

**Minutes from the Independence Squares Board Meeting  
September 18, 2024, 7:00 PM**

**Board Members in Attendance:** David B., Marika, Peg, Sarah, Steve

**Board Members Absent:** Ron, Vinney

**Non-Board Members in Attendance:** Deb, George R., Mike, Pattie, Will

Secretary's Report - Sarah

David B. made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 21<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting. Steve seconded. The motion passed with four votes in favor and one member abstaining.

Appointment of New Communications Coordinator

In an email on August 25<sup>th</sup>, Dave B. made a motion to appoint Marika Barth to the currently vacant position of Communications Coordinator on the Independence Squares board. Peg seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Review of Treasurer's Reports – David B.

Ron was not present to give the report in person. David B. opened the floor for discussion, and no one made any comments.

Caller Liaison Report - Mike/Linda

Mike gave the Caller Liaison Report, which is attached to these minutes. Dayle will be hired for the next Summer Splash on August 23, 2025. The Caller Liaison committee is still waiting for a few callers to sign contracts, but most contracts are in place, and there are solid verbal agreements for the rest.

David B. gave his thoughts on the last Open House and asked for others' opinions. Mike asked if the caller, Clay, did a good job, and David B., Marika, and Steve had positive reports. Everything is ready for the first day of classes next week. The church gave David B. new keys for the storage area.

Communications Coordinator Report – Marika

The report is attached to these minutes. Marika will send out an informational email to the mailing list before the first class, and they asked the meeting attendees to give them any information to be included in the email by Friday. They will note in their email that the parking garage next to the church is no longer accepting cash and has changed their rates. Peg asked Marika to put in a reminder about voting for the tee shirt designs. Steve let people know there

is a problem with club-related emails going to spam. David B. requested that people put the club listserv address in the BCC area when sending out an email to the entire club.

Mainstream/Plus Report – Vinney

Vinney was not present and did not give a report.

Advanced/Challenge Report – Peg

Peg is planning to send an email encouraging everyone in the class to come on Tuesday. She asked Dave T. to send her the email addresses he had for everyone that was on the Advanced/Challenge list last year.

Recruitment Committee Report – Steve

The written report is attached to these minutes. The Recruitment Committee recommends that Independence Squares again host Open Houses on Tuesday nights in July, August and September of 2025 as we did this year. David B. suggested discussing this in January at the same time as we discuss the start of classes. After the meeting, Steve and David B. will coordinate about sending an email to everyone who was invited to the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary dance.

Proposal to encourage/support new callers – Linda

The Board discussed Linda's proposal, which is attached to these minutes. Linda asked Mark for a cost estimate, and he said the total cost starts around \$223 for membership and music licensing. Multiple people spoke in favor of subsidizing but not necessarily paying the entire cost of CallerLab. Peg spoke in favor of GCA Caller School, saying that this proposal would further our club values. Mike said that Caller School registration costs are minimal, but we previously subsidized travel expenses, and it would make sense to do so again. Steve suggested the wording of the proposal should refer to members of the Independence Squares community rather than LGBTQ+ specifically. Mike encouraged taking an informal, individual approach to finding potential candidates and seeing what would help them. David B. will ask the Finance Committee to discuss the appropriate spending level. Will supported the idea of subsidizing Caller School but emphasized that sending someone to Caller School once or twice does not produce a caller who would be willing to be a substitute for us. He suggested that the club needs to think more about how to nurture new callers. Dave asked Will if he would write up some suggestions for that and send them to the Board, to which Will agreed.

**Dave made a motion to have the Finance Committee explore options for CallerLab subsidies, to have the Board explore ways to nurture potential new callers, and to start announcing this intention to the club. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion about whether to subsidize Caller Lab membership will happen after the Finance Committee meets.

### Finance Committee Report – Steve

The written report is attached to these minutes. Steve went over two proposals from the Finance Committee. The first proposal would require those seeking financial assistance to submit a short application form and require the Finance Committee to review and approve or deny the application.

