

**Independence Squares
Annual Membership Meeting
For year 2019 – December 2020**

December 8, 2020

This meeting was held via Zoom.

This meeting was held in December of a very unusual year; we have not danced or seen each other in person since early March. The club's by-laws state that we must have our Annual Meeting within a six-month grace period after one year following the last regularly scheduled Annual Meeting, so this meeting meets those requirements.

President's report - Tim

We're doing as well as can be expected. We are continuing to hold online social gatherings several times per month: social nights, game nights, mah jongg, and occasional virtual workshops and dances.

We hosted a virtual Glitter Ball last Saturday, which was very successful. We were joined by many non-IS attendees, many of whom were located in Europe.

We have held two very successful MS/Plus virtual workshops, thanks to Betsy.

The next event on the IS schedule is social night on January 12; Ron Rumble will MC, with backup/assistance from Dave Blatt. We will take the opportunity to chat and catch up, and we will talk about what we might like to see moving forward for social nights.

There are no more virtual dances currently scheduled, but the incoming board may want to schedule some. Members are encouraged to contact the board and let them know if this is of interest.

The club is in a good state financially (see below under Treasurer's Report). We won't propose a new budget at this point, since we don't know when we will resume dancing. The new board (or the following board, which will come in in June) will report on budget matters.

Our 2021 Fly-In has been cancelled; we have already begun planning the 2022 event. Mary Kay is stepping away from managing fly in, so we will be seeking new volunteers. She is leaving a well-organized plan, so new people will be able to set things up fairly smoothly.

Proposed By-law Amendment - Tim (speaking as a club member, not in his role as president)

The proposal is that we add a nondiscrimination statement to our bylaws; see below. Why is this being proposed? There has been no problem or issue. IAGSDC has added gender & gender expression to their nondiscrimination statement and asked all affiliated clubs to also add those categories. We realized this year we have NO official nondiscrimination policy, and Tim feels that we SHOULD have one in writing. A public statement expressing our stance on nondiscrimination helps to give folks a sense of belonging.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Independence Squares does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, membership, hiring and firing of staff, and selection of volunteers and vendors.

Treasurer's report - Dick

Dick went over the report. We are in very good shape, due to large bank balances. We thank our previous boards for their fiscal responsibility.

Fly in report – Mary Kay

The Fly-In report focuses on the 2022 weekend: dates, callers, how many registrations are being carried over, and known expenses. The theme is not yet known.

We will need to contact the hotel to find out if they will continue to carry over our \$2000 deposit, which we gave for the cancelled 2020 event.

Mary Kay is stepping back a bit from organizing the Fly-In, but she will help the new organizers.

The board expressed its immense gratitude to Mary Kay and the Fly-In Committee for all of their dedication and hard work.

Volunteer of the year – Dave Blatt

Dave announced that this year's Volunteer of the Year is Ted Marvel! Ted has given his time and expertise so generously this year. He put in an immense amount of work in transitioning our website to its new home and format, and recently set up our PayPal account and linked it to our bank account and to our website. He did all of this with enthusiasm and good cheer. Thanks, Ted!

Ted is being awarded a gift card for Fairmount Bikes, in recognition of his reputation for biking to and from the Lutheran Church in all four seasons! He is an inspiration to us all.

General thanks – Tim

Tim provided his heartfelt thanks to outgoing board – especially Leda and Susan, who stayed on several months past their official terms in order to help during this unusual time in the club's history.

Tim also expressed thanks to the many nondancing spouses of club members, who continue to be supportive during this time when we're not dancing.

Message from incoming president – George

In addition to the written statement George sent to the club listserv (see below), he made some remarks during the Annual Meeting.

In this pandemic year, it will be a challenge to figure out when and how we will ease back into dancing. We're heartened to learn that vaccinations are starting to be distributed. We will have to keep the

welfare of the whole club in mind as we move forward, and we will need everyone to cooperate by wearing masks and following all necessary protocols.

George commends the whole board for its hard work during this difficult time. He also appreciates how the club community has stepped up and been willing to participate in virtual activities. A lot happens behind the scenes, with committees, volunteers, and more. George welcomes all members to become more involved; please let him know if you'd like to participate in a deeper way.

George thanks us all and gives his best wishes for where we're headed.

Final statement as president - Tim

Tim asks the club to give the new board its support. They have a challenging task ahead of them: figuring out how to safely resume in-person dancing. There is no single right answer on how to proceed. Please offer your opinions, support, and patience. The decisions that are made will be in best interest of majority of club members.

Tim thanks All Join Hands for its support of all IAGSDC clubs during this difficult year. All Join Hands generously paid clubs' membership dues to IAGSDC so that we wouldn't need to expend our own funds. If anyone is looking for an organization to donate to (directly or via Amazon Smile designation), All Join Hands is a good choice: they are a non-profit charitable organization, dedicated to promoting LGBTQ+ square dancing. They also support GCA Caller School.

Board Election – Dave Tavani

The election was opened at 7:15; everyone who had paid their membership dues by noon on Monday, Dec. 7 was sent an automatic message at that time with instructions on voting via the ElectionBuddy.com system. Voting was open until 8:00 pm. This was the slate:

- President Elect – Norma Beard
- Secretary - Will Hamp
- MS/Plus rep - Stephen Demos
- Advanced/Challenge rep - Ron Rumble
- Communications Chair - Dave Blatt

As current President Elect, George Rizer automatically becomes President after the election. In addition, current Treasurer Dick Michelin will continue in this role as the Treasurer serves a two-year term.

