



CDSS Exec Meeting, Madison, WI

by Craig Meltzner, Carol Ormand and Pam Paulson

Like the spokes of a wheel, the travel paths of the CDSS Board members led to the hub of this traveling Exec Meeting in Madison, WI, in November 2016. Executive Committee members, a guest Board member, and our Executive Director came from CA, WA, OR, TX, NH, VT, NJ, MA, DC and MO.

Changes Are Coming—Our Transition

This was the first in-person meeting of the Executive Committee after Rima Dael's announcement of her resignation as Executive Director. A large topic of conversation revolved around planning for Rima's departure and the transition moving forward. The CDSS Transition Committee is in place and five members of the Committee were present at the Exec meeting. During this transition we are working with the same consultant, Third Sector New England, that we did during the last Executive Director transition. TSNE is familiar with our organization and can recognize the growth that has happened since they last worked with us. They will effectively assist us in getting ready to hire a new ED, conduct the actual search, and help with the on-boarding process. Transition Committee members facilitated several exercises to gather feedback from the Executive Committee to help guide discussions with the consultant. We are well-positioned to navigate this transition and it's a wonderful opportunity to strengthen our organization.

Executive Committee Meeting

The Exec is charged with meeting more frequently than the full Board and can make many decisions for the Board. The Exec meets monthly via conference call to conduct business and also meets in-person twice a year in a different community each time. In addition to the value of face-to-face discussions, this enables us to see what is going on around the country.

Craig Meltzner, Treasurer, led the discussion on finances, always a critical part of every Board meeting. The budget is being developed for 2017. We are still working on dealing with a common issue in many participatory arts organizations—a longstanding structural deficit. (Translation: CDSS spends more than it earns in a year.) Solving this takes time and care and we continue to diligently work to eliminate this problem.

Pam Paulson, chair of the Nominating Committee, shared the 2017 Board slate. (The letter announcing the slate was sent in December to the general membership.) The new Board members starting their first term in April 2017 are Beverly Francis, Peter Baker and Susie Lorand. Chris Weiler will be starting the second year of a two-year partial term. Donald Hughes begins a three-year term after serving a partial term. Brooke Friendly, Dorcas Hand and Sharon McKinley each will start serving their

second three-year term. We'd like to thank the Board members that are leaving in April—John Mayberry, Michael Hamilton and Martha Edwards. Welcome to the new and continuing Board members and a sincere thank you to departing Board members.

David Shewmaker updated the group on what is happening at Pinewoods Camp (PCI). A new PCI director, Carl Mastandrea, started January 1st. PCI and CDSS have a long and rich shared history as well as an excellent working relationship. We look forward to working with Carl.

Rima is making sure that details of what she has been working on and has completed are documented to help in a smooth transition going forward. Earlier this year we started the long-awaited investment in technology and infrastructure upgrades. The initial installation has happened. Staff training is ongoing as well as the tweaks necessary to gain the best efficiencies from the system.

Dance, Music and Song—Why We Do What We Do

Madison has a contra community centered around a strong core of diverse dancers; a small, but dedicated, English dance community; and one of the longest-running morris teams in the U.S. On Friday, there was an English dance held with CDSS Board members providing the calling, and Rare Privilege, with guest fiddler Martha Edwards, provided the music. The dance was lively and there were many regular contra dancers in attendance giving English a try. On Saturday the community hosted a contra dance with local callers and CDSS Board members providing the calling with the Madison Open Band (a.k.a. "the MOB") providing the music. At the Saturday dance there were several brand new dancers and the community welcomed them so that a good time was had by all.

On Sunday a potluck was held at the home of local dancers, Carol Ormand and John Bohlman. This gave the dance communities a chance to get to know one another better by sharing a meal. There was also a discussion facilitated by Rima focusing on the strengths of the community and opportunities for the community to grow. Several things stood out about this community.

- The first is the value of the dance venues that they have: Grace Episcopal Church, Folklore Village, and the Gates of Heaven Synagogue, as well as the Prairie Hill Waldorf School. In each of these locations the community has worked to be a partner with the

venue rather than a group that just comes in to use the space. There may be a potential for Folklore Village and CDSS to have a relationship as peer organizations.

- The second strength is the diversity of the dancers. Madison has a large university so students and recent grads are part of the community as well as folks that have been dancing for decades. At the monthly dance held at the Prairie Hill Waldorf location, 10-30 students from a small local college often attend.

- The third strength is the wealth of local callers and musicians, a natural outgrowth of the weekly open mic, open band dance that Madison has run for more than twenty years.* Many of these callers and musicians are known beyond Wisconsin. Some examples are callers Carol Ormand, Steve Pike and Roger Diggle, and the band Rare Privilege.

One of the challenges for the broader community is that Madison's dance groups aren't well connected to each other. During the meeting, one of the contra dancers, who has been dancing for four years, said she didn't realize that there is an English dance in town. The community spent some time brainstorming ways to keep each other better informed, such as making a flyer about the English dances that could be available at the contra dances. The groups now have an opening to continue discussions on how to help each other be sustainable and grow! Since this meeting, several musicians in the community have founded a monthly ECD music jam. Four of them have taken turns joining the house band, Toad in the Hole, in playing for the English dances.

Many thanks to Steve Pike, the local coordinator for our visit; he made sure we felt welcome and had everything that we needed. A big thank you to the local community for housing us, dancing with us and welcoming us into their midst for three days. We certainly felt the hospitality!

* *"Madison's Tuesday Night Dances—Fostering Talent for More Than Twenty Years,"* by Carol Ormand, *CDSS News*, Spring 2014.