**Steve made a motion for the Board to accept the Finance Committee’s first proposal. Peg seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Steve urged the Board to reject the second proposal, which would make the financial assistance program funded through a scholarship fund which dancers could voluntarily contribute to. Steve read out an email from Ron agreeing with Steve about rejecting the second proposal. Ron also recommended not writing the amount paid on the door sheet to preserve anonymity. Mike said he and Tim were not in favor of rejecting the proposal. Among his concerns, he pointed to the lack of guidelines and said that the system has been abused in the past. Marika spoke in favor of rejecting the proposal. Action item: Dave will ask Finance Committee about setting guidelines for the program. Peg stated that everybody who received financial assistance last year should not be asked to re-apply in order to get their benefits this year. Instead, they will need to re-apply in spring of 2025.

**Steve made a motion for financial assistance to be automatically renewed for 2024-2025 for everyone who received it last year. Marika seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Marika asked for clarification about what we will tell new students about the financial assistance policy. There were concerns about preserving confidentiality when people pay at the door, and Marika suggested advising people to use PayPal rather than cash.

**Steve made a motion that we add “if any of the fees below are restrictive to your attendance, please speak to the Treasurer” to the Classes and Workshop page of the club website. David B. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

### Other Business

Peg sent out a poll about tee shirt designs with help from Linda and Marika. She’s received 14 responses, which she thought was not a big enough sample size. If more people do not respond by email, she will bring in paper ballots for people to use. She is also looking into the process of getting the tee shirts printed.

The Board agreed that the next three meetings will be October 16, November 13, and December 11.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah Paulos  
Secretary, Independence Squares

# Independence Squares Treasurer's Report

## September 18, 2024

Attached is the August month-end financial summary.

Other items of interest are as follows:

- The 2024 Summer Splash netted \$140.05 for the club as previously reported to the board via email.
- We have two required payments to make toward future Fly-Ins, both to the Sheraton as follows:
  - \$2500.00 due on 10/1/24 for the 2026 Fly-In
  - \$2400.00 due on 10/6/24 for the 2025 Fly-In
- Chris Shull renewed his Independence Squares membership on 9/6/24, thereby increasing our membership to 66. That will be reflected on the September month-end financial summary. Ron will be submitting the required premium payment to the USDA for Chris' insurance coverage.
- Once we have a list of new class members (around our 3<sup>rd</sup> class night), Ron will submit the list to the USDA for their insurance coverage. In the past, the USDA has not charged a premium for new class members, and it is expected that there will continue to be no charge.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ron R

## Caller Liaison Report

### Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – September 18, 2024

The information below is accurate as of Monday, September 16, 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, October 19, 2024 – Mainstream and Plus with Advanced Star Tip Dan Koft 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, December 7, 2024 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Dayle Hodge – Merion Friends Meeting House 3:00 pm – 6:30 pm

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

Saturday, February 15, 2025 – Mainstream and Plus Kent Forrester 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, March 15, 2025 – Advanced and C1 Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

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

Saturday, April 19, 2025 – 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm Mainstream and Plus; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner (Social?); 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Advanced and C1 Dayle Hodge

Saturday, May 31, 2025 – Mainstream and Plus with Advanced Star Tip Wheel Around NJ II Dan Koft 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm People Care Center, Bridgewater, NJ Joint dance with Times Squares

Saturday, June 7, 2025 – Mainstream and Plus Pride Dance Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, August 23, 2025 – 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 11, 2025 - 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm Mainstream and Plus; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner (Social?); 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Advanced and C1 John Hawley

Saturday, December 6, 2025 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Mark Franks – Merion Friends Meeting House 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

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

#### Open Houses and Classes

Tuesday, September 17, 2024 – Open House Clay Goss 7:00 pm – 9:00 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, **one** week 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. Mark Franks has brought up the idea of starting the Plus class in December as there is then the possibility of the dancers having completed the Plus program prior to the fly-in.
- 2) Saturday, August 2025 Summer Splash – Details to be worked out by which club?
- 3) Similar to last year, after some feedback, we are recommending not hiring another caller on nights when only one of the callers is out that evening. The programs to be called those nights would be the Mainstream class and the Advanced workshop. Mark recommended this combination be taught as the Advanced class had no real chance to work on honing their skills last year as the Advanced class ran right up until the end of the class year.
- 4) As of this writing, Mark Franks will be out on October 15, 2024 and April 15, 2025. Betsy Gotta will be out on January 7, 2025 and April 15, 2025. Please note that they will both be out on April 15, 2025 as they will be attending CallerLab. The board should consider going dark that night unless a reasonable substitute can be found.

