

**Minutes from the Independence Squares Board Meeting
Monday, February 9th, 2026, at 07:00 PM via Zoom**

Board Members Present: Chris, Dave T., Eileen, Katherine & Cindy, Sarah, Steve

Board Members Absent: Kellie

Guests: Deb, Lisa, Mike, Ron

Zoom notice about for our code for Board members – Steve

Two club members expressed concerns about the pop-up notice that appeared during all club Zoom meetings last month. Use of the pop-up notice was paused until the Board could discuss revising the language of the notice.

Steve made a motion to change the language on the Zoom notice to say, “By pressing the "I Agree" button you are acknowledging that you have read this notice” and remove the word “ethics.” The Treasurer seconded. The motion passed with five votes in favor and one abstention.

The full text reads:

All Independence Squares board members have embraced a code that includes the following directives (amongst others)

I will perform duties and actions on behalf of Independence Squares properly, diligently, courteously and with respect for others.

I will remember that we are all volunteering our time and working together to support Independence Squares.

I will approach any disagreements respectfully and with a problem-solving mindset.

The board invites you to make a commitment to abide by these principles as you participate in the meeting that is about to begin. By pressing the "I Agree" button you are acknowledging that you have read this notice.

Approval of the Minutes – Sarah

Sarah made a motion to accept the minutes from the January Board meeting. The Treasurer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve made a motion to revise the minutes from the October 2025 meeting to insert the sentence, “The topic of the emails was the hiring of callers.” Chris seconded. The motion passed with five votes in favor and one abstention.

Sarah will work with Steve to upload the revised version of the October minutes to the website and Google Drive. There was a discussion about who should receive copies of the draft minutes before they are voted on.

Guidelines for Smooth Dancing and an Inclusive Dance Environment – Steve and Chris

There was a discussion about whether a new committee should be formed to consider ways in which to encourage an inclusive and respectful dance environment. The HASP Committee would be involved and consulted.

Steve made a motion to form a committee looking at our community culture and guidelines for smooth dancing and to task the committee with presenting a report with suggestions to the Board by the April meeting. Chris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chris will be the chair of the committee. The committee will choose a name for itself.

Changes to the Plus Program

After the Fly-In, Mark will teach the Plus class the eight calls that are being moved from Advanced to Plus effective September 2026. Mike will coordinate with Mark to learn when exactly that will be. The club will advertise the dates so that dancers who are not currently in the Plus class can come to those classes to learn the new calls.

Caller Liaison Committee – Mike

The written report is attached to these notes. The dates for the Open Houses have been finalized. A flyer needs to be made for the dance on Tuesday, July 14th. The only dance in 2027 that still needs to be scheduled is the joint dance with Times Squares in May 2027. There was a discussion about whether to switch afternoon and evening sessions for the March 2027 dance.

As requested, the Caller Liaison Committee created a list of criteria for hiring or not hiring a caller. Mike answered questions about the list.

Treasure's Report – Katherine and Cindy

The written report is attached to these minutes. IAGSDC dues were paid for the year 2026. There were two fraudulent charges on the PNC Visa/Debit card, which are included on the spreadsheet under the "Misc. Expenses" category. The funds were provisionally returned, but PNC's investigation into the fraud is active as of this meeting. A new card has been issued. Other expenses included caller fees, publicity, a new first aid kit, and club shirts. The Treasurer obtained the small games of chance license for the Fly-In the day after the last Board meeting.

Fly-In Committee – Ron

The written report is attached to these minutes. As of January 9th, there were 132 dancers registered and 120 room nights sold. A subcommittee is working to ensure a smooth transition

to a new procedure for the baskets to meet the requirements of the small games of chance license. Ron thanked Cindy and Katherine for their efforts in supporting the subcommittee.

In an email sent on January 29th, Ron asked the Board to approve an agreement with the Holiday Inn Express Langhorne to reserve additional room nights for the Fly-In after the Sheraton completely sold out. The club has no financial obligation to the Holiday Inn if we do not fill any of the room nights they set aside for us.

