

Independence Squares Board Meeting

August 13, 2019

Present: Dave Blatt, Steve Demos, Tim Harper, Dick Michelin, George Rizer, Leda Sportolari, Susan Turkel, Mike Rutkowski

Meeting was held at the 1101 Market Street (Dave Blatt's office).

Approval of Minutes - Susan

Minutes of Annual Meeting, July 5 meeting, and July 9 meeting were approved.

We discussed the status of several open action items from previous meeting minutes.

From Annual Meeting minutes:

- Year-end financial report from last year - needed to be sent to members (Update: DONE on Wed. 8/14)
- Wireless headset equipment for Pride and other events - Casey Bradshaw had offered to provide information to the board. (Update: Mike has emailed Casey to get this information as of Thurs. 9/12.)

From July 5 minutes:

- Name of continuing Mainstream class – we had agreed that it would be called Mainstream Intensive Workshop, but the website still says Mainstream Fundamentals Workshop. We agreed that we preferred Intensive so that continuing MS and Plus dancers would not have the impression that it's a remedial class. (Update: DONE, but the description of the class still uses the word "fundamentals" several times – can someone suggest better wording?)

From July 9 minutes:

- Club equipment in storage locker – inventory list needs to be distributed to board (Update: DONE on Wed. 8/14)
- Third key to storage locker - to be put in red box at the church (Update: not yet done as of Thurs. 9/12)
- Dave Tavani needs to be asked to continue to be the nominating committee (Update: we decided that it's too early to address this; we'll wait a few months into the season.)
- Dave Tavani needs to be asked if he's interested in composing text for an IS newsletter (Update: we decided that it's better to ask for this type of commitment in person, so will look for an opportunity to do so at a dance or club night.)

Treasurer's Report - Dick

Dick presented a report of income and expenses for the month of July 2019.

We noted that the July dance was a slight loss (\$15). We did not hold a 50/50 drawing at that dance. We discussed the desirability of holding 50/50 drawings at future dances. The board agreed to hold 50/50s at future dances, but not at club nights. We also agreed that IS would keep the proceeds of the 50/50 at the August 17 dance in DE, as we are taking on all financial responsibility for that dance (i.e., renting the hall, paying the caller, etc.).

Dick asked about the whereabouts of the checkbook for the Fly-In, and asked about authorized signers for that account. We believe that Mary Kay (chair of the Fly-In Committee) holds that checkbook, but at this point the only authorized signatories are on the current board. Mary Kay isn't able to use the checkbook.

***Action item:** Dick will ask the Rohdes for possession of the Fly-In checkbook. (Update as of Thurs. 9/12: Dick has learned that there is no physical checkbook for this account, but he now has the account and routing numbers.)*

Dick also asked who should keep copies of caller contracts. It was agreed that Mike (Caller Liaison) and Dick (Treasurer) would both keep copies of these contracts.

Caller Liaison Report - Mike

Mike provided a full report of his activities and upcoming dances (attached). Two new events have been planned for dates approved by the previous board:

- Saturday, January 18: Mark Franks, MS/Plus dance with Advanced star tip, 4-7 pm
- Saturday, February 1: Drew Allen, Advanced/C1, 4-7 pm

We discussed the pros and cons of holding split dances (i.e., dancing at two levels at a given dance, rather than All-Skate rotating between all the levels that have sufficient dancers present). The argument for a split dance is that it provides more floor time for all dancers in attendance. One argument against it is that it divides the club, as MS and Plus dancers can't come to A/C dances, and many A/C dancers seem to prefer not to dance at MS/Plus. This segued into a discussion of club cohesion, which is a major concern. We spoke briefly about non-dance activities we could organize to help bond club members, including announcing a restaurant to gather at after dances. This conversation will continue at future meetings.

We agreed that it's important to consider dancer feedback as we decide on programming and scheduling. We agreed that we had to be more systematic about collecting evaluations of dances.

Action Item: *At each dance we will hand out evaluations as people pay their admission; we will remind them to complete the evaluations during the break and at the end of the dance.*

Publicity Chair Report - Dave

Dave provided a summary of his activities over the last month. Here are highlights:

- He learned that Google classifies IS as an “adult entertainment club.” He will try to have this corrected.
- He would like for our dances to be listed in the *Where's the Dance* database (wheresthedance.com). He will seek a volunteer to take on this task.
- The website is coming along; Ted is working on it and will have something to show us in September.
- The by-laws listed on the website are out of date and don't include the amendments that were passed at the June 11 annual meeting. **Action Item:** *Dave needs to be sent the amendments so he can put them up on the website. Susan will do so.*
- Facebook: Susan and Dave met to investigate the club's two FB entities and to come up with a recommendation for the future.

