

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday September 21, 2026

3:00 PM

Hayward Public Library

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Kathie Pautsch, Mike Cleary, Andy Ubel, Chris Morley, Jan Guenther, Mick Endersbe, Aaron Mock, Sue Scheer (Emeritus), Tom Duffy (Emeritus), Mike Mandli (Emeritus)

Electronically Present: Bill Brown, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn, Kris Bjerkness

Absent: Jeff Olson, Yuri Gusev (Emeritus)

Staff Present: Mike Brown, Ben Popp, Louise Droessler, Matt Hewitt, Kristy Maki, Jen DeYoung, Shawn Connelly

Approval of Agenda: Mandli move. Duffy second. **Approved.** (Discussion of the 5-Year Strategic Plan has been moved to the start of the meeting to accommodate the staff that are present.)

Approval of Minutes from Saturday August 8, 2026 meeting: Duffy move. Ubel second. **Approved.**

Discussion of the 5-Year Strategic Plan: Staff Directors are here to discuss the 5-Year Strategic Plan.

- Louise Droessler - Development Director
Plan is to focus on relational versus transactional experiences as well as impact and sustainability. Endowment is a big part of sustainability with goal of growing the endowment to \$10 M by 2030. Goal is to increase both quantity and quality of experiences, with goal of 250K by 2031(our current is 198K).
Also focusing on:

Community Impact (including volunteer experiences)
Building sport participation (Sport Development Fund)
Stewardship
Environmental Impact
Innovation and Efficiency
Staffing (identifying gaps and skills)
Plan to review goals every 6 months.

- Matt Hewitt – Trails and Facilities Director
Goal is 250K outdoor experiences by 2031. Staff and community are our greatest assets. Will promote community initiatives that help people feel like stakeholders.
Goal is 100% of our power to be solar generated (apart from snow making).
Further discussed snow storage plan, expanding underground water for snow making, and trail signage.
- Mike Brown – Administration and Finance (Chief Financial Officer)
Financial planning will be accurate, concise and timely with streamlining of workforce and clear staffing goals. This includes the addition of a Sports Development Director.
RACI acronym is being employed for decision making hierarchy:
Responsibility
Accountability
Consultation
Interim
Professional Development is important for Succession Planning.
- Krisy Maki – Event Director
Goal is to increase event participants from 16K to 20K in 5 years. Keeping relevant is important (such as events like Junior and Senior Nationals).
Marketing and increasing events is a focus. The Epic Bike Race and the Birkie Trail Run are felt to have the greatest potential for growth.
- Jen DeYoung – Partnership Director

Goal is to focus on relational versus transactional relationships. There are many potential untapped sponsors/partners and growth opportunities. Focus on efficiency in the organization and educate staff on the brands that we carry.

- Shawn Connelly – Marketing Director
Goals are to strategically increase relationships and partnerships. The digital landscape is changing, and AI optimization is becoming more important. Our recent Destination of the Year Award can be used to promote our brand.

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- New board members Aaron Mock and Mick Endersbe were introduced and welcomed.
- Election of officers will take place at our meeting on October 26. There will not be a meeting in November. Our December meeting will coincide with our Christmas Party on Monday December 7.
- The Annual Performance Review of our Executive Director Ben Popp was led by Chris Morley, Jan Guenther and Paul Eckerline. This included and 360-degree feedback survey from the Staff Leadership Team, Board of Directors, and self-assessment from Ben. Ben is currently in the last year of his current five-year contract. Details of new contract are in progress.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben continues to support staff in their current roles and to focus on the 5-year strategic plan.
- Discussions continue with Snow Mountain Ranch for a new event. Also talking with Jessie Diggins in hopes of having her be a part of the Birkie week events.

- US Cross Country National Championships will take place at MTV January 2-7, 2027. The budget is in place with revenue estimated at \$90-\$100K. This will include one week of racing and will require a lot of staff and volunteer time. This will generate opportunities for partnerships and grants. Hoping to use the 5K racecourse, but minimum of 2.5K of snow is required for this event.

Staff Update: Mike Brown

- There is currently an open position for an Event Logistics Manager.
- A staff development session is scheduled for October 5th at the OO Outdoor Center.

LWC Update: Mike Brown

- LWC financials are not yet complete.
- Goal is to be a separate 501© (3) corporation by 2027, with the LWC event serving as the annual fundraiser.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- The 2025-2026 Financials were shared:
Total Revenue \$5,870K
Total Expense \$5,136K
Net Revenue \$734K
Restricted Income \$741K
Restricted Expense \$119K

Estimated Net Income \$112K (which includes a year-end bonus to staff of \$750 each).

- As of 9/23/2026:
Current Assets \$75K
Bank Balance \$431K

A/R \$142K
Pledges \$320K
Total \$968K

- A donation of \$300K is being made toward the Lobby Plaza. Snowmaking is the only remaining unfunded part of the Telemark Capital Campaign.

Development Committee: Bill Brown

- The first meeting under the new format went well. This committee is coordinating with the Endowment Board.

Team Sno Racing: Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

- A Fundraising Golf Tournament is scheduled for next week. An auction will take place in November. ABSF has traditionally donated items for this, including event entries.
- The formal Sponsorship agreement between Team Sno and ABSF is not yet finalized. Additional \$2K is required for ABSF to be a Gold Member Sponsor.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Ernie St. Germain is helping inspire a move to increase the number of tribal members who participate in cross-country skiing.

Documentation: Andy Ubel

- Discussions continue toward an agreement regarding Nordmor Road.

Birkie Green/Birchleggings Club: Jim Tenorio

- ABSF was thanked for the support they give to the BL Club, including help with distribution of their newsletter.

- Repairs on the Birchleggings Bell are nearly complete.
- BL Club currently has 375 members. There were 933 Birchleggers who skied last year.
- Recent fundraisers for the club included the Golf Tournament with 76 participants, and the Dakota Trail Bike Ride with 24 riders. This week they are hosting a mountain bike and disc golf event.
- The Annual Meeting will take place on Friday September 25 at the Johnson Center at Hwy 00; lunch is included.
- Grants will be distributed on October.
- The website is being updated.

New Business:

- Our next meeting is Monday October 26, 3PM at the Hayward Library.
- **Motion** to adjourn: Duffy move. Meeting adjourned at 5:10PM by acclamation.