## Communications Coordinator Report September 18, 2024

Dave Blatt and I met on Tuesday September 3rd to start training, website issue interfered with completing it. We plan to meet again on Saturday September 21st to complete that training. After that, I should (hopefully) be fully able to handle any communications needs!

### Updates:

- Ongoing issue logging into the admin side of the website has been resolved. Thank you, Ted, for your help!
- Steve and I discussed communications responsibilities. Steve will continue to handle the Facebook. Thank you, Steve!
- Several open house attendees mentioned seeing Independence Squares posts on social media as how they learned about the club!

### Upcoming:

- Emails will be sent to club members with info regarding lessons starting on Tuesday September 24th. Please let me know if there's anything specific you'd like included in that communication. Topics I'll already be communicating about:
  - Prepay rates for this year
  - Informing members that the parking garage by the church no longer accepts cash

### Ongoing:

- Please send any photos you take at Independence Squares events to me at [marikabarth@hotmail.com](mailto:marikabarth@hotmail.com) for use on social media!
- Please consider submitting info for a Square Dancer Snapshot on Instagram. You can do so [here](#) or email me a photo and some fun facts about yourself. I will run the finished "snapshot" by you prior to posting. Thank you George Voorhis, Leda, Roy, and Arin for sharing info for snapshots already!



## **Report from IS Recruitment Committee for the September 18, 2024 Board Meeting**

**Our committee: Arin, Chris, Coco, George, Marika, Steve, Vinney, Will**

**Our most recent meeting was on September 10.**

### **Action Item**

The only action item that requires board attention is that the committee recommends that Independence Squares again host open houses on Tuesday nights in July, August and September in 2025 as we did this year.

### **Open Houses 2024**

**Our second open house was very successful. We considered asking the board if we can post “All genders” signs over the men’s and women’s signs in the church for the 2025 open houses. Perhaps the signs could also specify “two stalls” and “two urinals and one stall”.**

### **Pride Events 2024 and other outreach.**

Our participation in the Trans Wellness Conference on September 7 was fruitful. We recommend participating again next year.

Our participation in South New Jersey Pride on September 8 also went well. The festival organizers facilitated our demo square performance. Coco sent a note to the organizers thanking them for their generosity. George encouraged us to reach out to festival organizers in the future before the date of the event to determine the technical criteria for using their audio equipment.

All the email addresses that we gathered from our second open house as well as the two events listed above were entered into our MailChimp list and an email was sent out reminding them of the September 17 open house. There will be two more emails sent out. One will encourage people on that list to come to the first day of classes and then another will tell them they can still start class on the October 1.

### **Capitalizing on our 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dance**

Steve and Dave are working on a note to the entire list of invitees to our 35th Anniversary Party about coming to our Mainstream Workshop (or other workshops) starting on September 24.

### **Outreach to medical professionals**

Marika and Arin made a flyer specifically for medical professionals which Marika distributed at the Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference.

### **Instagram**

All club members are encouraged to send photos to Arin and Marika for use on Instagram.

### **Promotional Tools**

It was suggested that we use the fact that Independence Squares is a social group that engages in non-dance activities as well as square dancing in our promotional materials.

### **Outreach to Straight Clubs**

Eileen has done a great service to Independence Squares by encouraging dancers (mostly new dancers) from Busy B's to come be a part of our club. Carol Ford does likewise with the students she teaches at a community center in New Jersey.

The Committee reminds the board of the importance of reaching out to local straight clubs about our upcoming Plus Class closer to the time that it will start.

**Next Meeting**

Our next Recruitment Committee meeting will not take place for several months. Perhaps it will be in January 2025.

## Proposal to Encourage New Callers

Independence Squares Board:

I am making a proposal to encourage and support new LGBTQ+ square dance callers. I would appreciate it if the board would consider this proposal.

Thank you,

Linda

This is a two-pronged proposal:

Inform and encourage and support those interested dancers to attend GCA Caller School at IAGSDC conventions.

Contribute toward the cost of membership in CallerLab so that a new caller can legally play licensed music at dances at which they are calling.

Advantages to Independence Squares

We would have a roster of new callers from the LGBTQ+ community

We would perhaps have someone who is already a member of Independence Squares to fill in if either of our weekly callers, for whatever reason, could not make it to a class night, or to call for a dance outside of the weekly classes.

First Prong: GCA Caller School

Encourage and promote and sponsor attendance to GCA Caller School, held each year at the IAGSDC convention. We have, in the past, sponsored people who have gone on to become square dance callers in our community. As far as I know, we have not done this sponsorship recently.

