

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Cincinnati Contra Dance Board
03-09-20, 6:30 pm, Wyoming Fine Art Center Room 202**

Attendance: Board members - Debra Barrett, Tricia Gorman, John McCain, Kurt Grannan, Frank Buschelman, Larry Lankford, Mary Rekers, Charles Wallner, Darlene Underwood, Other attendees - Liz Burkhart, Lea Crain, Robin Roland, Jim Koppock, Myra Mitchell, Michele Martin Hisnay, David Brendamour, Betsy Lehman, Bret Augsburger, Mike Self, Pete Armstrong, Christie Armstrong, Alex Lang.

Facilitator: (Deb)- The purpose of this meeting is to address the question of COVID-19 and contra dancing in Cincinnati. [A portion of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) was read about the method by which COVID-19 is spread. [<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus-ncov/about/transmission.html>].]

Although it is mostly on the coasts, there is some in Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, and now some in Ohio in Cuyahoga county.

There are two main concerns: Public health and dancers' health. The Pigtown Fling (PTF) will bring many people from around the country who may have the virus but not be aware that they have it.

A secondary concern is if we decide to maintain our dance schedule, with due cautions in place, will we lose a great deal of money if we continue paying our bands and callers, and attendance declines due to worries about the virus.

Treasurer: (Frank)- I have already written checks in the amount of \$3465 for Pigtown related expenses. I talked to Purcell (the venue for PTF) and they will not charge if we need to cancel. We have made a deposit of \$1000 which I will see if we can apply that to next year. We spent \$930 in mailings which will be a loss. \$888 was paid for airfare for two of the band members, I will see if that can be refunded from the airlines. Also \$700 to the sound provider for travel. I will see if he can get that refunded. Gaye Fifer said she is not expecting any money if we cancel. Wake Up Robin, the main band said that some type of compensation would be meaningfully appreciated. Audrey said they have had five cancellations in recent weeks and that is a substantial part of their income. Ed Howe, the sound guy, was wondering about keeping the deposit.

Question: Have we already decided to cancel PTF?

Response: Frank- No, we just looking at the losses if we decide to cancel.

Question: Do we want to talk about Mondays and Saturdays at this point?

Response: No, PTF has the most danger since people are coming from farther distances who might have been exposed somewhere else, and they are the people who will want to know as soon as possible to revise travel arrangements.

Response: Lea- I also need to know because this is the week we pay for the T-shirts, the lunches, and pay for the buttons to be made. That would be significant.

Facilitator: - Possible safeguards if the dances continue:

A- We now have permission to use the restroom marked "Employees Only" (by the office in the WFAC).

B- A fact sheet to add to announcements on precautions to take at the dance. We could just print out the latest advice from the CDC.

C- Adding sanitation points. Wipes and hand sanitizers at prominent points throughout the hall.

D- Have bottled water available to buy for those who would rather avoid using the water fountain.

Question: Could we ask people to leave if they sneeze or cough?

Comment: We could also remind people to not come if they have a cough, a fever, or have difficulty breathing.

Comment: We are in the allergy season and some people will have a cough or sneeze due to that.

Comment: This virus is asymptomatic and the virus could be passed by people who show no symptoms.

Comment: If we decide to go ahead with PTF, we could have someone in charge of wiping down surfaces such as the water fountains, tables, etc.

Comment: The reason for social distancing is to slow down the spread of the virus to lessen the impact on medical response. If we don't slow down the spread, then everybody's going to get it at once and the health care system will be over-taxed and it will be a very bad situation. That's why other dance events have been canceled (a number of other dance weekends was mentioned that have been canceled). I don't think anyone will think we are stupid for canceling.

Comment: If we don't cancel, attendance will be greatly reduced and we will lose money either way.

Comment: David- We have received 168 pre-registrations online and six via USPS for a total of \$10369. One request for refund.

Pigtown Housing Chair (Deven): I still have people contacting me for places to stay.

Comment: Frank- The online payments have not yet been transferred to our account from PayPal, so it would be easy to go online and click a button to issue a refund.

Comment: It would be good to note that money refunded is not a loss.

Comment: We will lose money if we go ahead with PTF.

Comment: We need income of \$23,000 to break even. So we have to make up the \$12,631 in door sales. I am not at all confident that we will make that in door sales.

Comment: We don't know what will happen in the next three weeks, there may be a lot of people change their minds about attending.

Question: What was pre-registration at this time last year?

Response: Information not available at this time.

Question: What obligations do we have to pay at this point?

Response: That was covered before you arrived. It will be a modest amount.

