



## El Camino Reelers Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 7, 2023, 12:00 PM PDT

Meet at host hotel , Saskatchewan room

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

### Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes from the 06/09/2023 meeting were approved.

### Activities since last meeting

- Three intro evenings at San Mateo County Libraries
- Open House June 27

### 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**
- **Re-evaluate at each board meeting.**

### Classes / Open House

- **Should schedule SSD-to-Plus class, and start advertising. See Recruiting below. We can cancel for lack of interest, if needed.**
- Will schedule another **Fun Night for July 25<sup>th</sup>**.
- **Already have one interest (Catherine Osborn).** Was invited to our Open House (Ed)
- One student has paid already (from Belmont intro)
- Next **class format** will be SSD Class on Tuesdays after Plus/Advance 6:30-7:30, Class 7:30-09:00, over 12 weeks. **Start August 8<sup>th</sup>**. Need people signing up, if not enough, no class.
- 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.
- **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.**
  - **Topics: Who are we, who do we want to serve, how can we be more personable,**
  - **Michael L will help Michael G to find a facilitator.**
  - **Board exclusive**
  - **Will need date and location**
- \$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

- Intros in June at **San Mateo County Public Libraries** were largely a success.
- **June 25 Fun Night feedback**
- **Open House / Fun Night** scheduled July 25
- **Needs to be put on the WheresTheDance.com and scvsda.org calendars ASAP, along with the class. Michael Levy**
- **Volunteered** to do promotions for Fun Night Open House:
  - Ed organized a booth and demo square at San Mateo Pride In the Park – no sign-in sheets for potential interest to follow up, but passed out flyers

- [Annette](#) at SM Pride Center
- [Oliver](#) did PA Online, Stanford Queer Student Union, flyers at Stanford and on California Ave. Had a couple of people show up who saw the **Stanford flyers**
- [Robin](#) to check with San Mateo paper ad rates, maybe they have a Pride issue, and into promoting Google search.
- Publicize in Google group sd-bayarea
- Robin to post on some Whole Foods and Pinera
- Oliver to follow up with Brian fomr SMC libs
- **Need to follow up with attendees of**
  - Belmont – done - Oliver
  - [San Carlos](#) - Oliver
  - Portola Valley – done - Ed
  - [Fun Night Open House](#)
- Notes from Recruiting and Retention meeting at IAGSDC Ottawa:
  - Treasurer meetings
  - Before pandemic several clubs with more than 100, now biggest are 80
  - 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
  - New 501c3 effort for new clubs
  - Boots in squares mention that pride was not successful für 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. Doing outreach with San Mateo County Libraries, will promote Fun Nights and class there.
  - Any interest in reaching out to alcove (P.A. Youth Services)? We could exchange flyers...? Oliver to contact.
  - 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.
- Oliver will see if there is a potential of exchanging flyers or other cross-promotion with allcove.org Palo Alto

### Quarterly Dances

- Darren Galina to call Aug 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Andy Alameo confirmed to call the Halloween Dance Oct 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Club Nights

- **July 11 will be dark.**
- 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.
  - 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 July (?). **Will schedule July callers. Web site needs updating**
- 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>.**
  - **Robin 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 **Facilitron** (?).
- **Ed will ask churches around Palo Alto for their going rate.**
- **Oliver will follow up with Robin.**
- 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)
- **Mountain View Pride Event** in October (Fri, 13<sup>th</sup>) 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. **Do we want to do this a little more formally, like once a year?** At convention **after Club Photo** would be good
- During General Meeting in February

## 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

- **August 19<sup>th</sup>** – picnic 1:30-2, dancing 2-4.

#### Fun Nights

- Scheduled for **July 25**.
- 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

#### Quarterly Workshops

- Pre-convention workshop on Sunday, June 11 had 1+ squares
- **Sunday September 17 1:30-4:30**, Billy de Frank. **Ed will ask them for availability and cost. Robin will check on facilitron.**
- 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) – 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'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:

- **Sunday, August 20<sup>th</sup> 11:00 am PDT**. 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.*