A person interested in learning how to call would be attending classes led by highly qualified square dance callers and taught some introductory skills. The students then call the GCA graduation dance at the IAGSDC convention to have some more practice. This is a very valuable learning experience, for those who wish to pursue learning how to be square dance callers

IAGSDC <https://iagsdc.org/> is the International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs, an LGBTQ+ organization.

GCA <https://www.gaycallers.org/> The Gay Callers Association (GCA) is an international organization consisting of individuals who participate in and promote gay and lesbian square dance activities.

The purpose of the GCA is to promote the development of gay callers and to promote square dance, round dance, and western dance as a recreational activity, provide mutual support among members, and to further the education, interest and participation of the members in the art without prejudice to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, race, or belief.

The GCA sponsors a caller school which is held in conjunction with the annual IAGSDC convention.

## Second Prong: Contribute toward CallerLab membership

BMI/ASCAP Licensing is necessary for a caller to be able to use copyrighted music at a dance. Sponsorship would indicate Independence Squares' interest in support and encouraging new callers.

The cost for BMI/ASCAP Licensing varies. See here for more information:  
<https://callerlab.org/bmi-ascap-licensing/>

CALLERLAB offers non-members the lowest prices on music licensing. Signing up is easy: Just print and fill out the Alternate License form, attach your check, and mail it to the Home Office. You may also view and download other Membership Applications forms from the Membership Forms page.

# Independence Squares Finance Committee Report

## September 18, 2024

The Finance Committee met on Friday, August 27, 2024. Following is the list of topics discussed.

- **Financial assistance for dancers at Independence Squares' dances**

The Finance Committee unanimously recommends the following proposal:

- Financial assistance program to continue but to become more formalized with an application required for review by the FC. Applications will have an expiration date to correspond to the end of the current or upcoming fiscal year, depending on the date of the application. Applicants will be asked to give a minimum level of explanation regarding their financial need, without a requirement for too much detail. Applications will be reviewed and approved or denied by the FC. Approval will reduce the cost of class nights and single session special dances to \$5.00. A double session special dance will cost \$10.00. Price reductions for the Fly-In are not covered under this program. A proposed application form is attached.

The Finance Committee discussed the following proposal but did not unanimously endorse it. We offer it for the board's consideration.

- Funding for the financial assistance program will be provided through the establishment of a Scholarship Fund to which dancers can make contributions. Dancers will be encouraged to contribute to this fund through announcements at our events and through occasional Scholarship Fund drives. The Treasurer will be responsible for managing the transactions in/out of the fund. While the fund will be established at the start of the 2024-2025 dance season, actual reimbursements to the club for discounted admission fees will not commence until six months hence. The financial assistance program will cease to exist if the fund runs out of money to sustain the program.

- **Finance Committee official roles and responsibilities**

Ron discussed a concern over the fact that the roles and responsibilities of the FC are not codified. Steve will begin putting together an official document outlining those roles and responsibilities. The FC will present a formal document to the board at some future date.

- **Request to move the club's checking account from PNC to another bank**

Ron has withdrawn his request to move the club's checking account from PNC, stating that there are complications in moving the account to another bank. These include the fact that most other banks require all signers to be in one branch at the same time to update signature cards, and the fact that several other banks have higher minimum balance requirements. Ron also expressed a desire to consider a bylaw change to

reduce the number of actual signers required on checks from two to one, while keeping the internal requirement of two approvals needed for disbursements. The FC agreed to have Ron start the process of putting this proposal together and Steve agreed to review the proposal before submission to the full FC.

- **Finding future Treasurers for the club**

Ron suggested a process of working now to find a replacement Treasurer for when his term is up next year. This involves an occasional announcement at club nights asking if we have any club members who might have the necessary financial background and encouraging those individuals to talk privately with Ron in order to have a discussion about the role. This could be followed by a months-long tutoring program where interested parties could shadow the current Treasurer to learn more about the role and to better prepare them for a possible term in office. Ron referred to this as an unofficial “Shadow Treasurer” role. It was suggested that volunteers be advised that participation in this role would not guarantee a nomination as Treasurer.

- **Wheel Around NJ JDA**

Steve mentioned that he will soon begin to put together the Joint Dance Agreement with Times Squares for our next Wheel Around NJ dance.