



El Camino Reelers Board Meeting Minutes

Saturday, May 04, 2024, 11:30 AM PDT

Remote meeting via Zoom 465 455 8223

Attended: Ed, Jeff, Michael G, Pete, Rob, Kurt, Oliver.

Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes from the 03/11/2024 meeting **were** approved.

Activities since last meeting

- Rob determined as sixth board member by coin toss.
- Open House 4/5.
- Picnic 4/27 with new dancer tips.

Covid Policies

- **Policy will align based on County recommendations.** [Sewer viral load trend](#)
- Ed updated website.
- Rob checked on how CDC recommendations differ from County. Ed put the link on the web site.

Classes

- SSD-to-Plus class started January 9th, graduation May 21, in time to know Plus by convention.
- 30 minutes of Advanced, 90 minutes of class with a Plus star tip in the middle, 07:00-09:00
- Class fees: \$200 per new student. Or 2 payments of \$100
- 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's membership free, otherwise the rest of the current year.
- Class members will get badges at graduation, if they don't have them, yet.
- Next **SSD Class will be 15 weeks** 2 hours each.
- Lucky Steppers will have a summer class in Sunnyvale.
- Looking at **SSD Class start in September**, with a possible Plus class early 2025. B, with an added 30 minutes. 30 hour club-level dancing, 2 hours class with star tip. **September 10th start, with Aug 27 Open House.**

Recruiting, Outreach / Open House

- Palo Alto Weekly story **published**:
 - Karla Kane cornerlaughers@gmail.com reporter, editor Heather Zimmerman hzimmerman@embarcaderomediagroup.com , photographer Magali "Maggie" Gauthier..
- Open House 4/5 7-9pm, was a success. Need to follow up with them. Oliver sent Thank You e-mail. Ed to add them to Google group. Got feedback from one attendee who felt **"boy/girl" was outdated.**
- Picnic 4/27: Some new dancers.
- **May 31st Open House – need caller (Michael to ask Michael L).** Kurt will call at a state-wide event a couple of weeks before, where **he can hand out flyers.**
- **June 23rd Picnic** inviting new dancers. **Need caller. Michel to check with Rich.**
- Future events should be put on the **WheresTheDance.com** and **scvsda.org** calendars ASAP, along with the class. **Michael Levy**
- Open Houses and class were advertised in Palo Alto Online and online calendars, flyers in Palo Alto ~~and Stanford~~, on scvsda.org , sd-bayarea Google Group, local clubs, ...?
- In a previous meeting Michael L put forward the idea of calling all members (every board member a share) to ask them what they would want, very open, without preconceived ideas. Ed divided up the roster so that each board member can call about 6 members. **Most members are yet to be contacted.**
- **See also Community Events below.**

- Notes from Recruiting and Retention meeting at IAGSDC Ottawa, and from previous discussions, in **Appendix B**

Club Nights

- Format for Plus class: 30 minutes of Advanced, 90 minutes of class with a Plus star tip in the middle, 07:00-09:00.
- Once Class has finished May 21, format will be alternating A and Plus. 07:00-09:00, Start with Plus. Option to go to 09:30 in the future.
- 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. Though we have enough cash on hand to be able to afford carrying some losses for some time
- Kurt has scheduled club night callers through **the end of June**.
- 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.

Quarterly Dances

- Eric Henerlau May 18, 2024
- Kris Jensen will be calling August 3rd.
- Vic Ceder October 26, 2024 (Halloween)
- There's been some complaints about booking the **same caller** as other clubs' dances around the same dates.

Other dancing

Weekend afternoons:

- Next T-Dance in the fall.
- Small attendance. Do we need them if we have picnics? Would be Sunday.
- Right now we'll have them **about once a quarter**– see 'Venues' below.
- Would be better to have an Open House close to Palo Alto on a weekend afternoon, maybe in August before the class. Need to advertise. Possibly in Jewish Center next to St. Andrews. Michel L to reach out to them.

Picnics

- April 27th, Hoover Park. Invited Open-House attendees.
- June 23rd, Hoover Park. 1:30 picnic, dancing 2-4. **Invite Open-House attendees, new dancers. Advertise.**

Fun Nights

- **On Hold.** 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

- Will do potluck 30 mins, then 1 hour SSD/Plus, then 1 hour Plus/Advanced, ending in Advanced (S, P, S, P, A, P, A, A). 7:00-9:30. Last one was March 15th. Ed needs help setting those up. Ed will make sure they are added to SCVSDA calendar.
- After March 15, we will have **Picnics** in lieu of potlucks.

