

## MINUTES

ABSF Board of Directors Meeting

December 2, 2019

3:00 PM ABSF Office

**Board Members Present:** Paul Eckerline, Dennis Kruse, Tom Duffy, Brett Rondeau, Sue Scheer, Jeff Tumbleson, John Kotar

**Digitally Present:** Kathie Pautsch, Charlie Dee, Yuriy Gusev, Mike Mandli

**Absent:** Jan Guenther, Mike Brown

**Staff Present:** Ben Popp

**Call to order:** 3:00 PM

**Approval of Agenda:** Rondeau move, Dee second. **Approved.**

**Approval of Minutes from October 21, 2019 Board Meeting:** Scheer move, Kruse second. **Approved**

**President's Comments:** Paul Eckerline

-We will defer discussion of the ABSF Board and direction for the future until the next board meeting in January.

-Paul thanked all of the ABSF board members for their leadership towards our [Birkie Snow Making Challenge Match](#). All of the board members have generously pledged toward this effort.

-Discussion of Telemark Properties.

**Executive Director's Report:** Ben Popp

-Pat Sheehan, of the trail crew, sustained a serious injury to his left hand while working on the finish line trailers. Worker's compensation will pay 2/3 of his salary while he is recovering. ABSF will pay the other 1/3 of his salary. We expect him to be off work for 2-6 months. The remaining 2/3 of his salary will be used to hire two part-time temporary employees to work with groomers and trail crew. We send him our thoughts and prayers and wish him a full recovery.

-Discussion of the **re-zoning at OO**

Rezoning needed in order to sell coffee and treats at the Highway OO Outdoor Center. This will come before the County Board for approval on Thursday December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. There is concern that it may not pass. Ben encouraged board members to attend to show support for this.

-Sawyer County is considering charging an **event fee** for use of the Birkie Trail. This has been tabled until January. There are concerns of the legality of charging a fee without providing any service.

One consideration that is more palatable for us is leasing the trail for events, with the ABSF as the administrators of the leasing fees. This would allow us to pay a percentage of the fee and collect the rest from other events that use the trail; with the caveat the money raised would then go right back into the trail.

#### **-Bridge over Highway 77**

Work is finished for the season. The north abutment is 95% complete and the south side is within one week of being completed.

#### **-Fundraising for Snowmaking**

There is unanimous agreement that snowmaking is important and should be a priority to (1) "save the Birkie" in low snow years and (2) to create a 5K (or larger) venue for skiing and events.

Initial fundraising goal of 125K is just a start. Realistically we would need \$300K for a 5K loop, and a much larger amount for the "Big Picture Vision". Operational vs capital costs discussed.

Discussion regarding how the Birkie's snowmaking initiatives can be environmentally green (storing snow, solar panels, etc).

We need to promote the big picture of snowmaking and be a leader for the future.

The Trail Committee will work on further ideas and future of snowmaking. This goes hand-in-hand with fund-raising.

There is agreement that the OO Outdoor Nordic Center is a good touring center, but the Start Area is really the future of the Birkie.

#### **-The new pump is in!**

It is smaller than the old pump but producing more water.

Next step is solving long-term Telemark access. We are committed to moving forward with this.

-A priority for next spring is to create a **secondary stadium** near the Birkie Start Area to be used as a finish line for various events.

#### **-Prince Haakon Race**

Already full with 850 participants!

This is our fastest growing event and will likely continue to grow. (Due to climate changes, shorter races likely to become more appealing.)

Main Street finish is important to continue.

A permanent start area/venue is needed for this race.

Properties are being evaluated for this purpose.

## Committee Reports

Finance: Mike Brown (unavailable for this meeting)

- An abbreviated Finance Committee meeting took place earlier today.
- Discussed funding for Pat Sheehan's medical leave.
- Timing of registrations are being reviewed (we had a lot of early registrations this year due to having names on bibs).
- A more complete finance report will be available in January.

Trail Committee: Mandli

- No report.

Documentation: Dee

- No report.

Competition: Kruse

- American Birkebeiner is included in Visma Ski Classics events calendar. Goal of this is to have more visibility of this race in European countries.
- Kikkan Randall will be racing this year!
- World Loppet is doing a better job with their calendar of events with a focus on citizen racing.

Skier Development: Guenther

- No Report.

Adjournment: Mandli move. **Acclimation.**