



El Camino Reelers Board Meeting Minutes

Sunday, May 25, 2025, 11:00 AM PDT

Remote meeting via Zoom 465 455 8223

Attended: Ed, Mike, Pete, Rob, Kurt, Oliver

Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes from the 04/13/2025 meeting were approved.

Activities since last meeting

- ECR Merch ordered. Will be distributed the next two Club Nights
- Class graduation April 19. Free graduation dance filled two halls
- Open House April 29 – 16 interested new dancers showed up
- Mike joined the Board
- Spring Dance May 3rd. Good turnout, fun was had by all
- Picnic May 17. Windy

Focus for this meeting:

- **Outstanding Action Items:**
 - **Rob** will come up with a proposal on where and how to **promote** the events.
 - **Facebook** ads vs. group vs. event posts. Latter needs participation of members to respond, invite.
 - Have all posts point to **Open House** page on website
 - **Oliver** to post on **Nextdoor**.
 - **Kurt** is managing **MeetUp** posts.
 - Updated weekly Newsletter by Michael is great
 - **Rob** will follow up with Michael on Facebook posting
 - Most Open House attendees heard from Meetup and referrals from other dance clubs, and a queer book club.
 - Could do something like a **ribbon** as straight clubs do, Is a good conversation starter.
 - Jeff picked up merchandise from vendor. Schedule:
 - May 23rd – Picked up order
 - May 27 and June 3rd - distribution
 - Jun 30 – convention
 - **Jeff** to come up with a proposal for a potential update to our club uniform. Will talk to Carol and Sheri. Aim is a small group of 2 men and 2 women to discuss ideas.
 - **Rob, Pete, and Oliver** to come up with a list of activities they do for the Board / ECR
 - **Still outstanding**
 - **Oliver** will come up with some questions / discussion items / action items (?) for a postmortem of our Board Retreat
 - **Michael G** to talk to Thom about Facebook posts / group / events etc. (was originally planned for November)
- **SF Pride** June 28/29
 - **Michael** will include in weekly email after this week. Have them contact Steve
 - **Oliver** to **check** with Steve, if this is still happening. If so, **Michael** to **promote** again
- **Mountain View and San Mateo Prides:**
 - Questions / To Do::
 - **Sound setup**
 - Will there be a space / time for **audience participation**?
 - **Ed** to produce **handouts** to show dates for Open Houses and Class start.
 - Will have 1 table and 2 chairs, canopy.
 - **Ed** to send e-mail to Open House attendees.

- Event organizers have social media pages.
- Need **weights** for papers and table cloth **clips**.
- **Kurt** will bring laptop with video.
- **Convention**
 - Promote at graduation
- **Member survey** along the lines of “What does square dancing with ECR give to you?” – What not. **Oliver**
- **We** will schedule our next **Tea-Dances** (Jewish Center next door?) later. We will have picnics for weekend afternoon dance opportunities while the weather is nice

Board / Membership

- **Everyone** should document their tasks if there’s no document, yet. For **next meeting**, make a **list of your tasks**
 - **Ed** has shared his preliminary list – Thanks!
 - **Michael G** has sent out a list in email.
 - Can use a shared document on Google drive, but have had problems with access restriction. Everyone should **access the drive with their own Google account**
- **Tasks** non-Board members can take on: **Oliver to send out to ecr-talk**
 - Class coordinator
 - Checks attendance every week and follows up with students who missed the class
 - Possibly surveys students on why they’re taking our class
 - Brings issues raised by students to the attention of the Board
 - Club “Worrier”
 - Organizes monthly birthday cake for members who have had birthdays the previous 30 days
 - Checks in with a regularly attending member who has not showed up for a (couple of) club nights. If needed, organizes a Get-Well card.
 - Social organizer
 - Asks membership what activities they might be interested in
 - Organizes non-dance events for members and guests, such as movies, theater visits, dinners, bowling, etc.
 - Should be no more than around \$30 per event
 - Prospect follow-up
 - Contacts people who attend Pride and other "recruiting" events to thank them for coming by, keep them informed about not-yet-dancer events like picnics and Open Houses, and keeps them engaged until the next SSD Class
- Eric will continue to hand out Anniversary Bars at Club Nights as he sees people. 40-year dangles to be handed out at the Anniversary Dance
- **Oliver** to come up with some action items / questions for a board meeting for a post-mortem
- Remaining **off-site** items:
 - **Action Items:**
 - If an item takes too much time, **assign** to someone **for proposal** – **Oliver** (ongoing)
 - Finalize **Mission statement** “We are a Modern Western Square Dance club for LGBT+ and friends in Silicon Valley creating a safe, sober space to dance, socialize, connect, learn and have fun.” – **all**
 - Come up with **Vision statement** from Greg’s notes – **all**
 - For next off-site session:
 - **Every member of the board** to come up with at least two questions / issues they think are the most important / pressing.