Steve made a motion over email to accept the terms of the proposed contract from Holiday Inn Express Langhorne and to authorize two Board members to sign it. Eileen seconded. The motion passed with four votes in favor.

For 2027, the Fly-In Committee is putting in place an online registration system where dancers will be able to register through our website. The system is being tested now.

The Sheraton is not willing to discuss a contract for 2028 until the summer of 2026. Ron is working with a company that helps organizations find meeting spaces.

Encouraging New Callers Committee. – Chris

Chris has received input from the Caller Liaison Committee, Will H., Deb, and others, and he is working on the next steps. It is currently undecided whether the club will offer a caller school scholarship this year.

Facilities Committee – Steve and Sarah

A group of volunteers have been opening and closing the church while Steve is out of town. The Facilities Committee is still in talks with Arch Street Meeting House for our July 14th dance. The Treasurer is finalizing a contract with the venue for Wheel Around NJ 2026 and working on the contract for Summer Splash 2026.

The Lutheran church has proposed a new contract that would require us to pay an additional \$5 per event. The fee for the storage committee would not increase. The Finance Committee recommends that we accept the rate increase. There was a discussion about whether to agree to the church's request that we pay by the 15th of the month.

Steve made a motion to sign a new contract with the Lutheran church effective through the end of 2026 that would include an increase of \$5 per event, with the date by which the money is due to be determined. Dave T. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Publicity Committee – Chris

The written report is included in these minutes. The committee is considering no longer using MailChimp. Ron and Vinney are organizing a trip to the Phillies Pride night, and Chris is organizing a trip to see Roy in the lead role in a play.

Recruitment Committee – Steve

Marika has stepped down as chair of the Recruitment Committee, and Steve will be the new chair. The committee needs to decide if the club will take part in Philly Pride 365 this year.

Mainstream and Plus Program Rep Report – Kellie and Eileen

Kellie sent out an email per Ron's request with information for first-time Fly-In attendees. Eileen has been speaking with Mainstream class members about the Fly-In and about how classes are going.

Nominating Committee – Dave T.

The committee has not been able to find a replacement President-Elect so far. Linda has joined the Nominating Committee, and she and Dave T. are working on identifying candidates.

Bylaws Committee – Dave T. and Sarah

The Bylaws Committee had their first meeting this month. They are making progress on their suggested revisions.

Old and New Business

Steve asked that we continue to encourage club members to lead club field trips. He is also planning to send out an email inviting dancers to come to three upcoming dances at our sister clubs. Cindy reported that the club will be paying for insurance for 10 students at \$75 starting soon.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 18th.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah
Secretary, Independence Squares

Caller Liaison Committee Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – February 9, 2026

The information below is accurate as of February 6, 2026, 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.

Please inform the Caller Liaison Committee of any changes regarding policies concerning the hiring of callers and dance schedules allowing ample time for the committee to make any adjustments or changes.

Dances Through April 2028

Callers have been contracted and confirmed for the following dances taking place January 8, 2026 through April 2028.

Saturday, February 14, 2026 – Valentine's Dance Class level Mainstream and Plus – 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm
Betsy Gotta

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

Saturday, March 28, 2026 – Advanced and C1 – Kent Forrester 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, April 18, 2026 - 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm SSD and Plus; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner (Social?); 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Advanced and C1 Mark Franks

Saturday, May 9, 2026 – Mainstream and Plus – Dan Koft Wheel Around NJ People Care Center, Bridgewater, NJ 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Saturday, June 13, 2026 – Mainstream and Plus Pride Dance Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – Open House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Tuesday, July 14, 2026 – Mainstream and Plus Dayle Hodge 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

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

Tuesday, September 8, 2026 – Open House Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – **9:00 pm**

Saturday, October 17, 2026 - 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm Advanced and C1; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner (Social?); 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Mainstream and Plus Betsy Gotta

Saturday, December 5, 2026 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Betsy Gotta – Merion Friends Meeting House 3:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Saturday, January 9, 2027 – Advanced and C1 Mark Franks 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, February 13, 2027 – Mainstream and Plus Valentine's Dance David Hartman

