

**Minutes from the Independence Squares Board Meeting
February 20th, 2025, 7:00 PM**

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

Board Members Absent: Marika

Guests in Attendance: Chris, Cindy, Deb, Katherine, Linda

Approval of minutes - Sarah/Dave

Peg made a motion to accept the minutes from the January 22nd meeting. Sarah seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Ron

The written report is attached to these minutes. Ron pointed out that the line item for miscellaneous expenses includes the expenses from tee shirt printing, the anniversary dance, the Zoom account, and IAGSDC dues. He also pointed out a recent payment of \$1,999 to the Sheraton. As Ron mentioned during the last Board meeting, one of the club's CDs recently matured, and he moved the money to the club's savings account. Cindy and Katherine intend to run as co-Treasurers. They met with Ron to begin learning the position. Ron recommended that only one of them be added to the financial accounts as a signer to prevent any possible conflict of interest. He also recommended that they be restricted from signing any contracts jointly, meaning they would not count as two separate Board members for the purposes of signing contracts.

Ron made a motion that, if Cindy and Katherine are elected as co-Treasurers, only one of them be added as a signer on our financial accounts and they be restricted from signing any contracts jointly. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

David B. proposed that an amendment to the by-laws should be submitted at the June meeting to apply these restrictions to any other elections going forward. Chris suggested we might also add a clause to the by-laws to prevent spouses from signing together. Ron will draft a proposal for the amendment to the by-laws by April.

Ron asked the Board to accept the contract that Cameron returned with his name typed in lieu of a signature. The Board agreed to accept this.

Fly-In Report – Ron

The written report is attached to these minutes. Ron believes that the number of dancers at the Fly-In will exceed last year's number. According to the hotel, 150 room nights have been booked, which is more than we were required to sell. As long as they have more rooms available in the hotel, they are giving the rooms to us. The Fly-In Committee discussed selling promotional tee shirts for the 2026 Fly-In; Ron will present a proposal to the committee at the next meeting. The projected cost for 100 tee shirts is \$399 with free shipping if we place an order soon.

Ron made a motion that the Board allocate \$500 for the 2026 Fly-In tee shirt project if approved by the Fly-In Committee. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The hotel has agreed to keep the bar open late for us on Friday and Saturday night, but they will require that we guarantee sales of at least \$500 each night. The Board discussed their concerns about the hotel's demands. Ron will negotiate further with the hotel and report back. Ron shared the poster for the 2026 Fly-In, which was created by Arin and Marika.

Caller Liaison Report – Mike

Mike was not present at the meeting, but he submitted a written report, attached here. The July and August Open Houses with Betsy have been confirmed; Steve also confirmed with the church. Clay will be the caller for the September Open House. Cameron has signed a contract for Summer Splash 2025. Callers have been decided for the 2027 Fly-In. Linda was pleased to announce that the club has now re-booked every caller we had to cancel due to COVID.

HASP Report and Proposals - Linda

The written report is attached to these minutes. The HASP Committee proposed that the club stop displaying the STOP sign every week, as the guidelines are outdated, and Linda argued that the sign was no longer useful.

Peg made a motion to stop displaying the STOP sign every week. Steve seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda is drafting new language for health and safety protocols to be published on the Independence Squares website in place of the STOP sign, and she will submit her draft to the HASP Committee when she is done. The committee would like to bring the club's policies in line with current CDC guidelines.

Linda sent out an email to the club with the club's mission statement and non-discrimination policy, with the Board's approval. She asked the Board to check with the church as to what their policy is in the event of a visit from ICE. David B. will draft an email to the church.

Facilities Report – Steve

Steve emailed the church about the problem with the floor. He believes we need to be more assertive in demanding that they take action, or provide a solution ourselves, or they will not respond. The church also still has not replaced the light bulb in the closet. At some point recently, someone broke one of the windowpanes in the door to the upstairs storage unit, and the glass has been replaced with plywood. The church has not explained what happened or who put up the plywood. Vinney believes that nothing was stolen from the storage unit, but he expressed concern about the security of the unit. Linda will purchase some sort of light fixture or lantern for the closet and submit the receipt.

Recruitment Committee Report – Steve

The Recruitment Committee looked at events in 2025 that they might be interested in going to. Vinney will look for volunteers to help at PhillyPride365. The committee requested a budget of \$650 to pay for entrance fees to Pride events, promotional materials, and targeted paid advertising on Facebook and/or Instagram.

