

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday September 15, 2025

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Kathie Pautsch, Kris Bjerkness, Jan Guenther, Tom Duffy, Andy Ubel, Mike Mandli, Chris Morley, Karen Manske, Bill Brown, Mike Cleary, Sue Scheer (Emeritus)

Electronically present: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown, Kristy Maki

Absent: Jeff Olson

Guests: Paul Thompson representing Birchleggings Club (attending electronically), Eric Maki and Ben Hansen representing LWC

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

Approval of Minutes from June 16, 2025 meeting: **Morley** move. Cleary second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Congratulations to returning board members Andy Ubel and Chris Morley, and welcome to our new board member Mike Cleary.
- We will elect 2025-2026 officers at our next meeting on October 20.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- Ben Hansen and Erik Maki from the LWC BOD are in attendance to discuss a proposed new structural agreement between ABSF and LWC.

- ABSF and LWC have a MOU since 2016 whereas LWC pays a fee to ABSF to help run the LWC event. Four board members from ABSF were also appointed to the LWC BOD at that time.

Since 2017, LWC has seen increases in Growth Revenue 70%, Expense 24%, Sponsorship 47%, and Product Sales 86%. Overall Revenue has increased from \$246K to \$550K.

Capital Projects completed in those years include new bleachers, improvements to dock, and flooring in the LWC office. The 90-foot climbing poles need to be replaced with an estimated cost of \$40-50K. LWC has \$260K in the bank.

- Advantages of having a new structural, dual authority agreement with LWC include:
 - operational efficiency (as ABSF manages business, finance, and marketing)
 - preservation of competition intensity
 - enhanced fundraising
 - broader marketing advantages
 - ability to expand programming, grounds enhancement, and usage of the LWC Bowl.
- A proposal is needed to move forward with the next steps toward acquisition and restructuring of the LWC Board with a dual authority framework. (LWC is unanimous on proceeding with this proposed agreement.)
- Discussion:
 - How does this fit with ABSF mission?
 - LWC and ABSF share a heritage (both started by Tony Wise).
 - LWC promotes an outdoor lifestyle and is a community event that draws competitors from across the globe as well as a large number of spectators.

A breakdown of cost/fees and detailed 5-year financials and strategic plan are requested, and will be made available at our next meeting.

- **Motion:** Move to proceed with going forward to develop a dual authority structural agreement between ABSF and LWC. Morley move. Ubel second. **Approved** unanimously.

Gender Policy Update: Kristy Maki

- ABSF is updating the gender policy as below to align with the policies adopted by both US Ski and Snowboard and USA Cycling. This will be updated in our policies and on our website.

Only females identified at birth are allowed to compete in the female division. Male is open to all. We will continue to have a non-binary category and an option for those who prefer not to say. Those who choose these categories will be listed in overall results but will not be eligible for awards.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.
- We are approaching our goal for Birkie week registrations.
- The Trek Store at MTV has sublet their space which is a breach of their contract. Trek has acknowledged this breach. We have a 10-year lease with Trek as of 2021. Trek has supported MTV with a value of \$200K (\$120K toward the building and \$80K in sponsorship) paid to us over the terms of the lease. New terms are in progress, which will come back to the board for approval.
- There is a group interested in starting a lift service for downhill mountain biking at MTV (about 30 days/year, weekends only). Details and a lease are being worked out including liability details.

- Dr. Brent Carlson has donated \$200K to MTV to be used for funding to complete permanent infrastructure in time for Junior Nationals Competition at MTV in March 2026. An additional \$200K match campaign is being launched.
- Staff are working on filing taxes in time to receive the \$160K energy credit for which we should qualify.

