WNSC Rental Room Perspective

Here is Michael’s perspective regarding the rental room after listening to a number of people who have more direct experience with it than I and after being involved in the process to procure some replacement gear in 2020-2022.

Historical Perspective

For many years the Jackrabbit Program received close to $2,000 a year to replace Jackrabbit gear from Sons of Norway.  At that time the charge for lesson equipment was very minimal.  Then, for a number of years we applied to Rotary and received between $2,000 and $4,000 for equipment.  This was all designated for children's programs by Rotary.  About this time the fee for rental has increased to help replace aging equipment.

Funds from the Chick's Program have been designated to replace what was determined to be a priority.  That included boots, skis, poles and snowshoes.  It usually depended on the Program fees collected and the number of day passes and rentals sold.  Pre-COVID we had quite a few drop in rentals so had more money to work with. During COVID we could not have drop-ins according to our COVID protocols.

During COVID we did have a month or so when we did not do rentals.  Pre-COVID, with drop in rentals on a nice day, most skis would be out and the rental period was for the whole afternoon.  During COVID the whole rental and cleaning process was more complicated and skis were pre-booked, up to 10 per time.   Thus - not as many rentals.   Just at the end of last year, the Club started doing drop-in rentals again.

The school program has been expanding the last few years.  The numbers vary per day – last week we had 31 skiers in one class. The City Sports Academy started with only a few visits and now is coming more often.  This year the elementary students have been scheduled before Christmas so that they can have access to the smaller skis are used by them, then the junior high and seniors are after Christmas.  This demand for the smaller size skis is new and conflicts with our previous approach of handing out skis to the Jackrabbit Program participants in early December for the season. Some schools do have their own skis and boots.

Obsolescence

Most of the rental equipment has been in service for a long period of time. Some purging of gear that is no longer functional exists but because a plan for replacement is not clear, gear is kept in case it is needed even when it is in poor condition.

Most of our boot/binding systems are SNS. When Salomon introduced ProLink, their version of an NNN compatible boot/binding, they suggested that SNS would continue to be supported. Over the last year they have stated that ProLink will be their offering going forward.

Objective/Focus

The Club does not have consensus on why we have rental equipment and who our target audience(s) are. Currently the following all utilize/expect rental room equipment in the conduct of their activities/programs;

* XC ski development programs (season long), Bunnyrabbits and Jackrabbits
* Biathlon development program (season long), Biathlon Bears
* School groups
* Lessons, classic and skate
* Chicks on Sticks
* Public rentals
* Others?

Related to the range of needs described above, the Club has not had a method to capture what the equipment need gaps are.

Ownership

The rental room has benefitted from the ownership shown by Doris and Melissa. Dan has played a role. Dallal is now involved.

Sustainability

The Club does not have a defined process on how to procure/replace the rental equipment, who is responsible for it and how it is funded.

Currently the following funding methods are utilized;

* Some portion of the fees from Bunnyrabbits/Jackrabbits fees have been used to purchase small amounts of equipment; often used, often in response to not having something available for someone registered in the Program
* Some portion of the fees, day pass and rental revenue from Chicks have been used to purchase equipment
* Various grants and donations are earmarked for equipment purchase when they are applied for but we lose track of this and the funds tend to flow into general revenue when they are received
* Some believe that revenue from rentals should be flowing to equipment purchase/upkeep

The Club has not considered the cost vs. life of rental room equipment and the degree to which revenue from rentals should fund the ongoing replacement/upkeep. Is having a rental room a good financial decision and if not, what are there other reasons to be in the rental equipment business?

The Club is not set up to work with vendors on bulk orders, 10 or more pairs, to take advantage of discount pricing from the ski manufacturers. This hasn’t been seen to be important, but will be much more significant as more equipment reaches end-of-life, or we change our focus, or we tackle the transition from SNS to NNN/ProLink boot/binding systems. The outages include;

* timing of knowing what our needs are compared to the windows for ordering (usually end of December to January)
* commitment of funds a season prior to receipt of the order (orders are usually received November-December, the timing of grants is variable and the amount of potential revenue from rentals/programs is not known for the year of the expense so budgeting is difficult)
* our banking is not set up to use what have become the standard methods of payment for these vendors.