Quarterly Workshops

- For notes from way back see Appendix C

Venues

- **Billy de Frank:** It's available for the old rate of 2 hours for \$100. For now, we'll do **weekend Tea Dances** about once a quarter.
- Club nights and quarterly dances continue at St Andrew's.
- Alternate venues see **Appendix D.**

Community Events

- Mountain View Pride Event has been postponed to June:
 - Location: City of Mountain View, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View, CA 94040
Expected audience size: 2,500+
Performance duration: 20 minutes
 - Follow-up: They currently have **no Pride activities planned.**
- **San Mateo County Fair** June 1-9. Will be individuals supporting Beaus and Bows if they are going. Will announce it in May club nights. We will **not participate** as a club.
- **San Mateo Pride in the Park** June 8. **Pete** is taking charge of SM Pride in the Park. Got approvals for **booth and parade**. Fees waived. **Rich to call** a demo square. Pete will put together **sign-up sheets** for parade, booths, and stage.
- **San Mateo Libraries.** No system-wide activities planned, might have interest at individual libraries. Only Pacifica has expressed interest so far.
- **Fremont Saturday** June 15. 10 am – 2 pm. . They feature "live performances", so maybe we could also get a demo square. We would be closest LGBTQI+ Square Dance Club. Possibility to reach a new audience? **Oliver will get back to them.**
- **Belmont Pride** expressed an interest in having us, but it's a weekday during the day. **Oliver is in contact.** Expected attendance around 20, so probably not worth it

Membership

- Eric will continue to hand out Anniversary Bars at Club Nights as he sees people.
- Do we want to re-join SCVSDA? What are the benefits and obligations to us? Joe Dehn got action item to put out a doc to explain that. **Kurt will follow up. We'll wait for JD's document.** Beaus and Bows might pull out.

Financials

- Tuesday Club Nights: Still losing money weekly, but year over year coming out ahead with the help of membership dues and donations.
- Could get 501©3 status through USDA. **Michael L to check** other ways with IAGSDC. **People can donate to All Join Hands and earmark the donation for a specific club. Should let people know about that,** possibly with reminders a couple of times a year. **Rob to draft** some information about it to make available to members on the web site. **Ed to give** him what he has on that.
- There is a group forming for club treasurers of IAGSDC clubs. **Ed?**

Caller Pay:

- Are we still paying our callers adequately? We pay \$30/hour, but when Mike and James call, they only get \$25/hr. each. Looks like Rocking Jokers pay slightly more (\$33-35), Western Stars less (\$20). Jeff suggested we think about a raise. **We will increase pay to \$35/hour going forward.** Unanimously approved.

Board / General Meeting

- Coin toss decided for Rob as final member of the Board.
- Jeff has taken on merchandising.
- Ed to point members to where to get rainbow suspenders.

- Instead of reinventing or re-investigating how to do things, we should have a collection of info somewhere, so when people leave the board, their experience is not lost. Unfortunately, there is no File section in Google groups. E.g. how do I set up a merchandise order, who do I contact for participating in a Pride event, how do I organize a dance, ...?
- **Ed will** look for existing documents on our Google Drive, and **inform Board**.
- **Everyone should document their tasks** if there's no document, yet.
- **Michael to check** with IAGSDC's R&R team about metrics of clubs re covid recovery numbers.
- Planning a **Board retreat** soon for the bigger questions facing the Club. **Should get some outside person as facilitator**.
 - **Board members to send Michael G their availability in April / May / June.**
 - Topics: Who are we, who do we want to serve, how can we be more personable, recruiting and retention.
 - **Michael L will help Michael G to find a facilitator.**
 - Board exclusive.
 - How does the club see itself, also as part of the greater square dance community?
 - **Will need date and location,**
 - In **Appendix A** are some observations by Robin with regards to recruiting, member satisfaction, and floor time of various-level dancers.

Social Activities

- None planned at this time.
- **Looking for someone to spearhead this effort.**
- 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.
- We might put out a survey about what people are interested in other than theater (which several already expressed interest)

Online Presence

Meetup

- Ed cancelled MeetUp and it is now solely used by Oaktown 8's. We had **2 students** in the Yellow class who came through Meetup.
- We advertised our Open House and got several people who showed up.
- Account is now Oaktown 8's going to Kurt's account.

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.
- Michael to talk to Thom.

Other

- We decided we would **not need posting on X (Twitter)**.

