

# BRIDGER BOWL

**Bridger Bowl Spring Membership Meeting  
Spring 2024 Meeting Minutes  
May 21, 2024, 7:00 p.m.  
Hilton Garden Inn, Bozeman**

## BOARD MEMBERS AND BRIDGER BOWL MANAGEMENT

Present: Jake Werner, President; Dave Weaver, Vice President; Dan Oliver, Secretary; Dennis Steinhauer, Treasurer. Board Members: Pat Hoffman, Jennifer Stark, Holly Tarlow, Todd Goertzen. Hiram Towle, General Manager; Austin Schuerg, Accountant; Julie Bennett, Recording Secretary

## CALL TO ORDER

President Jake Werner welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm.

## MINUTES

The minutes from the Fall 2023 Association meeting were provided to all members in attendance. Jake requested a motion to approve the minutes. Kama Werner moved to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2023, meeting; Lindsay Korth seconded the motion. With no additional discussion, members voted: All in favor, none opposed; minutes approved.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jake introduced the current Board of Directors. He thanked all of the Bridger Bowl departments and staff for their efforts and for working so hard this season. In particular, he acknowledged the snowmaking and grooming crews for their extensive endeavors in a challenging low snow year. He commented on the success of working with consultant Kari Anderson to improve communication efforts with membership and holding 20 listening sessions for members. Jake thanked Pat Hoffman for his 9 years of service on the board including 3 years as President.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Bridger Bowl Accountant Austin Schuerg introduced himself. Preliminary financial results from fiscal year 2023-2024 were presented as of 04-30-2024. Members were provided with the pre-audited balance sheet and income statement pending minimal adjustments in the normal course of the year-end close.

The balance sheet shows a very healthy asset to liability ratio. In comparison to last year, Austin noted accounts receivable grew substantially. This is due to the retro adjustment for the workers compensation program. For the 2023 calendar year \$277k is coming back to Bridger. The strong focus on safety is paying off. Bridger is continuing to purchase U.S. Treasuries, with an average return of 5.2% and laddered maturities extending beyond 12 months. Bridger continues to maintain 75% of 6 months of payroll plus fixed costs on hand. Inventory increased due to expanding the physical size of the retail shop to accommodate more items. He highlighted a list of assets purchased during the prior fiscal year totaling around \$900,000 (vehicles & equipment, lift maintenance, snow guns, building improvements, networks & cameras, rental equipment, etc.). Additional minimal labor is to be allocated from the income statement to assets.

The income statement missed budget in most categories due to the low snow year. The budget was built based on 350,000 estimated skier visits whereas actual visits were 296,346. There were corresponding

savings in expenditures as well as in labor due to the inability to fully open at the beginning of the season as well as managing labor to business levels. Interest income of \$1,359,389 exceeded budget by \$900,000 due to continued strong interest rates and conservative interest income budgeting.

A graph of monthly skier visits and cumulative snowfall was presented for the past 8 seasons. Skier visits increased for the month of March this year. Extending the season by one additional week in April allowed Bridger to see its second highest skier visit year in history despite the lowest cumulative snowfall December through January of the last 8 seasons.

Austin presented the 2024-25 budget which is based on 320,000 skier visits. \$2.2M is budgeted for capital expenditures for the current year. Labor costs will be up 8.5% due to a \$0.50 increase in the starting base wage to \$18.50, increased wages for returning employees and providing Aflac accident insurance for all employees. An increase in product prices of 4-5% is expected to offset the increased labor and operating expense costs. Net cashflow from operations is targeted to be \$2.4M.

#### MANAGER'S REPORT

Hiram Towle, Bridger Bowl General Manager and Director of Stoke. The 69<sup>th</sup> year of Bridger Bowl operations began with only the Sunnyside Quad running, limited terrain open and thin snowpack. It was appreciated by the skiing community that Bridger Bowl did open on their target date and provided what skiing they could. It was difficult to be unable to get all employees working with a limited opening. Ski patrol dealt with a persistent weak layer of snow all year long, which was challenging but a great learning experience. The grooming department did an outstanding job maintaining snow, grooming when they could early on and providing excellent corduroy as the snow conditions improved. Indoor operations (food & beverage, retail, rental shop) performed well and had strong staffing all year. On March 3rd a storm provided 22" of new snow, the largest of the season. In a poll of employees, 89% of staff would recommend Bridger Bowl as a great place to work. Bridger received numerous compliments from the public on the friendly staff and good service they experienced this season.

