MINUTES – Executive Committee Meeting

08/25/2026 at 10:00am at USFS Northern Research Station, Hwy K, Rhinelander, WI

Present: Arlyn Tober, Steve Heimerman, Bill Bialecki, Wayne Plant. Excused: Mott
Staff Present: Tracy Beckman, Coleman Kaiser
Guest: Brock Becker from Financial Planning & Information Services (FPIS)

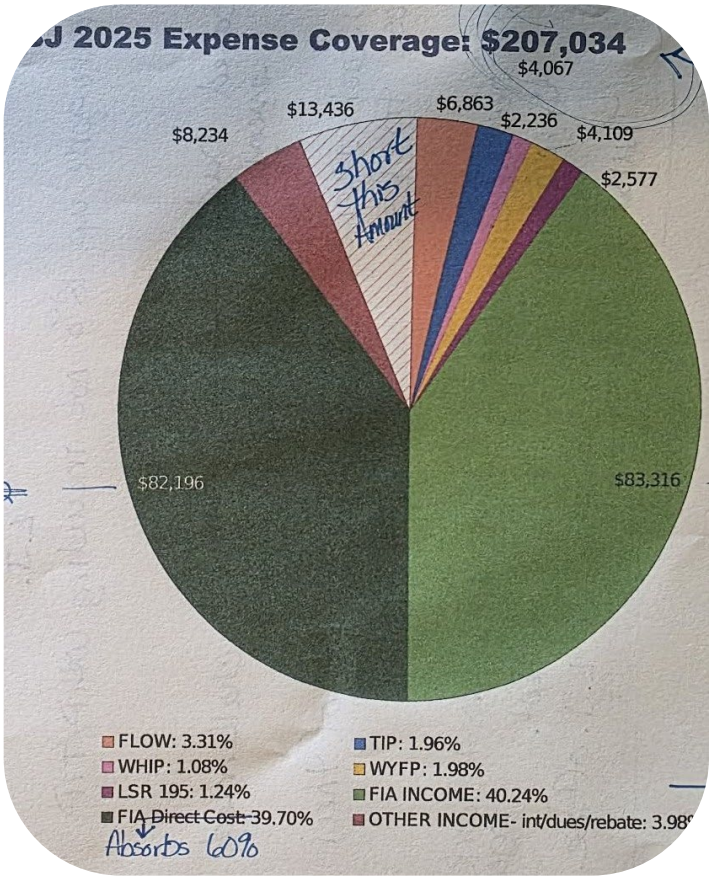
1. Call to Order – Bialecki called the meeting to order at 10:01am.
2. Approve Agenda – Motion by Heimerman/Plant to approve the agenda with the following change: move the Investment Discussion just before FIA Updates. Motion Carried.
3. Investment Discussion with FPIS representative Brock Becker.
    a. Investment account allows for unlimited withdrawals without penalty but would prefer a 3-day notice before withdrawing funds to allow them to make any suggestions or adjustments prior to withdrawal.
    b. Board decided to allow for a 50/50 mix of EFT and bonds through Schwab as per their suggestion.
    c. FPIS will send a quarterly report, and Schwab will send a monthly report.
    d. Beckman will send a voided check to set up the electronic accounts so they link to our checking account.
    e. So they can attend upcoming meetings, Beckman will email remaining 2026 & 2027 Executive Committee & Council meeting dates to both Ryan Wempe and Brock Becker at FPIS.
    f. Mott & Bialecki with arrange a mutually convenient time to sign paperwork and open the account.
    g. The amount of investment was discussed – the question was whether to invest the full $300K approved by the Council at the 7/28/2026 meeting or to invest $250K now and the rest later. It was decided to invest $100K initially, another $100K the following month after opening the account and then make a decision the next month whether to invest the full $100K or just $50K.
4. FIA
    a. Employee Performance Reviews:

        Timely FIA Reviews/Approvals: Beckman sought clarity on the issue of having to wait for approval at quarterly Executive Committee meetings to let FIA staff (who are paid according to the federal pay scale) realize their earned benefits. The committee agreed that between the FIA supervisor and the Executive Director, they can perform and approve reviews and set up for increases on employees' anniversary dates rather than paying retroactive pay.

        Standardized Review Form: After discussion, the Standardized Employee Performance Review Forms will now include as page one, objective, quantitative, measurable goals. Beckman and Kaiser will work together with employees to set these based on their program/funding source/deliverables. Some quantitative objectives mentioned were Safety, Production, Quality, Finances, Performance. Pages 2 & 3 will remain the same.