Website

- Up to date

Next Board Meeting:

- **Sunday, June 9 1:30pam PDT.** Location: Zoom
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Appendix A - 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.

Appendix B - Notes from Recruiting and Retention:

- Treasurer meetings – Ed?
- Before pandemic several clubs with more than 100, now biggest are 80 members
- Western Stars and Oaktown 8s among clubs that have grown
- Ottawa Date Squares have grown, too, by 100%. Had both at Pride, submitted to radio station, ads, active Facebook page. Grew from 12 to 24 to 40, lots of 20 and 30 somethings. Best recruitment was Pride.
- Joel Smith is new liaison for R&R
- New 501c3 effort for new clubs
- Boots in squares mention that pride was not successful for them

- Ottawa saw a big change after getting involved with Pride, have a Pride introductory dance where they hand out business cards with Open House Info. They are in the Pride program, pay off the entire Pride
- Chesapeake squares had success with Pride and cards as well. One side has club info, other dates for Open House. Really active at booths, grabbing people. Hande out 5000 cards
- Emphasize social and fun, not emphasizing square dancing, cause that's what grandpa did. Even business cards emphasize SOCIAL.
- Most clubs are becoming more straight, sometimes inviting gay dancers.
- Triangle squares had 2 squares at first Intro, only 1 came back at second. Flyers in village, weird of both, follow up before coats start. Follow up each year.
- Regina (Canada) changed location for Open House and full class and got two new squares. Going to get at least half to come to club nights.
- Puddle town squares is really struggling since pandemic. Got one square for a dance, most straight. Even the rep at the meeting was straight. Went from 90+ to 9 because of loss of Anne Übelacker and Gary Monday.
- Thom is teaching out to previous dancers (we miss you) offering refresher classes, potluck, picnic
- IAGSDC can offer surveys to do.
- Also have fun development funds we can apply for to try out different things. This could be useful for as in paper or radio.
- ? Had two into nights 1 week apart and start August class
- Thom can tell how to do Facebook marketing. Should have group, not only page. Thom can also help with preventing hijack of page
- Hotlanta: word of mouth is still best way.
- Die what you can to keep your members
- Overall down about 13%
- Lorenzo: for retention other activities like bowling, trips to zoo, etc.
- Liaison@iagsdc.org
- (from our discussion, previously under "Club Nights")
 - 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 in 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.
- 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.

Appendix C – Notes on Workshops:

- 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.)

Appendix D – Alternate Venues

- **Annette** has compiled a list of venues for use as locations for second club nights, workshops, dances, Tuesday club night. She has reached out to churches in the vicinity, all of which have long wait lists. Might be possible for one-time events, but a long shot. Venues are not any less expensive than St. Andrew's, might be useful as backup
- PACCC/Ventura Community Center is \$50/hour, high stage with power, possible kitchen access. Good for smaller daytime sessions. Lacks charm. Still have our deposit. Ed to follow up to cut a check.
- 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 Facilitron (?). Nothing available so far
- Ed will ask churches around Palo Alto for their going rate.
- Annette connected with SM Pride Center, they sent e-mail list of venues, some are free. They are interested in "take-aways (1 flyer and 20 cards) to promote events.
- Jeff is looking at Garden House in Los Altos and Grant Park, but the latter is small. Maple Room is a dance hall, but limited to 27 people, and no chairs, no table.
- Kurt also looked at RWC and Foster City and saw some with reasonable rates. Some places close to El Camino and 84. Community Activities Building close to Red Morton Community Center. A 32x36 room (4 squares) is \$30/hour. Non-profit rates might require 501©3 status (we are 501©7). Foster City CC has Starboard Room 850 sq ft (might fit 4 squares snugly; have to see layout) on vinyl floor. \$36.40/hour for non-profit. In RWC you get 2 free nights a month (?).
- While asking around, Annette frequently encountered the same Questions we will need answered to go forward:
 - 1. What is the geographical limit we want to look at- e.g. a 10, 15 mile circumference surrounding St Andrew's? Are there any locations that we just don't pursue?
 - 2. Am I asking about 1x event space and/or permanent weekly space for the club?
 - 3. What number of participants do we say might attend a dance event of ours? That is always a question.
 - 4. How do we want to deal with the 'you cannot accept money on site' issue? This is described to me as a legal issue with any nonprofit or government location we pursue- you cannot be taking in money on the premises.
 - 5. What is the range for room square footage for a dance? A class? A club night?
 - 6. What 'other' items do we need in a rental space-we need a definitive list. Tables, chairs, electrical outlet etc.