MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday June 29, 2026

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Mike Mandli, Kathie Pautsch, Bill Brown, Mike Cleary, Chris Morley, Jeff Olson, Kris Bjerkness, Sue Scheer (Emeritus), Tom Duffy (Emeritus)

Electronically Present: Andy Ubel, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Absent: Jan Guenther, Karen Manske,

Staff Present: Mike Brown, Ben Popp

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

Approval of Minutes from May 26, 2026 meeting: Scheer move. Cleary second. **Approved.** (Documentation Committee report is moved to the end of the meeting to facilitate an executive session discussion.)

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- Suggestion has been made to create a google calendar for ABSF BOD meetings. (Secretary will create these once elections are complete.)

- Board member elections are in progress. There are nine candidates (including two incumbents) for four seats.

- Our next board meeting is Saturday August 8 at Mt. Telemark Village HUB. This will be a shortened meeting just prior to our annual meeting which will take place at 2pm.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- The MTV Mural project has launched with donations coming in and fifty-nine artists who have applied, which will be narrowed down to one.

- Facility rentals are open to anyone, including political groups. ABSF is a non-political organization and as such does not support any candidate or group that may rent our venues.

- As a result of climate change and shortened ski season worldwide, ski events are being compressed into fewer months (primarily January and February). Running and biking events are increasing worldwide.

- Sawyer County has not yet appointed a new representative to replace Tom Duffy.

- The strategic plan focuses on increasing relational versus transactional relationships with partners and donors. Strategic partnerships can help attract new participants to our events by positioning our brand with new prospective communities and partners that enable the same lifestyle that we are trying to inspire.

  ABSF is partnering with the City of Superior and Earth Rider Beer on a new event: Superior Trails and Ales. This will take place on Saturday August 1 to support the growth of the Superior Municipal Forest trail system.

  Discussion on this included:
  These partnerships need to uphold the same quality and consistency of our events.
  Board approval is needed for any new event, which should include events that use our brand.

  Motion: Move to co-partner with and include the ABSF name/brand on the Superior Trails and Ales event. Scheer move. Mandli second.
  Approved unanimously.

- We are on track with Birkie week registrations.

- The Birkie Tour is being replaced with a Birkie training event, with a donor secured for this. The name of the event will change.

  Motion: Move to remove the Birkie Tour from our schedule of events and replace it with the Birkie Training event (name to be determined). Scheer move. Mandli second. **Approved** unanimously.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- Kelly Jennings (our graphic designer) is leaving ABSF.

- Helena Maki has been hired as Partnerships Coordinator and will be reporting to Jen DeYoung.

- Ally King (Retail Buyer and Manager) is leaving but is still working two days per week helping with LWC merchandise.

- Health Insurance renewal is upcoming, and many options have been investigated. The new bid has come in at a 2% increase in cost (less that the 9% increase that was budgeted). There will be no changes to deductibles and no change seen at staff level.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- LWC ticket sales are strong and are three weeks ahead of last year for all ticket sales.

- Volunteers are needed.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- Our audit is complete and came back clean with only a few minor adjustments.

- The 2026-2027 proposed budget has been further modified. Net income is down from 3% to 1.8% (depreciation being the biggest factor in this). Operational Net Income is $92.6K The Finance Committee is comfortable with this targeted budget amount.

  The budget does not include a monetary contribution to Sno Racing (which is being requested). After discussion, decision made to vote on and approve budget now. Team Sno Racing is encouraged to submit a formal proposal which we can review and vote on later.

  Motion: Move to approve the 2026-2027 Budget with the recent amendments. Bjerkness move. Scheer second. **Approved** unanimously.

Team Sno Racing: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

- Team Sno Racing requests ABSF continue to financially support the team. They feel that Sno Racing can help grow the number of Korte participants by helping to connect with clubs and Junior skiers, thus offsetting the monetary donation to the team.

- Yuri Gusev and Team Sno will provide a written proposal to be presented to the board and voted on at a future date.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- Key points of the Telemark Comprehensive Snapshot were shared:
  Actual to Date Expenses is $10.3M.
  Projected Remaining Expenses is $519K.
  Total Cost of Project is $10.8M *(The Lobby Plaza is on hold until a dedicated donor is secured and not included in this.)*
  Total Raised $10.4M
  We have $400K left to raise (with $350K of committed funds).

Looking at paying back loans early vs continuing loans (due to low interest costs). The interest of our loans are operational costs and included in the budget.

- ABSF Development Committee is replacing the Telemark Capital Campaign Committee. A proposal for this committee was shared including Mission, Functions, Scope, and Structure. This committee will report to the Board which will be responsible for approving the actions of the committee.

  The goal is to work in conjunction with ABSF staff to set the strategic direction and provide oversight for operational and capital investments for the ABSF.
  This will include annual giving programs, special campaigns, endowment, and targeted efforts with grants and major donors.
  There will be a Committee Chair (ABSF Board member), ABSF staff development leader, up to five non-board members, and a minimum of two board members.
  (The Endowment Board will remain separate, but this board will work with their leadership.)

  Motion: Move to approve the ABSF Development Committee proposal provided by Bill Brown.
  Brown move. Morley second. **Approved** unanimously.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- No report.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- Discussion occurred in Executive Session regarding a legal matter related to Nordmor Road.

- As a result of the discussion, the following motion was made:
  Motion: Move to authorize Andy Ubel to negotiate the easement for Nordmor Road with Mr. Andrew Niebler of the DeWitt LLP law firm.
  Bjerkeness move. Morley second. **Approved** unanimously.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: Paul Thompson

- No report.

New Business:

- **Motion:** Move to appoint Mike Mandli as our 4th Emeritus Director. Pautsch move. Scheer second. **Approved** unanimously.

- Our next meeting is prior to the Annual Meeting, which is Saturday August 8, 2-3PM at Mt. Telemark Village.

- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 5:00PM by acclamation.