



## El Camino Reelers Board Meeting Minutes

Saturday, May 20, 2023, 11:00 AM PDT

Remote meeting via Zoom 465 455 8223

*Attended: Annette, Ed, Michael G, Robin, Jeff, Kurt, Michael L, Oliver.*

### Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes from the 04/23/2023 meeting were approved.

### Activities since last meeting

- March 25 Spring Dance with Kent Ritucci.
- **Picnic** May 13 with Kurt calling and introducing Jeff Alder.
- **Pizza Night** April 18 was a success.

### Covid Policies

- Masks optional as of February
- We will no longer require vaccinations, coming in line with most other organizations.
- Current cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are all **low**. [Sewer viral load trend](#) is **low (40%-59%)** in north county.
- **Re-evaluate at each board meeting - keep as is.**

### Classes / Open House

- **Need to schedule next Open House or SSD Class(es), as well as SSD-to-Plus class, and start advertising. See Recruiting below.**
- **Big discussion** about whether we want to recruit 0-level dancers at all, given recent experiences. Do we want to stick with **blast classes**, which seem to over-tax students, or maybe a SSD-to-Plus class, or Advanced class?
- If we **stop taking new students**, then we do not need to recruit.
- What are we going to do with the recruitment opportunities we have? – Decided to **go ahead** with pursuing San Mateo Pride and SM Library opportunities and see how that goes. See below.
- **Might do a Board retreat in the near future for the bigger questions facing the Club. After convention and this recruiting cycle. Should get some outside person as facilitator.**
- \$125 per new student, \$100 for repeaters.
- Class fee includes all review club nights.
- If less than 3 months left in membership year (i.e. graduation is after June 30), Students get the following year free, otherwise the rest of the current year.
- Class members will get badges at graduation.

### Recruiting

- Chance of having intros in June at **San Mateo County Public Libraries**.
  - **Need a few time slots to see if callers are available.**
  - **Need enough space, bigger is better.**
  - **Callers availability: Michael not available weekdays, Kurt some. Angel availability is also an issue.**
  - **Oliver will contact Sam Trinkaus this weekend, call him early next week. Concentrate on weeks of 6/12 and 6/19, south county locations.**
- **Fun Night scheduled – June 27**
- **Volunteered** to do promotions for Fun Night Open House:
  - **Ed at booth San Mateo Pride**
  - **Annette at SM Pride Center**
  - **Oliver to do PA Online, Stanford Queer Student Union, flyers at Stanford and on California Ave**
  - **Robin to check with San Mateo paper ad rates, maybe they have a Pride issue, and into promoting Google search.**
- Things that worked, and those that didn't:

- Nextdoor and Palo Alto weekly, and word of mouth had people show up at least at intro nights (Red).
- One group showed up after seeing the flyers on California Avenue (Red).
- Several people showed up from Meetup (Orange).
- Los Altos had success with Palo Alto Daily Post. They offered an ad package for \$850.
- Flyers were posted on California Ave and around Stanford
- Reached out to Stanford Queer Student Resources who promised to spread the word. No results
- What did we not do (enough) of, if any? **Paid ad in paper? Distribute flyer in the area at University Ave, Castro St (Mtn Vw)**
- **Tam Twirlers have put out banners next to Little League and other banners (contact: Ann Shores)**
- **Yard signs to put out in front of home.**

## Quarterly Dances

- Ken Ritucci called on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Over **60%** were Advanced dancers, **29%** Plus. 66 in **attendance** for a \$39 net result. More than half the attendants listed another club as their primary.
- Mike Kellogg confirmed as caller for May 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - **Ed will call for volunteers and confirm with Kim and Bennet to host Mike. There's wheresthedance.com, but was not successful in promoting. Michael L will update (Ed will send login credentials) if needed. Ed also put it on Facebook group of square dance flyers.**
  - **Publicize in Google group sd-bayarea (Ed)**
- Darren Galina to call Aug 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Andy Alameo confirmed to call the Halloween Dance Oct 28<sup>th</sup>.
- We have a sign / poster board about what level will be called with the next tip.

