

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday May 26, 2026

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Mike Mandli, Tom Duffy, Andy Ubel, Mike Cleary, Jan Guenther, Chris Morley, Sue Scheer (Emeritus)

Electronically Present: Kathie Pautsch, Bill Brown, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Kris Bjerckness,

Absent: Jeff Olson, Karen Manske, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Staff Present: Mike Brown, Ben Popp

Guest Present: Paul Thompson (Birchleggings Club)

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

Approval of Minutes from April 27, 2026 meeting: Ubel move. Cleary second. **Approved.**

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Reminder that board member elections are upcoming. There are four incumbents up for reelection this year. Nominations are due on June 28.
- Tom Duffy is our 3rd Emeritus Director. The new Sawyer County representative has not yet been determined by the county.
- Sheila Wise (wife of Tony Wise) died peacefully at the age of 101 on May 2, 2026. A life celebration will take place at Mount Telemark Village on June 28th at 2 pm. ABSF is donating the use of the facility. A Go-Fund-Me is being

set up by her family to help cover other costs. Board members that wish to donate should contact Sue Scheer.

- **Executive Director's Comments:** Ben Popp
 - This was a busy weekend at the Hub due to Trek Demo Day. Epic Bike Fest is coming up soon.
 - Birkie week event registrations are going well. More club registrations are coming in.
 - The 5-year strategic plan is getting closer to completion. The draft will be sent out soon.
 - ABSF is working with Green Fleet (Sustainable Luxury Transport) to bring more charging stations to the area.
 - We are looking into a grant for solar power that would allow us to offset our electricity for snowmaking.
 - Nordmor Road and TIOA negotiations are coming closer to agreements.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- Grace Davis and Ally King are relocating. One position is posted for a Buyer and Retail Manager. Other responsibilities will be distributed internally.
- Our 5-year strategic plan includes an events director position.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- LWC ticket sales (especially the 3-day and family passes) are very strong. Charlie Berens' Wednesday night entertainment tickets are also strong. A record number of athletes are signing up.

- The 90-foot climbing poles need to be replaced due to safety concerns. This is proving to be difficult due to transportation issues.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The Finance Committee met prior to this meeting. The draft budget (sent out prior to this meeting) was reviewed in detail with recommendation for board approval.

Motion: Move to approve the proposed 2026-2027 budget. Bjerkness move. Scheer second.

Discussion and Highlights:

Revenue \$5.25M

Expense \$4.7M

Net Income \$527K

Restricted Income \$57.5K

Operating Net Income \$148K

We have a 3% Surplus goal of \$157K. Variance to goal is \$9K.

Changes that have been made to accommodate this budget are:

Incorporating Grace Davis's position internally.

Sponsorship increase of 10%.

Team Birkie will not receive a financial stipend this year. Rather, ABSF will partner with them to aid in fundraising for the team. (Considering an event with Snow Mountain Ranch.)

Marit Ross-Sonnesyn (representing Team Birkie/Sno Racing) expressed concern with the removal of the financial stipend. CXC and the Loppet Foundation are both contributing \$10K. She feels that ABSF supporters also support Team Birkie and would want ABSF to continue a monetary contribution. Finance Committee made this decision as our Sport

Development Budget is very tight (\$20K) and feel that helping Team Birkie fundraising would be a better investment. As this is a proposed budget, these conversations can continue over the next few weeks.

Other adjustments made to accommodate this budget include removing \$25K from website costs, increasing facility rentals by 25%, and increased disposal of fixed assets by \$10K (assets that we are no longer using).

Reminder that this is still a proposed budget. Board members should address further suggestions/concerns to Ben Popp and Mike Brown. We will vote on the final Budget at our next meeting.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- Louise Dressler and the Development Committee are continuing to move forward with restructuring this committee to focus on all ABSF fundraising needs.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- The 5-year strategic plan includes a new Sport Development Director position which will be valuable in expanding The Birkie One Program. The committee is considering ways to increase funding and resources for sport development as well as ways to increase community involvement.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- There has been some progress with Nordmor Road concern but no resolution. Discussions are ongoing and some misconceptions are being addressed and clarified.
- The ABSF website needs to have an updated list of dates for the Board of Director meetings.

Team Birkie: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

- June 9 is the official press release date to announce the new name and brand Sno Racing.
- Randy Gibbs (High-Performance Coach) will coach in-person for 180 days and otherwise will be remote.
- Sno Racing would like to see a proposal of the fund-raising event that ABSF is suggesting with Snow Mountain Ranch. The goal of this is to raise greater than \$10K for Sno Racing. It was suggested that Yuri Gusev put this proposal together.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: Paul Thompson

- A second round of grants have been awarded by the BL Club totaling \$14K to 9 different organizations, including ABSF and Sno Racing. Next round of grants will be awarded in October and April.
- Several upcoming events include the Golf Classic event (7/23/26), the Dakota Trail Bicycle Ride (8/13/26) and a Trail Hike to Mt. Ashwabay (6/3/26).
- The Cable Community Farm received a grant from BL Club that helped them with nesting boxes. A farm tour is scheduled at 10 AM on the day of the ABSF annual meeting (8/8/2026).
- Birkie Green will be at Grandma's Marathon to help with waste reduction. Volunteers are welcome.
- Jessie Diggins will join other Birchleggings Club representatives in Boulder, Colorado this week for a discussion on climate change.
- The Disc Golf Course now has five hole-in-one sponsors (\$2,500 to become a sponsor). Goal is to have 36 baskets (halfway there thanks to donations).
- The BL Club annual meeting will coincide with the Birkie Trail Run and will include a disc golf event and other fun activities.

New Business:

- Our next meeting is Monday June 22, 3PM at Birkie Headquarters.
- Mount Telemark Village Mural project is being launched thanks to a large donation (\$35K) from the Thatcher family with a 50:50 match. Fundraising and artist selection (through an application process) are in progress.
- A tree fell on storage building that is not insured. No equipment was damaged. Staff will be able to repair this at a nominal cost. This has prompted a review to ensure that all of our buildings are adequately insured.
- The interior of our trailside cabin is being rehabbed and will be a destination for skiers. Looking at other ways to use this cabin, including a potential classroom.
- Chris Morley and Jan Guenther have volunteered to help with Ben's annual performance review.
- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 4:25 by acclamation.