

## I S Board Meeting Minutes August 31, 2021

Present: Norma B., Steve D., Chris D., Will H., Bob R., Ron R., Ted M., Guests: Mike R., Tim H., Dave T., Eileen D., Dick M.

This meeting was held via teleconference (Zoom).

Approval of Minutes from August 2, 2021

The minutes were approved as corrected, unanimously. Moved Steve D., seconded Norma B..

**Treasurer's Report** - Chris D.

**Motion:** Treasurer's report be accepted as written.

Bob R. moved, Ron R. seconded, passed unanimously.

**Return to Dancing\*** - Ron R.

Discussion:

The metrics, that we have adopted on the advice of the consultant we have been working with, are back up to where they were in May of 2021. We had vaccinated members in May. We now have a protocol to use when holding events (dances, reviews, even classes) that include multiple risk reduction factors. With this protocol the individual members can make their own risk assessments regarding dancing. There is a range of safety comfort levels within the committee and board.

**Motion:** We approve Recommendation #1 with understanding that the club be polled and at least 10 people respond they will attend the dance.

Ron R. moved, Steve D. second passed 6 to 1.

**Motion:** We approve Recommendation #2 as modified to: Independence Squares will resume in-person dancing in September, on the dates of September 14 and 28, followed by a return to our full two-hall, two-caller program on October 12, pending a polling of the club members to ascertain their willingness to attend the September dances, with at least 10 favorable responses required in order to implement this plan.

Ron R. moved, Steve D. second passed unanimous.

**Motion:** We approve recommendation #3.

Ron R., moved, Will seconded, passed unanimously.

**Motion:** We approve recommendation #4.

Ron R., moved, Norma seconded, passed one abstention.

**Motion:** We approve recommendation #6.

Ron R., moved, Steve D. seconded, passed unanimously.

The action items for the mechanics of holding the September dances from the committee were reviewed and confirmed.

**Motion:** We approve recommendation #5.  
Ron R., moved, Chris seconded, passed unanimously.

**Recruitment Committee\*\*** - Steve D.

Discussion:

We need help in advertising this dance to the club and public. We discussed flyer making. We adjusted the wording on one flyer.

**Communications Coordinator Report** - Ted M.

Our website was updated. Ted M. will be away so Dave will fill in for immediate needs. The site was getting slow and the webmaster has gotten that reversed.

**MS/Plus Report** - Bob R.

Bob R. will inform MS graduates: they will receive their diplomas in September.

**Caller Liaison Report\*\*\*** - Mike R.

No change from the last report. The callers are set to go for the fall. Mark F. will not be available on October 19. Betsy G. will call.

**Zoom socials** - Steve D.

Zoom socials are ending. We will see if they show up for games live on September 28.

**Old business:**

We would like to work with the church to insure maximum air flow in the rooms we use..

**Adjournment**

Chris D. moved, Will H. seconded, unanimous.

**Attachments:**

**\* Return To Dancing**

## **Committee Report**

### **August 24, 2021**

The RTD committee met via Zoom on Monday, August 23, 2021, at 7:30 PM. All members were in attendance with no guests.

### **Return To Dancing**

The main topic of discussion was our eventual return to in-person dancing. Our current plan is for dancing to resume on September 14, 21, and 28, with a return to our full, four-program, two-hall schedule on October 5. Ron started the discussion by saying that this is a difficult decision because, on the one hand, Independence Squares seems to be in the minority regarding the number of clubs that are already, or will soon start, dancing. On the other hand, the COVID tracking sheet is concerning in terms of the upward trend in new cases. Speaking personally, Ron mentioned that it feels hypocritical of him to recommend that we continue to hold off on in-person dancing considering his own behavior. As a fully vaccinated person, he has made plans for theater attendance, indoor dining, and family events, and feels relatively safe returning to those activities, despite the increasing virus numbers. Ron made a proposal to the committee that we consider a return to dancing in September, but that we start with a bi-weekly schedule. The suggestion is that we dance on September 14 and 28, and then resume our full program on October 12, with a return to an every Tuesday schedule on that date, pending further revisions by the board. This would allow some space between our dances for us to reassess things and to talk with attendees regarding their comfort levels. It will also give us more time to consider cancelling dances if we find any of our attendees have become infected. This approach would balance the conservative approach of Joe Iser, who continues to feel that we should suspend indoor dancing, with those who are comfortable with a full return to our normal schedule. The majority opinion of this committee was that dancers are at the point where they have information enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their resumption of pre-COVID activities. The committee agreed on this recommendation, with one dissention. The concerns of this committee member are attached to this report as a dissenting view for the board's consideration.