## Club Nights

- In the appendix are some observations by Robin with regards to recruiting, member satisfaction, and floor time of various-level dancers.
- We've spent some time on why B&Bs is more successful, and how they differ, but **no direct action items were taken**
- Here are some ideas/notes we came up with in past meetings:
  - **Are there other clubs who dance at SSD through A2?** Not in the local space. Multi-level dancing is more common in gay clubs than straight ones. Martinez swingers is one straight club who is juggling multi-level dancing like us; they have gone back to 2 nights. Redwood Rainbows have many levels, but also dance on several nights (they own the hall) and have a large membership.
  - **We can do a better job planning out our classes. If we plan more in advance, we can do more outreach.**
  - We lost contacts with LGBT groups at companies, where we got members in the past. It's hard to advertise into groups that you are not part of.
  - We haven't offered an SSD-to-Plus class, but students who were ready found other ways of "upgrading". **A possible goal to have might be a Plus class that offers SSD—to-Plus class that draws from the SSD community. Would still have several level to contend with – Class level, Plus, Adv.** Nearby clubs have either different evenings for different levels, or a split night. Getting people in the door, getting them excited, and up to SSD is already a challenge.
  - **If we were to have two different nights, we may or may not have enough dancers to not go broke.** Right now, it's \$175 per night (hall & caller). Would need at least 35 dancers combined (2+ squares per) to break even. We have enough in the bank to sustain some losses, however, if we get fewer than a couple of squares+, we're going to have problems with interest as well as with finances.

- Of our 63 members, 10 live out of the area, 5 are primarily members of other clubs, some can't drive at night, others still don't want to socialize because of callers, and a few are dancing on challenge levels who don't come to any Plus or below calls. **Ed will follow up with a few dancers (like Mary Intersimon or Esmeralda). And/or a survey asking "what do you like about the current ECR experience / what do you not like / how often have you been coming / what would make you come more often..."**
- **We talked about a survey or e-mail to ask members why they no longer attend Club Night. Could be to all, or just those who haven't returned post-pandemic**
- Kurt has scheduled club night callers through end of June.
- Adjusted schedule to include more Plus, like SSD-SSD-Plus, SSD-SSD-Plus for the first hour and a half, then alternating Advanced-Plus for the last hour. End on a Plus tip. This will result in 4 SSD, 4 Plus, and 2 A2 tips for the night.
- The hope is that with successful recruiting we will have enough attendance to have two club nights again, one (mostly) SSD, one Plus and Advanced.

## Venues

- Club nights and quarterly dances continue at St Andrew's. **In light of their new pricing structure, we need to figure out if we need (an)other venue(s) for class nights, quarterly dances, etc.** Also, the covered **patio is off limits.** **New rates go into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>.**
  - **Ed to ask St Andrews for a long-term-customer and no-janitor discount.**
- PACCC/Ventura Community Center is \$50/hour, high stage with power, possible kitchen access. Good for smaller daytime sessions.
- Beaus and Bows get the school in **South SJ for \$38** (John Muir) for the Ice Cream Fling, but their publicized rate is \$400.
- Robin signed up for an account on **Facilistron** (?).
- **Robin will ask churches around Palo Alto for their going rate.**
- Billy de Frank has started to have some in-person events again. Annette has made direct contact with Gabrielle; they are interested in having us again, **need to decide if we want to pick up quarterly Fun Nights there (or some other events)**

## Community Events

- **San Mateo Pride** in the Park (June 10). Got a booth, and Rich Reel as caller for demo square 2:40-3:00 (Kurt as backup)
  - **Will promote the June 27 Fun Night there.**

## Membership

- Seems like Eric has handed out Anniversary Bars at Club Nights as he saw people. **Do we want to do this a little more formally, like once a year at, say, the Halloween Dance? Or at convention (after club foto)? Or...?**

## Board / General Meeting

### Financials

- Tuesday Club Nights: Still losing money weekly, but not unsustainably, at least until the new pricing comes into effect.
- Ed is adding new members to insurance as they renew

## Other dancing

### Saturday afternoons

- Should do more weekend afternoon events.
- **Should they become regular, and if so, how frequent?**

- They could morph into Workshops?

#### Picnics

- Had it **May 13<sup>th</sup>** .
- **Next one will be scheduled at our June meeting**

#### Fun Nights

- We said “Not before current class is over”. **It is, so...?**
- Open House format seems to be more successful than Fun Nights in terms of getting new interested people to show up.
- Note: We had previously (before dancing resumed post-COVID) decided, that the monthly Fun Nights held at St. Andrews (twice a quarter) would move to Tuesday nights from 7:15 PM to 9:00 PM, with full level Plus dancing from 9:00 PM to 9:30 PM. We would advertise the night as starting at 7:00 PM to get people there on time to start dancing by 7:15 PM.

