

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday April 21, 2025

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Kathie Pautsch, Tom Duffy, Andy Ubel, Mike Mandli, Jan Guenther, Bill Brown, Karen Manske

Electronically present: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev, Kris Bjerkness, Chris Morley

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown, Jen DeYoung

Absent: Jeff Olson

Guest: Paul Thompson (Birchleggings Club)

Approval of Agenda (with addition of introduction of Jen De Young and moving Birchleggings Club up earlier in the agenda): Mandli move. Manske second. **Approved.**

Approval of Minutes from March 17, 2025 meeting: Mandli move. Guenther second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- The date of the Annual Meeting has been changed to Saturday August 2, 2025. Our next board meeting is Monday May 19, 2025.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: Paul Thompson

- The group will be meeting at the Samuel Johnson Outdoor Center at 00 Trailhead on May 30 to recycle Birkie bibs. All are welcome to help. Last year 5,000 bibs were recycled.

- The following Birchleggings Club fundraising events are scheduled:
Dakota Trail Bicycle Ride on Thursday June 12, 2025.
Disc Golf and Dinner on Thursday June 26.
Golf Classic on Thursday July 17, 2025.
- A trail improvement/clean-up event is planned for August 2nd to coincide with the ABSF Annual meeting. Plan is to involve youth. Discussed opening this up to volunteer local to increase participation. Andy volunteered to donate refreshments for this event.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- Jen DeYoung was introduced. She started her role as Partnership Director the week before the Birkie. She has a 14-year history of working in both public and private sectors. She and her family moved to the area in 2020. Her family (including two daughters) are Birkie enthusiasts. She sees significant potential to increase partnerships and elevate the organization. Goals are to bring on new partners and value existing partners, increase diversity of sponsors, and increase national sponsors.
- Trails and Facilities Director is still open. Ben is filling this role temporarily.
- Stephanie Martin is retiring from the position of Sr. Staff Accountant as of June 5. Currently looking at quotes from accounting firms to manage some of the work.
- Last week Redgy Jorstad (Marketing and Content Coordinator) announced that she will be leaving at the end of the month to have more time with her family. There is discussion of the possibility of a part time/remote position.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

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

- The shift to the (tax exempt) Haku platform has started with the membership drive. We have five events open on the new platform. RunSignUp will be phased out after the Birkie Trail Run is complete.
- A recent meeting with Telemark Stays to discuss the campground went well. Details are being worked out.
- Ben is working with the state about a legal process to remove a gas tax from an old road at MTV.
- Due to Oak Wilt restrictions, trail work cannot be started until July 15.
- Staff continue to work on Strategic Plan. Due to weather changes, event revenue has decreased over the past years. Vision is to promote ABSF as offering year-round opportunities for outdoor experiences. Working to use the asset structure that we now have, and to increase the impact and sustainability of the infrastructure.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The Finance Committee met prior to this meeting.
- The ABSF 2023-2024 Audit Report was shared prior to the meeting. This was a clean audit. Adjustments were made that did not affect overall numbers. This report requires formal acknowledgement from the board.

Based on this audit, the following recommendations were made:

Recommend that we have another accountant review the financials each month. Mike Brown is looking into the cost of this and does have an individual in mind who has worked with ABSF previously.

Recommend that the ABSF Treasurer periodically review and approve journal entries throughout the year.

Motion: Move to appoint Kris Bjerkness as the approver of financial data and entries on a monthly or quarterly basis (frequency to be decided). Mandli Move. Duffy second. **Approved** unanimously.

Motion: Move to formally acknowledge that the ABSF BOD has received and reviewed the 2023-2024 Audit Report. Mandli move. Duffy second. **Approved** unanimously.

- The ABSF Financial Performance Summary YTD as of May 2025 was shared electronically prior to the meeting. To help improve the summaries, they will be based on Headwinds and Tailwinds in the future.