**Recommendation #1: Independence Squares will resume in-person dancing in September, on the dates of September 14 and 28, followed by a return to our full two-hall, two-caller weekly program on October 12.**

***Rationale: With more square dance clubs, and many other social activities, returning to pre-COVID schedules, our club should reopen and allow the dancers to assess their own comfort level regarding their return to dancing. Independence Squares is taking precautions in terms of the vaccination requirement, masking, elimination of snacks, and the use of hand sanitizer, and all attendees can make their own determination regarding the effectiveness of these measures in terms of their own individual health and safety. A continued shut down of social activities has a negative effect on those who used to participate in these activities and causes us to become less likely to resume those activities as the shutdown of those activities stretches over time and our members begin to feel more and more disconnected from our club. A return to dancing in September will help us to reengage our members and make them feel comfortable again on the dance floor, in time for our Glitter Ball.***

***Amended recommendation, approved by board:***

***Independence Squares will resume in-person dancing in September, on the dates of September 14 and 28, followed by a return to our full two-hall, two-caller program on October 12, pending a polling of the club members to ascertain their willingness to attend the September dances, with at least 10 favorable responses required in order to implement this plan.***

***Reason for changes:***

***The board agreed that we should make sure that we have enough dancers to fill at least one square before we commit to holding a dance. The requirement to have 10 positive responses was put in place just in case we have no-shows. The reference to a “weekly” program starting on October 12 was removed in order to allow the board the flexibility to amend the schedule as needed.***

## **Hybrid Dances**

We further discussed an idea that Ron presented regarding a hybrid type of dance for our September dances. This idea involves the setup of a laptop at the live dance, near the speaker and aimed at one pilot square, that would broadcast the dance via Zoom to others who were not comfortable attending the live event. This is being tested by both DC Lambda Squares and Times Squares and Ron has discussed their plans with representatives from both clubs. There is no additional cost to the club to run this, unless the callers feel that they should receive a higher fee due to the attendance of Zoom dancers. Mike will discuss this with the callers but was confident that they would not request additional compensation. A separate document is enclosed as a part of this report which gives more details regarding this proposal.

**Recommendation #2: Independence Squares will try a hybrid program for the September dances which involves the setup of a laptop aimed at a pilot square that will broadcast our dances via Zoom, as described in the attached “Hybrid Dances” document.**

***Rationale: This approach will open our start up dances to a wider audience and will give our members an opportunity to dance with us even if they are uncomfortable doing so in person at this time.***

***Amended recommendation, approved by board:***

***Independence Squares will try a hybrid program for the September dances which involves the setup of a laptop that will broadcast our dances via Zoom, as described in the attached “Hybrid Dances” document.***

***Reason for change:***

***The reference to a pilot square was removed. The suggestion was that we cannot promise to have a pilot square if we have only one square with some of the dancers being unwilling to be on a Zoom broadcast. The option is still open to having a pilot square if everyone in that potential pilot square is agreeable but it's existence will not be advertised in advance.***

## **Dance Programs**

We discussed the programs that should be danced at our upcoming dances, and we make the following recommendation:

**Recommendation #3: We will continue with our original plan to program an intensive Mainstream review, alternating with Plus, with a Star Tip for the September dances. We will resume our full, two-hall, two-caller, four-program schedule with our October 12 dance.**

***Rationale: There is a need for a full review for our new Mainstream dancers so that we don't lose them because of not having danced for more than a year. We want to encourage them to remain with our club and we want to prepare them for the Glitter Ball in December.***

***Approved by board, as written***

## **October "Fun Dance"**

A discussion of the October "Fun Dance" was held, with the following recommendation:

**Recommendation #4: The October 1 "Fun Dance" should be held as planned.**

***Rationale: The hall and the caller have both been contracted and there could be a financial loss to the club if we cancel the event.***

***Approved by board, as written***

## **Safety Protocols**

We also discussed our existing safety protocols and questioned whether we should make any changes. Two committee members felt that a temperature check should be conducted of each attendee. One member said that they belong to a club that does a temperature check, and it makes them feel safer. Another

committee member said that temperature checks are common when entering many businesses and felt that most people are used to temperature checks these days and would not be opposed to a simple and quick scan. Despite these two comments, the following recommendation was approved:

**Recommendation #5: No further safety measures should be implemented at this time. After each of our September dances, this committee shall reach out to the dancers who attended in order to gauge their satisfaction with our safety protocols. This committee shall continually reassess our current protocols, taking into account the opinions of our attendees and the current infection landscape.**

***Rationale: The majority opinion of this committee felt that our existing precautions were sufficient. In fact, our existing safety precautions are higher than those of many of the other clubs that have resumed dancing in light of the fact that we are requiring masks and a health attestation from each attendee.***

