

**Mt. Airy Role Terms Task Force  
Resolutions and Recommendations  
DRAFT 2.3 12/22/2019**

*This draft of the task force's recommendations to the board incorporates comments and conclusions drawn during the Task Force meeting on December 5 and the board meeting on December 18.*

**In summary, what are the recommendations of the Role Terms Task Force?**

The Task Force recommends that the members of PATMAD vote on the following resolutions early in March.

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How many Thursday dances each month should have gender free role terms? *Pick one.*

- None. All should use traditional gendered terms.
- One
- Two
- Three
- All should use gender free terms

The board will use the median of the votes cast to set the schedule going forward.

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Which gender free terms should be used? *Mark your first and second choice.*

- Larks and Ravens
- Larks and Robins
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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The Task Force includes Sheryl Neckritz, Mark Moore, Jim Rice, Jim Kitch, Jennie Walsh, Donna Hunt and Chris Deephouse (chair). The Task Force and the process we followed was authorized by the PATMAD board in the spring of 2019. The Task Force led two community round table sessions attended by 50 people, some of them twice. The Task Force then sent out a questionnaire that received over 100 responses. The results of these efforts and our own discussions are covered in the following pages.

In addition to accepting this report and authorizing the vote in March, the Task Force recommends that two dances in March and/or April use gender free role terms.

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**How many gender free dances should we have each month?**

108 people responded to the Task Force's questionnaire. The responses show:

- Between 10% and 15% of respondents do not enjoy Gents & Ladies.
- About 30% do not enjoy Larks & Ravens. From the comments, a small number of these people prefer gender free calling and have a specific dislike for Larks & Ravens.

The round table discussions and the questionnaire responses brought to the surface that the community is divided. A significant segment prefer traditional terms and a significant segment prefer gender free terms. To allow everyone to dance at least some of the time with terms they enjoy, the Task Force recommends that we split the schedule each month. We recommend the community vote on the following resolution:

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Proposed Resolution for the vote in early 2020:

How many Thursday dances each month should have gender free role terms? *Pick one.*

- None. All should use traditional gendered terms.
- One
- Two
- Three
- All should use gender free terms

The board will use the median of the votes cast to set the schedule going forward.

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**Which gender free role terms should we use?**

Several survey respondents prefer gender free calling but dislike Larks & Ravens specifically. Several respondents suggested alternative terms and positional calling.

It will be good for the community to allow flexibility in which gender free terms are used. Proposals for alternative terms are useful only to the extent that callers are willing to use them. Having new gender free terms each month will likely be confusing to dancers, especially beginners. Many dancers do not want to be guinea pigs in a social experiment; they just want to dance.

Positional calling is favored by some national callers such as Beth Molaro and Brooke Friendly. However some coordinating callers are unfamiliar with it, and we have never had a full dance with positional calling here in Mt. Airy. The Task Force recommends a “wait and watch” approach to positional calling.

Some survey respondents suggested Larks & Robins and Leads & Follows. Larks & Robins is being used regionally. Anne Lutun will coordinate using Larks & Robins on February 20 so we can try these terms.

Leads & Follows has some significant negatives. Some people think these terms subvert the community nature of contra dancing. Some people think these terms imply a power dynamic between the roles that does not belong in contra dancing. Importantly, several coordinating callers are willing to call any gender free terms except Leads & Follows. Hence the Task Force recommends not using Leads & Follows.

Given these factors, the Task Force recommends the following resolution be on the ballot.

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Proposed Resolution for the vote in early 2020:

Vote for your first and second choice for which gender free terms to be used:

- Larks and Ravens
  - Larks and Robins
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
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**Should we explore an alternative dance series that is explicitly gender free?**

Several people suggested establishing an alternative dance series that is explicitly gender free. Some folks want to be part of an alternative contra community. Others hope that the alternative community will start another series to help preserve the traditions of the Thursday dance. The Task Force asked about this idea in our questionnaire to see if this idea has sufficient community support to pursue further.

Discussions with potential organizers have focused on a Sunday or Monday dance series. These days reduce competition with nearby Thursday and Saturday contra dances. These days could be good for booking touring bands after they play a Saturday dance or the Glen Echo Sunday dance. These days are also better than weekends for renting a suitable hall. The Commodore Barry Club and Summit Church would be a good location for logistical reasons. But a location in or near Center City or West Philadelphia could draw a bigger audience.

Here is a summary of the responses to our questionnaire on this matter:

Would you support a gender free dance in or near West Philly or Center City on a Monday or Tuesday night?				
Would you support a gender free dance in Mt. Airy on a Monday or Tuesday night?				
<i>GF Center City</i>	Percent of Responses	<i>GF Mt. Airy</i>	Percent of Responses	
Regular	11	Regular	10	Yes, I would attend regularly, but I am not available to be an organizer.
Organizer	4	Organizer	1	Yes, I would attend regularly. I volunteer to be co-organizer of this dance.
Occasional	33	Occasional	45	Yes I would attend occasionally.
No	56	No	49	No, this idea has little interest for me.
blank	4	blank	3	<i>Did not respond to this question</i>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>108</b>	

These responses suggest a new series could be successful in terms of both attendance and organizer commitment. The following people responded to the survey that they volunteer to be organizers:

- Liesl Jandry, Mark Moore, Oliver Lyons, Vince Budnick

The Task Force recommends: the Board should consider forming a committee to investigate the feasibility of a new series in or near Center City or West Philly.

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**What is the timeline?**

Thu Dec 5	The Role Terms Task Force met to our consider recommendations to the board.
Wed Dec 18	The PATMAD Board meets at 7:15pm at Donna's & Chris' house. A report from the Role Terms Task Force is on the agenda. The full Task Force is invited to participate.
Jan 17, 2020	Rick Mohr will coordinate a full evening that will use <b>Larks &amp; Ravens</b>
Feb 6, 2020	Last day to become a member and vote in March.
Feb 20, 2020	Anne Lutun will coordinate a full evening that will use <b>Larks &amp; Robins</b> We will have a community meeting, before or during the dance, to explain the upcoming vote and respond to questions.
March 5 & 12	A vote on resolutions regarding role terms is scheduled.
March 18	At their monthly meeting, the board will ratify the outcome of the vote and set the schedule for which weeks will use each set of role terms.
March & April	Two dances TBD will have gender free role terms.
Thu May 7	The schedule goes officially into effect with the May to August booking period.

**Other topics for discussion**

Several other ideas came up during the round table discussion and in response to our questionnaire. Some concerns are:

- Some dancers who dance both roles are annoyed by snide comments when they dance a role different from their usual gender role.
- Some dancers expect to do a ballroom swing with all neighbors in the line. Some dancers are uncomfortable doing a ballroom swing with a person of the same gender.
- Some dancers suggested having one line for traditional opposite gender dancing and having another line where same gender dancing is welcome.

These ideas may be tangential to deciding on the role terms callers should use. The Task Force requests that the board address these concerns following appropriate channels.

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**Appendix: Questionnaire Statistics**

<b>Number of Responses</b>		108		
	<i>Enjoy Gents &amp; Ladies</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Grand Total
Percent of Responses	74.1%	11.1%	14.8%	100.0%
	<i>Enjoy Larks &amp; Ravens</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Grand Total
Percent of Responses	48.1%	29.6%	22.2%	100.0%

<i>Percent of Responses</i>	<i>Live within one hour?</i>		
<i>Attended round tables</i>	Yes	No	Grand Total
Two	7.4%	0.9%	8.3%
One	16.7%	9.3%	25.9%
None	53.7%	10.2%	63.9%
Do not recall	1.9%		1.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>79.6%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>