

IS Board Meeting

September 1, 2020

Present: Dave Blatt, Steve Demos, Tim Harper, Dick Michelin, George Rizer, Leda Sportolari, Susan Turkel, Mike Rutkowski (guests: Eileen, Norma, Ellen, Will, Bob, Mary Kay, Ed)

Meeting was held via teleconference.

Approval of minutes from July 21 -- Susan
Approved with corrections.

Treasurer's Report - Dick

We discussed the July Treasurer's Report. The only activity this month was the payment for our MeetUp subscription. Things were otherwise very quiet.

Update on club listserv transition – Dave

The club has used a Yahoo! listserv for the last ~20 years. The settings around moderation have recently changed in an undesirable way: any newly added member has the ability to post to the mailing list without going through moderation. This setting cannot be overridden.

Dave is working on transitioning the club listserv to a Google Group. He's set up the group and has done an initial phase of testing.

The next step will be to harvest our current email list from Yahoo, and then contact current Yahoo group members to alert them of the upcoming invitation to the new group. We will not invite people whose emails have been bouncing. It is easy to add people to the Google Group proactively, as well as to enroll them upon request. We anticipate a smooth transition to the new listserv environment.

Review of Club Survey Results - Steve

Steve shared the results of our recent club survey with the group. There were 35 responses. Overall, respondents were amenable to the various options we offered for returning to dancing (e.g., hands-free, with masks, outdoors, etc.). There was some resistance to being assigned to a square for the entire night; one concern might be that if one dancer sits out a dance, the entire assigned square would have to sit out that dance. Less than half of the respondents said they would not dance until there is a COVID vaccine. Five respondents would not want to dance hands-free. Everyone was willing to dance outside.

Respondents reported enjoying our social activities, particularly our monthly Zoom socials. In terms of potential future activities, hiking and biking were not of interest. People seemed to be interested in a socially distanced bring-your-own-food picnic; there was also interest in a city walking tour. Steve is willing to co-plan a picnic; if we have one, Steve suggested it take place in October.

In terms of interest in virtual/online dancing, the survey revealed lots of "maybe" responses.

Overall, respondents approved of the board's set of criteria for returning to dancing.

We agreed that the survey confirmed much of what we already knew. Nevertheless, we agreed that it was helpful and reassuring to know what the membership is thinking.

Caller Liaison Committee Report - Mike

Mike reported on the virtual dance the club hosted in August, with Dayle Hodge calling. About 45 people attended, including 13 IS members during the MS/Plus session, and 6 during the A/C session. Club members' interest in virtual square dancing seems limited, so Mike advises that we not invest resources into putting on our own virtual dances. He noted that there are VSDs available almost every day of the week, and our club members are able to attend those.

The only contracts in place for IS dances are for the two October dances, the Glitter Ball in 2020 and 2021, and the fly-in.

Mike recommends we cancel both October dances. He has contacted both callers; neither has expressed interest in leading a virtual dance, and we won't be ready to dance in person in October.

A motion was proposed to cancel both October dances; the motion passed unanimously.

Action item: Mike will contact both callers to tell them that the dances are cancelled; once they have been informed, Dave will update the website to note that the dances have been cancelled.

We also discussed the Glitter Ball. We have one more month before we need to decide whether to cancel, in terms of the hall rental. We have already agreed to pay the caller, Dayle Hodge. We could offer the event as a virtual dance, and encourage participants to dress up, to set up a fancy real or virtual background, etc. We know that Dayle has a strong and large international following, so it could be a well-attended event if it were well-advertised. (We would also have the option to not advertise far and wide, and have it be a more local-centric event.) Another option could be to market the event as a "Glitter Social" – a party, all dressed up, just for the club. We agreed to discuss this again in October. Meeting participants are encouraged to email the board with any thoughts or additional ideas.

2021 Fly-In Discussion - Mary Kay

After cancelling the 2020 Fly-In, we negotiated new contracts with the callers. We can cancel up to 6 months before the event with no penalty. If we cancel within 6 months, the callers will receive 50% of their negotiated fees. This month is the 6-month cut-off for cancelling without penalty.

Mary Kay presented the Fly-In Committee's perspective, which is that we should continue to plan and hope. They are willing to pay the callers. They recognize that attendance could be low given the age of dancers. They are in touch with the callers, who also prefer to wait and continue to plan. The committee and the callers have agreed to be in touch before the callers make any travel plans.

The hotel had carried our deposits over from this year to next year. They want to work with us and are likely to continue to roll our deposits over if we need to cancel. However, all things being equal, it is probably better from the hotel's perspective if we cancel earlier so that they have more flexibility.

After hearing the Committee's perspective, the board and guests at the meeting had a lively conversation. Several people felt that few dancers would be willing to attend a dance weekend six months from now, as it is unlikely that a viable vaccine will be available and that sufficient people will have had it. Some felt that the board has a responsibility to protect the club's financial assets. It was noted that other square dance conventions have already cancelled for the spring.

On the other hand, some noted, there is a possibility that there will be a vaccine by the spring. Some suggested that there is value in providing hope for the dancers, and that it would be better not to cancel the Fly-In this early.