Steve made a motion to allocate \$650 for promotional activities. Vinney seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

On Tuesday, April 15th, there will not be dancing. Steve proposed that he and a few other people be allowed to run a board game night at the church from 6:30 to 9:30 PM that Tuesday. Attendance would be free, with donations accepted at the door.

David B. made a motion to accept the game night proposal. Vinney seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Communications Report - Dave (for Marika), and Steve

The written report is attached to these minutes. Marika was not present at the meeting, but they submitted a proposal via email to make the Pride dance scheduled for June 7th, 2025 a “member appreciation” dance with free admission to all registered members of Independence Squares. Board members were enthusiastic about the idea. Ron suggested revising the flyer for the dance to indicate that it is free to members.

Steve made a motion to accept Marika’s proposal. David B. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Sarah will email Marika to let them know that the proposal was adopted and ask them to update the website with the new information.

Print Job – Ron

There was a discussion about how many copies of each flyer to order as part of the large print job that Ron is putting together. Ron estimated that the order will go out around the first week of March.

Advanced/Challenge Report – Peg

Peg said she believed there would be enough people at the next Tuesday night. She let the Advanced/Challenge dancers know that on March 4th there will be only one teacher and encouraged people to come to class that day.

Mainstream/Plus Report – Vinney

Vinney is still sending out weekly emails. He reported that the Mainstream class is motivated. David B. asked Vinney to work on getting members of the Mainstream class onto the club email list so that they will get the club emails after they graduate from the class.

The next Board meeting will be on March 26th, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Paulos
Secretary, Independence Squares

Independence Squares Treasurer's Report February 20, 2025

Attached is the January 2024 month-end financial summary.

Items of note, previously reported to the board via email on 2/5/2025:

- Misc expenses increased by \$103.29, due to IAGSDC dues that were paid (\$66.00) and the purchase of face masks and name tags.
- The total for "Dance Admission Fees" looks odd due to the fact it includes cents in the total. This is due to the fact that one dancer accidentally overpaid recently, through PayPal, and I had to refund that money. A refund through PayPal creates an odd adjustment to our fees and that resulted in the odd total in this category.
- The t-shirt finances are as follows:
Cost of t-shirts: \$739.54
T-shirt payments received through January 31: \$640.00
PayPal fees for t-shirt payments: \$9.52
Net loss: \$109.06
Note: There are between 13 and 15 shirts that have not been paid for yet
- Our bank balances dropped by \$1358.90 from the previous month. This is due primarily to a \$1999.00 payment on 1/6/25 to the Sheraton for our 2025 event.

Our Live Oak Bank 6-month CD matured on 2/13/25 in the amount of \$15,351.38. The funds were moved to the Live Oak Bank savings account to provide liquidity for the upcoming Fly-In.

February 15 Chocolate Dance finances are as follows:

- Door admission fees: \$305.00
- 50/50 proceeds: \$91.00
- Caller fee: \$300.00
- Hall rent: \$90.00
- PayPal fees: \$1.84
- Net Income: \$4.16

T-shirt accounting (through 2/17/25) (Note: not all t-shirts have been paid for yet):

- Income: \$680.00
- Cost of t-shirts: \$739.54
- PayPal fees: \$9.52
- Net loss: \$69.06

Ron met for approximately three hours with Cindy and Katherine on 2/16/25 to begin the process of teaching them the Treasurer position. They intend to run as joint Treasurers, which the bylaws allow. **My recommendation to the board is that to prevent any conflicts of interest, only one of them be added to our financial accounts as a signer. I further recommend that when it comes to signing contracts for the club, both be allowed to sign as permitted by the bylaws, but that they be restricted from signing any contracts jointly.**

Ron and Vinney will be away the week of Feb 24. Coverage is needed to handle the finances on 2/25/25.

Cameron Harnish's contract for Summer Splash. Not properly signed but documentation exists to validate that he has signed it. **Approval to accept the contract requested from the board.**

There are two Fly-In related matters that need board approval. They are part of the Fly-In report.

Respectfully submitted, Ron R

Fly-In Committee Report

February 20, 2025

The last Fly-In Committee meeting was held on January 24, 2024. A copy of the minutes from that meeting is attached.

Numbers update (as of 2/17/25)

- 122 registered dancers. Increase of 10 from our last report (we had 133 dancers in 2024, including walk-in)
- \$11,290.00 registration dollars
- Hotel room count: Not available at the time of this report but will be updated for the board meeting.

