

# Semi-Annual General Meeting Minutes of the Scottish Country Dance Society of Boston, MA, Inc.

7:45 PM Monday, November 11, 2024

Canadian-American Club, 202 Arlington St., Watertown, MA

This is a hybrid meeting, in-person and on Zoom.

Ten percent of the membership needs to be present or logged in.

7:47 Begin.

## MINUTES

1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Monday, June 10, 2024 (**Alena Taylor**)
  - a. A few small corrections, which have been made. Approved.
2. Treasurer's Report, 2023-2024 (**Cathy Crabtree**)
  - a. With a boost this year from Pinewoods ESCape, the Fall Concert & Ceilidh, the Highland Ball, \$542 in donations and additional support generated by the Bookstore, Workshops and the Demo Team, we were able to end the year with an increase in net assets of \$1,292. This was despite a shortfall in PW Scottish Sessions, and an increase in insurance and other administrative expenses.
  - b. Net revenue from membership fees remained on par with the prior year - \$7,809 vs \$7,871. While we had a 4% growth in membership from 229 to 237, and an average increase in our single and couple membership fees of 4.5%. HQ also increased their subscription fees by an average of 4.5%. As a reminder, we budget for membership fees to cover the subscription fees paid to HQ, insurance costs, music subsidies, and to cover a good portion of the other administrative expenses.
  - c. Fall Concert – For our Nov 2023 Fall concert we changed the venue and format. We had a combined concert & ceilidh at the Arts at the Armory in Somerville with guest artists Hanneke Cassel and Dave Wiesler. With savings in rent and tech costs, and with a \$1,200 grant from NH Scot we cleared \$966. Our Nov 2022 concert featured Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas. Although very well attended, substantial increases in expenses, compared to 2017, the last time Alasdair & Natalie played meant we were only able to clear \$57.
  - d. Highland Ball – We cleared \$659 this year compared to a small loss of \$142 last year. Our improved numbers this year were a result of a 34% increase in attendees.
  - e. PW Scottish Sessions – The PW Scottish Sessions ended with a shortfall of \$1,039. Attendance continues to be down from pre-pandemic years, especially Session II. Once again, there were a number of last minute cancellations and refunds given to campers unable to attend due to covid. But as in years past, thanks to the generosity of some campers who donated their services and others who donated supplies and refreshments, the overall loss was lessened. Although the numbers were disappointing, the overall Pinewoods experience, once again, did not disappoint! Marc and Keira will provide a full report.
  - f. PW ESCape – PW Escape netted the year with a healthy \$3,274 surplus! Our share was \$1,637. As a reminder, any surplus or shortfall is split 50/50 with Country Dance Society of Boston. Connie Kent will provide a full report.

- g. Expenses – Overall, expenses increased 11%. This includes an increase in insurance costs of 9%. The Tartan Times expenses exceeded its revenue by \$32 this year, but last year revenue exceeded expenses by \$79. (So we are still ahead). Administrative expenses, which includes such items as fees paid to Cambridge Class for SAGM and AGM meetings, software, tax prep, Square fees (CC processing fees), and marketing increased by 15%.
  - h. Marketing/Publicity – Looking ahead, we can and should expect to budget more for marketing and publicity expenses.
  - i. Speaking of marketing, we were invited last summer to participate in the Dancing on the Greenway summer series. Honorariums were paid to the musicians and the MC.
  - j. Cash in bank at year-end was \$72,445 up from \$70,578 at 9/30/23. Of this balance, \$40,000 is invested in a 1 year CD due 2/1/25 with an interest rate of 5%.
3. Pinewoods Camp, Inc. (**Bruce Mabbott**)
- a. We had a great summer 2024 at camp. We did struggle with some last minute cancellations due to covid at several sessions, which caused some last minute stressors for program providers. Hopefully our 2025 season will be epic!
  - b. Work weekend dates for 2025 are already set with May 17-18 and May 24-26 being the two Spring weekends. These are great weekends to help camp get set up and you get to enjoy the beauty of camp for free!
  - c. Regular sessions will start on May 30, 2025, when we are delighted to welcome back La Nuestra Tango. They had such a good time last summer that they decided to come back again. The Lavendar Folk and Country dancers are also coming back in June for the third year in a row!
  - d. The bathroom project behind Hands Across is continuing construction after pausing during the summer. Foundations were poured in the spring, and framing is happening as we speak. We anticipate having a tight structure in the next couple of months and completion before camp starts in the summer. It will be nice not to have to schlep to the Square to use the facilities!
  - e. We have had three years now that our beech trees have been ravaged by blight. There is a glimmer of good news as an experimental treatment is showing promising signs. Pinewoods may be chosen as a test site, and even if we aren't we may get access to the treatment which is a series of nematicide injections.
  - f. Erosion control work is continuing around camp as the frequency of heavier downpours has increased and is causing damage to our infrastructure.
  - g. We are also in the very early stages of designing a new Pine Needles building...stay tuned as that project unfurls over the coming months.
  - h. Our Centennial is coming up next year. We have the Fine Companions session from June 10-13, 2025. This is aimed at older members of the Pinewoods community who maybe feel they have aged out of regular sessions, or who haven't been at camp in a while. It will be at a slower pace than a regular camp session. There is also a crew reunion session and work weekend from September 12-14, 2025. Go to [Pinewoods.org](https://Pinewoods.org) for more information and stay tuned the closer we get!
  - i. The Pinewoods Board has just finished up a strategic planning exercise that will focus our attention through 2030. A working group has been compiling this since last year. Thank you if you completed our survey in the spring that asked about what we should focus on. We received hundreds of responses, and this helped us gauge what our priorities should be.
  - j. As ever, Pinewoods is also incredibly grateful to the generosity of the Scots.

