

Minutes from the Independence Squares Board Meeting June 19, 2024 7pm via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance: Steve, Scot, Peg, David B., Sarah. **Absent:** Ron, Vinney.

Non-board Members in Attendance: Drew, Arin, Marika, Will, Gabriel R.

Secretary's Report – Steve

Steve made a motion that the minutes from the April meeting be approved. Motion was seconded by David B. Passed unanimously. Discussed who should send out the Zoom link, announcements about future meetings, etc., and Scot said that he would handle this. David B. will follow up with Scot and Sarah to show them the procedure. There was a discussion about the best way to handle approving minutes at the Annual Meeting, possibly using Election Buddy to approve minutes, but there was no motion made. David B. raised a concern about a lack of transparency around the Board voting over email, and there was a discussion of how to mitigate this. Steve gave a summary of decisions that were made since the last meeting. The summary is included below these minutes.

Treasurer's Report – Ron

There was no Treasurer's report because Ron was not present.

Class Rep Report – Peg and Vinney

Peg did not give a report. Vinney was not present and did not give a report.

Recruitment Committee Report

Scot stated that going forward he would like to ask committee heads to submit items to be discussed at Board Meetings in writing before the meeting. Steve gave a report on upcoming recruitment events, including the Open Houses and Pride. He addressed a concern that was raised in a previous Board meeting about PhillyPride365's openness to police and shared that their mission statement does not say anything about not inviting police to attend. He asked for opinions about participating in the October Pride parade. Marika talked briefly about the club Instagram. There was a discussion about the logistics of being involved in the parade and whether it would be too late in the year to recruit new members to the club. **Peg offered to ask Linda as Caller Liaison to ask Betsy if she thought it would be too late. We also need to find out the start date for classes in 2025 and circle back to that later.**

Caller Liaison Report

Steve gave a summary of the planned classes and workshops for 2024. There were no objections. Marika commented that it could be helpful to intentionally pitch the Mainstream

workshop to former club members who would like to get back into square dancing but have not danced in years.

Fly-In Committee Report

Steve gave an update on Ron's negotiations with the hotel for 2025. The revised contract for 2025 has not yet been finalized.

Old and New Business

David B. talked about the Phillies Pride night and said it went well. Three of the newly graduated students attended, as did Betsy and Mark, their spouses, and a couple friends and former members of the club.

Scot asked for comments on the Anniversary Dance and the club trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Marika said about 9 people went on the museum trip, and there is interest in doing it again, possibly at other museums as well.

Scot brought up Linda's proposal that a facilities committee should be created. It was agreed that we should hold off on discussing it and invite Linda to give her thoughts at the next meeting.

There was a discussion about interest in getting a new club T-shirt. There was some confusion about whether we should be discussing a T-shirt or the official club shirt, but for the most part, people seem enthusiastic about getting a new T-shirt. Eric, Arin, and Marika have expressed interest in possibly creating new designs. Peg suggested that we should put out a call for submissions or ideas to the whole club, as the club did in the past. **She agreed to send a club-wide email soliciting opinions, collect submissions, and share them with the Board.**

Wheel Around New Jersey 2025

Steve reported that a date and time have been fixed for the dance, May 31st from 6 to 10 pm. A room has been reserved at People Care in Bridewater, NJ. A caller has not been hired yet. Steve said he would not ask Mike R. and Jim B. about it until after the convention. The dance will be Mainstream and Plus, possibly with Advanced star tips, and tickets will be \$10.

Dances for 2025

The dances that have already been planned are January 4th, the Fly-In, and the Glitterball. There was a discussion of potential dates and themes for other dances. David B. suggested Valentine's Day and Halloween themed dances for Mainstream-Plus. Steve was in favor of a Summer Splash co-sponsored dance. Marika suggested a Pride month dance. There was

interest in a February 15th Mainstream-Plus dance. David B. suggested combo dances with multiple programs separated by dinner, but there were concerns about people not wanting to dance for 4 hours. There was interest in having an Advanced-Challenge dance between the IS Fly-In and the Rehoboth Fly-In. People were tentatively in favor of a June Mainstream-Plus dance, but there were concerns about the heat. No motions were made. We will discuss it further.

There was a discussion about the club photo at Convention, and Steve wanted to remind attendees to bring their club shirts.

Arin gave a report about the *Inquirer* article and went over statistics for the club social media accounts. The *Inquirer* shared the article and a video they made to their Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok. Arin stated that the engagement was significantly above what comparable posts by the *Inquirer* have gotten, with 77,000 views on Instagram. They estimated that about half of comments on social media were positive, a quarter negative, and a quarter arguing with those negative people. Since the article, the club has gained 144 new Instagram followers, more than doubling the follower count and bringing it to around 250. Arin and Marika will continue making posts on social media and asked Board members to contribute to the mini-bio series.

