



El Camino Reelers Board Meeting Minutes

Sunday, August 20, 2023, 11:00 AM PDT

Remote meeting via Zoom 465 455 8223

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

Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes from the 07/07/2023 meeting were approved.

Activities since last meeting

- Open House July 25
- Darren Galina Dance Aug 5
- Yellow Class started Aug 8
- Picnic Aug 19

Covid Policies

- Masks optional as of February.
- Continuing current policy
- 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**
- **Re-evaluate at each board meeting.**

Classes

- **Ed to nudge the two students who haven't paid, yet.** 7 students - 1 from SM Libraries, 2 former ECR, 2 from Meetup, 2 word of mouth, 0 from Open House. Some more students will join from Beaus and Bows.
- Should schedule SSD-to-Plus class and start advertising. See Recruiting below. We can cancel for lack of interest, if needed. With current class, it will be January before we will have a Plus class. **Let's firm up a time frame and format in September or October board meeting**
- Next **class format** is SSD Class on Tuesdays after Plus/Advance 6:30-7:30, Class 7:30-09:00, over 12 weeks.
- Planning a **Board retreat** in October for the bigger questions facing the Club. **Should get some outside person as facilitator.**
 - 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
 - **Will need date and location,**
 - **All Board members to email availability for retreat to Michael G.**
- \$125 per new student, \$100 for repeaters. **Might have to increase in light of venue fee increase, and what Oaktown charges (\$150)**
- 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 / Open House

- Intros in June at San Mateo County Public Libraries were largely a success.
- 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, ...?
- Karla Kane cornerlaughers@gmail.com from the Palo Alto Weekly would like to **write a story** about the Reelers and is looking to talk to a few people. I told her we would get back to her after this meeting.

Volunteers? Ed, Kurt Michael, Jeff, Michael, reach out to Hank and Sheri – Oliver to get back to her suggesting starting with a group Zoom meeting.

- Notes from Recruiting and Retention meeting at IAGSDC Ottawa in **Appendix B**
- (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.
- Any interest in reaching out to allcove (P.A. Youth Services)? We could exchange flyers...? **Oliver will see if there is a potential of exchanging flyers or other cross-promotion with allcove.org Palo Alto.**
 - 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.

Quarterly Dances

- August dance netted \$200+. Thanks, Darren and Robin!
- Andy Alameo confirmed to call the Halloween Dance Oct 28th.

Club Nights

- **Jeff has volunteered to sponsor a second club night for Plus and Advanced for 8 weeks** to see how this would be accepted by our membership. **There should be funds available through All Join Hands’ development fund.** Has already inquired at several possible locations. **Garden House at Shoup Park at \$60/hour?**
- We will continue to **charge** members for club night, even though part of it is for angeling because they get dancing, we have fixed and now increased expenses, and we already lose money each week. Also point out that we’re looking at ways to give members more floor time. **Michael G to communicate** to members.
- In Appendix A 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.

- **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 has followed up with a few dancers (like Mary Intersimon or Esmeralda). **Ed will get a card for Esmeralda to be signed** at club night
- **Michael G: 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..."**
- Kurt has scheduled club night callers through end of September
- 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.
- We will try a second club night (see above)

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 1st.**
- St Andrew's has declined to offer us a 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 **Facilitron** (?). **Nothing available so far**
- **Ed 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)** Ed talked to Gabrielle about **September 17**. It's available for the old rate of 2 hours for \$100
- 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 (?).
- **Annette will compile a list of venues** for use as locations for second club nights, workshops, dances, Tuesday club night. **Please send all venue information you have to her.**

Community Events

- **Silicon Valley Pride** is asking for volunteers Aug 26 and 27. No news on ability to pass out flyers. **Oliver will publicize on ECRTalk**

- **Mountain View Pride Event in October (Fri, 13th) to celebrate National Coming Out Day:**
 - Here are some key details regarding the event:
 - Date:** Friday, October 13, 2023
 - Time:** 5-8 p.m.
 - Location:** City of Mountain View, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View, CA 94040
 - Expected audience size: 2,500+
 - Performance duration: 20 minutes
 - Are we interested? YES – Oliver to follow up

Membership

- Seems like Eric has handed out Anniversary Bars at Club Nights as he saw people.

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.
- Could get 501©3 status through USDA. **Michael L to check** other ways with IAGSDC.
- There is a group forming for club treasurers of IAGSDC clubs.

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

- **October 21st** - picnic 1:30-2, dancing 2-4. Hoover Park (callers: bring paperweights and -clips). **Michael G to see who's available to call.**

Fun Nights

- 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

- Next potluck **August 29**, with ½ hour club-level dancing, ½ hour potluck, class after that. **Ed to publicize.**

Quarterly Workshops

- Pre-convention workshop on Sunday, June 11 had 1+ squares
- **Sunday September 17 1:30-4:30**, Billy de Frank. Theme: **Tea Dance** Plus and A2. Kurt will be the caller.
- 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 put out a survey about what people are interested in other than theater (which several already expressed interest) – Michael G to ask, combine with workshop**

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. We had **2 students** in the Yellow class who came through Meetup.
- We're **keeping it** for the moment (July meeting)
- 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
- Michael to talk to Thom

Other

- We decided we would **not** need **posting on Twitter**.
- Robin will look into TikTok. Need survey to see if people have issues with having dancing clips

Website

- Up to date

Next Board Meeting:

- **Saturday, September 9th 11:00 am PDT**. Location: Zoom

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 investigate 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