

## Meeting of Mt Airy Contra Dance community 12-12-2015

Approx.: 40 attendees

Board Members present: Phil Baumgarten, Jonathan Sills, Donna Hunt, Mark Thompson, Mark Hillegonds, Laura Alexander, Christine Merryman, Chris Deephouse, Vince Budnick, Adlai Waksman

Phil Baumgarten opened meeting with a welcome to all participants. It was great to see leaders from other dance groups (who also consider Mt Airy to be their community). Dance groups represented were Birdsboro, Allons Danser, Mostly Waltz, Arden, Contradelphia, Swing Dance Society and a new CDSS Board member from Princeton. He encouraged all present to speak freely and a 2 minute time limit was enforced to give all a chance to speak. (Jonathan Sills timekeeper)

2 comments posted on FB page the morning of the meeting were read in abbreviation

Opening questions were offered to group if they wished to format their own opening comments. We went around circle with those declining to comment being offered an opportunity to speak at the end.

Questions: What is working? Your concerns? What's not working (with positive solutions)? Your specific hopes or outcomes for meeting? Your expectations of this meeting, or questions you have?

Donna Hunt: note taker (on yellow Post-it chart) and Christine Merryman

### Notes from FB posts:

- Dance is welcoming to strangers
- Suggest Board allow themselves flexibility when making/enforcing rules
- Dance is not welcoming due to booking ahead. Suggest a dance where individuals line up as Gent or Lady (without partner) and the taking of hands will dictate who you will be partnered with
- Dance invites: Variety of individuals with varying levels of social awkwardness and dance proficiency

### Notes from participants in circle: (Donna note: This section was grouped in categories and not in spoken time sequence)

- Honor community
  - positive community support of dance
  - Acceptance of others at the dance is mostly positive
  - this dance is very welcoming and people have made many friends and spent time with these people outside of the dances
  - Be a "personal ambassador" and introduce newcomers to your friends and help them feel welcome—engage them in discussions/conversations at break
  - this is a very inclusive community (where new comers are welcomed regardless of the type of people whether they are socially awkward or introverts, everyone is welcomed) and people are encouraged to dance with a wide variety of partners (this was said more than once)
  - Keep maintaining and improving the BEST of this community
- Recent Incident –Donna's Note: There was much interest in the "recent incident" which board repeatedly said would not/could not discuss. There was clarification of the "recent incident" that the sanction is not forever. (This was erroneously reported by someone outside PATMAD board on social media).

- Exclusion from the dance should be last resort. Historically there have only been 2 other dancers excluded in past (many years ago)
  - Frustration expressed at presence of unanswered questions (that board will not answer)
  - wanting to know what happened and what boundaries were broken-know the process of dealing with troublesome dancers
  - -confidentiality issues/anonymity (this topic was brought up more than once)
  - -not appropriate to share details and privacy issues
  - -having trust in the board and not needing to know all the details (this was said more than once)
  - -thinking about the individuals that have come forward with complaints and how hard that must have been for them to share such personal details/embarrassing/uncomfortable moments
  - -having compassion
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- Concerns about due process of accused
  - Where does “line in the sand” land between inclusion and exclusion when considering sanctions
  - when does something go from inclusive to the point where someone feels so uncomfortable that they feel violated or they don't return to the dance
- Board specific
  - Thanks to the board (many people expressed their support)
  - Board needs internal consistency, complaint was made about an email that was forwarded without permission of the sender.
  - Wishes for more communication between dance boards to share issues that we all face
- Clearer policy and process -
  - Wish there was more criteria leading to sanction/ban of this “recent incident”
  - no policy can cover every situation/ and no policy is fair and not discriminatory
  - documentation should be made available to community as far as guidelines and policies
  - more communication needed between the board and community
  - Need flexibility in By-laws
  - By-laws cannot be made for everything, there is room for all sorts of situations
  - Needs “standards” not specific situations when drafting documents
  - wish for more inclusion of membership when making rules
  - Interest in availability of board meeting minutes to the membership on website
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- Problems at the dance:
  - Older male dancers asking (bombarding) young women to dance continually. Do we sanction? How to educate? (this topic brought up more than once)
  - A woman experienced impatience/snide comments from others while dancing a gender role swap especially with unequal attendance of more men
  - overhearing a conversation where 2 young women were talking about warning another woman about a certain particular dancer
  - booking ahead problem/not making people feel welcome (this was mentioned more than once)
  - Booking ahead could be minimized with “partnering education” of dancers
- Concerns about younger dancers