3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Saturday, March 13, 2027 - 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm Mainstream and Plus; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner;
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Advanced and C1 Betsy Gotta

April 2027 Fly-in: Callers: Barry Clasper, Mark Franks, Eric Henerlau, John Hawley April 2-4, 2027
Sheraton Bucks County Please note that John Hawley will only be calling on Saturday, April 3, 2027

Saturday, June 12, 2027 – Mainstream and Plus Pride Dance Betsy Gotta 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Saturday, August 21, 2027 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 David Hartman will be calling with Dayle during the first half of this dance.

Saturday, October 16, 2027 - 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm Advanced and C1; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm Dinner (Social?);
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm Mainstream and Plus Brian Jarvis

Saturday, December 4, 2027 – Glitter Ball Mainstream through C1 – Dayle Hodge – Merion Friends
Meeting House 3:00 pm – 6:30 pm

March 31 – April 2, 2028 Fly-in: Callers: Betsy Gotta, Michael Kellogg, Justin Russell, Brian Jarvis
Sheraton Bucks County Please note that Brian Jarvis will only be calling on Saturday, April 1, 2028

FYI Notes

- 1) Dayle Hodge has been hired to call on March 31, 2026 when Betsy Gotta will be attending CallerLab. He will be calling the Mainstream class and the C1 workshop.
- 2) Both Betsy Gotta and Mark Franks will be available and ready to start classes on September 22, 2026. The next step for the board is to determine what programs to offer and whether it be a class or a workshop.
- 3) The committee is working on scheduling dances for 2027 based on the preferred dates from the board. The only dance remaining unfinished is the May 2027 Joint dance with Times Squares.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Rutkowski

Linda Bourdet

Dave Blatt

Treasurer's Report on activity through January 31, 2026

- Available balance from all sources as of 1/31/2026 is \$51,398.
- One of the 9-month CD's with Live Oak Bank came to maturity on 1/23 and the funds were deposited into the Live Oak Savings account (\$10,275.60). Current APY on the Live Oak Savings account is 3.80%. Current Live Oak CD APYs are 3.70% for 9-month CD and 3.80% for 1-year CD.
- Due to snow day on 1/27, January payments to Betsy, Mark and LCHC were not written until February 3rd and are not reflected in any financial reports for/through January.

- Expenses of note for January:
 - IAGSDC Dues for 2026: \$72.00 (\$1 for each paid member)
 - Two fraudulent charges on PNC Visa/Debit card: \$2,574.84 in total (\$1,282.86 and \$1,292.98). Charges occurred on 1/27 and hit the PNC checking account. The charges appear on the cumulative spreadsheet as "Misc expenses" in the "General" column. Funds were returned to the PNC checking account provisionally on 2/4 and will be reflected in the report on February activity next month. PNC's investigation into the fraud is active. We will alert the board when the investigation is complete and the return of the funds is permanent. We have two PNC Visa/Debit cards - one assigned to Cindy and the other to Katherine. The fraudulent charges were against Cindy's card. Once found, the card was cancelled. A new one has been issued. We are now keeping both cards locked unless needed for a transaction.

- \$1,500 was moved from Live Oak Savings to PNC checking after the fraudulent charges hit the account and before those funds were provisionally returned to insure that minimum balance requirements could be maintained.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy and Katherine

Co-Treasurers

Independence Squares Fly-In Committee Report February 9, 2026

The most recent Fly-In committee meeting was held on January 9, 2026. The next meeting will be on February 13, 2026.

Numbers update (as of January 9, 2026)

We have 132 registrants (an increase of 6 from the previous report) and \$11,650 in registration fees (an increase of \$555.00 for the previous report). Our budget for registration fees is \$13,000. A total of 120 room nights have been sold. Our obligation to the hotel is to sell 112 room nights.

