

Independence Squares Board Meeting

June 15, 2020

Present: Dave Blatt, Stephen Demos, Tim Harper, Dick Michelin, George Rizer, Leda Sportolari, Susan Turkel, Mike Rutkowski (representing the Caller Liaison Committee)
Guest: Will H.

Meeting was held via teleconference starting at 6:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes - Susan

The May meeting minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Update – Dick

Dick noted no change in his report. There is still an outstanding check that has not been cashed. The June report will reflect a \$3000 donation from Dance for Independence (who were responsible for Belle's Run, the Philadelphia 2019 IAGSDC convention). *Tim will send a thank you note to Dance for Independence and will put out an Independence Squares general e-mail recognizing the generous donation.* [Tim sent out both communications and they are attached below the minutes.]

Caller Liaison Update – Mike

The board agreed to cancel our July dance. *Mike will contact the caller to let him know and will offer him full compensation.*

Program Reports including Social Night and Game Night – Leda and Steve

One Plus student (Sam K.) would like Betsy's instructional disk. *Steve will send Sam's address to Tim for forwarding to Betsy.* Steve is working on getting new dancers to join our general e-mail list.

Everyone was pleased with how the June social went and thanked Leda for hosting. Dave will host the July social and suggested having every participant deliver a joke.

Game night is going well with a core group of regulars as well as new people rotating in.

Virtual Dance Discussion – all

Leda reported on her discussion with Thom Cuong Dang that she had when she was asking him for permission to use one of Darren Gallina's recordings of virtual square dancing for use at the last Independence Squares social. She said Thom gave permission and said that Darren was available to call for us but that it works best if Darren called within two weeks of when we ask him. Mike is also in communication with Thom.

Although there was a lot of agreement that it is a little redundant for Independence Squares to host a virtual dance since there is already so much availability out there, we also decided to look into the possibility of having Dayle Hodge move our August dance to an online format. *Mike will broach this idea with Dayle.* Some of us felt it would be good to try to incorporate some social aspects of a dance into our online version, to give it an Independence Squares flavor and not make it 100% dancing.

Tim mentioned that there may be licensing issues with using the music needed for an online dance. Darren has the needed licenses but Dayle may not. Leda said we could hire Darren as well if that is the case.

Discussion of dancer willingness to attend once we meet our basic criteria for resuming activities - all

The board recognizes that our stated requirements for when to resume dancing will not be met soon. For example, schools may reopen but they will probably enforce some level of social distancing.

The board discussed possible scenarios in the event we are unable to resume dancing in the foreseeable future. There was general agreement that it is too early to make any decisions on this matter.

We noted that the church where we dance has not reopened.

Three of us said we would not be returning to dance even if it is allowed until we have further confidence of our safety (such as a vaccine).

Steve agreed to make a survey to send out to our membership about their comfort level in resuming dancing. In particular it will address which accommodations would make them feel safer.

It will include (but not be limited to) ...

1. Possibility of no-hands dancing
2. Possibility of an outdoor venue
3. Possibility of assigned squares
4. Possibility of limiting the number of programs at a dance
5. How members feel about other ways to stay connected
6. How members feel about virtual dancing

Discussion of Club response to ongoing protests – all

We had a long discussion of if and how Independence Squares should respond to the protests against institutional racism. *Dave agreed to write up two statements and send them to the membership.* The first will recognize the Supreme Court's historic decision barring discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in hiring or firing. The second statement will assert Independence Squares' stand against racism.

[Since the meeting, Dave wrote and distributed the two statements with unanimous board approval. They are attached below. Tim also addressed racism in the state of the club email that announced the \$3000 (see below). Will alerted us to two NPR podcasts that are relevant to our discussion. Tim announced the formation of a task force to propose specific actions as the club continues to make our activities welcoming of everyone. The committee will ensure that our recruiting efforts do not overlook communities color in promoting our club. So far George, Steve and Leda have said they will be on the task force.]

Additional topic – Steve

Steve recommended that the announcement of board meetings with a welcoming invitation for members to attend should be assigned to one person who would take on that responsibility monthly. Leda agreed to take on that responsibility.