Hiram shared some statistics from the season:

- 296,346 total skier visits, 2<sup>nd</sup> best ever
- 40,362 unique visitors
- 1/20/24 was the largest single day attendance of 6,457 skiers
- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest year of bus ridership with 3 fewer buses; 25,997 riders
- MAP Party Lager was the most popular beer
- 20 tons of Brew City French fries were consumed
- The volume of waste created was down by 33.6% compared to the prior year

Temperature Statistics:

- Warmest December by average temperature
- 4<sup>th</sup> warmest November by average temperature
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest new snowfall in November
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest snow depth on January 31st (30")
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest total snow depth for closing day
- 4<sup>th</sup> lowest total snow depth on opening day
- 14<sup>th</sup> highest snow water equivalent (SWE) March

Various other community related statistics were highlighted including \$6,515 raised for the Bridger Bowl Foundation and \$23,208 raised for the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. Bridger Bowl works extensively to give back to the community with a variety of donations which totaled \$1,192,275.

Summer projects and operational enhancements for next season were presented:

- There are plans to add a food trailer at the bottom of the Alpine/Powder Park lifts
- A burrito shack is planned for the bottom of the Pierre's Knob lift pending USFS approval
- Road and parking lot improvements
- New weather station location at the original gun mount area as the top of Alpine site has become unreliable
- New Food & Beverage point of sale system (which will accept Apple Pay)
- Updates to the rental and demo fleet of skis

Hiram reiterated that the focus at Bridger remains keeping Bridger Bowl for Bridger Bowl skiers and riders. There is no intent to align with other pass products such as the Indy Pass. With this focus and recognizing adding skiers to an already popular and busy mountain is not needed, all of the season passholder partnerships are ending (Targhee, Soldier Mountain, Alta, Bogus Basin). These partnerships were underutilized by Bridger season passholders but brought many more people to our already busy area.

The 69<sup>th</sup> year of operation was a big success and Hiram thanked all of the skiers and riders who came to Bridger, the board, community partners, event sponsors and employees.

#### GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Holly Tarlow, Chair of the Governance Committee, provided an overview of consultant Kari Anderson's role in first helping the board with strategic planning and then updating board processes and operations to better follow current non-profit best practices. As a result, the board has revamped their board meetings, edited all existing board documents, created several new policy documents, compiled a new board manual to expedite training of new directors and implemented a board portal to archive their work. She explained the structure of Bridger Bowl as a 501(c)(4) non-profit corporation. It is a membership organization. All members are members of the corporation along with staff, management and the board.

The board is working to improve communication with membership and encourage member participation. A new ad hoc membership committee is being created to guide the relationship between the board and membership. It will be composed of several board members, staff members, and select individual members. The committee will be up and running by the fall membership meeting. The board is also working to make the nomination process for new board directors more transparent and far-reaching. Jen Stark is leading this process.

Holly introduced Kari Anderson of Incite! Consulting. In November 2023 an invitation was sent out to all members inviting them to participate in the bylaws, mission and vision review process. There was good participation. Kari recognized each member individually who contributed and thanked them. Many were in attendance. It was a collaborative effort which included bylaw education, outlining the difference between for-profit and non-profit corporations, vision and mission ideation sessions, and a comprehensive review of the current bylaws for areas in need of clarification and revision.

A timeline was laid out for the next steps in the process. The bylaw changes are now with the attorneys for review. The goal is to have a draft ready for membership in the Fall of 2024. Kari thanked the Governance Committee members Dan, Holly, Jennifer, Dave and Hiram for all of their work.

Bob Kolesar asked about the requirements of a legal settlement from 2000 providing for some privileges for members. These documents have been provided to the Bridger Bowl attorneys to review for inclusion.

Bob Mannisto asked about the costs incurred for the consulting process. Kari's fee is \$25k for a 2-year engagement. She has put in over 1,000 hours. Attorney fees are not known at this time. Dave Weaver complimented Kari for her excellent work and guidance.

Jake unveiled the new vision and mission statements adopted by the Board. Bridger Bowl's Vision: "*Be the model nonprofit community resource that fosters a lifelong passion for outdoor recreation to benefit all generations*". Bridger Bowl's Mission: "*Remain a locally focused recreation area that balances quality, affordability, and sustainability in a way that best serves our community*".