- Code of conduct for all dancers should include trust between and appropriate behavior towards each other--especially when dealing with younger dancers
- having concrete things to say as tools to help people that might feel nervous to talk to someone about something that's not working or making them feel uncomfortable
- Gender imbalance
  - How to manage? Inform callers, cut down length of dance, how to assure those sitting out to dance next?
  - more inclusion when there is a significant gender imbalance, particularly a lot of extra men

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Phil read our statement and reminded everyone of our confidentiality guidelines (to not name names).

Statement from Board regarding recent issue/sanctions was read:

As most of you know, the PATMAD board recently voted to exclude a member of the community from attending dances sponsored by our organization. We have not publicly named this person because it is our policy to maintain confidentiality in dealing with allegations of misconduct at dances, so as not to expose anyone to harassment or humiliation. The board will adhere to that policy even if those involved choose not to. We will not discuss the matter beyond this statement, because doing so would violate the privacy of those involved. We also expect that all of us here will not violate confidentiality while at this meeting.

The board received multiple complaints about a pattern of inappropriate behavior that left a number of young female dancers no longer feeling comfortable continuing to attend our dance. The board is committed to providing a safe environment for community members of all ages. Based on these factors, we agreed that the person responsible should be kept away from our events for an indefinite period of time, while the board strives to resolve the problem.

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POLICY REVIEW : Copies of our (not yet completed) POLICY ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR were distributed to attendees of the meeting. Jonathan read the policy aloud. This policy was reviewed by attendees and comments were made. A 2- minute limit on comments was enforced. (Note: The full Policy is included at the end of this Community Meeting document)

Attendees shared their thoughts about this policy:

- inappropriate behaviors list (at the end) is just some examples
- Is drug use at the dances included in this list? What should board do about illegal drug use at dance? (clarification: during dance time but not in dance hall)
- Suggest the Final copy of this document be presented and approved at community meeting (\*Note: this is the Board's plan)
- What did board do about "issues" prior to this document? (Response: In past, the board followed a responsible course of action since guidelines were not available. This document has been 1 year in the making and not quite finished yet. Explained that in past ~2 years this board has handled several complaints which were dealt with in similar ways as noted in document: approach, discuss, document in private file available only to board members)
- Accused has right to know complainant and right to speak to that person.
- the privacy rights are important and people aren't going to come forward if they have to confront the accused and it is unsafe to disclose names
- need community standards

- rights of accused and accuser should be balanced
- there's a way to speak to a person about complaints without giving specifics and generally and getting their side of the story
- Jonathan shared his example of the man kidnapping the dog and putting a party hat on him and parading him around for all to see and shared how sometimes it is impossible to keep anonymity when giving a complaint to the accused, even with leaving out names
- maybe there could be a board mediator between both parties if they have to speak to one another
- suggestion that there should be a hearing before the board where accused have the right to know who the accusers are and what the accusations are
- Privacy rights cannot be maintained if both parties meet each other
- we are not a legal system/legal community so we don't have to follow any specific law but can use inspiration from the legal system (a few people went back and forth as far as legal rights whether or not we should follow certain laws)
- This dance community is a “club/private organization”, and “legal” rules do not have to be applied (regarding sanctions)
- We rely on the board to promote dancing and safety
- #1 in document: let accused know that someone complained
- #1 empower individuals to use their own voice rather than rely on Board intervention. Some discussion followed about individuals discomfort with confrontation and/or concerns of personal safety.
- “encourage” accused not to attend (rather than ban them)
- Dance communities nationally over the past few years have seen increased complaints as dancers are more vocal about what can/will and cannot/will not be tolerated by them. Social media adds to this process.
- Suggest: Add steps to process: conversation adding neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- When you do speak up, the person you talk to sometimes denies the behavior.
- Should be different standards for on vs off dance floor? Should on the dance floor be a higher standard?
- If there's an assault outside of the dance, that then becomes an issue inside the hall. Jonathan shared his story about a dancer who walked into his house uninvited and scared him, although Jonathan was able to diffuse the situation
- One person defines “offensive” etc., differently from another
- Give young women tools to defend their own well-being
- Policy should be explicit about anonymity
- Do By-laws say anywhere that minutes be available to community? (Answer: no)
- Private suggestion to Donna: When minors enter the dance hall they could be directed to talk with a board member if they have concerns. Consider: balance information/empowering vs scaring them off (why do I need to know *that?*)