Facilitator: Some people who could not be here sent comments to read:

Comment 1: "Corona is viral and viruses cannot tolerate heat esp at 28C and above! They die at these temps! Go boil yourself in a really hot bath! Prevention, of course, is wise, with hand washing, wearing of gloves if need be, hand sanitizers etc etc. But I ask folks not to panic and overreact. This is NOT the Plague! More folks get influenza than from this virus. Worry and overreaction do have negative effects on the immune system and the body. Worrying just causes leaps in higher blood pressure, stress levels go up and folks who stew can't sleep well. Yes, protect ourselves but don't go into hiding over a small chance of catching something. The Board is facing a very tough call regarding Pig Town. I am hoping that our organizers will carry on with the event and not cave in to the panic that is seeming to surround this particular virus. We are tougher than this old virus and the chances of contracting it are very slim especially here in the wilds of Ohio. Good luck with the decision-making. Best to all."

Response: 28 degrees C cannot be the point where viruses die because body temperature is

37 degrees C.

Comment 2: “Greetings all, I am unavailable this coming Monday evening, but I trust others to make a sound decision.

Just to put my current opinion out there: I am a member of several other boards, including one that is hosting an international conference in Sweden in a couple of weeks, which involves air travel (not quite as high contact as contra dance, but actually very close). In that case, we are following CDC guidelines day by day, and encouraging participants to make their own individual decisions (and follow the advice of their employers, as the conference is a professional event). There are a few cases in Sweden, but if the conference were in, say, Italy, our conversation would be very different. At this stage, I personally feel it would be overstepping to completely cancel PTF, given that no cases have been confirmed in our area. Even if, say, one case is confirmed in Cincinnati, I think we would need to think about whether that case touches the dance community or Purcell Marian before deciding to proceed (and, as importantly, check the updated CDC recommendations for our area). Again, I do want to stress the importance of individual agency in deciding to attend, and the idea that we—the board, but also the PTF committee—need to support that agency and reassure folks we are following CDC guidelines, but not give specific advice one way or the other about attendance (unless CDC guidelines or a case close to our community/the dance gives us cause to actually cancel). Encourage folks to make the decision they feel is right for them. Just my two cents,”

Facilitator: Are we ready to vote on PTF, or do we need more time for discussion?

For everyone present, are we ready to vote on whether to go ahead with PTF?

Poll: 16 yes, 4 no. Let’s have a little more time to hear from those who are not ready to vote.

Comment: Charles- My organization had a meeting with the health department this last Monday and they don’t know where this is going, but they expect it to get more severe. They do expect it to expand: this is all about prevention. For PTF, are we doing anything towards prevention? We are talking about a lot of at-the-door payments. The literature says that exchange of cash is a good way to spread disease. Even if no one is sick at the event, we don’t know who is going to be sick five or six days after the event [someone who is contagious with no symptoms].

Comment: I think the earlier we cancel, the better, because we will cut our losses, we will be able to stop things that aren’t in motion yet. This is a matter of prevention, a gift to the community to not spread it [the virus]. For public health sake, for our children, for our parents who are in their eighties, to make that curve [the infection rate] (motions with hands to indicate a sharp spike in infections as compared to a lower but longer curve) so that we don’t over burden the medical workers, the hospitals, etc. and to stop it from getting into retirement centers. We also have a lot of older dancers who are considered at greater risk if they get the virus.

Comment: Younger dancers will not be able to go to work if they get the virus.

Question: What is the financial strength of the group? Can the group survive the losses?

Response: Frank- Yes we can. Also to answer Kurt, the sooner we cancel, the less work will need to be done answering emails about housing and such.

Comment: Frank- Maybe sometime in the summer, when this all blows over, we could have a contra-thon event. We have eight bands and six to eight callers, if they are interested in volunteering, we could have two hour slots, throw a big party for twelve hours and ask people to donate and have fun making up the money we loose from PTF. But we have enough

money to survive this. I am not worried as treasurer.

Question: Instead of canceling [PTF], could we postpone it for three or four months?

Response: Deb- That's a very creative idea. The drawback to that is the odds that our bands and callers would still be available at that point aren't super high. And our volunteers may not be available.

Comment: There is no air conditioning at Purcell Marian main gym.

Comment: We don't know how long this [the virus] is going to last and there won't be a vaccine for at least nine to twelve months, but I don't think we should start planning the contra-thon yet. [general agreement]

Comment: In consideration, if we cancel, with respect to the bands, I would be happy to donate my admission to the band. Others might be willing to make a donation as well.

Comment: Several dance weekends that have canceled or are considering canceling have asked for donations to the bands.

Comment: One person has already said to donate what she has already paid to the bands. I'm sure there would be others who are willing give a little bit.

Comment: Lea- We can easily change our registration page to a donation page.

Question: Deb- Are we ready to have a vote of the board?

Question: Are we basing this on prevention, which is different from the CDC recommendations?

Response: Deb- The CDC recommendations are not geared for contra dancing where you step into the arms of another person every 30 seconds.