T-shirts for 2026 Fly-In

At the January Fly-In committee meeting, the committee discussed the idea of having a promotional T-shirt for the 2026 Fly-In and to have them available in time for the committee to wear on Sunday morning at the 2025 Fly-In. Since that meeting, Ron has put together a proposal to present to the committee at the next meeting. The proposal is to order 100 shirts, with sizes based on the percentages that we had for our recent club T-shirt order. The company that we ordered the new club shirts from has a special offer of 100 shirts for only \$399, with free shipping if we can get our order together quickly. If we charge \$15 per shirt, and sell all of the shirts (admittedly, not likely), the net income to the club would be \$1101.00, less PayPal fees incurred when dancers make a purchase. Shirts would be available for sale on Sunday morning at the 2025 Fly-In and a line would potentially be added to the flyer to allow registrants to place an order and add the fee to their registration. The flyer can refer dancers to our website to check out the details, including a picture of the T-shirt. Ron will manage this, and the Fly-In Registrar would need to keep him advised of orders that were placed. T-shirts to be picked up at the 2026 Fly-In unless otherwise arranged (we will NOT offer to mail T-shirts). It is recommended that the Fly-In committee members each get one T-shirt free of charge. **Ron is asking for board approval to allocate the funds to make the purchase of the T-shirts if the Fly-In committee agrees to this project.**

Hotel bar issue

We had an issue at the 2024 Fly-In when the bartenders were not advised in advance that the hotel had agreed to keep the bar open for our attendees on Friday and Saturday night. Ron has negotiated this issue with the hotel for our 2025 Fly-In. They are willing to keep the bar open on both nights but will require that we guarantee sales of at least \$500 each night (not cumulative). Our club will be responsible for any shortfall in sales. This has not yet been discussed with the Fly-In committee. Last call will be at 1:15am, last pour at 1:30am, and liquor out of the room by 1:45am. Without extended hours, the bar will close at 10:00 PM each night. Drink prices are as follows:

- Premium drinks \$15
- House drinks \$13
- Wine \$10
- Beer \$8

Board approval is needed in case the Fly-In committee agrees to the extended hours, since we will become contractually obligated for any shortfall.

2026 Theme and flyer

The committee decided on a circus theme for the 2026 Fly-In, with a tagline of "Spin The Big Top". A flyer has been drawn up and needs to be approved yet by the committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron, Fly-In Committee Co-Chair

Caller Liaison Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – February 20, 2025

The information below is accurate as of February 16, 2025, 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 February 2025 through March 2026.

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

Tuesday, July 22, 2025 – Open House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 – Open House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Saturday, August 23, 2025 – Summer Splash All-level dance Mainstream through C1 – Dayle Hodge 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm Cameron Harnish will be calling as well from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek – Joint Dance with DC Lambda Squares and Chesapeake Squares

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 Open House Clay Goss 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

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 – 6:30 pm

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

Saturday, August 15, 2026 Summer Splash All-level Dance Mainstream – 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, December 5, 2026 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Betsy Gotta – Merion Friends Meeting House 3:00 pm – 6:30 pm

April 2027 Fly-in: Callers: Barry Clasper, Mark Franks, Eric Henerlau April 2-4, 2027 Sheraton Bucks County (?)

FYI Notes

- 1) 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. With the beginning of the Plus class in January 2025, the Mainstream and Plus classes should be called on those nights when only one caller is available.
- 2) Please note that both Mark and Betsy will 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.
- 3) I was given a list by the board as to potential dates for 2026. The only ones confirmed thus far are shown above. The remainder of the list is a work in progress.

Health and Safety Protocols Report to the Board February 2025

HASP made two proposals for the board

1. HASP has moved past the original focus of the Return to Dance Committee and beyond tracking COVID. There are other infectious diseases to be aware of, and mental and emotional and physical health are all important. We will broaden our scope beyond COVID. The STOP sign that is displayed each week at dance class is not as useful now as it had been in the past. HASP will draft new wording for health and safety protocols on the IS web page to replace the STOP sign. HASP is working on a summary of the history of RTD and the evolution to HASP; summary will be presented to the IS community for their information.

Proposal: Stop displaying the STOP sign every week. We could still display the STOP sign at dances and events when new people might be attending. We will reinforce that if a dancer (or caller) is sick for whatever reason, it would be prudent to stay home and get better, rather than come to a class or dance.

