

# MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday April 20, 2021

3:00 PM

Online via Teams Meetings

**Board Members Present:** Mike Mandli, Jeff Tumbleson, Kathie Pautsch, Mike Brown, Paul Eckerline, Tom Duffy, Charlie Dee, Bill Brown, Sue Scheer, Yuri Gusev, Karen Manske, Brett Rondeau, Jan Guenther

**Absent:** none

**Staff Present:** Ben Popp, Allison Slavick, Joe Vadeboncoeur, Susan Kendrick

**Approval of Agenda:** Scheer move, Pautsch second. **Approved**

**Approval of Minutes** from March 15, 2021 and March 29, 2021 Board Meetings: Rondeau move, Pautsch second. **Approved**

**President's Comments:** Mike Mandli

- Our next meeting will be Monday, May 17, 2021 3:00 PM at the OO Samuel Johnson Outdoor Center.
- Reminded board members that ABSF emails are important for communication and should not be shared externally. Asked members to refrain from negative communications by email.
- Fred Scheer, a long time contributor and donor to the ABSF, was introduced. He requested to join us as a guest to discuss and clarify past purchases of land, as well as his involvement as a consultant in the sale of the western 190 acres of the Telemark Property. He thanked us for the opportunity to speak today.

First, clarification of the Nordic Ridge purchase 8.5 years ago: This was resolved many years ago. The important point is that his intent to purchase the property was made well before Sawyer County started talking to the ABSF about this property. Once the county did, Fred Scheer reached out to the ABSF board.

Mosquito Brook Property as permanent start for the Prince Haakon Race: After the 2019 race, this was considered and ultimately agreed upon. The Scheer family donated one lot and ABSF purchased a second lot (value of each lot \$25K). ABSF BOD approved this unanimously last year. By verbal agreement, ABSF

contributes \$1,500/year to the Brook Ski Trail Fund, and the Brook does all of the grooming of this trail. Fred requests a letter from the ABSF for his records stating that this transaction was approved with unanimous support from the ABSF BOD.

Telemark Property: Fred has had interest in purchasing parts of the Telemark property over the past 13 years, but various circumstances precluded this. When he learned about the current intent of the ABSF to sell the western 190 acres of the Telemark Property, all conversations with ABSF staff centered on how to best maximize development of the property. He acted as a consultant, with the caveat that if an offer was ever made, it would be to maximize capital for the ABSF. Due to current circumstances, he will not be making an offer to purchase this property, but remains available to donate his time and expertise as a consultant. He remains a staunch supporter of the Birkie and ABSF and looks forward to focusing on the future.

Response from BOD: Fred was thanked for coming today to clarify his role as consultant vs. potential buyer. It is noted that we appreciate his expertise as a consultant.

- There is a staff retreat scheduled for May 18.

### **Executive Director's Comments:** Ben Popp

- World Cup Update:  
ABSF leadership group has met with the Loppet Foundation; there is a letter of intent in process and a draft budget is being formulated. There is also interest from Canada in doing a Ski Tour USA. Many logistics need to be worked out. Income would be generated through sponsorships and ticket sales. By next meeting, a draft budget should be in place. Biggest cost is television production.  
Combining this with Birkie events is a plus for us as we already have the infrastructure in place.
- USAT has approached ABSF regarding hosting a winter triathlon. Would like to start with a smaller event, with commitment to put on a National Championship in the future (2023). Operating budget for first event estimated to be approximately \$30K. Looking at either January or March (or perhaps even later, as we have snowmaking capability).
- Covenant for NW section of Telemark Property: A draft Declaration of Covenants is done and ready to be submitted to attorney. Discussed that it may be beneficial to have no up-front covenants, allowing a developer to come up with their own, subject

to our approval. City of Cable can also have input in this. Ben will put together (and review with attorney) guidelines for covenants.

- Team Birkie (Yuri Gusev)

Goal of this is to create a part of the skier development program that currently does not exist (there is nothing in our area past high school).

CXC and the Loppet Foundation are committed and are inviting ABSF to team up to create a high performance racing team.

Team Birkie would:

- Establish a high performance program supported by professional coaching and race service to prepare upcoming Midwest athletes to compete at the highest level of international competition.
- Leverage Team Birkie staff and athletes as leaders around Midwest to assist with sport, club, and coach development and increase competitiveness at the junior level.
- Develop a fiscally sustainable model for the program to excel for many years to come. Team Birkie would rely on shared fundraising efforts of three of the largest cross-country ski organizations in the US.

Athletes would give back by visiting Nordic Rock schools. A head coach would be in charge of day-to-day management of the team and oversee the training.

Accountability would be via high performance working group meetings held monthly, performance tracking and performance evaluations.

Budget is \$120K over 4 years (\$30K) per year from ABSF.

Discussion from BOD: We are in process of building budget for next fiscal year.

There is \$57K in budget for Ambassador Program. Historically we have spent anywhere from \$27K - \$80K annually for skier development. This program has considerable built-in accountability.

ABSF would run the financial end and marketing of our brand.

**Motion:** ABSF will contribute \$30K annually for the next 4 years to Team Birkie from Skier Development Funds. Dee move. Rondeau second. **Passed** unanimously.

- Telemark Development:

A storage building is needed at the property as the Great Hall is being used for so many events that it is not feasible to be constantly removing all of the equipment stored there. A storage building is being worked into the Capital Budget. The Great Hall will be zoned as an assembly room vs storage building.

Bids are coming in for the construction of a 78x60' storage building (approximately \$100K for first year; insulation and lighting to be added second year).