4. Pinewoods Scottish Sessions, 2024 (**Marc & Kiera Hartstein**)

- a. Scottish Sessions at Pinewoods 2024 were well enjoyed by all. With shifting demographics and continued uncertainty around Covid, attendance remained low. This year the branch opened attendance to youth dancers and permitted non-staff families to also bring infants, which allowed a number of new dancers as well as families in the community who might otherwise have had to stay home to join us.

Session I ran from Friday, July 5 - Monday, July 8 and Session II ran from Monday, July 8 - Saturday, July 13. Marc and Keira Hartstein co-chaired. We had a wonderful and varied teaching staff in Jody Kulas (Ontario, Canada), Jeanne Moody (California), Catherine Queen (Scotland, teaching Scottish Step), David Queen (Scotland, teaching Highland and country), Jen Schoonover (Conditioning), and Roberta Lasnik (Yoga). All were very well-received. Catherine Miller was fantastic as Music Director and led an excellent team of musicians focused on local and nearby talent. Catherine was joined by Katie McNally (Maine), Peter Macfarlane (Vermont), James MacQueen (Ohio), Leland Martin (Massachusetts), and Calum Pasqua (New York) on fiddle; Dave Wiesler (Delaware) and Neil Pearlman (Maine) on piano; and local bagpipers Stephen Thomforde and Nate Silva. Michael Bergman (Massachusetts) and Jared Kirkpatrick (North Carolina) ran sound. This year we experimented with having Leland Martin as a dedicated leader for both daytime and evening jam sessions.

PCI relaxed their Covid policy to permit unmasked dancing throughout the session, a change that was welcomed by many. Several rapid antigen tests were again required and testing was matter-of-fact. We were pleased that the policy was available early enough and with enough clarity that prospective campers were able to decide whether they were comfortable attending well in advance. 9 campers had to cancel one or both of the sessions they had planned to attend due to a positive Covid test in the days leading up to camp, including one who tested positive during check-in. We also had one camper test positive on Sunday of Session 1. While we were saddened at the number of people who were unable to join us, we are pleased to note that evidence suggests there were no transmissions at camp, and the testing was protective. Where a full camp (including staff, not including infants) is 145, we had 127 campers in Session I and 110 in Session II. This was disappointing but in keeping with recent trends, and we had budgeted against the possibility. Thanks to several generous donations the financial cost was minimal.

We hope that a combination of promoting the excitement of the centenary in 2025, reduced uncertainty around Covid, and positive reports from the small surge of Youth attendees we had this year will encourage more to attend going forward.

Verbal feedback from campers was universally positive. 74 attendees filled out evaluations, and their feedback was also overwhelmingly positive. Three young campers had such a good time they elected to stay on for Session II.

- b. We would like to thank our wonderful staff for a fantastic session, and TMC and Exec for their support and assistance.

Respectfully,

- Marc and Keira Hartstein, Pinewoods Scottish Sessions 2024 Co-Chairs -

5. ESCape Pinewoods Session, 2024 (**Connie Kent**)

ESCape 2024 was a great success, with our highest attendance ever! For the first time since ESCape started, we sold out and had a waitlist.

This year, 159 people registered for camp, and as expected some withdrew in the months leading up to camp. We had slightly stricter Covid policies than PCI required, and although (as always) reactions to the policy were mixed, we heard from several registrants that this was the camp they felt safest attending due to those policies. We had a few people withdraw for various reasons (injuries, illness, family matters) including several who were exposed to or contracted Covid in the days before camp, but overall had great attendance. We were able to work through our entire waitlist, and our final number at camp was 139 (a little shy of full camp due to some of the last-minute Covid withdrawals).

ESCape 2024 ran from Monday, July 1 through Friday, July 5, and over the course of the week, no one tested positive for COVID. We did not hear any reports of post-camp Covid cases apart from one person who was confident that he caught it after returning home.