The word *recreation* was chosen intentionally as opposed to skiing to be consistent with the original articles of incorporation. Discussion ensued and various questions and comments were shared. Hiram stated the words in the mission and vision statements were forged from the key concepts that arose from the working sessions with membership.

#### LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Hiram presented the report. As part of their work to develop the updated master plan for Bridger Bowl, SE Group came to the area in February for onsite tours of the facilities and the mountain. They gathered a lot of data. The goal is to present the Master Development Plan to USFS (Forest Service) this fall. The review process for acceptance with the USFS will be 2 years due to their staffing constraints. While areas of focus are being developed, an initial focus will be snowmaking; where to find water, how to store it, and can we get it expanded onto the USFS property. Bridger is also looking at trails for hiking and biking. SE Group understands Bridger Bowl doesn't want to be a resort. Parking, lodges and the beginner area are likely additional focus areas.

Public input will be part of this process and listening sessions will be planned. Goals of the masterplan are for SE Group to match as best they can the parking capacity with the mountain capacity, identify expansion that makes sense, find pinch points and where we can match capacities better, fully maximize our lower mountain and essentially fix problems Bridger currently has with crowding.

Other recreational opportunities will be looked at including existing trails and connectivity between Bridger Bowl private property, USFS property and Crosscut. There is currently a working group with the Custer Gallatin National Forest representing many different user groups looking at existing trails, future trails, and planning for the Bridger Range.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Greg Beardslee voiced concern about skiers "buzzing" and skiing dangerously close to other skiers on purpose. Jake advised it is definitely an awareness of Bridger and patrol. Hiram stated they are engaging in efforts to drive awareness of safe and respectful skiing. The Outside Kind Organization has been engaged, and awareness messaging with MSU for students is ongoing.

A suggestion was expressed for a beginner terrain park in the beginner area to keep small younger skiers safe and give them a place to learn progressions.

Josh Fairchilds put forth a nonbinding motion to recognize the Board of Directors for the hard work they have put into the organization.

### OLD BUSINESS

Todd Goertzen honored Pat Hoffman, expressing appreciation for his passion and service on the board, including stewarding us through the pandemic as President and spearheading the transportation committee to increase busing.

### BOARD NOMINATIONS

Jen Stark reminded everyone that in November the board asked that any member interested in a board position submit an interest form to the email address [secretary@bod.bridgerbowl.com](mailto:secretary@bod.bridgerbowl.com). She spoke to the goal of building a more diverse board through diversity of not only age and gender but also the manner in which board members use and experience Bridger Bowl. The board is looking for individuals with practical skills and knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing Bridger in the future. The search for 2025 board members will begin after the Fall meeting.

She explained there are 3 open seats on the Bridger Bowl Board of Directors for the coming year. The board is nominating two current board members to serve additional terms and one candidate to become a new board member. Pat Hoffman has served 3 terms on the board and will complete his service this spring. A board member can serve up to three 3-year terms. Current board member Joe Seymour is nominated to serve a third 3-year term. Current board member Holly Tarlow is nominated to serve a second 3-year term. Ian Jones is nominated to serve his first 3-year term. Jake called for nominations from the floor. Jake called a second time for any nominations from the floor. There were none.

Each candidate made a short presentation about themselves. Ballots will be mailed to all current Bridger Bowl members. New board members will be announced by the end of July.

### NEW MEMBERS

Dan Oliver presented the following membership applications for ratification: Daniel Adams, Seth Cooper, Bruce Enger, Evan Genay, Thomas Harari, Mosey Hardin, Chris Hartsoch, Lars Heinstedt, Richard Hofacker, David Kembel, Kim Kembel, Andrew Kirsch, Morgan Klass, Elizabeth Kozub, Tal Lind, Bryana McKay, Carol Peterson, Thomas Peterson, Michael Polaire, Doug Roberts, Leslie Rogers, Cameron Smith, Jennie Smith, David Steinberg, Patrick Wing.

Josh Fairchilds moved to ratify the new members; Buddy Drake seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried, and memberships approved.

### MOTION TO ADJOURN

Pat Hoffman welcomed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dayna Bergin moved to adjourn the meeting; Lindsay Korth seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor; Pat adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

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JACOB WERNER, PRESIDENT

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DANIEL OLIVER, SECRETARY