Meeting adjourned: 7:49 pm

June 16, 2020

Dance For Independence, Inc.
2001 Hamilton St, Apt 815
Philadelphia, PA 19130-4220

Dear DFI Board,

On behalf of the Independence Squares Board and our entire membership, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for your very generous donation of \$3,000 to the club! In addition to providing Philadelphia with the marvelous 36th IAGSDC Convention, you have helped to ensure the continuation of LGBTQA+ square dancing in Philadelphia! As you are certainly aware, the ongoing health crisis has disrupted all of our lives and sparked significant financial uncertainty about the future. Your donation alleviates much of that uncertainty and allows us to plan for a return to dancing as soon as conditions allow. Thank you again!

Best Regards,

Tim Harper
President
Independence Squares

Dear Independence Squares Members and Friends,

I hope you are all safe and well and finding new and interesting activities to keep occupied. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express our sincere appreciation to Dance for Independence for their very generous donation of \$3,000 to Independence Squares! In addition to hosting the wonderful 36th Annual IAGSDC Convention, they have given a donation that will help ensure that our club will be able to “hit the ground dancing” once we are able to safely resume. Thank you, Norma, Donna, Dane, Ed, Fred, and Will!

Unfortunately, the time to resume has not yet arrived, and we have made the decision to cancel our July 18 dance. As a reminder, the board has set three basic criteria that must be met before we consider resuming our normal activities:

1. Philadelphia schools have resumed activities with no social distancing requirements in place.
2. COVID-19 cases have been steadily declining in the 10 Philadelphia metro counties (Philadelphia, Delaware, Chester, Montgomery, Bucks in PA; New Castle in DE; Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem in NJ).
3. It is legal to convene a group of 50 people in the city.

These represent the minimum conditions that the board feels must be met before we should consider a resumption of our gatherings. Additional criteria may be considered as conditions change. We are currently evaluating conditions monthly and, though encouraged by the reopening of some jurisdictions, the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in some of those areas give us cause to move slowly. The health and safety of our dancers is our primary concern. In the coming weeks we will be asking you to participate in a survey to provide us with feedback regarding what YOU, as dancers, consider appropriate criteria for resumption of our in-person activities. Please participate as we need your input for these critical decisions.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage everyone to join in our all-club virtual socials (second Tuesday of each month), game night (fourth Tuesday of each month) and our new Mah Jong evenings (Mondays). In addition, several callers are scheduling virtual square dances and we will be providing information regarding these to all who are on our e-mail list. These events are great fun and a wonderful way to keep in touch with other dancers and practice dance skills. Just be patient, acquiring the ability to dance with people who aren't there can take some practice!

Take a Peak has scheduled a number of Virtual Convention events since we won't be able to congregate in Denver in person. Please consider joining us online for those as well.

On a final note, although we (your board) generally try to avoid commenting on non-square dance events, the world has a way of intruding and I don't believe any of us are unmoved by recent events. The Supreme Court ruling protecting the LGBT community from discrimination in hiring and firing was a remarkable milestone worthy of celebration! At the same time, events and protests across the nation have highlighted the many instances of racism still faced daily by people of color. Clearly advancement is possible, but much work remains to be done. Independence Squares remains committed to providing a welcoming environment to ALL and we will do our best to ensure that, even virtually, we remain a safe space where diversity, in all of its facets, is valued.

Please be safe!

Tim Harper
Independence Squares President

Subject line: Celebrating the Supreme Court Ruling

Hello Dancers,

If we were dancing right now, we would have the opportunity to be together to celebrate the latest Supreme Court ruling protecting the LGBTQ community from discrimination in hiring and firing. This is a landmark case, and the outcome was far from certain. The 6-3 ruling is certainly icing on the cake.

We can't physically be together for this, but we wanted to send out a note marking this incredible milestone in our country's journey toward full civil rights for all Americans. Be out, be proud, and Happy Pride (indeed)!

Your IS Board

Subject line: Independence Squares Stands Against Racism

Hello dancers,

The events and protests over the past weeks have highlighted the inequities the Black community faces daily. As a board, we wanted to make clear that Independence Squares is committed to being a welcoming place for all, regardless of race. We are on hiatus now, but as we start to come together in the coming months, we will welcome, as we always have, members of all races as well as all from the LGBTQ community, and allies of both, to come and dance with us, and enjoy the friendships and community that are such a special part of our club.

Your IS Board