Key Highlights:

Operating Income: \$4.076M

Total Expenses: \$3.746M

Net Income: \$2.065M

Operating Net Income: \$408K

Total Revenue: \$5.811M

Balance Sheet is favorable.

Revenue over the winter was soft due to decreased event revenue (Fat Bike Birkie, Birkie Tour/Night Race were down in numbers). More revenue is needed to get close to a balanced budget by year end.

Budgeting process was started in late March and is about \$100K short, but still early in the process.

Two draws from our line of credit (totaling \$200K) were taken to manage short-term pressure, which will improve with the opening of Birkie week registrations.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- The entire campaign total is \$10.2M, with \$600K left to raise over the next several years. \$6.5M received as gifts; the rest from grants. We have \$2.4M pledged to come in over the next four years. We have

approximately \$780K from potential donors who have not yet committed. There is an opportunity for naming rights to the Birkie Start for \$500K.

- Due to economic circumstances, most future projects will be more expensive than originally planned. The committee is considering options for these.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Steve Thatcher has reached out to the committee about his strong interest in Birkie One. He has agreed to fund 25 pairs of Nordic Rock skis to support the program.
- The committee continues to focus on the sustainability of the program and increasing the reach of Birkie One to other populations.
- The weekly spring run/walk – Ziigwan Bimibaato Series begins on Wednesday May 7 and will happen every Wednesday for 4 weeks starting at 5pm. This is open to anyone, with focus on kids and their families. Information is available on the webpage. There is no cost. The program is run by volunteers.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- A formal proposal for the addition of emeritus directors to the ABSF BOD was sent out by Andy Ubel prior to the meeting. Changes to the bylaws include:
 - a) The number of Directors of this Corporation shall not be greater than fifteen (15) nor less than six (6) Directors. In addition, this Corporation may have up to six (s) Emeritus Directors.
 - (e) The Board of Directors, by a majority vote, may appoint an elected Director, at the end of the Director's term, to serve in the position of Emeritus Director for an initial three (3) year term and may also, by a majority vote, reappoint the Emeritus director at the end of the initial term for successive three (3) year terms, provided the President has determined that the Emeritus Director has been active on the Board, has regularly

attended regular Board meetings and has provided service to the Board on committees that the President has appointed the Emeritus Director to serve on. An Emeritus Director shall have the same voting rights of a Director but shall not be counted when determining a meeting's quorum.

Motion: Move to approve the above proposal and changes to the bylaws for the addition of emeritus directors to the ABSF BOD.

Guenther move. Pautsch second. **Approved** unanimously.

- The elections for the ABSF board of directors is upcoming. There are three positions that will be open. (Incumbents up for re-election are Yuri Gusev, Andy Ubel, and Chris Morley.)

Team Birkie: Yuri Gusev

- Team Birkie is finishing a great season and getting ready for next year. A final fundraising push is in progress for this year.
- Yuri recently met with the Executive Director of the Loppet Foundation. They will continue to support Team Birkie and continue their current partnership agreement.
- Yuri met with a group of ABSF board members last week to discuss transitioning Team Birkie to a 501(c) nonprofit organization. ABSF would continue to support and sponsor Team Birkie through a fixed amount of money as well as in-kind services. Team Birkie would have its own board of directors, which could overlap with ABSF and Loppet Foundation board members.

Yuri estimates that \$250K would be needed annually (not including housing) to sustain the corporation. Team Birkie received 90K in donations this year (50K from ABSF and Loppet Foundation). Yuri is aware of five people who would like to be Trustees and would donate \$10K each.

Motion: Move that the ABSF supports the concept of Team Birkie becoming an independent 501(c) corporation.

Ubel move. Mandli second. **Approved** unanimously.

New Business:

- Our next meeting is Monday May 19, 2025, 3PM at Birkie Headquarters.
- Staff will be having an offsite retreat soon. Board members should let Ben know if there are suggestions for topics to focus on.

Motion to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 by acclamation.