

**Minutes from the Independence Squares Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 18th, 2026, at 07:00 PM via Zoom**

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

Board Members Absent: none

Guests: Bob, Deb, George, Helena, Mark, Ron, Will

Approval of the Minutes – Sarah

Sarah made a motion to approve the minutes from the February Board meeting. Chris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Appointing a Vice President

Steve made a motion that the Board appoint Mike as Vice President of the Board of Independence Squares. Eileen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mike will serve as Vice President until the next election, effective immediately.

Approving the Board Code

Steve asked the Board to reaffirm whether they approved the Code of Ethics that the Board adopted in July. There was time for Mike and the rest of the Board to review the code before voting.

Steve made a motion that the Board accept the Code of Ethics as presented. The Treasurer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Guidelines for Smooth Dancing and an Inclusive Dance Environment – Chris

Chris submitted a proposal for creating a new set of guidelines for community behavior and a new committee for handling instances of concerning behavior. He asked for input and volunteers. The document is attached to these minutes.

Steve made a motion to form a committee to create a document of community standards and pose to the Board the possibility of another committee that would act as mediators when conflicts arise. Chris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Scheduling Next Meetings

The Board agreed to meet from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM on May 6th. The Annual Meeting will be on June 2nd at 7:00 PM.

Caller Liaison Committee – Mike

The written report is attached to these minutes. Mike stated there were no changes to report.

Changes to Upcoming Classes and Dances

Mark will start teaching the new Plus calls on April 7th, 2026. There was a concern that the back room where Mark teaches is too small for the anticipated number of dancers. It was suggested that we should switch rooms and put the Plus dancers in Betsy's room. Mike will reach out to Betsy and see if she agrees.

Eileen surveyed the Mainstream and Plus dancers and concluded that there is no need to switch the afternoon and evening sessions for the March 2027 dance.

There was a discussion about whether to dance the Mainstream 2026 and Plus 2026 programs at Independence Squares dances starting with the October 17th dance.

Steve made a motion that starting in September 2026 all Mainstream and Plus dances will use the Mainstream 2026 and Plus 2026 call lists. Mike seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There was a discussion about what classes and workshops to offer on Tuesday nights starting in September. Part of the conversation focused on whether to offer an Advanced class. The final decision will be made by the next Board.

Steve made a motion to recommend to the next Board that we have a Mainstream class, a Plus class, an Advanced class, and a C1 workshop starting in September. Mike seconded. The motion did not pass with three votes in favor, two votes against, and two abstentions.

The Board will discuss this further in April.

Treasurer's Report – Katherine and Cindy

The Treasurer did not give a verbal report due to time constraints. The written report is attached to these minutes.

Fly-In Committee Report – Ron

The written report is attached to these minutes. The Fly-In Committee recommended that the Board approve a proposal to make the following amendments to the 2027 hotel contract:

- Add the same bar terms as in 2026.
- Increase the hotel room block from 140 to 160 room nights (increasing the room nights we are required to sell to 128).

After ruling out several alternate locations, Ron negotiated with the Sheraton for 2028 and was able to get favorable terms. The Fly-In Committee recommended to the Board that we accept these terms and move forward with the contract.

Because of the loss of the Princeton Rooms at the 2026 Fly-In, the Sheraton issued a refund of \$1588.03. For the time being, the hotel credited the amount to the 2027 Fly-In account. For accounting purposes, the Fly-In Committee recommended that half of the refund be credited to the 2027 Fly-In and half to the 2028 Fly-In to offset the increased costs of those Fly-Ins. This decision does not change the amount of money in the club bank accounts.

Steve made a motion to approve all of the proposals on the Fly-In Committee report. Dave T. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ron will get the amended contracts to the Board for signatures.

Bylaws Committee – Dave T. and Sarah

The Bylaws Committee submitted a draft of recommended changes to the bylaws. Dave T. and Sarah took comments and questions from those present at the meeting. Steve asked anyone who had further suggestions to email the committee. The Bylaws Committee will meet again and work on a second draft to present by the April meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM. The next meeting will be on Thursday, April 9th.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah
Secretary, Independence Squares

Community Guidelines Ideas

Square dancing with Independence Squares is a joyful and social activity. Independence Squares is a welcoming place for dancers with a wide variety of ages, identities and abilities. To ensure a positive and safe experience for everyone, the board of Independence Squares is developing Community Guidelines. The Guidelines focus on some important themes:

- Safety
- Inclusion
- Respect
- Communication

Some examples of potentially inappropriate behavior are:

- A dancer openly disregards instructions from the caller.
- A dancer is too rough when doing certain moves with other dancers.
- A dancer heckles or derides another dancer who makes mistakes.
- A dancer is openly disdainful of persons of a different gender, race or sexual preference.
- A dancer pesters another person to date or to have sex.

To establish the Community Guidelines, we need a few things:

1. A short written document that elaborates on the themes listed above.
2. A documented process for addressing potentially inappropriate behavior.
3. A committee (3-5 people) to handle instances of potentially inappropriate behavior.
 - a. The ideal committee will have a mix of genders, and a mix of long time and newer club members.
 - b. Members should be calm and sympathetic when addressing any issues

Some observations:

- We are making these guidelines to be prepared for what might happen. They are not directed at any specific person or incident, recent or in the past.
- We need a new committee with a new name. The IS Board and the HASP committee are not well suited to serve in this role.