Committee Reports

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- Project costs to date are \$9.6 M
Projects to complete will cost \$1.3M
Total project costs will be \$10.9M
- Total funds raised \$7.7M
Total outstanding pledges are \$2.4M
Total raised plus pledges is \$10.1M
- This leaves us \$800K to either finance or raise from additional gifts.
- The current plan is to finance the debt with the SBA loan we have for \$1.2M at a very attractive interest rate of 2.75% and chip away at paying off the balance over the remaining life of the loan. We still have naming rights available for the overall property.
- It should be noted that the project's Current cash balance is (\$650K) which has been borrowed from operations.
- Uncompleted projects (which total \$1.3M) include:
 - Biathlon Range
 - Mountain Bike Trails-phase 4
 - Snowmaking infrastructure
 - Bathrooms at the start area

This does not include Lobby Plaza (which is on hold until we secure a dedicated donor

- The Biathlon Range will be operated by the Biathlon Club (not ABSF). Range Master is required to be present at all operational times.

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- September financials will be completed this week. Staff are working with accountant to close out year-end.
- Next Finance Committee meeting will be October 20 prior to our board meeting. Quarterly financials will be shared at the October meeting.
- Current cash position is low as MTV Capital Campaign has borrowed from operations and there are several other capital projects ongoing. We may need to borrow against our open construction loan (that we have not yet borrowed against). We have revenue coming in from A/R and from Team Birkie. More to come on this decision next month.

Our current cash balance is off \$100K compared to last year.

- We received a Federal Employee Retention Credit of \$261K from 2021.
- Loan on the Prinoth Groomer has been paid off.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- No new report.
- The committee continues with brainstorming sessions, organizing volunteer groups, as well as working with LCO schools.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- Andy will update the Procedures Manual to include:
 - The updated Gender Policy.
 - Language stating that the names of board members who abstain or

vote no to motions be included in our minutes.

- Andy and his son (who is a lawyer) are looking at our liability waivers and policies on how these are administered.
- A goal for this year is to review and update the standard agreement templates used by ABSF (i.e. sponsorship, vendor services, etc.).
- The website will be updated to include our Emeritus Directors (Sue Scheer and Yuri Gusev).

Team Birkie: Yuri Gusev

- Team Birkie has had two meetings with new board members and trustees. Annual meeting occurred last week in Minneapolis.
- Five committees have been assigned: Steering, Finance, Nominations, Performance and Media Communications. An athlete is serving as Digital Content Coordinator.
- The lease and insurance on the van (through February) will be paid off to ABSF, after which there will be no more transactional elements of TB to ABSF.
- ABSF has paid \$10K of the agreed \$30K commitment to Team Birkie.
- The Board of Trustees has asked Ben to be a member of the Team Birkie Board to which Ben has agreed. A second representative from ABSF is needed on the Team Birkie Board. Marit Ross-Sonnesyn is interested in serving on both Team Birkie and ABSF board of directors.

Motion: Move to nominate Marit Ross-Sonnesyn as ABSF delegate to the Team Birkie Board. Mandli move. Guenther second. **Approved** unanimously.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: Paul Thompson

- BG celebrated “Sun Day” to promote solar energy. As part of the Birkie Trail Run Festival, there will be a discussion of the importance of solar energy and what ABSF is doing to promote and utilize solar energy. BTR will incorporate ideas from Grandmas’s Marathon for recycling containers at aid stations and tents.
- Birchleggings Club is working on a sponsorship with Milwaukee Tool Company with goal of obtaining more electric powered tools.
- BL Club thanks ABSF for their help with mailings to 20-year Korte and Korte/Birkie combined participants with goal of drawing more people to the club.
- Membership is approaching 400. Annual Meeting will take place on September 26 at the Samuel Johnson Outdoor Center,
- BL Club is working to revamp the Disc Golf Course at MTV.

Old Business:

- No update on camping at MTV.

New Business:

- Staff are working on a strategic plan with the vision of enabling 250K outdoor life shaping experiences over the next 5 years. More on this at our next meeting.
- Board discussed having more insight on the costs needed to maintain our growing assets and infrastructure. Reminded that this is all available in the detailed budget and PNL. The Finance Committee will further discuss this at their next meeting.
- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 by acclamation.