***Approved by board, as written***

## **Masking Policy For Our Callers**

Finally, we discussed the topic of masking of the callers. When we recommended, and the board approved, that masks be required of all attendees at our events at this time, it was assumed that the callers would not be required to be masked. But we never definitively discussed that. This committee agreed that the callers should not be required to be masked while calling. It was also agreed that the callers must wear masks between tips and must maintain 6' of distance from the dancers while calling. One committee member asked if a plastic face shield could be required of the callers, just as an extra layer of safety. As an experienced round dance cuer who has to use a microphone, Ron mentioned that there could be some issues for the caller in terms of trying to hold the microphone to the face underneath such a shield. We agreed that we would not recommend that a safety shield be required but Mike offered to talk with the callers to see if they might be willing to wear one anyway. As a result of this discussion, the following recommendation was made:

**Recommendation #6: The callers shall not be required to be masked while calling but will be required to wear masks between tips. They are to remain at least 6' from the dancers while calling. This clarification of our masking policy must be clearly communicated to attendees through our list of safety protocols so that all attendees know what to expect when they attend our events.**

***Rationale: It is difficult to call with a mask over the nose and mouth. Considering that the callers have been vaccinated, will wear a mask when not calling, and will keep 6' of distance from the dancers, a mask isn't needed while calling. The Independence Squares online listing of our safety measures needs to communicate this policy so that attendees know that the callers are not breaking our policy by unmasking while calling.***

***Approved by board, as written***

## **Action Items**

Depending on the approvals made by the board, responsibilities for each of the following action items need to be determined:

- Notify callers regarding mask waiver while calling, 6' distance requirement, and addition of Zoom component (Mike). **Mike will handle and will get the callers' input regarding how to make the Zoom component work**
- Reach out to new Mainstreamers to personally invite them to our in-person dances (Bob). **Bob will handle**
- Give new schedule to Ian (Norma?). **Norma will handle**
- Set up Zoom meeting (Ron). **Ron will handle. Chris will assist with the actual setup at the dances**
- Get a Zoom cohost (Ron. Ask Mike). **Mike will handle**
- Draft announcement of dance dates with all safety protocols listed (Ron). **Ron will handle**
  - Email announcement to members (Ted). **Ted will handle**
  - Post announcement to Facebook (Ron). **Ron will handle**
  - Post announcement to Instagram (Steve). **Steve will handle**

- Contact Lou regarding opening the hall (Norma?). **Norma will handle**
- Update masking policy for our website to include caller waiver while calling (Ron to draft, Ted to post). **Ron and Ted will handle**

## Hybrid Dances

Consider running in-person dances, with those dances being broadcast live via Zoom at the same time. This allows dancers to choose whether to dance with us in person or from a remote location.

Being done by both DC Lambda Squares and Time Squares, but with seemingly different set ups and purposes.

Attendance at our Zoom dances has historically been very low, so the Zoom portion of a hybrid dance could fail to gain any traction. But it could be implemented without any cost to the club unless the callers request a higher compensation due to the addition of Zoom attendees. We should consider discussing this with the callers.

Implementation outline for Independence Squares:

- Advertise through club emails, Facebook, and Instagram that the dance will be held live, with an option to attend via Zoom. Include the link to preregister for the Zoom option in the announcements
- Set up laptop at dance, positioned near the speakers (Ron can provide the laptop)
- Open prescheduled Zoom meeting with the video turned off in order to avoid any privacy issues that in-person attendees might have
- Arrange for an offsite person to assist (possibly Mike), who would be responsible for the following tasks:
  - Let attendees in from the waiting room
  - Communicate with Zoom attendees if needed
  - Communicate via text or phone with a contact person at the live event (possibly Ron) to problem solve any issues (move the laptop closer to/ further from the speaker, sound accidentally muted, etc.)
  - Remind the Zoom attendees via chat that there is a donation button on the website
  - At the conclusion of the event, make a brief report to the RTD committee and the board regarding their assessment of the successfulness of the Zoom portion of the event (how many attendees, comments made by the attendees, etc.). This will help the committee and the board to assess the need to continue this experiment with subsequent dances

Should consider referring to the tip jar as a “donation” jar, since the caller’s contract rate for the in-person dance is higher than that for a Zoom dance and the donations are likely to go directly to the club rather than as tips to the caller. This avoids a misrepresentation of the distribution of these funds.