If we cancel, and the virus situation is much better in March, we noted that we could put on big local one-day dance.

A motion was proposed to cancel the 2021 IS Fly-In and offer registrants same options as last year, in terms of rolling over their registration, getting a refund, or donating their fees back to the club. The motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor and 1 abstention.

The next Fly-In is scheduled for the last weekend in March, 2022. The callers will be Michael Kellogg, Anne Uebelacker, and Chris Phillips.

Social/Game Night Reports - Steve/Leda

Game night continues to be very successful, with about 10-13 participants every month. Sometimes individuals have to sit out, but they seem to enjoy watching the proceedings. If there were a volunteer to host a separate "room," then everyone could play every game; however, it's been difficult to get a volunteer to take on that role. In any case, if a new participant attends a game night, that new person always gets to play.

Social night: Our social nights have also been successful. We talked about possible themes or activities to focus the gatherings. We agreed that we would welcome non-board members making suggestions for activities, hosting activities, and/or hosting the entire social. Some of the possible activities we mentioned included:

- bingo
- charades
- a fashion show
- meet your pet
- two truths and a lie
- share a photo from your childhood
- share something about yourself that nobody in the club knows about you
- come with ideas for a future theme

The next social is scheduled for Tuesday 9/8, and does not yet have a theme or a host. We discussed the pros and cons of meeting and conversing as a full group vs. in smaller groups in breakout rooms. Most people seemed to prefer staying in the full group. We agreed that the point of the social night is to socialize and to get to know each other better. With that in mind, George offered to facilitate the 9/8 session with the following theme: tell the group about your *second* favorite hobby (assuming that square dancing is everyone's first favorite!).

Action item: Steve will set up the Zoom meeting for the 9/8 social and send George the link. George will send out an announcement to the listserv announcing the theme and link, and will host the event.

Club Zoom Account Discussion - Steve

The club has signed up for a dedicated Zoom Pro account at a fee of \$15/month. We talked about whether the account is worth maintaining, given the expense.

Thus far, we have used the account for club socials, game night, board meetings, and diversity committee meetings. Several people felt that it looks both more official and more friendly to have the club's name on the Zoom interface for these events, rather than the name of an individual board or club member with a Zoom account. It also allows a variety of board members to run or host an event, rather than relying on any one individual with a personal account. We agreed that it makes sense at this time for the club to keep the Zoom account.

Long term club future (discussion continued from the July 21 meeting) - All

We discussed the question of whether we want to hold virtual dances/workshops. When we discussed this in July, we wanted to have the experience of hosting the August virtual dance and see how the club responded. We found that attendance by club members was not very high, and some felt that uptake would not be high if we offered virtual dances or workshops. There was also a concern that this could be a money-loser for the club, if we paid the callers but weren't able to cover costs with admission fees.

Some meeting attendees said that they like virtual dancing and would like for the club to offer it to our members. They felt that it is good for practice, and that it would help members to keep in touch with the club. It is important to have a good teacher to cue the dancers; with a talented leader, the dancers could start doing virtual square dance at a basic level and could advance to a higher level. It could also be a way to draw our recent MS class back into the fold, if we offered a virtual MS workshop. We could require pre-enrollment to ensure a base number of participants in order to hold the series.

A motion was proposed: IS will offer a limited virtual square dance series with one of our club callers at the MS level (possibly with Plus tips), limited to members of IS and local clubs. The votes were split: three yes, three no, one abstention.

Action item: Mike will contact the club callers to see if they're interested/able in hosting a four-session virtual square dance workshop series, and we can discuss it next month. (Update: Betsy is interested and proposed a series of dates in October and November. We agreed to wait until the next board meeting to flesh out the details.)

We also discussed the possibility of arranging a club-hosted socially distanced picnic, possibly to include socially distanced line dancing. We agreed to discuss this at Tuesday's social to see if there's interest. Steve would want other volunteers to help. We discussed possible locations, including Ridley Creek State Park (pavilion with electricity), Fairmount Park, or Rose Tree Park in Media. Even a large parking lot could work, on a weekend.

Recruitment Committee Report - George

Some new folks have joined the recruitment committee, and others have expressed interest in participating. George is hopeful that it will be a solid committee.

The board is encouraged to make suggestions to the recruiting committee.

It was noted that the IAGSDC has a recruitment and retention committee. This committee has a meeting scheduled for next Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 9 pm. Anyone can attend.

IAGSDC History Project - Mike

Mike and Tim have been recruited to work on the Memorial Panels on the IAGSDC website, specifically on entries for our deceased club members. Mike is looking for people to help provide information on these folks, such as personal remembrances and photos; current members are also welcome to write up text for these biographical pages. For many of our late members, the IAGSDC site has no information beyond a name and photo. We have no badges for the physical quilt panels for some of our early members, so we may order new ones. Mike has sent email to the club asking for people who remember the deceased dancers.