Question: I thought someone said it was based on the school system.

Response: Deb- That was CDSS [Country Dance and Song Society].

Comment: If we wait for the schools to close, that would be too late. Lakota schools are going to e-learning in about a week.

Comment: Mary- Here at the [WFAC] center we are teaching lessons, but not large groups. Even here [WFAC] we have been told to prepare to go to online classes. Some teachers have started online for some students who had known contact with returning travelers.

Comment: Deb- We are ready for the vote. **We will have a non-binding vote from those present and then a board vote. Poll: Shall we cancel PTF 20 yes, 0 no. Board vote: Shall we cancel PTF 8 yes, 1 no. PTF is canceled for 2020.**

Comment: Canceling saves lives. Canceling now [instead of later] saves money.

Question: Should we see if the 2020 bands and callers can do next year?

Response: It would be easiest to leave the bands & callers who are already contracted for 2021. Give the first chance to do 2022 to the 2020 talent.

PTF Refunding:

Motion: Shall we refund all pre-registrations? Vote: 9 Yes, 0 No.

Suggestions were made to ask for a portion of the refunds to be donated to help the bands and callers who will miss out on expected income.

Motion: Shall we make a decision about Saturday and Monday dances before we decide on the wording for the PTF cancellation announcement?

Discussion:

Comment: Saturday dances bring in people from out of town, but not as many as PTF. So far there are no cases of the virus in the tri-state area.

Comment: The governor of Kentucky has announced that there are confirmed cases in Jefferson, Fayette, and Harrison counties. That's the Lexington and Louisville area.

Comment: So it is not a matter of if we cancel our dances, but when we cancel, because dancing is a high risk activity for this virus.

Comment: Sooner will be safer than later. We don't know where it will spread by Saturday.

Question: If we cancel Saturday and Monday dances, will we be obligated to compensate all of the bands and callers affected?

Response: Frank- 1) We have not in the past compensated bands and callers for canceled nights. 2) I talked with Julie, the executive director of the WFAC and she said as long as we are not canceling for an entire year, that we can cancel for a month and not have to pay for the canceled nights.

Comment: If we cancel this Saturday dance we will have time to decide about the next Saturday dance.

Motion: Shall we cancel the 14 March Saturday Dance?

Vote: to cancel March Saturday dance 5 yes, 2 no, 2 abstention.

Monday nights-

Discussion:

Comment: Most people do not come from out of town on Mondays, but some do.

Comment: I was not able to find anything else on the internet that has been canceled in Cincinnati.

Comment: There has been a lot cancellations in Cincinnati.

Question: A dance that has been canceled?

Response: No, not any dances.

Comment: I got a call from someone in Oklahoma saying that as a dance organizer, they were looking for guidance from Cincinnati about COVID-19.

Comment: We talked about that months ago about how people around the country look to us.

Comment: It is okay to lead the way on this one.

Comment: I think we should take the advice of CDSS and base our decision on the local school systems.

Comment: I disagree because education is more essential than social dancing.

Comment: In terms of school district canceling, one thing to consider is that children are not as affected by this virus. A school district may say all of our kids are healthy, we don't need to cancel. I think using the school districts as a meter is not going to be accurate. This is a close contact event, we are breathing heavily, sweating. Someone could come in asymptomatic and spread it. I think it is the responsible thing to do to not have a dance.

Comment: I think we should have a policy or procedure to determine this in the future.

Comment: That policy can be decided after this meeting. We don't have to develop it now.

A straw poll of all present: Should we suspend Monday dancing for now, starting after tonight? 8 yes, 6 no

Board vote: 7 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain

Facilitator: Should we suspend tonight's dance? Board vote 0 yes, 8 no.

The board determined the wording for tonight's announcement:

With heavy hearts, the Board is sorry to announce that PTF 2020 has been canceled in light of COVID-19. This decision has been made to protect our community, as well as the communities of our attendees. Rest assured, you can get a full refund.

As the organizers of Pigtown Fling, we've had some unredeemable expenses. However, since we want to make sure our professional talent is compensated for the loss of their revenue, the Board is encouraging dancers to donate part of their refund to the talent. For those of you

who've registered online, we will email all prepaid registrants shortly to make refund arrangements. If you don't hear from us soon, please email the address on your registration confirmation. If you pre-registered by postal mail, we'll send the un-cashed check back to you. If you would like to make a donation, you may also follow the link on the Pigtown website to make a donation by Paypal. We will make sure the talent receives the income.

FURTHERMORE, we are suspending our Saturday and Monday dances from March 10 until further notice.

Our Board will continue monitoring the situation. We'll post updates on Facebook and on our website as things evolve.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM

Respectfully submitted by Larry Lankford, secretary