LHB has conceptualized an overall site plan for the hub of the property, focusing on all of the activities that can occur there (including a paved trail for roller skiing and a rebuild of the fireplace (outside). Visuals of the renderings were shared. The Telemark Futures Committee is working on prioritizing activities according to the results of the survey that has been completed.

## Committee Reports

**Finance:** Mike Brown

- Review of operating financials as of the end of March:

March:

Income \$65K; Expense \$226K; Net Income deficit \$(161K)

Year to date:

Income \$2,730K; Expense \$2,098K; Net Income Surplus \$632K.

Budget variances:

Income favorable by \$534K driven from Donations \$445K, Event Ops \$120K, but offset by Restricted Donations (\$28K).

Expense unfavorable by (\$25K) driven from Telemark (\$112K), Trail Expense (\$64K), Payroll (\$31K) and offset by Event Ops \$127K and Marketing Expense \$56K.

Last year variances:

Income unfavorable by (\$594K) driven from Event Ops (\$337K), Other Income (\$114K), LWC Reimbursement (\$90K), Donations (\$62K).

Expense favorable driven by Telemark (\$145K), Trail Expense (\$71K), Expense Ops \$549K, Payroll \$95K, and Marketing \$43K.

Bank Balance \$509K.

No material changes to CARES Act or Telemark financials activity from last month.

Trail Pass Revenue for the year is \$162K, 21.8% increase over last year.

**Telemark Fundraising Committee-Capital Campaign:** Bill Brown

- Currently in a holding pattern as need more vision and plan for the property. Plan to start postcard campaign in mid-May. Website to be finalized mid-June. Plan to have a separate donor and development websites. Considering the name: Mount Telemark Recreation Area and Conservancy. Working on recognition for tiers of giving with incentives for each level. Working on a grant agreement with CAMBA as partner for funding trails.

**Documentation:** Charlie Dee

- The following language has been drafted by the Documentation Committee for admission to the Procedure Manual regarding political expression. This material has already been presented to ABSF staff, with no concerns.

**5.19.2015.3**

**Partisan Political Expression**

The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) is a 501(c)(3) organization. By law, neither staff time nor resources can be used for partisan political purposes – that is to support or oppose any candidate running for public office. This is a strict prohibition because any perceived violation could threaten its tax- exempt status. Engaging in advocacy on issues, however, is not prohibited.

Examples of activities that are prohibited include:

1. Making statements that favor or oppose candidates or political parties at any ABSF event, meeting, or in any ABSF publication, including the website, social media, and any ABSF email address.
2. Posting comments that favor or oppose candidates or political parties on any staff or organization birkie.com email accounts.
3. Giving a candidate, political party, PAC or any group working in a partisan political way any ABSF mailing list.
4. Taking action on behalf of the ABSF as a sign of support or disapproval of another person's or organization's partisan political position.
5. Forwarding an email from a candidate, political party, PAC or any partisan political group that comes to a birkie.com email account. Birkie.com email addresses must not be used to subscribe to candidate or political material. If an e-mail is inadvertently received, it should be deleted, and the list unsubscribed from.

The Executive Director, ABSF employees, and members of the ABSF Board of Directors should take pains to ensure that when not officially representing the ABSF, if they express partisan political points of view, they state clearly that they are expressing their own points of view and not those of the ABSF.

The Executive Director, ABSF employees and members of the ABSF Board of Directors should be aware that when communicating with audiences of skiers, bikers, runners, or lumberjack sports athletes, even though they are not officially representing the ABSF, people may assume that they are. In such situations, if they express partisan political points of view, they need to state clearly that they are expressing their own points of view and not those of the ABSF.

Employees of the ABSF have the rights to free expression of ideas and to engage in partisan political activities on their own time, and the guidelines above should in no way be interpreted as infringing on those rights.

**Motion:** Move that the above language regarding political expression by ABSF staff and BOD members be admitted to the Procedure Manual.  
Dee move. Pautsch second. **Passed** unanimously.

**Telemark Futures Committee:** Charlie Dee

- This committee has been meeting weekly to brainstorm, define and narrow down the activities and amenities that are most desired for the Telemark Property, while staying true to the values/goals/and mission of the ABSF.

Staff have weighed in on the values of various activities with a matrix designed to score them. This matrix showed that the most important values as related to Telemark include:

- A Sense of Community
- Embrace and Drive Change
- Environmental Stewardship
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Healthy Lifestyle for *ALL*
- Respect and Trust

The committee is meeting again tomorrow and more to come.

**Diversity Committee:** Jeff Tumbleson

- This committee met on April 9; a synopsis of the meeting was sent out to BOD.
- Values that Birkie One could/will operate from (while keeping Birkie Heritage and Spirit) include:
  - Lead by example
  - Diversity
  - Bring Joy
  - Humility
  - Integrity
- Mission and Vision statements are being drafted.
- Plan to interface with Telemark Futures Committee to integrate diversity and these core values into the planning.

**New Business** (this is an addendum):

- The following motion was made on April 23, 2021 in regard to the grants that we are applying for to help fund the Telemark property that will go into conservancy with Landmark. The documents are available to interested reader on the link below.



DNR Apps -- three  
resolutions.pdf

**Motion:** Move that we approve three documents required, dated 4/20/21, for DNR grant process to help fund the property the ABSF would like to place in land conservancy with Landmark Conservancy.

Tumbleson move. Pautsch second. **Passed** unanimously on 4/23/21.

- **Motion** to adjourn: Dee move. Pautsch second. **Adjournment** at 5:20 PM.