Soon after 8, Dave reported the results:

- The whole slate was approved, with no write-ins or votes against any of the candidates.
- The resolution regarding the nondiscrimination clause passes, with 30 votes for and 1 against.

There will be a transition meeting next Tuesday night with members from the outgoing and incoming boards, and open to all club members.

Final thanks - Leda

Leda expressed thanks to Tim for his leadership during the past year and a half. We on the board have had spirited discussions at times, but we have always worked together well and made good decisions on behalf of the club. Independence Squares has benefited greatly from Tim's leadership, and we all thank him.

Meeting adjourned: 8:16 pm

Appendix: Incoming President's Report

INDEPENDENCE SQUARES
INCOMING PRESIDENT'S REPORT
DECEMBER 8, 2020

I started dancing 45 years ago. I danced mainstream for two years and then I dropped out of square dancing for a short while. Forty years to be precise...

I moved to New Jersey, and because I came out late in life, was looking for gay activities and community.

I've been dancing now with Independence Squares for just over six years now and have found much more than just a hobby or pastime!

I have shared good times, dancing of course, but also dining together, traveling together, sight-seeing, attending special dances and getaways, meeting new people, saying good-bye to some, laughing, weeping... dare I say it, we are family.

I have been fortunate enough to serve on the board for the past year and a half as your president-elect. Who knew that the whole world would turn upside down with the advent of a pandemic?

We have endured a halt to in-person dancing. We have attempted to stay in touch with virtual social times and game evenings. Many have begun to experience a whole new dance mode – virtual square dancing... as I say, who knew?

And during it all, many of the club members have kept in touch, looked after one another, commiserated and planned and been the sharing and caring and fun-loving family and community that we have all come to love as a wonderful, special group of people.

So – we've endured a lot. What has that meant for me, as a club member and as a member of the Board, and what do I want that to mean as the incoming President of Independence Squares? It has been amazing to serve with the previous Board.

Pragmatically, of course, the Board had to deal with the realities of legal and medical limitations on dancing, which has meant stopping dances, classes, meeting, gatherings, planning, and including the determinations relating to fly-ins. It was painful. For my part, and – I believe on the part of the entire Board - the decision making was very deliberate and was significantly concerned about the safety and welfare of each and every member of the club.

Financially, the club is in good shape, and a lot of the routine income and expenses of the club are somewhat in stasis, because we can't do most of the activities that would normally drive income and outgo within the realm of finances.

Socially, the club is not dancing... not in good shape. What can I say? It stinks. We love dancing, enjoy the club, our friends and family, and we look forward to the time when we can either return to some normalcy or structure a new normalcy that will be as enjoyable and positive as ever. We have been fortunate that volunteers have done a great job of orchestrating social time and game nights.

Because of the pandemic, the Board decided to hold in place our previous Board officers until we could get back to a more normal footing. We assumed that the limitations and lockdowns and sequestrations

and such would be much shorter duration than they have been. That never happened, and a new Board will assume the board responsibilities for the club in our December 2020 meeting.

So, I'd like to suggest what that means to me as your new club president. I have two primary areas of effort that I'd like to mention.

First – given some reasonably good news recently related to vaccine – I hope that one of our first orders of business will be the comfortable resumption of safe in-person dancing. I will be the first person to point out that this will not be easy, because there are a dozen different areas of concern that will have to be addressed to resume in-person dancing. Who will get vaccines, who will get them earlier, later, not-at-all, etc.? What precautions must we adhere to as we return – will masks and social distancing be important when we get to the point where some folks are vaccinated, while there are some who may not get vaccine until much later? What will be the availability for dance space at the church, or the arrangements required?

Now, all of that will have to be handled dynamically over the course of the new year and those questions are very early and tentative (as I write this report, we are experiencing the highest rate of daily deaths since the start of the pandemic), but I want the club to understand the enormity of the task facing us; and it will require the entire club and the diligent efforts of the board to help us to navigate those new, uncharted waters and difficult territory.

Second – I am very hopeful that when we get to the point where we can think about recruitment, we can look to expanding our recruitment opportunities and models. Just like with our 'restart' efforts, I'm not sure what that will look like, but I do hope that – given the twin catastrophes of social upheaval and racial unrest and cultural angst, coupled with pandemic – we can build on the foundation of inclusion, friendship, fun, and group enjoyment existing in the club to redouble our efforts to bring in new dancers to our IS 'family'.

As I said, I look forward to that day when our social activities and dance time are back to normal.

Briefly, I want to share some thanks.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the previous board members for a LOT of diligent and difficult decision making and hard work.

I am grateful for the folks who have been volunteers and have served on committees and made and revised and cancelled and remade plans.

The club has weathered an ugly patch. Times will still be rough for the immediately foreseeable future. I ask for your patience and help for me, for the board, and for the entire club.

For the newest members to the old-timers (or long-timers; you can choose your wording), my wish for you is that the joy, the exercise, the socializing, the gathering, the lessons/learning, the fun, and the sheer good time of dancing will be back soon.

I look forward to it.

With respect and love for the entire club.

Yellow rocks,

George Rizer

President, Independence Squares