

Independence Squares  
Annual Membership Meeting  
For year December 2020 - June 2021  
June 8, 2021

This meeting was held via Zoom.

This meeting was held to get our annual meetings back on our regular schedule after a very unusual year.

### President's Report\* - George

This has been an ugly 2 years. It is flabbergasting to see how remarkable the club's activities, cohesion, caring, and support have carried out during the pandemic. Kudos to the club for the whole club's cohesion in an amazing time.

A club can only function well if there are people who get behind its efforts. I thank everyone who has in any way contributed to who we have been in the past two years.

### Secretary's Report - Will

The minutes of the December 8th, 2020 annual meeting were adopted by the IS Board in January and posted on the website. However, the secretary failed to record that action.

Motion

We accept the minutes of the last annual meeting.

Will moved, Jed second, passed unanimously.

### Treasurer's Report - Dick

Thanks to donations from All Join Hands we have had a slight financial increase. We have maintained our insurance.

Treasurer's Report accepted unanimously.

### Election of 2021-2022 Board of Directors - Susan - Judge of Elections

The election was opened at 7:15; everyone who had paid their membership dues by noon on Monday, June 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 – Steve Demos
- Treasurer - Chris Deephouse
- Secretary - Will Hamp
- MS/Plus rep - Bob Rohde
- Advanced/Challenge rep - Ron Rumble
- Communications Coordinator - Ted Marvel

As current President Elect, Norma Beard automatically becomes President after the election.

### Proposed By-law Changes - Dick

There is a proposal to modify Article 4 of the club's by-laws. This is the proposed change:

Section 4.4 D 4. Shall ensure that at least the ~~President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary of the incoming Board~~ become signatories of the club bank account(s) in a timely fashion for the duration of their term(s) of office.

Shall be replaced with:

Section 4.4 D 4. Shall ensure that at least the Treasurer and three other Board members become signatories of the club bank account(s) in a timely fashion for the duration of their term(s) of office.

The language being removed has been lined out. The language being added has been underlined.

Rationale:

*This change is being proposed in order to give the Board more flexibility in appointing signatories of the club's bank accounts in case one or more of the officers are unable to be signers due to residency or other impediments.*

Discussion:

As one of the writers of the current by-laws, Jed spoke against the change.

- The intent was to restrict who had access to the bank account.
- Only high level officers should have access to the bank account.
- Part of the vote for officers is who is going to have that responsibility.
- There have been cases in square dance clubs where board members have gone rogue and absconded a with money.

Several members spoke supporting the amendment.

## Fly-In Report - Casey

Casey and Dave T. (the co-chairs) will meet with Mary Kay (the outgoing chair) on June 10, 2021. Mary Kay reported: Sally at the Clarion Hotel has carried over the \$200 deposit from 2020 to 2021 and to 2022. The pricing will remain the same. Guest rooms will be \$75. We owe \$1,800 for the rooms by a month before the fly-in. March 25-27, 2022 are the Fly-in dates. Callers are Michael Kellogg, Chris Phillips and Kris Jensen. The committee is looking for volunteers.

## Recruitment/Retention Committee Report - Steve

We haven't had a formal Recruitment/Retention Committee for some time. The task has been split.

- Retention Committee which is looking to reassure members that have dropped out that they are valued and welcomed back.
- Recruitment Committee which is
  - Looking for new club members.
  - Looking for additional ways to increase our diversity.
  - Is forming a proposal to instate a series of "Fun Nights"
    - Anyone can come regardless of square dance experience.
    - Open up to a diverse group of people who want to go out and have a fun night.
    - Raise our profile in the community and eventually some of them will want to join us as members.
    - Not yet approved by the board. Discussion regarding branding, recruitment, charging admission, exclusion, inclusion, the purpose of the "Fun Nights", and when they might start.

## Resumption Committee Report - Ron

The club will be participating in Pride Lite this year on September 4, 2021. We will need volunteers to staff the table.

The committee has found that all the parameters we need to reopen have been met except the guidelines for the city of Philadelphia. Philadelphia has an announcement scheduled for 6-11-2021. We hope this will allow us to open up. We will be sending out a survey for the members to decide safety protocols for return to dancing.

## Volunteer of the Year Award\*\* - George

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And if we wanted to recognize our volunteer for the year, and we wanted someone to exemplify the hard work and dedication and significant input made on behalf of Independence Squares...

We could look this year to Mike Rutkowski...

Well-deserved and congratulations - and Mike, you have the thanks of the club for all you bring and share with the club, as the Independence Squares Volunteer of the Year.