This is the page listing all of the names on the IAGSDC Memorial Panels, grouped by club:

https://www.iagsdchistory.org/historywiki/index.php/Memorial_Panel_Names

New Business

We discussed the status of the current board, specifically how long this board will be seated. In a meeting earlier this year, we had agreed to hold the club's Annual Meeting and board elections one month after we resume dancing. On the other hand, the club's by-laws state that any member can call an Annual Meeting six months after a missed Annual Meeting – which would be anytime after December 15. (This raises the question of what constitutes a member, as no one has paid dues for this year....) We did not reach any conclusions on this topic.

We scheduled the next board meeting for Tuesday, October 6, 7:00 – 9:00 pm.

Adjourned 9:08 pm

Caller Liaison Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – September 2020

The information below is accurate as of Sunday, August 30, 2020, 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.

Opening Discussions for Board

- 1) At the request of the Fly-in committee, we contacted the callers for the March 2021 Fly-in as to their thoughts on holding the fly-in. While I have not heard from Bill Harrison, both Eric Henerlau and Kris Jensen agree that they can't predict the future but feel that we should continue to plan for the fly-in. We have promised the callers that we will keep them in the loop as time moves forward and they begin to prepare travel plans. They have been asked to reach out to us before proceeding with finalizing travel plans. Like us, they are hoping that the situation with the pandemic begins to improve to allow for in-person dancing.
- 2) We each attended the virtual dance with Dayle Hodge on August 15, 2020. My purpose was twofold, one to dance and the other to see how many of our club members attended. Each of the sessions (one MS/Plus and the other Adv/C1), had 27-31 screens participating. There were 13 Independence Squares members at the MS/Plus session and 6 at the Adv/C1 session. As there are opportunities every day to dance virtually, those club members who are interested should be encouraged to do so, however, we do not feel that the club should expend its energy and resources on doing more of them. The only upcoming dance that should be considered for hosting virtually would be the Glitter Ball as we know that Dayle is comfortable with the format.
- 3) Brian Jarvis and Geo Jedlicka are due to for us on October 3 and October 17, 2020, respectively. Based on the current situation, we are recommending the cancellation of these dances. The committee emailed both callers about the possibility of doing a virtual dance, however, only Brian has gotten back to us thus far. Brian has tried dancing and calling virtually, and he is not a fan. I am not sure of Geo's feeling about virtual calling. Also, the church is not currently available for dancing and they are not sure when they will be open again.

Dances Through December 2021

Callers have been contracted and confirmed for the following dances taking place October 2020 through December 4, 2021.

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

Saturday, October 3, 2020 – Mainstream through Advanced – Brian Jarvis 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, October 17, 2020 – Advanced through C1 – Geo Jedlicka 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, December 5, 2020 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – 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. **See Note Below**

Saturday, December 4, 2021 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Betsy Gotta 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm The Merion Meeting House is the first choice as the site of the Glitter Ball 2021

FYI Notes

- 1) 2021 Fly-In Callers: Bill Harrison, Eric Henerlau, Kris Jensen March 12-14, 2021 New contracts have been issued to the callers per the board's instructions. All of them were agreeable to the requested changes.
- 2) 2022 Fly-In: Callers: Mike Kellogg, Chris Phillips, Anne Uebelacker March 25-27, 2022
- 3) I contacted the church in Newark, Delaware to cancel our reservation there for August 15, 2020 as we no longer needed the space. They were about to contact us as while they are renting their space right now, our group would have been too large to meet under the guidelines in place. They look forward to seeing us next year.

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

- 1) Discussions were held with Mark Franks and Betsy Gotta regarding classes beginning in September 2020. Both are aware that no classes are planned for this fall. They understand that once dancing begins again, workshops will be held at the various levels with the completion of the Mainstream class being on the agenda. No contracts have been signed pending the resolution as to what classes or workshops will be held in the fall or spring. I spoke with Mark Franks recently and he anticipates that there will not be any dancing anywhere in the region this fall. He is checking in with me regularly about our reopening and before he plans any trips for himself.
- 2) The Merion Friends Meeting House was contacted by Leda to see what their cancellation policy is. Their cancellation policy calls for a month's notice. The final decision on the Glitter Ball will need to be made by the end of October to ensure that they receive our notice within the proper time frame.
- 3) Lou Partridge and Norma Beard contacted the Lutheran Church regarding their status. The church is not renting out their space currently, so nothing to worry about unless the club begins dancing before the church is reopened. This may be more of an FYI but is something that the board should be aware of for future planning.

Upcoming Dances and Callers

Our advice is to not cancel the remaining dances in 2020 until it becomes clear that the club should do so. The ability to obtain callers is not always easy, however, that is not our concern here. Our main concern in not canceling the dances is two-fold: one is to give dancers hope that we will be returning to dances soon, and two, to support the callers who are a part of our community. Paying the callers at 100% of the contract amount shows the callers that we respect them as a part of our community and to support them financially during these difficult times as these dances provide a good portion of their livelihood in many cases. The callers are the small businesses in our community being affected by COVID-19.

No dances have been scheduled for 2021 other than the fly-in in March 2021 and the Glitter Ball in December 2021. If we are not dancing at that point, there are much larger issues to deal with besides who to hire as a caller.