#### Potluck Nights

- After our **Pizza Night**, looks like people are comfortable to have **shared food**.
- **We will schedule potlucks (without prior survey), likely on a regular club night, starting in July**
- **Can also invite to informal lunch before or dinner after June 11.**

#### Quarterly Workshops

- **Pre-convention workshop** on Sunday, June 11 afternoon 1:30-4:30. Decided to have it at Ventura Community Center. **Agreement** has been **signed** by Oliver. Caller Michael Levy
- Following notes are from way back:
  - We want to hold more quarterly workshops. We’d pay \$200 or half the door. Topics we’d like to cover: Gender Swap/APD workshop, for 4 hours.
  - Once we have workshops again someone needs to check with Rob to see how long he thinks a workshop should take, and if he’s available for a date yet to be determined. If Rob’s not available, we should ask the same question of Eric Henerlau.
  - Convention Brush-Up for Plus (thars, teacup chain, other rarely-used calls) This might also be handled via the 6 weeks of club nights prior to Convention, as long as we announce the topic of each club night in advance? In the last half-hour of Adv-Class-Plus format?
  - APD/DBD Plus. (Again.)
  - Square recovery techniques. (Keep the square dancing, and also know how to reset from lines or waves. Ideally, swap people around to get them into the right place before the end of the sequence.)

#### Social Activities

- None planned at this time
- **Robin** has looked at taking up going to the Mountain View theater again. Their free tickets for non-profits was stopped during Covid, and they do not seem to have any intentions of taking that up again. We could still go. Weekday tickets are \$30, so an evening with dinner would be \$50-\$60. In the Board’s opinion, \$30 for an event / \$50-\$60 with dinner would be upper limit for events. **We’ll put our planned social activities on our ECR club calendar. Robin will try and organize something.**
- **We’ll ask at GM, and also put out a survey afterwards about what people are interested in other than theater (which several already expressed interest) – Did we do a survey?**

#### Online Presence

##### Meetup

- Meetup currently costs \$24.99/mo. We will keep MeetUp and have changed to the 6-month model. Just paid another \$100. **Is this something we want to keep up? How active are we on Meetup?** If we decide to

discontinue, we'll need to cancel it before next renewal in April. Need to let Oaktown 8's know, since they share the account.

- Robin has tried to generate more interest on Meetup.
- We advertised our Open House, and got several people who showed up.

#### Zoom

- Zoom renewal is coming up in May. Will let it **auto-renew**.
- Board meetings are zoomed.

#### Facebook

- We still have a presence. Michael posts events

#### Other

- We decided we would **not** need **posting on Twitter**.
- Robin will look into TikTok.

#### Website

- Up to date

#### **Next Board Meeting:**

- **Friday, June 9, 2023, at 6:30 pm PST.** Location: Zoom
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## Appendix (Robins Observations):

- 1. Low attendance at club nights  
*On Wed nights B&B has 6 squares, RJ has at least 4, and BS has at least 2. Yet on Tuesday night when no other club dances, we struggle to get 2 squares.*
- 2. Small percentage (20-25%) of ECR members actually attend club nights  
*We have 60+ members but struggle to get 16 on club nights.*
- 3. Small class sizes compared to nearby clubs  
*B&B has 25 in their class, RJ as about the same number, Quads has at least 8 (including several from our SSD class). We struggled to have 5.*
- 4. Plus/Adv dancers leaving for other clubs  
*Multiple plus/adv dancers have stopped coming on Tuesday nights because of our extended (1 year) SSD focus.*
- 5. ECR members stop coming and no one investigates  
*One odd aspect I have noticed over the 5 years I have been with ECR is that members suddenly stop coming to club nights and no one seems to comment or investigates what happened or why they stopped coming.*
- 6. Skill set of Plus/advanced members not improving  
*We have neglected helping our plus and advanced dancers improve their skills. One ECR member told me they stopped going to adv squares because their advanced skills were not good enough and there was no way to improve them. In our SSD focus we have neglected our current members.*
- 7. Little sense of community  
*ECR seems to operate as a “shared activity” group rather than community. We don’t acknowledge significant events in members lives, we don’t check up on them if they don’t show up, we don’t provide opportunities to get to know one another with outside activities. ECR membership likewise has no demands or expectation.*
- The Local Square Dance Environment  
*There are a number of local square dance clubs so that one can dance multiple times per week:*
  - ☑ *Sunday: Star8 (adv), Quads (APD plus, adv, C-level)*
  - ☑ *Monday: Outlaws (adv)*
  - ☑ *Tuesday – ECR (SSD-A2)*
  - ☑ *Wed: Belle Swingers (adv), B&B (Plus), RJ(Plus)*
  - ☑ *Thursday: Interlocked (C-level), Lucky Steppers (Plus)*
  - ☑ *Friday: katydids (plus but dying)**Nearby clubs:*  
*B&B has 6 squares, round dancing, 25 in latest Plus class, more than 30 in round dance class*  
*Quads has 8 in their Plus class (including some of our recent SSD graduates). and has their “APD” niche*  
*BS has 2-3 squares*
- *We have no competition Tuesday nights yet can only get two squares.*