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LUNCH: Delicious veggie and meat chili (created by Mark Thompson our host), corn bread, salad, chips, snacks, coffee, tea, etc. compliments of the attendees. Break for approx. 30 minutes (?) with many side/small group discussions continuing, some in kitchen/foyer/outside (where it was beautiful!!).

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Post lunch: its 1:00 (advertised stopping time and several folks had to leave) and decision to stay until 3:00 (firm end) and which topics to include for rest of the meeting. These were suggested:

1. Action items- Post policy for discussion on-line for comments including a legal perspective
2. By-Laws- Board has authority over rules- wish for more power to membership
3. Policy should define “minor” 21?, 18?, 17?, 16? When commenting on protecting “young” dancers

4. Clarify what was procedure to “recent issue”?
5. On-off dance floor issues – need to define limits to on/off
6. Transparency- need to have membership meeting to discuss about what’s happening.
7. How to hold Board accountable for actions?

Decision made by group to Clarify policy, and continue discussion on #3, #4, # 5 above until time runs out

Policy discussions:

- Lesser sanctions (between doing nothing and banning)
- Should have more discussion prior to sanctions with accused to allow accused to have their say
- More focus on empowering dancers so that more positive steps can happen before something becomes a problem. (This is difficult due to tension of accused facing accuser and visa versa)
- Address booking ahead

- Difference between on-floor/and off:
  - on-floor is understood to be AT EVENT (dance floor, bathroom, parking lot etc.) not i.e., in individual apt
  - situations that happen outside of the dance that make someone feel so uncomfortable that they don't return to the dance
  - Is a caller in a position of authority? (there was a little debate about whether or not they were, more people seemed in agreement that they were in a position of authority on stage/leading)
  - Trust Board to determine “grey” issues for on/off if not clear
    - Jonathan assured everyone that as a board we try to reach a general consensus
- Do board members check in with new people throughout the dance?
  - Dance manager has discretion for that event (not all are Board members)
- Policy 2 A&B define “reasonably clear”-
  - in “recent issue” Board participated in discussion and came to consensus to determine this
  - Define “reasonable” time for process and investigation (note that “legal documentation” uses “reasonable” and it’s not always well defined)
- How much is too much- when is something actionable (once?, twice? Three times?)
  - Clarify: continued (recurring) issues, severity, or long past occurrences (presented for first time)
  - policy of zero tolerance is not a good idea
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- Policy should include what the expectations are of the dancers in the community

Closing:

Action for policy follow up:

1. Revise document (include comments made in this meeting) \*\*Board is to use their discretion\*\* (do we need another meeting to discuss??)
2. Board will send policy to membership
3. Accept feedback by certain date
4. Schedule face to face meeting with membership to ratify (uncertain when this meeting would be-before dance/at break/another Saturday??)

Action of this meeting follow up:

1. Send minutes of this meeting to attendees who signed email list sent around (everyone encouraged to send minutes to Donna Hunt for inclusion)
2. Send policy to attendees (in electronic format)
3. no open forum on the internet, face to face better
4. Send survey with structured questions as a wrap up for this meeting (how did it go? Is there anything else you think should be discussed? What conversation would you like to continue having? Etc.)
5. Re-write policy as needed (see above) and send to full membership for ratification

Thanks to all who attended.

Special thanks to Mark Thompson who hosted the meeting and Sam Dorfman who allowed us to use his home.

Respectfully submitted

Donna Hunt (including notes from Christine Merryman and edits from some board members)

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**\*\*PLEASE NOTE: THIS POLICY IS A WORK IN PROGRESS DO NOT DISTRIBUTE\*\***

**PATMAD**  
**(Philadelphia Area Traditional Music and Dance)**  
**POLICY ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

**Background and Scope**

PATMAD (Philadelphia Area Traditional Music and Dance) is committed to the safety and comfort of the people who attend the events it sponsors. PATMAD needs the cooperation of all attendees to ensure all social interaction and physical contact is safe, appropriate, and welcome, on and off the dance floor.