## Dissenting Opinion

I recommend we postpone resumption of in-person dancing for the following reasons:

1) At the July 14 Board meeting, the board agreed to “continue weekly tracking of the positivity rates and the new cases per 100k and will begin to track the % ICU bed usage and new hospitalizations. We will reconsider in-person dancing, or amend our safety protocols, if these numbers show significant increases, and/or if federal, state, or local guidelines change in a negative way.” Since the number of new Covid cases in our area have risen to levels not seen since early May 2021 and the number of hospitalizations is the highest since we began tracking that metric, I believe that these represent significant increases. Both rates are increasing exponentially, doubling roughly every two weeks. If those trends continue, new cases would be expected to exceed 4000 per week and new hospitalizations to exceed 900 per week by the time of our September Dance.

2) The Delta variant is the dominant strain of Covid19 in our area. According to the CDC:

The Delta variant is highly contagious, more than 2x as contagious as previous variants.

Previous variants typically produced less virus in the body of infected fully vaccinated people (breakthrough infections) than in unvaccinated people. In contrast, the Delta variant seems to produce the same high amount of virus in both unvaccinated and fully vaccinated people. [Although] fully vaccinated people are likely infectious for less time than unvaccinated people.

3) Square Dancing is a highly aerobic activity involving increased respiration rates while in close contact with others. Our dancers tend to be older and may have underlying health issues. We also engage in our activity indoors in rooms that have relatively poor ventilation. All of these are contributing risk factors making virus transmission more likely. Masking and limiting participation to vaccinated individuals are helpful precautions, but neither is 100% effective, and we know that “mask-fatigue” can prompt otherwise compliant individuals to violate safety protocols. Any breach of the safety protocols would further elevate transmission risk.

4) We did solicit input from a public health expert. His advice has been a blanket recommendation to delay a return. If we aren't planning to follow his advice, why solicit

it? The results of not accepting recommendations from public health officials can be devastating as our fellow citizens across the south are coming to realize.

Returning to alternate week dancing really doesn't address the safety issue. Given the rapid transmission of the Delta variant, once exposure has occurred, the damage has been done. If we aren't comfortable dancing every week, why would we be comfortable dancing every other week. Contact tracing can occur within days if needed.

In a recent interview, Dr Francis Collins (Director of NIH) observed a number of parallels between the Covid19 pandemic and the HIV pandemic. We are at the early stages with Covid19, having only one effective medical weapon – vaccination, similar to the days when AZT was the only available weapon against HIV. Under these conditions, the development of resistant viral strains is virtually guaranteed. HIV became a chronic, treatable condition only with the advent of multiple treatment options, and the same is likely to be true for Covid.

The discussion regarding RTD is also very reminiscent of the rather rancorous debates within the gay community during the early AIDS crisis over the closing of sex clubs and bathhouses. I know some may not appreciate the analogy, but Square Dancing is an activity that puts participants at very high risk for transmitting the virus, in much the same way as patronizing a bathhouse did for HIV. Masking and vaccination are equivalent to “safer dancing practices” but are still highly dependent on individuals following those guidelines. Reopening our dances during a surge in viral transmission will put us in the same morally ambiguous position as the bathhouse owners were. Are we acting irresponsibly by encouraging people to engage in a high-risk activity with the likelihood that this will contribute to development of resistant viral strains or are we providing an environment where participants are encouraged to use risk-mitigating practices for an activity that they would be engaging in regardless? Any decision we make will be criticized.

I apologize for the length of the dissent, however, I wasn't sure how else to voice this opinion in an abbreviated way.

Thanks again,

Mike

**\*\*Report from the Recruitment Committee**

The Recruitment Committee met on 4 August 2021. Chris, Steve, Tim, Will and Vinney were in attendance

In preparation for the upcoming October 1 Fun Dance members of the committee will

- contact potential invitee groups.

- not cosponsor the first two Fun Nights but they will instead be events to introduce Independence Squares to the wider community and assess how we can improve the event. (We reserve the right to change our minds if we get an unexpected offer to cosponsor.)

- focus on publicity and outreach to likely interested groups.

- get online publicity posted including Facebook posting, Meetup, and asking individual members to post via NextDoor. Postings should include our safety requirements as well as a statement that attendance will be limited to 120 attendees.

- recruit/assign volunteers for pre-event setup, post-event breakdown

- solicit volunteers to fill the roles identified by the RTD Committee.

We acknowledged that we need to keep a focus on the broader issue of recruitment with an emphasis on increasing diversity. If we reach out to other LGBTQ+ organizations that focus on minorities, we need to be extra mindful that our approach reflects our desire to build real community engagement, otherwise the initial gestures could be seen as tokenism.

We discussed the possibility of instituting a "Community Night" once per month whereby we invite another LGBTQ+ group to send a spokesperson (or several) and give a 5 to 10 minute introduction to their group during our announcement time. This would expose our members to other groups, expose the other groups to us and potentially lead to greater interactions between the two organizations. Since this has the potential to eat into dance time, we would need to limit the presentation times and likely only schedule once per month.