- In **Appendix A** are some observations by Robin with regards to recruiting, member satisfaction, and floor time of various-level dancers.

Classes

- Plus Class accounting? Each club made \$776
- Plus Blast Class:
 - **Class fee** will be \$125, but students will have to pay for Club Night
 - Tip format of Plus class review period club nights. 6:45 A/P, Class, A, C, S, C, S, C, P/A –End by 9:00 pm
- SSD Class fees: \$150 per new student.
- SSD Class fee includes all review club nights.
- If less than 3 months left in membership year (i.e. SSD 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.
- Need to make sure to **connect to new dancers**. Also need to understand **why** they are coming to the class.
- Could have a **buddy system** to connect one angel to one student, or at least one **class coordinator**. Let's have an eye out for the first few weeks, and reconnect next meeting to see if and how we are going to implement this.
- **New SSD dance nights** 2nd and 4th Fridays in Sunnyvale

Recruiting, Outreach / Open House

- Will have **several Pride events** to attract new interest.
 - Pete is contact for **Mountain View** and **San Mateo Pride** events – see below
- **Recruiting possibility** at Avenidas Senior Center (has anyone Allen French's e-mail?) **Oliver/Ron**
- Got E-Mail from **Destination Palo Alto**, which could be a good way to promote Open Houses etc. **Oliver/Ron**
- 200-300 wristbands with website printed for \$25-\$165. Flags can't be customized. Michael L has sent contact info from the pig-picking wrist bands to Pete, who will order some appropriate ones for ECR.
- Cost estimate for bus cards 500 cards for \$65+tax. Ed ordered, are available for Pride and other events
- Future events should be put on the **WheresTheDance.com** and **scvsda.org** calendars ASAP, along with the class. **Michael Levy**
- Advertise Open Houses and class in Palo Alto Online and online calendars, flyers in Palo Alto and Stanford, on scvsda.org , sd-bayarea Google Group, local clubs, ...?
- **Community radio ad?** – **Michael L., Jeff (podcasts)** Ed did one community ad
- 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.**
- Palo Alto Weekly contacts:
 - Karla Kane cornerlaughers@gmail.com reporter, editor Heather Zimmerman hzimmerman@embarcaderomediagroup.com , photographer Magali "Maggie" Gauthier.
- Stanford Dean of Queer Studies: Benjamin Davidson bendavid@stanford.edu (semester start is late September)
- **See also Community Events below.**
- Notes from 2023 and 2024 Recruiting and Retention meeting at IAGSDC Ottawa, and from previous discussions, **in Appendix B**

Club Nights

- Stop club night at 9:00 instead of 9:15

- Have class-review and A2 tips
- Right now, we have 2 A2 tips. We will **stick with that** in the future. **Michael** to specify in weekly e-mail
- **Dark** July 1 and July 8, Open House July 15.
- Right now, it's \$187 per night (hall & caller). Would need at least 20 dancers combined (2 1/2 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 convention.
- 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.
- There's a new SSD club in Sunnyvale that will be doing club nights every other week Fridays

Quarterly Dances

- We should coordinate with PACE and/or Advanced Squares to possibly share callers (and costs) for a weekend
- Darren Galina confirmed for August 23th.
- Buddy Weaver for Halloween Dance on November 1st. Contract signed. **Need** to verify travel (drive?) and lodging.
- Need to start getting callers and dates for **next year** - **Ed**

Other dancing

Weekend afternoons:

- Next T-Dance **to be scheduled**
- Small attendance. Do we need them if we have picnics? Would be Sunday. Decision was to pause T-Dances as long as the weather is nice enough for picnics.
- Possibly in Jewish Center next to St. Andrews. **Michael L** to reach out to them.

Picnics

- May 17th
- None in June because of Pride events (?)
- **August 9th** 1:30 pm picnic, dancing 2:00-4:00. Hoover Park – Invite beginners. **Kurt** to call
- Will have Open Houses in July (15) and August (26) with SSD Class to start September 9th.

Potluck Nights

- Next one **to be scheduled**
- **None until fall**
- Format was 30 mins food (7:00), then alternating A2/Plus until 9:30. Class members are invited for food for free. Maybe a class tip if there are several class members.

Quarterly Workshops

- For notes from way back see Appendix C

Other Events

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**.