        ED & FIA Supervisor Reviews: The Executive Committee is responsible for setting measurable goals and completing timely annual performance reviews, on or about the anniversary dates of hire, for both the Executive Director and the FIA Supervisor. Beckman was directed to put those items on the next council calendar as a reminder to the committee of when those reviews should take place.
    b. Kaiser presented performance reviews for two employees, suggesting MD be approved for a GS7 to GS8 step increase. Motion by Heimeran/Plant to approve the increase as suggested retroactive to the employee's anniversary date. Motion Carried. Kaiser suggested CK be approved for a GS9 to GS 10 step increase. Motion by Bialecki/Heimerman to approve the increase as suggested retroactive to the employee's anniversary date. Motion Carried.
    c. Review/Approve 2026-2027 FIA Budgets and Plot Prices: Kaiser presented his 2026/2027 budget projections and suggested the following plot prices for the next panel 10/01/2026 to 09/30/2027. These only include FIA plots as the CFI Program has been suspended by USFS for the next panel year.
        i. Class 99C FIA P2 Plots from 736.35 to 758.44. Motion by Plant/Bialecki to approve. Motion Carried.
        ii. Class 99E FIA Urban Plots from 708.05 to 743.31. Motion by Heimerman/Bialecki to approve. Motion Carried.
        iii. Class 99D FIA Habitat Plots from 76.08 to 78.36. Motion by Bialecki/Heimerman to approve. Motion Carried.
        iv. Class 99F FIA Wetland Habitat Plots from 51.75 to 53.30. Motion by Plant/Heimerman to approve. Motion Carried.

5. Financial Outlook Discussion: Over the past six months, Heimerman, with the help of several employees and the E.D. has been systematically gathering financial information to better understand Lumberjack's full financial picture. He used the 12/31/2025 balance sheet along with the 12/31/2025 budget update to put together a pie chart showing Lumberjack's Operating Expense coverage from 2025. The total expenses were $207,034 of which the FIA Program directly absorbed 39.7% in the form of 60% of Lumberjack's administrative expenses that are charged to that program. The rest of the expenses were offset by Lumberjack recognizing grant/contractual administrative fees. In 2025, those fees offset Lumberjack expenses at the following rates: FIA Program 40.24%, FLOW 3.31%, WHIP 1.08%, WYFP 1.98%, TIP 1.96%, LSR 1.24%, interest, dues, rebates combined 3.98%. This leaves a deficit of $13,436 or 6.51% for 2025. Heimerman explained this loss will only increase in coming years due to the loss of the CFI program for 2026-2027, increased cost of insurances and other inflation, and increased employee expenses while training Tracy's replacement. Heimerman wants the Council to realize that while we have cash on hand, we should not rely on that. He discussed our sponsored agencies and the disparity between the administrative fees realized from their grants and agreements vs. the 80% from FIA. He is not saying we should reduce or release any agencies or programs, rather, he wants the council to have all the information so they can make sound decisions. He feels our primary focus should be financial stability. He feels strongly that the council should be looking at WHIP/TIP/FLOW as 'cost centers' or 'programs' of Lumberjack instead of listing their administrative fees as income on Lumberjack's operating budget. He handed out a financial sheet showing a different way of reporting our figures, dividing our assets into non-liquid, semi-liquid and liquid. He feels this will give a clearer picture of what is actually available heading into the next few years. He feels the process of strategic planning needs to include common sense discussions with WHIP, TIP & FLOW's steering committees. He doesn't feel we can have those discussions without them knowing the information from the chart he presented. He talked about what expenses can be reduced and that going into budget talks for 2026, each line item, program, project grant, sponsored agency and process should be challenged, even the things we do well should be challenged. He suggested using a zero-based budget process where we start at zero, don't use any historical information, but rather prove how each expense is justified which would lead to being able to prioritize expenses and set goals, not only for Lumberjack, but for any sponsored agencies or programs. While this seems reasonable and even prudent, methods, tone and word choices were discussed. Others felt we could be alienating our partners by jumping ahead, making assumptions and expressing frustration without sharing all the facts. The Lumberjack Executive Committee then decided to call a meeting with WHIP/TIP/FLOW's executive committee members to further discuss these findings and talk strategy. They decided on Thursday, October 1st at 10am at the Lumberjack office with a virtual option available. Beckman will send out a meeting notice.



6. Motion by Bialecki/Plant to approve a salary increase for the Executive Director retroactive to her anniversary date. Motion Carried.
7. Based on the time, all other agenda items were tabled.
8. Bialecki adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Submitted by Tracy Beckman for Secretary Arlyn Tober

09/10/2026