Steve stated under the Communications Report that there was an incident involving a specific person from a different square dance club posting excessively on the Facebook page. After discussing it with Mike, he asked the person to limit themselves to once a week. The person accepted this and has not posted again since. Steve asked for input on how to effectively use Facebook, and Arin and Marika talked about adapting the materials they made to be used on Facebook.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.

Done since the meeting

Peg sent out the email about club shirts as discussed.

David B. met with Scot and Sarah as discussed to show them how to send emails to the Board and set them up with access to the Zoom account.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Paulos
Secretary, Independence Squares

Decisions made via email since the April 25 Board meeting

1) We approved the signing of a contract with the Langhorne Sheraton for our 2026 Fly-In. All board members voted in favor.

We finally have contracts from the Langhorne Sheraton for our 2026 Fly-In. We've been through 4 versions of the event contract and 5 versions of the sleeping room contract, and we finally have what the Fly-In committee chairs think is a good deal. Here are highlights:

- Sleeping rooms: They upped our room rate to \$142.00 and I kept pushing back. They relented and brought it down to \$139.00 which is only \$2.00 higher than the rate for 2025.
- Number of rooms and attrition rate: Same as 2024 and 2025 at 100 rooms with 80% attrition.
- Comp rooms. They changed it to 1/25 and again, I pushed back. They relented and brought it down to 1/20, which is what we had for 2023 and 2024, and have again in 2025.
- Bonvoy points: They are giving us triple Bonvoy points as they did for 2024 and will do again in 2025.
- Ballroom rental. They initially proposed \$7372.51. I was able to get it down to \$6600.00 which is the same as 2025. The ballrooms will be the same as what we used in 2024 and the same as what is contracted for 2025.
- There is a section that mentions that we are required to get approval to use outside vendors. To be safe, I asked, and received, an email stating specifically that we are permitted to hire our own square dance callers. It's possible that we'll need approval if we are going to offer massages again in 2026 but we'll cross that bridge later.

These terms are far better than what was originally proposed, and the committee chairs are of the belief that this is a good deal. It's exactly what we have for 2025 except for a very small increase in the sleeping room rate.

2) We decided as a board to purchase gift cards for Mark and Betsy to be presented on May 21. We did this without a formal vote.

3) Ron wrote to the full board with a motion that we revise our 2025 event contract with the Sheraton to add the Princeton Ballroom for both Friday and Sunday, at a cost of \$1000.00. Steve seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

4) Ron wrote to make a motion that we approve membership for John T. Steve seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

5) Steve made a motion via email that Independence Squares discontinue its subscription to MeetUp. Ron seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

6) Linda asked the board via email to approve the awarding of a free pass to an upcoming IS square dance as a prize during the 35th Anniversary Dance. We approved this request without a formal vote so long as there was an expiration date marked on the prize.

Report to the Independence Squares Board of Directors from the Recruitment Committee for the June 19, 2024 Board Meeting

The Recruitment Committee met on May 23 to discuss upcoming pride events and our continued efforts to recruit new members.

We decided to recommend to the board that Independence Squares discontinue its membership in MeetUp. Since the May 23rd meeting the board voted to accept that recommendation.

We continued our discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of holding our event on Penn's campus. It was agreed that if we do such an event again we should do it in partnership with a campus LGBTQ+ organization.

We talked about staffing pride events in 2024 and beyond. It was suggested that we should encourage our new Mainstream graduates to take the lead on staffing tables at such events in 2025.

PhillyPride365 finally got back to us with information about vender fees for a nonprofit and shared their mission statement which is attached at the end of this report. By that time no more vender spots were available. The mission statement is quite inclusive and makes it clear that the organization is one that we can support through purchasing of a vender table in 2025 and possibly participating in OurFest (sic) 2024 with a contingent in their pride parade.

Steve, Bob and Roy went to the PhillyPride365 on June 1 to pass out palm cards and to enjoy the day. Quite a few people approached us to ask about LGBTQ+ square dancing in Philadelphia. The event was quite commercial but very successful and well attended. There were lots of police as well as PhillyPride365 security in attendance.

Dave Blatt headed up our booth at Delco Pride on June 7. He was helped by Dave T, Ken, Linda, Peg and Ed G. They handed out about 150 palm cards and got more than 25 email addresses of interested folks.

We will not be participating at Cherry Hill pride.