In short, the Facebook GROUP, which was founded in 2008, has been more of a community space in which group members can post articles, discuss club activities, post pictures and videos, etc. It can be used for the creation of events, but the events listing will show that the event is “Hosted by [name of person who created the event].” Users need to JOIN the group in order to post, receive updates, and see the full site; a moderator needs to allow them to join. We can set up questions for potential group members to answer as a way to weed out potential trolls.

The Facebook PAGE, founded in 2015, mimics the website; it is used to create event listings, and each event created there is labeled as “Hosted by Independence Squares.” Only administrators can post to the page, so there is no discussion there. Individuals can choose to “follow” the page in order to receive updates without needing to be added by anyone.

Dave's recommendation is that, as it is confusing and unnecessary to maintain these two entities, we keep the Facebook GROUP and gradually decommission the Facebook PAGE. We can post future events to the group; it will be clear from text and context that

these are not actually hosted by the individual who posts them. We can post an announcement on the PAGE indicating that it will no longer be updated, and we can suggest that folks who are interested in keeping up with the club should join the GROUP.

Dave offered to come up with the three questions that will be used to screen potential joiners of the FB group; he will bring those for discussion at the next board meeting.

The board discussed this proposal and agreed that it made sense.

Action Items: *Dave will bring three screening questions to the next board meeting for discussion. After those are approved, we will begin the process of decommissioning the FB page.*

- IAGSDC website: Dave has updated IS club information and Fly-In information on the IAGSDC website.

We discussed the functionality the IAGSDC website offers of providing online registration and payment for Fly-Ins. PayPal is integrated, and individuals can pay with a credit card if they don't have a PayPal account. A useful functionality is that registration fees can be set to automatically increase at specific dates as the Fly-In approaches. We agreed that we wanted to make use of this service for the 2021 Fly-In.

The Fly-In committee has stated that they are in the midst of the registration process for the 2020 event, and they prefer to conduct the entire process using their analog method. However, we know that they will start accepting registrations for the 2021 event at the 2020 event, so we need to start setting up and testing the system now.

Dave proposed a motion to authorize his using the club's email and the Fly-In checking account to set up a club PayPal account. Once that is in place, he can use the IAGSDC online sandbox to start testing the system of accepting payments. The motion passed.

- We discussed the All Join Hands newsletter that Dave distributed to the club via email last week. This newsletter is a collection of flyers for Fly-Ins and other dance events from all over the country. The IS Fly-In did not appear in the newsletter.

Action Item: *Someone needs to ask the Fly-In Committee to submit our flyer to All Join Hands. (Update: Dave Blatt will do this.)*

Budget for 2019-2020 – Dick and Tim

Dick has put together an estimate for overall income and expenditures for this year, and his model projects a \$600 loss over the course of the year. This is a somewhat conservative model, in that it makes a low estimate for income and a high estimate for expenses.

Tim pointed out that we have a very high balance in our bank accounts, especially given that we are a non-profit. So, we can afford to take some risks and possibly lower our door fees.

Tim also noted that we are the most expensive club in the area in terms of our door fees (\$10); most clubs charge \$6 or \$7 for members and \$8 for non-members. We do not offer a member discount.

We discussed our financial assistance policy. There is some concern that that this policy may be abused, and there have been complaints from members about this possible abuse. Tim and Dick have two concerns:

1. Currently, granting of financial assistance is completely at the discretion of a single person: the Treasurer. Dick would like to expand this so the President and Treasurer both consider each case.
2. Currently, there are no objective criteria for qualifying for financial assistance. If an individual asks for help, they are given the discount. Tim suggested we consider asking that those requesting assistance fill out an application form, and shared an example from DC Lambda Squares.

We discussed these concerns. We also discussed alternative scenarios to offering the financial assistance we've offered until now:

- We could lower our fees across the board and do away with the financial assistance program
- We could post suggested fees and let people pay what they want on a sliding scale. (NB: the local contra dance in Mt. Airy offers a sliding scale; their language appears on this web page: <https://thursdaycontra.com/#slidingscale>).