Small Games of Chance license

A subcommittee meeting with those who handle the basket sales was held on January 20, 2026. The committee is actively working to ensure a smooth transition to the requirements of the Small Games of Chance license. Basket donors are being asked to state a fair market value for their donations. A new ticket pricing list has been put in place and detailed instructions for the ticket sales desk have been drafted and are being reviewed. The committee extends its sincere appreciation to Cindy and Katherine for their efforts in supporting the subcommittee.

Hotel sell out

As previously reported to the board via email, the Sheraton is sold out for the weekend of our event and has no additional rooms to add to our block. We offer thanks to the board for working so quickly to help us put an overflow hotel in place. We have signed a contract with the Holiday Inn Express, just 0.6 miles away from our host hotel, with a room rate that matches that of the Sheraton. We have no financial obligation to the Holiday Inn Express if we don't fill any of the room nights that they have blocked for us.

2027 Fly-In (April 2-4, 2027) ~ Registration process

An online registration system for the 2027 Fly-In has been designed and is being tested. This will allow dancers to easily register through our website instead of having to mail in a registration form. It will also provide more information to our Registrars than what is provided when dancers register through the IAGSDC website. A conversation will be held at our next meeting to consider removing the IAGSDC registration option from our flyer.

2028 Fly In (March 31-April 2, 2028) ~ Venue

As previously reported to the board, the Sheraton is not willing to discuss a contract for 2028 until the summer of 2026. In the meantime, Ron has spoken with Helms Brisco, a company which helps organizations find meeting spaces for their events. Helms Brisco has started the process of looking for venues in our area that can accommodate us for 2028. This could give us more options and some leverage in dealing with the Sheraton for 2028. It should be noted though that during Ron's initial conversation with Helms Brisco, he was told that hotels are not eager to book square dance groups because they just are not financially lucrative to the host hotels.

Communications Report - 2026-02-09 board meeting

Publicity - Website

- Posted the latest information about our fly-in provided by the committee
- Updated the dance calendar with the latest information
 - Updated info for the Times Squares and DC Lambda fall fly-ins
 - *Need venue confirmation for the July dance*
- Elaborated the venue info for the Glitterball and Wheel Around NJ

Publicity - Fliers

- Most of the fliers for Saturday dances are complete and ready for printing.
- A flier for the July 14 dance will be created this week.

Publicity - Mailchimp

- We now have 355 contacts in the Mailchimp account we use for recruiting during the summer.
- MailChimp announced that free accounts are limited to 250 contacts effective Feb 17.
- The publicity committee (Steve, Dave B, Chris & ?) are looking into alternatives.
- Chris would like to initiate a regular newsletter like the ones sent by Times Squares and others.

Off the Floor

- Ron and Vinney are coordinating a group of IS dancers and friends to come to the Phillies Pride Game on July 18, 2026. Contact Ron & Vinney for details.
- Chris is coordinating a group of IS dancers and friends to see Roy Wilbur in a leading role in On Golden Pond at the Shawnee Playhouse Sunday April 19. Contact Chris for details.
- The board encourages members to organize events off the floor, such as:
 - Visiting Busy Bees, Club Sashay, Perky Promenaders & other suburban clubs
 - A games night on a Tuesday this summer when we have no classes
 - Visiting a museum

New Callers

- The board wishes to encourage and support new callers.
- Chris accepted the assignment to get the ball rolling.
- Chris received valuable ideas from the Caller Liaison group (Mike, Linda, Dave B), from Will Hamp, and from Deb

Nominating Committee Report

IS Board Meeting - 02/09/2026

Unfortunately, the search for a president-elect to replace Marika has been unsuccessful so far. I did have interest, or at least not a definite refusal, from one club member but since she has not been an IS member for two years, she is ineligible for the position. If there is a consensus among Board members, would there be a willingness to suspend the bylaws in this instance? The club member is certainly more than capable of taking on this position. I will definitely follow up in recruiting her for the next Board later on if we think it is not essential to make this change. I'm not advocating for either suspending the By Laws or not but I just wanted to bring up this possibility.

Linda Bourdet has agreed to be part of the nominating committee and has been very diligent in identifying members who might be interested in joining the Board in the next term.

Dave Tavani

Nominating Committee Chair