Marika volunteered to spearhead our participation in the Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference at Temple University on September 6 and 7. They have applied for a table and will find out soon if we will be awarded one. Participation in this event is at no cost to Independence Squares.

We will discuss the possibility of participating in the October pride parade at our next Recruitment Committee meeting. We will also continue our discussion of reaching out to medical practices in the area that cater to the LGBTQ+ community. Dave B has provided information to us about the International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Convention in Philadelphia that runs from September 27 to October 1.

Arin has taken over the management of our Instagram account and it has grown under Arin's leadership. Marika has taken the lead on posting profiles and quotes of club members on our Instagram feed. I encourage board members to volunteer to participate in this initiative.



Our Mission

Galaei's Philly Pride 365 program provides crucial opportunities for our community to join together in celebration, find family, get resources and share the love, art, and joy that are hallmarks of our community.

Philly Pride 365 is a program that seeks to elevate the experience of Pride Programming in Philadelphia year round including large scale events for Pride month (June) and National Coming OUT Day (October) with the underlying premise that Pride should be celebrated everyday.

We combine our unique and vibrant culture and backdrop of the city of Philadelphia, our Gayborhood, independent queer and trans business owners, grassroots organizations and nonprofits to provide innovative programming, dynamic structure, and great intention around how we endeavor to lift up all in our community and create a space for everyone.

Caller Liaison Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – June 19, 2024

The information below is accurate as of Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 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/Notes for Board

No additional contracts or promises have been made to any caller regarding the holding of workshops or classes, virtual or live, other than those listed below.

Dances Through April 2026

Callers have been contracted and confirmed for the following dances taking place April 2024 through March 2026.

Saturday, August 24, 2024 – Summer Splash All-level dance Mainstream through C1 – Dayle Hodge 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek – Joint Dance with DC Lambda Squares and Chesapeake Squares

Saturday, October 19, 2024 – Mainstream and Plus Dan Koft 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Saturday, December 7, 2024 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Dayle Hodge – Merion Friends Meeting House

Saturday, January 4, 2025 – Advanced and C1 Mark Franks 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

April 2025 Fly-in: Callers: Jeremy Butler, Vic Ceder, Don Moger April 4-6, 2025

Sheraton Bucks County Saturday, December 6, 2025 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Mark Franks – Merion Friends Meeting House

March 2026 Fly-in: Callers: Sandie Bryant, Ted Lizotte, Chris Phillips March 13-15, 2026 Sheraton Bucks

County

Open Houses and Classes

Tuesday, July 23, 2024 – Open House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm –

9:30 pm Tuesday, August 27, 2024 – Open House Betsy Gotta

7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Tuesday, September 10, 2024 – Open

House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

FYI Notes

- 1) Discussions were held with the callers and members of the Caller Liaison Committee and then with the board at a previous meeting and the following recommendations were made and approved for classes beginning in September 2024.
 - A) Classes will begin on September 24, 2024, two weeks after the last Open House as the callers are unavailable until that date due to existing travel plans.
 - B) Betsy will call the Mainstream class and a C1 workshop. There are insufficient numbers of dancers to begin a new C1 class.
 - C) Mark will call a Mainstream workshop and an Advanced workshop. The Mainstream workshop will provide the newly graduated Mainstream class members an opportunity to hone their skills. The Advanced workshop will provide the newly graduated Advanced dancers an opportunity to hone their skills as well.
 - D) In January 2025, the Mainstream workshop will become a Plus class if there is sufficient interest to do so. If not, the Mainstream workshop would continue.

Health and Safety Protocols Committee Report to Independence Squares Board of Directors

Submitted by Linda Bourdet, Head, Health and Safety Protocols Committee June 18, 2024

- HASP has not met since March 2024. There are no pressing issues currently.
- HASP submitted a report to the IS Annual Meeting in June 2024.
- HASP noted that the CDC is no longer requiring reporting of hospitalizations due to COVID:

Recent Updates to COVID Data Tracker

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

Updated on May 10, 2024

- Effective May 1, 2024, hospitals are no longer required to report COVID-19 hospital admissions, hospital capacity, or hospital occupancy data to HHS through CDC's National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). CDC encourages ongoing, voluntary reporting of hospitalization data. Data voluntarily reported to NHSN after May 1, 2024, is available at [Trends in Hospital Utilization, Capacity, and Reporting - NHSN](#).
- HASP proposes that we no longer report statistics on hospitalization due to COVID due to lack of data.
- HASP recommends the club keeps current protocols in place for the summer.
- HASP plans to meet before the start of September 2024 classes to review the health and safety protocols on the IS website and what will be recommended to be put into place during the Fall 2024 / Winter 2025 class season.