

## **MINUTES**

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday May 19, 2025

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

**Board Members Present:** Paul Eckerline, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev, Tom Duffy, Andy Ubel, Mike Mandli, Chris Morley

**Electronically present:** Kathie Pautsch, Kris Bjerkness, Jan Guenther, Bill Brown, Jeff Olson

**Staff Present:** Ben Popp, Mike Brown (electronically)

**Absent:** Karen Manske

**Guest:** Paul Thompson (Birchleggings Club)

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

**Approval of Minutes** from April 21, 2025 meeting: Mandli move. Morley second. **Approved.**

**President's Comments:** Paul Eckerline

- Sue Scheer is interested in being our first Emeritus Board Member.

**Motion:** Move to appoint Sue Scheer to serve in the position of Emeritus Director for a three-year term which can then be renewed as outlined in our bylaws. Ubel move. Mandli second. **Approved** unanimously.

- Paul asks board members to consider moving board meetings to a different time to accommodate younger board members. Please send any suggestions to Paul.

### **Staff Update: Mike Brown**

- There are no firm updates on staffing.
- The Partnership Coordinator position is on hold until budget details are decided.
- Trails and Facilities Director position has been changed from a full time to part time position. Ben continues to fill this role temporarily.
- Stephanie Martin is retiring from the position of Sr. Staff Accountant as of June 5. A contract for a bookkeeper is in the works. This is a person known to us and is familiar with ABSF.
- Candidates are being considered for Marketing and Content Coordinator. Until this position is filled, Redgy Jorstad will continue to work on an hourly basis.

### **Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp**

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.
- The staff have been devoting a lot of time to the 2025-2026 budget.
- Reminder that the Epic Bike Fest takes place on the first weekend in June.
- A list of the projects that the Trails and Facilities team are working on was shared. After July 15 oak wilt restrictions will be lifted, and plan is to work on the trail south of OO.
- The Pedestrian Bridge at MTV will be completed by July 1 so that it can be used for the WORS event. Will start working on this after the EPIC.
- The HAKU event platform has been working out very well.

- Birkie event registrations are encouraging. ABSF membership is down this year.
- Visitor traffic at MTV is increasing. There were over 400 visitors last week.
- There was a wedding at OO last weekend. We are not currently marketing our venues for private events, but this is a future goal. Currently this is part of the Trails and Facilities Director position.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Finance:** Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- Mike sent out a full copy of the proposed 25-26 annual budget prior to this meeting. The staff have been working hard on this. The final approval of the budget is needed at our June meeting.

Key Highlights:

Total Revenue: \$5,185,513

Total Expenditures: \$4,554,471

Net Revenue: \$631,042

A new requirement for a 3% operational cushion has been introduced this year.

The current budget has an Operational Net Income of \$28,542.

The ABSF operational cushion needed requirement is \$155,565.

To meet the new reserve requirement, the following changes are incorporated into the proposed budget: \$50,000 for soft Birkie registrations, pausing the Partnership Coordinator, reducing the Trails and Facilities Director to part-time, expense savings on event costs, and termination of our \$30,000 sponsorship of Team Birkie.

With these adjustments, the Operational Net Income is projected to be \$155,630, thereby satisfying the 3% reserve.

- Considerable discussion ensued about the proposed budget, the 3% operational cushion, and the proposed changes (especially regarding Team Birkie).

After discussion of the operational cushion, the following motion was made.

**Motion:** Move to change the operational cushion for the 2025-26 budget from 3% to 1.5%. Bjerkness move. Mandli second. **Approved** by majority with two opposed.

Staff will amend the budget to reflect this change. Recommend the Finance Meeting be moved up a few weeks to discuss the budget.

- Discussion around Team Birkie (TB):

Concerns are that TB is currently in debt to ABSF and that ABSF is not getting a good return on our investment to TB. TB should be accountable for what ABSF expects.

Acknowledged that TB does promote athletes in the sport. ABSF believes in sport development and TB is a good partner.

Recommend that staff come up with a proposal to include the level that ABSF will continue to sponsor TB (including in-kind support) and what ABSF expects from TB in return.

Andy Ubel would like board members to send him a list of things that they would like to see TB do to benefit ABSF, and Yuri will let us know what TB needs. A meeting will be set up to discuss this with ABSF and TB prior to our next meeting.

### **Telemark Capital Campaign:** Bill Brown

- The campaign has raised another \$35K over the past month. We are \$100K short of our goal. Several upcoming projects now cost more than originally budgeted (due to current economic conditions).

**Birkie One:** Chris Morley

- We have received the 25 pairs of Nordic Skis donated by Steve Thatcher.
- Reminder of the weekly spring run/walk – Ziigwan Bimibaatoo Series on Wednesday evenings at 5pm at the Hospital Trails. The first evening had 27 participants. Last week cancelled due to rain. All are welcome.

**Documentation:** Andy Ubel

- No report.

**Team Birkie:** Yuri Gusev

- Team Birkie is transitioning into a 501(c) nonprofit organization.

**Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club:** Paul Thompson

- Congratulations to Jan Guenther and Bob Britz for being inducted into the MN Senior Sports Hall of Fame!
- Birchleggings Club now has 380 members and is fiscally strong. Meetings occur on the third Thursday of every month.
- Registration is open for these upcoming events on RunSignup:
  - Bib Recycling at 00 on May 30. (Expecting to recycle 2K bibs.)
  - Dakota Trail Bike Ride June 12.
  - Disc Golf and Dinner June 26.
  - Golf Classic (Fundraiser for ABSF) July 17.
- Birkie Green is planning to donate electric chain saws and mowers to ABSF. Brief discussion on other ways that ABSF could use BG's donation. Paul Eckerline will attend BG's next board meeting.
- An upcoming symposium is being planned to discuss the impact of climate change.

**Old Business:**

- Telemark Stays and ABSF continue to work on the campground proposal with the plan to locate the 25 sites near the bathhouse. Ben will send out the amended proposal prior to our June board meeting.

**New Business:**

- TIOA (Telemark Northwoods Lodging) has 56 condos on 11 acres adjacent to MTV. The county is mandating that they have 30K square feet of green space per unit. They are short by approximately 40 acres. Ben has been discussing solutions with them including ABSF leasing some property to them for the purpose of meeting this requirement.
- Our next meeting is Monday June 16, 2025, 3PM at Birkie Headquarters.

**Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 by acclamation.