

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday April 27, 2026

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Mike Mandli, Tom Duffy, Andy Ubel, Kathie Pautsch, Bill Brown, Sue Scheer (Emeritus)

Electronically Present: Mike Cleary, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Kris Bjerkness, Karen Manske, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Absent: Jan Guenther, Chris Morley, Jeff Olson

Staff Present: Mike Brown, Ben Popp, Matt Hewitt, Kristy Maki

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

Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2026 meeting: Mandli move. Brown second. **Approved.**

Pricing Update for Birke Week Events: Kristy Maki

- Due to increasing costs, and after careful budgeting, an increase of \$5 for Birkie events is deemed necessary.

Korte U-20 fees will start at \$120; all other Birkie Week event fees will start at \$225. The date-based price increases will remain the same as last year with increases occurring in June (\$235), September (\$245), and October (\$250).

Motion: Move to approve the Birkie Week Events fee schedule as proposed above.

Scheer move. Duffy second. **Approved unanimously** after the following discussion.

Scholarships are available for high school seniors. Plan to make these scholarships available to all young skiers.

Clubs are vital for attracting new skiers. Marketing/Communications is focusing on this demographic.

Goal is to have 3,400 skiers register during the first week of registration.

Barriers to registration also include housing and transportation costs.

Looking at ways to attract high school teams to participate in the Korte, such as providing busing to and from their schools.

Discussion of summer and fall projects: Matt Hewitt

- Summer projects will focus on maintenance and repairs including:
 - Brushing the Birkie Trail south of OO.
 - Mountain Bike Trail maintenance (with volunteer groups helping).
 - Building a gathering/picnic area at the top of Mount Telemark that will also serve as a drop-off for mountain bike shuttle. The Portage Outpost is sponsoring this new addition.
 - Disc Golf (cost \$24K, with half of the money raised for this so far).
- We are obtaining a new mower to be pulled behind our Kubota tractor.
- Erik Blow is working on a way-finding system for our ski trails.
- Venue and facility rentals are going well with \$90K in revenue so far and projected to be \$98K by year-end.

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Reminder that board meetings have been changed to the fourth Monday of the month. Next meetings are Tuesday May 26 (changed due to Memorial Day) and Monday June 22. We will confirm that the ABSF website also has an up-to-date list of our meeting dates.
- As Tom Duffy will no longer be our Sawyer County Representative, Paul would like to nominate him as our 3rd Emeritus Director.

Motion: Move to appoint Tom Duffy as Emeritus Director for the ABSF Board. Eckerline move. Scheer second. **Approved** unanimously.

The new Sawyer County Representative has not yet been announced.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Telemark Northwoods Lodging (TIOA) needs 25 acres of green space. A proposal is being worked out that would give them an easement to the land adjacent to the HUB in exchange for the well (value \$25K), \$250/month lease for septic, and 30 room nights to be used for events (value \$5,250). We would continue to own the land, and their easement would be for access only. Andy Ubel volunteered to help with this agreement, which is still being negotiated.
- Nordmor Road issue is unresolved.
- Venue rental income is projected to be \$98K this year with 90% of the rentals at MTV.
- Ski Trail grooming totaled 1,451 hours (61 days) this year for a total of 7,843 kilometers!
- The 5-year strategic plan is still in progress. This will be shared electronically and discussed at our May meeting with final completion date of July 1.
- The UW River Falls economic impact study of the Birkie is nearly complete and reveals greater than \$55M impact to our community.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- Grace Hoins has relocated and is working remotely until her last day in early May. Ali King is also relocating. She has agreed to work remotely for up to one year if needed. Positions are posted for both positions.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- LWC ticket sales (especially the 3-day passes) are ahead of last year at this time by \$20K. Thursday night is family night with reduced pricing (vendors are helping to offset costs for families). Charlie Berens' Wednesday night entertainment tickets are soft, but picking up.
- ABSF continues to have a shared agreement with LWC. LWC will be its own 501(c)(3) in 2027 (Heritage Timber Sports).

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The Finance Committee met prior to this meeting. Third quarter financial update and the draft budget will be presented today.
- We have 20 full-time and 7 part-time (4.15 FTE) staff members.
- ABSF Financials (YTD through March 2026):

Total Revenue \$5.209M with Budget \$4.890M
Total Expense \$3.957M with Budget \$3.783M
Net Income \$1.252M with Budget \$1.107M

Restricted Income \$536K with Budget \$610K
Restricted Expense \$51K with Budget \$30K
Operating Income \$767K with Budget \$527K
Revenue includes a one-time ERC grant for \$261K.

Additional revenue is coming in with the closing of the MTV lot, the Huelsman Grant, and other restricted income.

Birkie week bills are still coming in.

We did not meet our event income goals to date (soft registrations), but sponsorship is strong.

- Draft Budget for 2026-2027:

Total Revenue \$4.887M

Total Expenditures \$4.459M

Net Revenue \$428K

Total Restricted Donation/Grant Income \$436K

Fundraising Expenses \$44.5K

Total Operating Revenue \$36K

\$146.6K is required to meet requirement of a 3% surplus as recommended by Board (\$110.4K needed for a 3% balanced budget.)

Staff will continue to work on budget and present updated draft budget at our next meeting.

- We have taken four draws from our construction loan for total of \$900K. Working on paying down the loan as future pledges come in.
- The Operational Remaining Balance for MTV is \$424K.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- The Campaign has raised enough money to pay off the Biathlon Range. The concrete contractor donated \$11K for labor.
- The Biathlon Club hopes to start events in late May and to host a winter event this year. Sawyer County SCOPE program has donated seven new rifles. Andy Ubel requests a copy of the agreement with ABSF to assure liability and insurance coverage is adequate.

- The Development Committee is transitioning to focus on the whole of ABSF needs vs MTV.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- No report as Chris is unavailable today.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- There has been no progress with Nordmor Road concern. Discussions are ongoing.

Team Birkie: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

- The fiscal year has wrapped up in a positive financial situation. Working on the budget for next year. Several trustees have stepped up with 3-year financial commitments.
- The Personnel Committee is focusing on safe sport and staffing compliance which will include annual reviews and employee contracts with athletes.
- Randy Gibbs has been hired as High-Performance Coach to work with athletes at the National and International level. This position is a hybrid of remote and in-person coaching.
- The new team name is Sno-Racing. Logo and rebranding should be completed by early May. Hoping to continue to partner with ABSF and the other Midwest sponsors. The Loppet has pledged to continue supporting the team.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: No report.

New Business:

- Our next meeting is Tuesday May 26, 3PM, at Birkie Headquarters.

- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 4:55 by acclamation.