

Annual Meeting Looks to the Future of CDSS

by John Seto and Craig Meltzner

Small piles of snow remained on the edges of the parking lot at Eastworks in Easthampton as the CDSS Governing Board gathered for its 2018 Annual Meeting. 2018 marks a pivotal year for CDSS as we move forward with strategic planning. It was augured by two leadership transitions – Gaye Fifer chaired her first Annual Meeting as new Board president, with leadership from Katy German at her first AM as executive director. All twenty-three board members were present except for one. The decision to hold the meeting at the CDSS office site proved beneficial, as staff participated in the meeting activities even as they worked hard to facilitate the food and technical needs of the large group.

Activities started early the first day for the executive director, board officers, and the new incoming board members for introduction and orientation with office staff. Incumbent board members joined the group at lunch, and the afternoon was soon buzzing with discussions and voting on multiple topics, including the transition of treasurer from Craig Meltzner to Joel Bluestein, potential changes in the management of our investments, and a detailed presentation by staff member Sarah Pilzer on the operational tech system Salesforce. This data platform may be the solution to the integration of the several independent systems that CDSS is currently using.

The remainder of Wednesday afternoon saw a report from Katy German on her first six months as ED, in which emphasis was given to the rise of morale in staff, as well as a new sense of job ownership with fresh engagements such as staff involvement in the budget process. The desire to



The CDSS Governing Board at the Annual Meeting (photo by Doug Plummer)

have a smaller Executive Committee was discussed. The business day ended with a rotating round of speed-dating with staff to foster friendship as well as gain knowledge of the many roles and responsibilities they take on. Many of us attended the Wednesday evening contra dance in Amherst.

On Thursday we worked on the renewal of the CDSS mission, vision, core values, and guiding principles. We noted the information about group needs coming out of the Canadian affiliate survey and look forward to feedback from US affiliates. The afternoon progressed with the setting of strategic priorities and focus areas. Exercises divided participants into smaller groups where ideas flowed freely and were captured for consensus building. The Strategic Planning Task Group will refine these ideas and priorities for further Board review and approval. Business on Thursday afternoon ended after the presentation of reports from the Executive, Nominating, and Awards Committees, including approval of the recipient of CDSS 2019 Lifetime Contribution Award.

A special dance event honoring David Millstone, CDSS president for the past six years, took place at the Whately Dance Barn on Thursday evening. David inspired and motivated us all, providing able leadership during the CDSS Centennial and executive transition, and tributes came from far and wide. Among the gifts offered was an iconic framed photograph from fellow board member Doug Plummer. We all danced “A New Leaf,” an English dance written in David’s honor.



The meeting in panorama (photo by Doug Plummer)



David Millstone, at the dance in his honor (photo by Doug Plummer)

The third day of the Annual Meeting was dedicated to the important topic of board fundraising. Plans for estate giving were presented by Robin Hayden, CDSS Development Director, and Joel Bluestein. Brooke Friendly led the Board and staff in improvisational theatre techniques designed to help us become more comfortable asking potential donors for money and services on behalf of CDSS. Board members were then divided into teams to brainstorm ideas on the “get/solicitation” in addition to the “give” part of fiduciary responsibility. The Board has committed to raising \$25,000 outside of their own giving.

Successful fundraising stories by Board members in 2017 were shared. Norm Stewart reported on his outreach to younger dancers within the Louisville, KY, contra community. In New Jersey, Nancy Barbour raised significant funds for CDSS with help from her workplace’s matching giving program. David Roodman and David Shewmaker reported on an event in Washington, DC, where their respective ambassadorial and culinary skills aided Brooke Friendly’s dance social. After hearing these inspiring stories, the Board renewed their enthusiasm to work together to raise needed funds, while promoting the social and health benefits of dance, music, and song.

Reports from Board committees continued Friday afternoon, with ratification of a reduced-sized Executive Committee, an update on Pinewoods, and the confirmation of Personnel Committee. In addition, task groups were discussed – with the Song Task Group and the Dance Musicians Task Group disbanding, and the Community Safety Task Group continuing. Two new task groups, one on the topic of dance and health, another on archival partnership with University of New Hampshire, are being considered.

A Couple Left the Set While We Were Dancing!

Tips on recovery by Laura Brodian Freas Beraha

A note on etiquette on the dance floor: As dance instructor Walter Nelson instructed dancers (many new) in the first set dance at the Social Daunce Irregulars Formal Victorian Ball on November 26, 2017, “Once you’re in a set, you stay in a set. If you leave a set in the middle of a dance it will ruin it for the other dancers.”

Unfortunately, not all dancers get the message. Some new dancers miss the point that as social mixers these dances demonstrate that one essentially dances with everyone in the room. Sometimes new dancers are so focused on themselves that they are unaware of the results of their actions on other dancers.

This brings up an interesting question: You are dancing in a duple minor set dance. You have progressed and suddenly discover that there’s no new couple to dance with. What happened? Apparently one couple has left the set in the middle of a dance. What do you do? The only saving grace is this: if a couple leaves your minor set during a dance, quickly extricate yourself and your partner, go down to the bottom of the set and re-enter there.

If you have the misfortune of your partner leaving during the dance, tell the other couple in your minor set to reenter at the bottom while you leave and try to find another partner. Then you and your new partner shall come back in at the bottom of the set. It recently happened at one of my ‘drums’: a dancer panicked, left the dance, and could not be convinced to stay. In my case, I was fortunate enough to call a by-standing person onto the floor to replace the errant person and the dance continued without interruption.

Barring that, if someone in your minor set leaves, whomever remains should just go to the bottom of the set and re-enter the dance. That way, it won’t be ruined for the rest of the members of the adjacent duple minor sets. I shudder to even think about the nightmare that would occur if someone bugged out of a triple minor set dance!

Laura Brodian Freas Beraha has been teaching English Regency Dancing since 1984. She is the founder of the Bay Area and Valley Area English Regency Societies. Laura holds a mostly monthly Regency dance party in Pasadena, California.