

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday January 26, 2026

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

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

Electronically present: Jan Guenther, Mike Cleary, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Absent: Karen Manske, Bill Brown, Sue Scheer (Emeritus)

Staff Present: Mike Brown, Ben Popp, Kristy Maki

Guest: Edward Eroe (Birchleggings Club)

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

Approval of Minutes from December 8, 2025 meeting: Ubel move. Mandli second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- The ParaBirkie event is cancelled this year due to no registrations. A visually impaired skier can still do the Prince Haakon with a guide.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Discussions regarding Nordmor Road (easement) are ongoing.

- The recipients for the Shellie Milford Spirit of the Birkie Award have been decided.
- Telemark Northwoods Lodging (TIOA) needs approximately 43 acres of green space to meet their zoning requirements with Bayfield County. Options are being considered to help them with this including either leasing or selling them the land.
- Camping update: Ben and Pat of Telemark Stays would like to start the project with building one cabin that could be ready by this spring. They would like to start with a lease agreement for this first cabin (expected cost of \$25K) after which the steps for further construction would be determined. Board recommended that a masterplan for the final concept be approved prior to starting this first cabin. Ben will recirculate the draft plan that has been drawn up for ten units with their own bathroom.
- Governor Evers visited Mt. Telemark Village on Tuesday January 20 as part of a week of travel to highlight tourism and winter recreation in WI.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- A Trails and Facilities Director has been hired. Matt Hewitt will be starting on February 11. His background makes a perfect match for this position.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- The final contract for the new 501(c)(3) LWC organization is still being worked out. Ticket sales for the 2026 event are up from last year at this time.

Birkie Week Update: Kristy Maki

- January was busy with events every weekend. Birkie week events, Fat Bike Birkie and Junior Nationals remain for this season.

- Registrations for all the January events were down this year. The Birkie Tour saw the largest decrease, which was in part weather-related (200 registered and only 100 showed up).
- Next year we will be adding Senior Nationals to the mix. The large number of events is stressing staff. The Birkie Tour may be discontinued.
- Trail pass sales are currently \$156K and projected to be \$188K with budget of \$181K.
- Birkie week event registrations are currently 10,500 which is below goal. The largest decline is first time Birkie skiers. Staff are brainstorming on how to market to Nordic clubs and teams to draw in new skiers. Several board members expressed interest in helping with this goal and a meeting will be set up in the future for this purpose.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- Second Quarter Financials:

Total Revenue \$4,025K with budget \$3,811K.

Total Expense \$1,832K with budget \$1,720K.

Operating Income \$1,902K with budget \$1,937K.

Event income is down by about \$201K due to decreased registrations for Birkie week events.

Total Revenue is favorable to budget due in part to the one-time Employee Retention Credit related to Covid. Sponsorship income is above budget.

Total Expense is unfavorable to budget due to a mix of budget timing and an unresolved depreciation reporting issue.

Bank Balance is \$2,721K.

Total for all Assets \$15,827K.

Total for all Liabilities and Equity \$15,827K.

These numbers include our original \$1.2M loan to purchase the land and the \$2M construction loan for MTV.

Telemark Capital Campaign: (Bill Brown unavailable today)

- Pledges are continuing to come in including the Huelsmann Foundation Grant. There are two other potential large donations that are being negotiated.
- The Birkie Bash is an opportunity to thank our donors and will highlight Birkie Trivia.
- Park at the Start fundraiser is strong.
- The bathrooms at the start should be ready by the Wisconsin State Championships.
- Phase 5 of the Mountain Bike Trails is being worked out. OTM and Trek are no longer interested in further donations. Wish list includes some easier trails and a pump track.
- The Hub Building has had some leakage due to ice dams. The architect and builder are taking full accountability and will repair when weather allows.
- Suggestion made to create a video (with a QR code at the venue) on how to use the outdoor fitness area.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- A two-week ski program with LCO starts next week with third through fifth grades. There is a groomer on site and new Nordic Rock skis have been donated. Volunteers are appreciated; reach out to Chris for schedule.
- The Cable Rod and Gun Club will be incorporating hunter safety for biathletes into their programming.
- “What’s a Biathlon?” will be part of Birkie this year. The Biathlon Club will have a booth at the expo.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- A draft agreement with the Nordmor group regarding the road easement is still in progress.

Team Birkie: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

- A new name/brand is finalized with plan to release this at the World Cup Finals in Lake Placid. New uniforms will be available for Super Tour Spring Series in March. A new team handbook is also completed.
- Team Birkie will have a booth at the expo and will continue to highlight the support they receive from ABSF, The Loppet Foundation, and CXC.

Green/Birchleggings Club: Edward Eroe (filling in for Paul Thompson)

- Birkie Green will be collecting organics for the third year at the Birkie Food Tent. 1.2 tons were collected last year.
- The Birchleggings Bell on the trail is broken and will be taken down to be fixed.

- Several fundraisers are coming this summer including the Third Annual Golf Tournament (7/23/26), the Dakota Trail Bike Ride (8/13/26), and a new Summer Fitness Event at Minocqua Winter Park (June 5-7).
- The Birchleggings Newsletter goes out to all Birchleggers, including non-members.
- The BC will host a social event on Tuesday of Birkie week at the Mosquito Brook Cabin. The BC Annual Awards Breakfast will take place on Sunday after the Birkie at the Hayward Steakhouse and Lodge.
- In addition to recognizing 20-, 30- and 40-year Birkie skiers, recognition awards will also be given to Combi Skiers (those who have a total 20 Korte plus Birkie finishes).
- BC has awarded many grants to projects that correspond to the club's mission and purpose.
- The website for the Birchleggings Club is full of information. Special thanks to Louise Dressler for her help with incorporating RunSignup.

New Business:

- Our next meeting is Tuesday March 24, 3PM, at Birkie Headquarters.
- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 by acclamation.