For those unaware, ESCape combines English, Scottish, and Contra dancing, and it is the only session at Pinewoods that offers all three traditions. Our class offerings this year included the usual English for All, Advanced English, Scottish for All, Scottish Challenge, Scottish Technique, Contra, Evening Dance Tutorial, and Song Swap. Other classes offered this year were Conditioning, Harmony Singing, Morris, and a music workshop. Campers stepped up to offer additional volunteer-led classes in shape note singing, change ringing, couples dance, and contra flourishes. Our annual Chocolate Tasting Party on Thursday afternoon featured showcases from several different classes.

Classes were generally well attended. We usually expect a mild downward trend over the course of the week, but saw a surprising (and exciting!) increase in many classes on day two.

Evening dances continued to be split into thirds with each tradition getting about 55 minutes of dancing each night. On the final night, we started with a Grand March and ended with the Pinewoods Reel. The evening dances were well attended all four nights, even given the masking requirements on Monday. Each night, we ended the dance with a song. After parties included the Welcome Party with a Canada Day Theme, a Games and Tunes Party, Pub Night, and the Last-Night Pinecones Party. The Welcome Party on Monday was held in Pine Hollow (ending promptly at midnight with some people continuing the festivities later in the Camphouse), while Games and Tunes Party and Pub Night were in the Camp House.

Camper evaluations were mostly very positive with the general sentiment that camp is too short! We are taking camper feedback about programming and staffing into consideration as we plan for ESCape 2025.

Our budget has been finalized, and there was just one main deviation from our proposed budget for this year: We provided free covid tests to all of our staff members, in accordance with our policy of mandatory testing for the first two days. We'll make sure to include this in future budgets, but despite the extra expense, we still made a profit of \$3272.34, which has been split between CDS-Boston and RSCDS.

We want to express the greatest thanks for April Birnie and Daniel Potter for all the organizing they have done for ESCape over the past several years. They are both stepping off the committee

this year, and the remaining members (Connie Kent, Kate Fais, and Laurie Tupper) will be joined by Chloe Levine and Geoffrey Wood. We have already begun planning for next summer and are in the midst of hiring our staff. We expect that registration will be open by the end of January 2025.

6. Summer's End Weekend, 2024 (**Roberta Lasnik**)

August 24 to 26, 2024 was our second time at Hulbert Outdoor Center in Fairlee VT. Because of HOC's schedule we had to change our schedule to run Saturday night to Monday morning. It was an experiment and as such, was fairly successful. 49 campers and staff were up to the challenge and by all reports a good time was had by all. HOC has a lovely green campus with winterized cabins and canvas tents for housing. We hired a caterer for the Saturday evening meal and HOC provided the remaining meals for the 'weekend'.

Arthur McNair and Beth Birdsall were our full-time teachers with Lois New coming in Sunday afternoon to lead the Party Prep Class and MC the evening party. We offered an 'Essentials' Class in Quick Time and Strathspey and they were taught by Martha Kent and Susie Long.

Terry Traub along with Malka Traub-Pomerantz, Debbie Jarvis on fiddles; Nate Silva on pipes and Howard Lasnik on percussion filled the dance spaces with great music. Debbie stepped in at last moment for Catherine Miller who came down with Covid before camp. Kudos to Debbie for joining us!

All participants tested for Covid upon arrival and 24 hours later. We are pleased to say – We had ZERO positive tests both at camp and following into the next week.

We appreciate our time at HOC and will work with the timing and housing for Summer's End 2025.

Our thanks go out to the Boston RSCDS for their continued support of Summer's End providing the insurance coverage we need to run the camp.

We want to take this time to publicly thank Susie Long for her service on the Summer's End committee. If you are interested in joining a fun group of people who want to see dancing continue in the late summer, please speak to me or anyone on the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roberta Lasnik for the Summer's End Committee

-Gary Apfel, Dawn Hathaway, Martha Kent, Loren Wright, and Susie Long (past Member)-

7. Other Business:

a. Nominating Committee—candidates wanted (**MaryEllen Scannell**)

- i. This year we are starting early to identify volunteers for future exec spaces. We will be looking for a new Vice President (Marsha is stepping down). The election will be held for 2 at-large members. The Executive committee needs to fill at least one more space in the nominating committee.
- ii. Meetings are all Zoom, last Wednesday of each month. Please see MaryEllen for job descriptions. (inviting)

b. Publicizing Branch events and classes—help needed (**Susie Petrov/MaryEllen Scannell**)

- i. The more people who are involved, the more we can extend this list (John will combine lists with previous ball chairs). Publicity needs to be a priority, and create a small committee or group to focus on and implement
- ii. Currently, co-chair of event is responsible for publicity for that event. This may need to be expanded and made more purposeful. Need to cultivate next generations to host and help and lead future events.
- iii. Anyone who has desire, willingness, and expertise please see Susie.

Motion to adjourn, seconded, approved. 8:38