Please share your ideas and feedback with Chris Deepphouse, cdeepphouse@gmail.com

Caller Liaison Committee Report

Independence Squares Board of Directors Meeting – March 18, 2026

The information below is accurate as of March 18, 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 March 28, 2026 through April 2028.

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 - Activity through 2/28/2026

1. Ending balance total across PNC and LiveOak accounts was \$47,979.07 on 2/28/2026.
2. LiveOak 9 Month CD matured on 2/14/2026 and the final balance of \$5,150.52 was transferred to LiveOak Savings. After 2026 Fly-in income and expenses are settled, Finance Committee will assess if it is sensible to open any additional CD's at LiveOak. Current APR on our LiveOak Savings account remains 3.80%. As of 3/9/2026 LiveOak was offering CD's with APRs no higher than 3.80% (1-Year CD). Our Savings account is earning the maximum APR available with LiveOak.
3. PNC provisionally refunded the full amount (\$2,574.84) of the fraudulent charges that occurred in January on Cindy's Visa/Debit card. They also refunded two monthly service charges posted for December and January (\$40 each for a total of \$80) for bank services we are not using. With these refunds, our Miscellaneous expenses total for the current fiscal year (June through February) is down to \$231.22 (from a high of \$2,886.06 at the end of January when these charges were included).
4. Tuesday classes are operating at a loss of \$3,885 through 2/28/2026. Special dances are operating at a loss of \$368 through 2/28/2026.
5. We purchased square dancer insurance from USDA at a cost of \$75.00 for the 10 Mainstream class members listed below to cover them through 2026. As you may recall, the USDA new dancer insurance only covers students for 2 dances in addition to classes. Since our Mainstream class members have been invited to attend multiple dances, we needed to purchase insurance for them prior to graduation in May. We reviewed class attendance lists and sought confirmation from our Mainstream/Plus reps when determining the list of students to insure.

Amanda B

Bernadene W

Denise M

Elissa V

Emma C

Erin M

Louis L

Mary B

Shawn K

Ted X

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Konecko

Katherine Cheetham

Co-Treasurers

Independence Squares Fly-In Committee Report March 17, 2026

Numbers from the 2026 Fly-In, held last weekend, have not been finalized. A report will be sent to the board once this is completed.

The Fly-In committee met on March 6, 2026, and makes recommendations to the board as noted below.

2027 Fly-In (April 2-4, 2027)

The Fly-In committee recommends that the board approve a proposal to amend our 2027 contract with the Sheraton to add the following (Note: The hotel has already agreed to these terms in principle and is just waiting for board approval to send an addendum for signatures):

- Bar terms to match those stated in our 2026 contract, as follows:
 - \$1,000 beverage sales minimum, cumulative over Friday and Saturday nights. Our actual total at the 2026 Fly-In was \$1677.00)
 - All sales at the bar from 10:30PM to 1:30AM to be credited towards the sales minimum
 - Two bartenders, depending on business needs
- Increase of the sleeping room block from 140 to 160 room nights. This would obligate Independence Squares to increase its guaranteed number of room nights sold from 112 to 128 (80% of the room block). The club would be responsible for the cost difference if less than 128 room nights are sold. For the 2026 Fly-In, we sold 148 room nights at the Sheraton. We also sold 18 room nights at our overflow hotel.

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

Ron has negotiated terms with the Sheraton for our 2028 Fly-In, as follows, and the committee hereby asks for the board's permission to secure these terms:

- Ballroom rental cost (University Ballrooms and Princeton Ballrooms) of \$7880.04 (inclusive of service fee and sales tax).
 - Note: Our 2026 rate was \$7598.23, and our 2027 rate is \$7746.48. The first rate quoted for 2028 was \$8013.60 and was negotiated downward.
- Sleeping room rate of \$145.00, plus tax.
 - Note: Our 2026 rate was \$139.00, and our 2027 rate is \$142.00. The first rate quoted for 2028 was \$149.00 and was negotiated downward.
- Attrition rate of 80%. This is the percentage of our room block that we are obligated to sell and matches the terms that we've always had at the Sheraton.
- Comp rooms: One for every 30 room nights sold. We've always had terms of 1 for every 20 sold. The original proposal from the hotel for 2028 was 1 for every 40. They are unwilling to negotiate any lower on this, saying that the industry standard is 1 for 50.
- Bar terms to match those of 2026, as listed above under the section titled "2027 Fly-In (April 2-4, 2027).

2026 Fly-In credit from the Sheraton

Due to the loss of the Princeton Rooms at our 2026 Fly-In, the Sheraton has issued a refund of \$1588.03. For the time being, the hotel has credited that figure to our 2027 Fly-In account. The Fly-In committee asks the board to approve the following recommendation:

Split the hotel credit of \$1588.03 in half and apply it to the 2027 and 2028 Fly-In's.

Rationale: Our 2026 Fly-In does not need this credit in order to be financially successful. The costs of our 2027 and 2028 Fly-In's are higher due to increased hotel costs, the cost of having hired a 4th caller, and the less favorable comp room rate (for 2028). Applying this credit equally to the 2027 and 2028 events will help to cover those increased costs. The committee recommended that it be noted in the financial records that these credits were generated at the 2026 event so that future Fly-In chairs and future club Treasurers are clear in understanding this unusual event. Ron assured the committee that if approved, he would work with the hotel to apply these credits appropriately and will work with the club's Treasurers to get these credits applied appropriately within the club's financial software.

Respectfully submitted
Ron, for the Fly-In Committee