Portland [Oregon] Country Dance Community

Community Forum

An opportunity to share thoughts about the decision that only nongendered role terms would be used at PCDC contra dances

An invitation to participate in the forum was sent to the 269 PCDC members. There were 66 people in attendance, and 10 people who couldn’t attend sent written comments. All attendees received a detailed description of the format prior to the meeting. Forty-two people spoke, and 10 who couldn’t attend sent written remarks. The forum took place in our dance hall with a sound technician providing amplification. An audio recording was made of the entire event in case a later reference was needed.

* Goal for each forum participant: Listen to others with the hope of gaining a new awareness or perspective.
* Goal for the PCDC community: Reach a deeper understanding of and respect for the different preferences within our organization.

**Guidelines for Speakers**

Participants received the following guidelines about their comments in advance of the forum.

**Yes—**Please share

* Your own thoughts, feelings, and opinions about gendered vs nongendered role terms.
* Your opinion about the contra committee decision that PCDC hire only callers who will use nongendered role terms at PCDC contra dances.
* The direction you would like to see PCDC go re role terms from this point forward

**No**—These types of comments will be interrupted by the facilitators; the speaker will be asked to re-focus.

* Talking about someone else’s opinion
* Responding to something read in an email
* Explaining policy
* Going off topic—especially talking about role swapping. Although somewhat related to calling, role swapping is a separate issue.
* Making hostile or accusatory remarks

**Format of Forum**

* Upon arrival, anyone who wished to speak took a number and found a seat in one of the concentric circles set up in advance.
* Facilitators provided a brief introduction restating goals and guidelines and role-played comments that did not meet the guidelines.
* Numbers were then drawn from the pool of people who wished to speak. If the speaker didn’t feel ready when their number was drawn, they could pass and ask to be called on later.
* Mic runners delivered a cordless mic to each speaker so they did not have to move from the circle.
* Each speaker had a firm two-minute time limit with timekeepers holding visible clocks.
* When everyone who wished to speak had done so, the facilitators asked for comments about what participants had gained from the forum.

Attendees left feeling very good about the meeting and about our community. There was a lot of community follow-up, described elsewhere.

*Sue Songer, 5/24/2023*