## Election of 2021-2022 Board of Directors Results - Susan - Judge of Elections

At 8:03, Susan reported:

- The whole slate was approved, with no write-ins or votes against any of the candidates.
- The by-laws change passes, with 96.6% of the vote.
- The anonymous election system worked.

## Incoming President Speech - Norma

I was not planning to be president virtually. I am looking forward to getting back to in person in the church. I thank all the people who have kept us in touch with our social meetings, games, mahjong, and virtual dancing. Back to dancing is coming up sooner than I thought. I am thankful for that. The things that are coming up are important. Getting us back to dancing and growing the club. It takes all of us. We need everybody to help to promote and bring in new people. We need volunteers for Pride. I want to invite everyone to come to our board meetings. Thanks for coming I was glad to see everyone. I hope to see you all back to dancing soon.

## Thank Yous - Steve

The board members that are rotating off the board deserve a hearty thanks.

- Dick Michelin has been steadfast, conscientious, and reliable. He is a huge asset to the club.
- Dave Blatt has been one of the hardest working board members, clearheaded, knowledgeable, and capable. He has done every task he set for himself or at the boards request with incredible competence and timeliness.
- George Rizer has guided us through storm of Covid. He runs board meetings effortlessly and professionally. His commitment to inclusivity, inspires me and I am humbled that he has agreed to stay on the recruitment committee to continue its work to keep our club vibrant, diverse, and strong.

## Mainstream graduates -Steve

Bases on their attendance at our workshops, we have graduated Peri B., Vinney F., Sarah W., and Sarah P. We welcome these new members into Independence Squares!

## Adjournment

### \*INDEPENDENCE SQUARES OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been my privilege and my honor to serve on the Board of Directors for the Independence Squares and to have been the President-elect and President for the past two years.

So for this outgoing President's Report, how has the club fared during my tenure? I'll share a moment of consideration about the past, the present, and the future to try to encapsulate my outgoing thoughts and feelings and reflections.

First the past...

In the fall of 2019, the club was healthy (in several ways – most ways).

\* Going into my President-elect term, the finances of the club were good.

\* We were still basking in the aftermath of a wonderful local IAGSDC convention – Belle's Run. Even though there is a legal line between the Belle's Run and the club, of course the club was integral to the participation in the convention. Congrats to the committee and the volunteers and all of the participants.

\* We were in the midst of a couple classes and had several new mainstream dancers.

\* The Board consisted of seasoned Board members and dancers.

In many ways transitioning from 2019 to 2020, the club was in a good place and our positive status was exemplified by a prosperous and typically comfortable and harmonious new year.

Business as usual for the club meant fun and entertainment and our typical club sharing and enjoyment.

Continuing the reflection for the past, in February of 2020 – all hell broke loose.

\* On January 21, 2020, a man in Washington State was the first United State death for the illness that was then referred to as the corona virus.

\* By the end of January there was a federal US corona virus task force.

\* By March 2, there were 100 confirmed cases of corona virus in the country. In about 8 days, that number jumps from 100 to 1,000. In another 2 days, that number doubles again.

\* By March 10, schools started shutting down. Businesses start implementing at home measures.

\* On March 13, Pennsylvania closed the public schools for two weeks.

\* On March 16, the president issued new guidelines urging people to avoid social gatherings of more than ten people and to restrict discretionary travel. Pennsylvania: Governor Wolf extends a shutdown order to the entire state.

\* To date, in the US, there have been 594,568 COVID-19 deaths.

In person square dancing was stopped for the next year.

SO – how did the club handle that gruesome reality? I hate to sound like a soap opera, but the club handled the COVID reality with grit and determination, with a mixture of optimism and concern for fellow dancers and our friends, with disbelief and patience and impatience...  
Let's face it, the nation hasn't faced a medical/social/cultural upheaval like this for more than a 100 years (1918).

During the intervening months from mid-March, 2020 to today, the club has remained active in several ways and it is a testimony to the Board and to the club membership that we have been coherent and caring and thoughtful and – in many, many ways – a club that is a wonderful group of friends and square dance family.

- \* We have embraced social time, during our normal Tuesday evenings and we have instituted virtual social gatherings such as trivia nights, getting to know one another, showing off hobbies, social games such as 'two truths and a lie,' and a host of similar virtual social activities.
- \* We have implemented regularly scheduled game nights, that use both games that members have implemented as well as programmatic internet games for game nights.
- \* We have implemented regularly scheduled mah jongg game nights.
- \* We have held virtual dances, (permitting dancers to dance to virtual callers via ZOOM (internet program/application).
- \* We have held virtual workshops at various levels, to try to remind and retain some small semblance of calls.
- \* We have encouraged dancers from IS to participate in virtual dances and other virtual activities with other clubs.