Pride / Community Events

- **50th Santa Cruz Pride** June 1
 - Not interested
- **Mountain View Pride** Event is handled by Pete
 - Location: City of Mountain View, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View, CA 94040
Contact: Eck, Lauren <Lauren.Eck@mountainview.gov>
Expected audience size: 2,500+, Performance duration: 20 minutes
 - Date will be **Sat June 7th** 11a-3p
 - Caller: Kurt Gollhardt
 - Booth decorations purchased
 - 20-minute Demo scheduled for 12:50pm
 - Give-aways: rainbow flags, logo wristbands, rainbow candy, ECR business cards & new class information.
 - Volunteer sign-ups in progress. Additional email request for volunteers sent to ECRTalk on May 21.
 - Pete has requested \$100 from the organizers as cost reimbursement
 - Board agrees that Pete can sign for any necessary paperwork
 - Submitted Application for booth / demonstration - 2/12/2025 - Covered booth will be provided
- **San Mateo County Fair.** Not attending
- **San Mateo County Pride in the Park**
 - Theme: Breaking Boundaries, Shaping Lives!
 - **Sat June 14** 11a-5p
 - Caller: Rich Reel
 - Booth decorations purchased
 - Booth fee (\$50 for non-profits) paid
 - Parade scheduled for 10:30am
 - Festival open from 11am - 5pm
 - ECR Stage demo currently scheduled for 2:15pm (20 minutes)
 - Give-aways: rainbow flags, logo wristbands, rainbow candy, ECR business cards & new class information.
 - Volunteer sign-ups in progress. Email request for volunteers sent to ECRTalk on May 21 (additional people needed for parade especially).
 - Booth provided
 - Submitted Application to Entertainment Committee 2/9/2025 (requested \$100 stipend to offset our caller expense)
 - Submitted Booth Application 3/17/2025 (\$50 non-profit fee due May 30)
 - Submitted Parade Participant Application 3/20/2025
- **San Mateo Libraries.** Contact: Trinkaus, Sam trinkaus@smcl.org
- **Fremont Main Library June 21** 10-2 Contact: Isaacson, Todd, Library TIsaacson@aclibrary.org We got an invitation to attend again. Will **not attend** due to other Pride commitments. Ed to forwarded to Oaktown. Oliver to got back to Todd to decline for ECR and communicate we passed it on to Oaktown.
- **Filoli June 14 and 15** 10-5. Contact: Danae Bravo dbravo@filoli.org Got an invitation to attend again. Will **not be able to attend** due to other Pride commitments - Oliver followed up to decline for this year
- **Belmont Pride** Contact: Brigitte Shearer BShearer@belmont.gov
- **San Carlos Adult Community Center.** Contacts: Caitlyn Matoso CMatoso@cityofsancarlos.org, Roberta Gonzales-Gregg roberta2gg@gmail.com
- **August 24/25 San Jose Pride.** Rob looked at the web site. \$350 to march, \$650 to get a tent. Will not attend

Financials

- Tuesday Club Nights: Still losing money weekly, but year over year coming out ahead with the help of membership dues and donations.
- **People can donate to All Join Hands and earmark the donation for a specific club.** Possibly with reminders a couple of times a year. **Should include that with membership renewal notice.**
- There is a group forming for club treasurers of IAGSDC clubs. **Ed?**
- We have increased caller pay to \$35/hour.

Social Activities

- None planned at this time.
- **Looking for someone to spearhead this effort.**
- Mountain View theater 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

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 Meetings:

- **Sunday, June 15th 11:00 am PDT**, Location: Zoom
- **Saturday, July 19th, 12:00 pm PDT**, Location: Zoom
- **Saturday August 17th, 11:00 am PDT.**

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.
- **Notes from 2024's Recruiting and Retention:**
 - Joel Smith is liaison to clubs at IAGSDC
 - Ottawa hosted a Pinked Dance, heavily advertised, with lights and fog machine. Had 40 attendees, 17 new dancers
 - Chitown graduated 10 at last class, lots of recruiting at local street fair. They picked half a dozen Aldermans to add their monthly Open Houses to their calendar (*I guess that's something like Nextdoor neighborhoods?*). Involved local chamber of commerce. Had T-shirts made with the club's website QR Code on the back. Got all their members to like the vents on Facebook, which promoted them
 - Chesapeake Squares: At Pride event, had a photobooth (BYO camera) with petticoats and cowboy hats. Was very popular
 - IAGSDC has money to pay for recruitment efforts, but won't cover food. They also paid for pride bracelets for Chitown that had their info on them.
 - Tinseltown moved to LA LGBT Center, which includes a live-in center for youth and seniors
 - Phoenix got 3 graduates through Meetup
 - Grand River offered \$25 off of their Fly-ins for newbies
 - Temple Squares are struggling to find a space
 - Rest of meeting was taken up by Ted, chairman of caller lab, who presented his / their idea of creating a new 2-tier calling schedule for below-A (like SSD and Plus, but with fewer entry-level calls, officially doing away with Basic 1, Basic 2, and Mainstream)
 - **Goal:** Make onboarding easier, reduce the 'Rush to Plus'.
 - **Contact:** chair@callerlab.org.
 - **Resource:** Ray Owens of squaredancetech can create square dance videos to be put on web sites etc.
 - **Pete** will check with getting an IAGSDC grant to get wristbands and flags with our website on it.
- **Next meeting 10/26 via Zoom**

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.