2. We discussed the current political climate and how to continue to provide a safe and welcoming space for gay, lesbian, transgender people, queer, bisexual, and allied people to our community. We looked at the mission statement for Independence Squares and would like to distribute this to our community as a reminder of who we are and what we stand for.

Proposal: Distribute the IS mission statement in an email to all members of the IS community.

We are Philadelphia's only square dance club teaching and supporting modern western square dancing for the LGBTQ+ community and our friends. 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.

HASP took these actions

Pending Information Sheet: Linda's Action item: Write an information sheet on the history of HASP and how it has evolved and invite contributions from the IS community on topics of interest to them.

Pending Newsletter: Linda's Action item: Be the lead writer and ask HASP committee members to contribute to a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter on current topics and invite contributions. We would send the newsletter to the IS community.

Done: Hand sanitizer: Linda identified and removed expired hand sanitizers pump bottles and refilled with fresh hand sanitizer.

Done: First aid: Linda replenished the club's first aid kit with bandages, protective gloves, and eye washes.

Asked: Church's policy on immigration and sanctuary: Asked the IS board to check with someone from the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion what their position is and what is their action plan, if there is a visit from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), so that we know what to do if ICE comes while we are there at a square dance event.

Done: Flourishes: Mike followed up with Betsy on introducing flourishes, and possibly alternate handholds, to newer dancers. Could focus on Highland fling for dos-a-dos, weave the

ring, allemande left, and circle to a line. This is to help newer dancers who might be anxious at a fly-in if they are confronted with flourishes they didn't know about.

Done: Peg's let the IS community know that the door that we use to come to dance classes will be monitored by someone from IS and will be locked after 7:15 so there won't be any surprise visitors during dancing. Let dancers that come in later know that they can ring the doorbell for admittance after 7:15 pm.

Report from IS Recruitment Committee for the February 20, 2025 Board Meeting

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

Our most recent meeting was on February 10. Our next meeting will be on March 24, 2025.

Action Item

The only action item that requires board attention is that the committee requests a \$650 budget. We would like to be able to pay entrance fees at pride events, to pay for promotional materials and to do some targeted paid advertising on Facebook and/or Instagram before our open houses.

Open Houses 2025

Our committee will advertise and run the open houses on July 22, August 12 and September 16, 2025.

Pride Events 2025 and other outreach.

There is still limited information about upcoming opportunities for outreach this year. PhillyPride365 has not posted information about this years events but we presume the march and festival will be on June 1. Steve is the only person on the committee who can commit to staffing a table on June 1. Vinney will reach out to our membership on Tuesday nights to see if anyone can help out that day.

There is no information about a Trans Wellness Conference for 2025 yet either.

Steve will take the lead on organizing a table at Delco Pride Festival on June 14. Vinney will approach Dave Tavani about having a presence at the Delco County Pride Parade in Media on June 7.

Coco will take the lead in organizing our participation in South New Jersey Pride on September 7. George and Coco will reach out to festival organizers before the date of the event to determine the technical criteria for using their audio equipment.

We discussed encouraging our membership to participate in smaller events such as the Collingswood Pride Picnic on Monday June 20.

Retention and Non Dancing Social Events

Committee members remarked upon the fact that involving students and recently new members in non-dance social activities gives them a sense of belonging. Their involvement in these activities positively correlates with their continued involvement with our club. There is a Philly's Pride Night on June 20. We should encourage our students to attend. There will probably be an Independence Squares Games Night on April 15. Marika and Arin will continue to organize free or low cost options for outings such as Museum Nights. Steve will encourage Dave Blatt to organize another field trip or activity for our members.

Outreach to medical professionals

We will talk more about this strategy at our March 24 meeting. Marika and Arin made a flyer specifically for medical professionals last year.

Inclusivity

One of the topics at the March 24 meeting will be a check in and brainstorming session about what more Independence Squares can do to encourage diversity, equity and inclusion in our club.

Communications Report

Most flyers for upcoming 2025 events have been made and can be included in the large print order that will be placed prior to the fly-in.

I am considering whether it makes more sense to hold the previously discussed Canva 101 training in the summer or fall since flyers for most 2025 events have now been made. I want to ensure folks who participate have the opportunity to make flyers afterwards if they choose to do so.

Ongoing:

- Fly-In promotion posts are popping up regularly on Facebook and Instagram. Everyone is encouraged to share those posts and help highlight the event!
- Please send any photos you take at Independence Squares events to me at 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 V., Leda, Roy, and Arin for sharing info for snapshots already!