The Board has performed the task of managing the logistics of keeping the business of the club going – that has entailed everything from transitioning keys and physical materials to appropriate locations, to making the necessary payment and fiscal decisions, to trying to be attentive to the realities of the pandemic (monitoring openings/closings, statuses, determining potential virtual recruitment and retention strategies, etc.).

Now, the present...

A vaccine (actually several) has emerged over the past year, with the first inoculation on December 14, 2020. To date, more than 294 million doses have been administered, fully vaccinating over 135 million people or 41% of the total U.S. population.

The Board has created a committee that is diligently and very conscientiously reviewing the requirements for re-opening and for resumption of in-person dancing. That requires an analysis of everything from inoculation rates to legal mandates to venue (church or other) considerations (weighing air circulation and other medical issues) to preferences for masking/non-masking, insurance liabilities, etc. It is a huge task and that committee is already doing an amazing job of riding herd on that huge concern/commitment.

And, finally, the future...

We'll be back.

Independence Squares, the preeminent LGBTQ+ square dance club in the Philadelphia area has demonstrated a very strong and determined past. We've weathered small normal speed bumps in club activity – the kind of things that happen in any social group – and a monstrously huge and deadly emergency state.

I would be remiss if I failed to point out that the President of the club, the Board, and any single individuals do not make the club. It is a wonderful collection of dedicated and talented and committed individuals that run the club.

Kudos to the two Boards I was part of these past two years.

The skill sets and talents are amazing, and your willingness to tackle incredibly difficult issues, while maintaining a composure and responsibility to the club's interests, is more than commendable – it is a minor miracle.

There have been issues that have been troubling to me, and some that weren't resolved in the direction that I personally would have preferred. But through the entire two years of Board activity, I could count on fair minded efforts for the good of the club. And in the final analysis, that's all that any Board member or club member should or could ask from an officer of the club... willingness to be there – for the club's best interests.

It would be folly to try to individually name all the Board members and club members who have made my tenure as Board member meaningful and have given so much to the club during some amazingly tough times.

You know who you are.

Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I think that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

And in my musings, I can see me – remembering my left hand from my right hand – and I can see a room filled with my square dance family dancing together.

Submitted with fondness and respect,

George Rizor

08 JUN 2021

**\*\*INDEPENDENCE SQUARES  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDEE  
MIKE RUTKOWSKI**

I'm going to share a confession prior to presenting the award to the Volunteer of the Year.

When my twin daughters were born, they went to a pediatrician's office that had two pediatricians, in practice with each other.

One was jovial and friendly and – I remember 45 years ago – that he talked to the children in his service with a duck voice.

He was beloved by my ex-wife Pat and beloved by a ton of the other mothers of the children in the pediatric service.

The other pediatrician was friendly, but mostly just paid attention to the kids' illnesses, more than charming the kids and mothers.

But – he was an amazing diagnostician. He knew pediatric medicine inside and out he was sharp and didn't miss a thing.

I liked him a lot, he was talented and capable and was instrumental in solving cases and curing ills...

So between the two pediatricians, the office had joy and laughter and fun covered, and hard work and skill and diligence and details and results covered – with generally excellent results.

Now imagine that package in the volunteer of the year for Independence Squares.

One of the toughest jobs in the club is not held by a member of the Board of Directors – and it sure as hell isn't the president, because I survived that.

That tough job is held by a committee chair... for a standing committee for the club. And I cannot tell you how much I personally value both his caring and friendly and outgoing demeanor, as well as his attention to detail and his diligent work and efforts.

Mike does a tremendous job as one of the chairs of the Caller Liaison Committee.

Mike also is that friendly, encouraging face that makes the dance and the day so much fun for everyone.

Mike certainly warrants recognition as the volunteer of the year.

I remember, years ago when I started dancing with Independence Squares, how fun Mike was, and I fell in love with him, as he helped as an angel for the class I was in... honestly... somehow, it wasn't until the next Tuesday dance class that someone mentioned that Mike was married. I decided that I had to kill Tim...

No, at classes and fly-in's and conventions and special dances and at special events, we can count on Mike's presence being the kind of presence that makes the club what it is – special.

Add to that, the incredibly tough job of being the point of contact between the club's Board and all of the callers and venues that Mike works with.

- Mike is an ongoing attendee at the IAGSDC Recruitment and Retention Committee.
- He prepares the Caller Liaison committee reports for the Board and lends a ton of expertise and experience to that task.
- Mike sits on the Return to Dancing committee.
- Mike sits on the Retention committee.
- And just recently, Mike orchestrated the creation of an incredible club directory.

So, if we wanted to recognize our volunteer for the year, and we wanted someone to exemplify the fun and the joy and the great presence of the club in Independence Squares...

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