**Responsibility of Dancer with a Concern/Complaint**

If anyone is doing something that hurts or makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, don't hesitate to let him/her know. Quite often, the offender does not realize he/she is making someone uncomfortable. If the inappropriate behavior continues, or if you do not feel comfortable confronting the person, report the matter to any Board member or event manager. At any time, you may find contact information on our website [www.ThursdayContra.com](http://www.ThursdayContra.com).

**Responsibility of the PATMAD Board**

If an attendee exhibits behavior that unreasonably interferes with an individual's ability to attend or enjoy the event by creating an intimidating, threatening, unsafe, hostile, or abusive environment that is harassment and PATMAD is charged with dealing with such behavior in an appropriate, effective manner. Consequences may include exclusion from all PTMAD events.

When concerns about inappropriate behavior come to the attention of the Board, either through a complaint from a dancer or through observations by others attending a PATMAD event, the Board shall follow the following procedures. The Board, at its discretion, will follow the procedures below:

1. At least 2 representatives of PATMAD (consisting of Board members, or their designees, who have knowledge the incident) will speak to the accused individual to get his/her side of the story.
  - B. The PATMAD representatives will explain PATMAD's "Policy on Dealing with Complaints of Inappropriate Behavior" and give the individual a copy of the policy, along with a copy of pertinent documents.
  - C. The PATMAD representatives should also collect **contact information** from both the accused individual and the person making the complaint (or those who observed the incident.)
2. Participating PATMAD representatives will make a detailed written record of the conversations with the complaining dancer (or with those who observed the incident) and with the accused individual. This record will be submitted to all of the members of the Board. Any other written statements, either from the complaining dancer or from those who observed the incident, should also be submitted to the Board. Records may be submitted as email to the Board. These records will be archived and kept in confidence.
  - A. If it is reasonably clear to the PATMAD representatives that there has not been an instance of inappropriate behavior, then the matter is ended. In such cases, the person(s) raising the complaint will be notified of the decision and told the reason(s) for the decision.
  - B. If it is reasonably clear to the PATMAD representatives that there has been an instance of inappropriate behavior, then the individual will receive a written warning. They will be told that future instances of inappropriate behavior may result in behavior specific sanctions or being banned from PATMAD events, either for a specific period of time or permanently. The Board will determine when these measures beyond a written warning become necessary.
3. If it is necessary for the Board to conduct an investigation of an incident, the accused individual may be required to refrain from attending PATMAD events for a reasonable amount of time while the investigation is conducted.
4. If further instances of inappropriate behavior by the same individual occur within a reasonable period of time, the procedures described in 1 and 2 above should again be followed.
5. If an individual is banned from PATMAD events, either for a specific period of time or permanently, the individual has the right to appeal the decision to the Board. All bans will be issued in writing and delivered by certified mail, or by two or more members of the Board, in person.
6. If an individual is banned from PATMAD events for a specific period of time, the Board may make the individual's return to PATMAD contingent upon signing a statement saying that he/she understands PATMAD's "Policy on Dealing with Complaints of Inappropriate Behavior". This statement will indicate that the individual may be permanently banned from PATMAD events if he/she engages in further inappropriate behavior. The PATMAD Board may also require additional measures to help the individual better understand and/or control his/her behavior.

**All written records will be archived and accessible to future Board members. The Board will take reasonable care to ensure the confidentiality of all of the conversations and records.**

**Policy violations include but are not limited to:**

- Offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion
- Deliberate intimidation
- Repeated attempts to ask a partner who has declined the invitation
- Persistent crossing of stated boundaries
- Stalking
- Unwanted physical contact
- Unwanted sexual attention
- Exploitative or coercive behavior

**NOTE:** This policy is not intended to cover extreme cases (e.g.; threats, acts of violence or blatant sexual/offensive touching or actions involving a minor). In such cases, an offender may be told to leave immediately and never return to a PATMAD event. The authorities may also need to be notified.

\*Thanks to Princeton Country Dancers, Oberlin contra, and Old Farmers Ball for sharing their original document\*