

**The Birchleggings Club, Inc.**

***Our Purpose:** To contribute support to the American Birkebeiner Cross Country Ski Race and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging participation in physical activities.*

**Annual Members Meeting**

**September 22, 2023**

***Meeting held at Samuel C. Johnson Family Outdoor Center at OO Trailhead and streamed via the Zoom conferencing application***

Board members attending:

Paul Thompson, President; Bob Britz, Vice-President; Dave Balsiger, Treasurer (via Zoom); Ralph Bovard; Steve Carmazon; Connie Meek.

Not attending:

Edward Eroo, Webmaster; Jim Tenorio (JT), Secretary

Guests/Members attending: Ben Popp, ABSF Executive Director; John Kotar, Birchleggings Club (BLC) Founder; Gus Virkus; Julie Virkus; Jim Haubrich; Dave Rhude; Brian Smith

**Call to Order**

After an outside barbeque, President Paul Thompson called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

**Welcome (Paul Thompson)**

- Paul welcomed everyone and gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Birchleggings Club. Each of the present board members introduced themselves. Paul introduced John Kotar.
- After the 2024 Birkie there should be 2000 skiers who have earned the Birchlegger title. Of these 314 have joined the Birchleggings Club.
- Paul presented Connie Meek with a gift of flowers in appreciation of the many things she willingly takes on for the club due to the fact that she lives in the Hayward area.
- Paul thanked his wife, Mindy, for being the IT/Zoom specialist for the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report (Dave Balsiger)**

- The fund for the Nomad electric snowmobile is exhausted now that the vehicle has been purchased, delivered, and donated to the ABSF.
- We have no outstanding bills to pay other than expenses from this annual meeting.
- We have approximately \$7200 in the general fund right now.
- Membership renewals should help build up the treasury. 124 memberships are up for renewal at the end of this year.
  
- Paul reviewed some of the club's accomplishments over the years and discussed our club's need to keep growing our membership. He announced that we will be urging folks to sign up for life memberships. We presently have five persons with lifetime memberships. Our goal is to attain by Birkie 2024 a total of 500 paid memberships (of all categories) and ten lifetime members.

### **Working Group Report- Fundraising (Bob Britz)**

- Bob discussed fundraising, using the “MY DEALS” app. The app is a nationwide discount “coupon” program that can be accessed via computer or cellphone. Bob gave examples of potential savings any racer using “MY DEALS” APP, could potentially get, citing his savings of \$200.00, on an upcoming 7 passenger SUV rental, for Bob’s Arizona baseball tournament, potential savings on Airfare, hotel rentals, and restaurant savings, especially for those Birkie participants flying in.
- He discussed how both the ABSF, and The BL Club could make money from it, mainly, from the ABSF raising the race fees for all of the Birkie-involved events by \$10.00, (Something he felt no one would notice, or object to). In doing so, it would bring in \$7.00, per race event registrant, potentially \$70,000, (or more), how much %, ABSF, and the the BL Club would get has yet to be decided, this will be examined in depth after 2024 Birkie, and the decision made to raise/not raise the race fees for 2025 races, and % of said fee raises decided then, too.
- Current BL Club members, and those upcoming dues paying members will automatically get access to their individual “My Deals” access code to participate for the duration of their paid BL Club membership.

### **Working Group Report-Birkie Green (Paul Thompson & JT)**

- Paul discussed our acquisition of our Taiga electric snowmobile, and, the need for the Birkie trail crew to prove its “A Workhorse, and not a Showhorse”, before we decide on acquiring a second Taiga.
- Paul described how making and selling the “Birkie Bib Bags” helped fund the snowmobile and reduce waste. We are also looking at how to possibly recycle the bibs directly.
- The carbon offset program where racers make a donation to offset their carbon footprint from traveling to the Birkie is going to have the money applied to offsets locally.
- Paul reported that a possible recycling partner for the Birkie is Big Lake Organics. With them we hope to expand the recycling program during race week.
- Paul has invited the new Taiga dealership to have a presence at the Birkie Expo.

### **ABSF Executive Director- Benn Popp**

- Ben Popp discussed how he felt ABSF, and the BL Club can work/help each other. He described the Birchleggings club as the “spine” of the Birkie.
- Louise Droessler, has been assigned by Ben Popp, to be the main point of contact between the BL Club, and ABSF.
- He spoke at length about ongoing fund raising for Telemark Village, that ABSF has about \$4.5 million, of the \$10 million goal for the village. The capital-campaign program is now moving from the high-dollar donor phase to the smaller-donor requests. They are working on ideas for other opportunities for giving, one possibly targeted to Birchleggers.
- Ben described some of the new developments now in place at Telemark and plans for the future.
- He described how there are many plans for the upcoming 50th Birkie Anniversary.
- Ralph Bovard presented Ben with the idea of Ben skiing his 20<sup>th</sup> Birkie this year, perhaps crossing the finish line with Ernie St. Germain at the open track event on Wednesday.

### **Idea for Mosquito Brook Hut (Gus Virkus)**

- Gus presented a proposal for a fire pit at the hut. A 44” wide and 25” tall outdoor steel fire pit is proposed.
- Donations for the fabrication and installation of the pit could be used as a fund-raiser.

### **Election Process of New Board Members**

- New board members were nominated and candidates gave their reasons for desiring to be on the board.
  - o Connie Meek nominated and gave support of Gus Virkus.
  - o Bob Britz nominated and gave support of Jim Haubrich.
  - o Ralph Bovard nominated and gave support of Dave Rhude.
- Ralph B. moved and Connie M. seconded to approve the three nominees for membership on the BLC Board of Directors. The motion was carried unanimously
- Paul T moved and Ralph B. seconded to re-elect Connie Meek, Ed Eroe, and Paul Thompson each to additional three-year terms on the board.

### **Other Discussion**

- Ralph discussed his concerns about the disconnect between ABSF members and BL Club members, our need for much improved communications between our board and Birchleggers who are dues paying members, and especially those who aren't, so that they understand what our club board has done in the past, is doing now, and future plans, that would make them proud to be a member.
- Ralph suggested that we have a monthly write up that ABSF can help disseminate.
- Our (lack of) presence on the ABSF website was discussed.
- Recruiting more women Birchleggers was discussed.
- Inviting 20-year Kortelopet skiers to be members of the BLC was brought up. Paul said that the idea has been discussed, but no action will be taken until we can talk to and get input from Kortelopet skiers as to their desires.
- Ways to grow our membership were discussed.
- Also discussed was Ralph's and Steve's desire to sponsor Ben, to ski with Ernie St Germaine, on the Wednesday open track event, so that Ben could get his 20th Birkie finish, and become a Birchlegger, while Ernie finished his historic 50th Birkie, the funds for sponsoring Ben to go to Telemark Village.

### **Next Meeting**

Date: Wednesday October 11, 2023

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: “Zoom” virtual conference

### **Adjournment**

- It was moved and seconded to adjourn. Motion was carried.
- **The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.**

Compiled from notes taken by Steve Carmazon and Ralph Bovard, and from the recording of the meeting. Thank you Steve and Ralph!

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Tenorio, Secretary