daughters who are active in skiing and biking. She feels the transition is going very well as Ronda left with things well set up. She is looking forward to building connections with the community and networking with school and other groups. She is inspired by seeing people do things for other people.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- Jen DeYoung started her position as Partnership Director and has already re-enrolled thirty-five key sponsors.
- Partnership Coordinator, Kyle Parker, is leaving ABSF on April 4 to paddle across America. This position will be posted.
- Trails and Facilities Director is still open. Ben is filling this role temporarily.
- An events consultant recently helped work out logistics and pricing for hospitality events.
- Stephanie Martin is retiring from the position of Sr. Staff Accountant as of June 5. Position for Financial Bookkeeper/Accountant is posted.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.

- ABSF was recently recognized at a Bayfield County Board Meeting for the significant impact it has to the community.
- Ben will be attending the Worldloppet Annual General Meeting in Iceland in April. There is financial concern among some WL countries due to weather cancellations.
- Staff are working on a five-year strategic plan for ABSF.
- Our registration and data base is changing platform to Haku which allows us to be tax exempt. This will start with our next ABSF Membership registration.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- Preliminary Financial Data YTD as of 3/15/25 was shared.
Income data shows that we were down in budget for five of our events and over budget for the other 5 events.
Other misses to budget include Trail Pass Revenue, Membership Dues, and other revenue (beverage and retail sales).
Estimate \$75K-\$100K favorable for expenses due to cost savings.
General donations and sponsorships are ahead of budget.
Too early to tell if there will be an operational miss to budget.
Two years of low snow has been problematic. Staff is determining pricing for the upcoming event season and may need to ask board for authority to set pricing range for registrations.

- Considerations brought up by board:

Offer an opportunity to register late with an ABSF donation attached to the fee.

In low snow years, assure that man-made snow loops are available to non-participants during events and raise awareness that this opportunity to ski is available.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- The public part of the campaign is complete, with \$237K left to raise. Louise has new plans with strong prospects. Ben thanked board members for fundraising phone calls that proved to be very helpful with the campaign.
- The Paving Stone fundraiser is going well; discussed increasing this opportunity.
- The bridge design is completed and will offer thirty-two donor recognition opportunities. Details are being worked out.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Despite the low snow year, Birkie One had a good season working with LCO fifth grade classes. They had 5 ski days. LCO teachers were extremely helpful. Equipment was a challenge. Nordic Kids donated thirteen pairs of skis. Looking into obtaining about twenty pairs of Nordic Rock skis. Plan is to support the relationship with LCO through a summer/fall running series.
- The challenge for Birkie One at this point is how broad the program should be. Currently the program is entirely driven by volunteers. To make the program broader, a staff person would be beneficial. The committee will be meeting to further discuss these topics.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- The updated Bylaws and Procedures Manual have been posted on the ABSF website.
- At our last meeting, consideration of adding emeritus positions to the ABSF BOD was made by Andy Ubel. The goal of this is to open positions on the board for new/younger members. There are thirteen board of directors with 10 elected positions.

Andy would like to consider authorizing up to six emeritus directors which would entail attending meetings, serving on committees, and voting rights. The emeritus position would be for three years, thereafter subject to reappointment either by a committee or the President.

Andy will write up a formal proposal to present at our next meeting.

Team Birkie: Yuri Gusev

- Team Birkie just finished the World Championship races and had a successful season. There are three World Cup Races left this season. Now looking at applicants/bios for next year's team.
- Julie Ensrud has stepped down as head coach. A decision for her replacement will be made soon with the athletes weighing in on this decision.
- Final fundraising push in in progress. Total revenue from all sources is about \$100K. Donors are buying a house for athletes to live and will lease to athletes for nominal fee.

Birchleggings Club and Birkie Green: Paul Thompson

- Birchleggings Club was thanked for their \$10K donation to the Telemark Capital Campaign. They also donated \$4,500 for reusable waste containers.

- Birchleggings membership is growing with thirty new members since the expo and now up to about 400 total. Skiers who have completed a combination of 20 Kortess and/or Birkies are now invited to the club. Birchleggings Club is considering ways to help with Birkie One initiative such as helping with LCO events and working on trail maintenance.
- Birkie Green has donated an electric snowmobile to ABSF which is working well. Looking into electric chain saws for trail work. Continuing to look at ways to decrease waste (such as cups at events) and to reuse (such as a “swag swap” or donating to charity).
- The Birchleggings Club is hosting a Golf Tournament on July 17 with goal to raise \$10K. ABSF BOD are invited to attend.

Old business: MTV campsites

- The agreement with Telemark Stays Campground is progressing with three items to be worked out:
 - Right of first refusal.
 - Request to increase campsites from 10 to 30, which would require more land and approval from the county.
 - Length of agreement (concern that a 10-year term is too short in lieu of the investment into the bathhouse).

New Business:

- Our next meeting is April 21, 2025, 3PM at Birkie Headquarters.

Motion to adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 4:55PM by proclamation.