

MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

Monday September 16, 2024

3:00 PM

Birkie Office

Board Members Present: Paul Eckerline, Chris Morley, Kathie Pautsch, Andy Ubel, Karen Manske, Tom Duffy, Kris Bjerckness, Yuri Gusev

Electronically present: Bill Brown, Marit Ross-Sonnesyn

Staff Present: Ben Popp, Mike Brown

Absent: Mike Mandli, Madelaine Rekemeyer, Jan Guenther

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

Approval of Minutes from June 17, 2024 meeting: Ubel move. Morley second. **Approved.**

Introduction: Marit Ross Sonnesyn

- Marit was introduced and welcomed as our new board member. She has strong connections to the Birkie. She grew up skiing on the Birkie Trail and her sister Alayna is a member of Team Birkie. She works as a Physician Assistant Hospitalist in the Twin Cities.

Team Birkie Overview: Julie Synnove Ensrud

- Julie has been part of Team Birkie since 2021 and is the new Head Coach. There are three other coaches as well as Team Director, Yuri Gusev. Team Birkie has 29 athletes across all teams which include the World Cup, Continental, Regional, and Developmental Teams. With her

Norwegian background, her goal is to support all team members and help athletes achieve their goals.

President's Comments: Paul Eckerline

- The next Board Meetings are October 21, 2024 at which time we will elect officers and December 2, 2024 which will be followed by the ABSF Christmas Party.
- The Compensation Committee met with Ben. He has done an excellent job this past year. Goals for 2024-25 were established:
 1. Meet or beat the 2024-25 Budget while running excellent events. Create and commit to a 2025-26 Budget with a 3% or larger margin.
 2. Successfully close current MTV Capital Campaign by 6/30/25.
 3. Continue to optimize the organization and update the org chart to maximize team efficiency and sustainability.
 4. Develop a 5-year strategic plan for the ABSF (2025-2030) that includes a well-developed programming and staffing plan for MTV.
 5. Create sustainable models for Birkie One and Team Birkie

Motion: Move to approve the Executive Directors 2024-25 goals. Duffy move. Pautsch second. **Approved** unanimously.

Executive Director's Comments: Ben Popp

- Ben sent out a detailed report electronically prior to the meeting.
- Staff are having biweekly meetings to discuss MTV. NICA weekend and Cheq. 40 have been the largest events since the outdoor center has opened and both went very well. Now ramping up for snow making

(with addition of two more snow guns) and preparations for the Turkey Birkie.

- The Birkie Trail Run is scheduled for September 28. Numbers are ahead of last year at this time (with more registered for the 5K vs. the half marathon). This is also the Marathon World Championship.
- The Mt. Telemark Enduro race is scheduled for October 12 and is limited to 50 riders this first year.
- We will host a WORS series race at MTV next summer.
- MTV will host the WI Trail Council which is an advisory committee of the DNR on October 10.
- CXC will be at Base Camp the last weekend in October for a Coaches Camp and Roller Ski Race.
- Ben is travelling to Switzerland and Estonia next week for Worldloppet meetings.
- Staff met with Senators regarding our sales tax issue who feel there is no conflict. An appeal is in process. Staff are also looking into other options for our registration database.

Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown and Kris Bjerkness

- August financials are not yet finalized.
- We will soon need to access our loan for MTV. We can borrow up to \$2.8M. Staff are looking at models to help reduce costs and decide how and when to borrow from loan. We have \$300K in the bank currently.

- Development at MTV is ongoing. Looking at a cash/flow model for snowmaking with \$1.2M budgeted to raise for this in our Capital Campaign.
- Mike Brown is taking on role as interim Sponsorship Director. Sponsorship is 16% of our total budget. We are at \$508K currently with goal of \$555K (91.6% complete). We have two good leads for the Sponsorship Director position.
- Other open positions are for Retail/Buyer and Facilities Manager. Long term goal is to add a Sport Development position once we have monetary support for this position.

Telemark Capital Campaign: Bill Brown

- The budget is strong. We have reached over \$7.9M. We have spent \$965K more than we have brought in (for the building). We have \$1.4M in pledges yet to come including grants, donations, and a rebate. Looking forward to a strong year end and then Birkie week push.
- Several smaller campaigns are also in progress including Great Hall Bathrooms, Museum revamp, grant for mural on bank of MTV Building, and the Lobby Plaza.

Birkie One: Chris Morley

- Chris met with Ben Popp and Louise Dressler prior this meeting. Goal is to develop infrastructure within the ABSF dedicated to the Birkie One effort. Grant opportunities are being looked at with goal of obtaining a \$300K grant to sustain staff support for five years.
- The alternative school at LCO that Birkie One has been working with has closed. Birkie One is collaborating with the Superintendent of LCO schools as well as the after-school program of the Hayward School District to develop other options to involve and engage youth.

Documentation: Andy Ubel – no report

Team Birkie: Yuri Gusev

- Yuri gave a detailed presentation of Team Birkie.

Goals of Team Birkie include:

Sustainable fundraising.

Top tier coaching.

Recruit and retain elite athletes and support their potential.

Create a supportive and positive team culture.

Secure an Olympic Podium at 2034 Olympic Games.

Team Birkie includes 29 athletes across all teams and 14 support staff members (paid and volunteer). There are 98 Junior/Collegiate athletes who also participate.

Operational Structure was shared. Yuri serves as Team manager. ABSF provides office support. There are two full time coaches as well as two part time coaches.

Future needs include a new Team Manager who will reside in Minneapolis, continued administrative support from ABSF with focus on sponsorship and marketing, and increase coaching resources.

The 2024-2025 Budget was shared:

Revenue \$348K (up 27%)

Expense \$326K (up 16%)

Budget projections for next two years were also shared.

Team Birkie adds value to ABSF with:

Visibility and branding.

Community engagement across the United States.

Physical connection to Twin Cities market.

Cross sponsorship opportunities.
Sport Development.

Team Birkie is asking for:

Increased engagement with marketing and communications from ABSF.

Increased financial support from ABSF. (ABSF currently provides \$30K per year in addition to in-kind services).

New Business:

- Discussed exploring a new Porta-Potty vendor for our events as our current vendor, though still in business, is not accepting new customers (raising concern of this business closing in the future).
We spend \$25K/year on Porta-Potties.
Great Hall Bathrooms (when completed) will be nearly sufficient for our events except for Birkie week.
We use 280 porta potties for Birkie week events.
Discussed various possibilities for the future.
This topic was tabled for now but will need consideration in the future.

Motion to adjourn: Duffy move. **Adjournment** at 5:00PM by acclamation.