We had a lively discussion of all of these options.

We concluded that we would continue to charge \$10 at the door for classes and dances through the end of 2019. There will still be a pre-payment discount, the specifics of which are

yet to be determined. The website will say that the pre-payment option is available and that details will be forthcoming.

Agenda Items not addressed

We ran out of time to discuss the rest of the agenda items:

- Follow-up on prior board's decision to open a third bank account by the end of August – Dick and Tim (Note: this was later resolved via email: we will amend the decision and extend the time limit for creating this account by an additional two months to give us time to further discuss the details.)
- Update on bonding of Board members - Mike
- Caller survey - Steve
- “Friendly-ness” discussion – how to balance welcoming/fun with successful dancing – George et al.
- Report from Retention Presentation at Convention – Mike et al.
- New Business

We will pick these items up at our September meeting.

Meeting adjourned 9:07 pm.

Caller Liaison Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – August 13, 2019

The information below is accurate as of Sunday, August 11, 2019, and may not reflect any updates received after this report's preparation. Please note that all dances are at the Lutheran Church unless otherwise noted.

Open Houses – Summer 2019

There is one remaining open house for this summer to be held on Tuesday, August 20, 2019.

Dances Through September 2020

Callers have been contracted and confirmed for the following dances taking place August 17, 2019 through September 12, 2020.

Saturday, July 27, 2019 Plus/Advanced – Joe Bradshaw 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Tuesday, August 6, 2019 Mainstream/Plus – Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Saturday, August 17, 2019 Joint Dance with DC Lambda Squares Mainstream – C1

Dayle Hodge 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

The dance will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek in Newark, Delaware, the same site as last year..

Saturday, September 7, 2019 – Todd Fellegly Double Header with Potluck (Arrangements have been made for his lodging on the night of September 7.)

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm Advanced through C2

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Potluck

7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Mainstream through Plus with Advanced Star Tip

Saturday, October 5, 2019 Mainstream/Plus with Advanced Star Tip – Mark Franks 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Saturday, October 19, 2019 – Advanced/C1 with C2 Star Tip – Brian Jarvis 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, November 23, 2019 – Mainstream/Plus with Advanced Star Tip – Howard Richman 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, December 7, 2019 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C2 – Dayle Hodge 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm The Merion Meeting House will once again be the site of the Glitter Ball with paperwork and checks to be finalized.

Saturday, January 18, 2020 – Mainstream/Plus with Advanced Star Tip – Mark Franks 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Saturday, February 1, 2020 – Advanced/CI – Drew Allen 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Saturday, September 12, 2020 – Barry Clasper Double Header with Potluck

3:30 pm – 5:30 pm Advanced through Challenge 1 with C2 Star Tip

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Potluck

7:00 pm – 10:00 pm Mainstream through Plus with Advanced Star Tip

FYI Notes

- 1) The committee has begun hiring callers for January 2020 through May of 2020.
- 2) 2020 Fly-In Callers: Sandra Bryant, Todd Fellegly, Dayle Hodge March 27-29, 2020.
- 3) 2021 Fly-In Callers: Bill Harrison, Eric Henerlau, Kris Jensen March 12-14, 2021
- 4) Upcoming Fall Classes – Contracts have been offered to both Joe Bradshaw and Betsy Gotta for the classes and workshops beginning in September 2019. Joe will be teaching the Mainstream class and the Advanced Workshop beginning September 10, 2019. Betsy will teach the C1 Workshop and the Mainstream Workshop beginning October 8, 2019. The Mainstream Workshop will become a Plus class beginning January 7, 2020. All sessions will end on May 19, 2020. Substitute callers will be hired when either of them is unavailable.

Items of Concern for the Caller Liaison – To Be Discussed by the Board

- 1) Approving dances further out on the calendar. While the board is still trying new things and times, this may seem like it shouldn't be done, however, most times and dances can be changed at a later if there appears to be a real problem. Please see the caller's contract where cancellation policies are spelled out. Dates are currently approved through May 2020. The committee will be recommending dates to the board at the August 2019 board meeting through at least December 2020. The open houses for the 2020 and 2021 summer sessions are a different topic.

Upcoming Callers

Please let me know of any callers that you would like to have call for our dances and we will do our best to bring a variety of callers to our dance halls.