

January 26, 2014, Community Town Hall Meeting Notes

Uncut Version

1

7:00-7:10pm – Introductions

Everyone: Find someone you don't know and introduce yourself! (4 minutes of chatting)

Management Self-Introductions: Who are you, what do you do here, and what do you do not here?

- Staff: Jess, Member Services Coordinator, dance & permaculture & Rob, Facilities Manager, robots & rally car racing
- Directors & Officers:
 - Aaron (Chair), Mimi (Treasurer), Rahul, Lenny, Ellen (Secretary)

7:10-7:15pm – Community Announcements & Projects

-Molly asked for community announcements:

Lenny- mentioned that is trying to talk to all past or interested volunteers- asked all to come talk to him.

Jesa- reminder that deadline for SOS is end of the month- includes paying (she thinks \$55.)

Kristen Stubbs- teasecraft next meeting March ??- they were in Dig before Arisia

Rob- setting up kids robot competition- looking for adult mentors- week after SOS-practice at asylum? Competition location not set yet

Jimmy Rogers- runs weekly free electronics/robotics night, same night as fabrics- wants to encourage members to help offer public events- come talk to him or other event organizers if interested.

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7:15-7:20pm – MOLLY Intro: State of the Asylum

At critical state for asylum, want to still be here in 20 or 50 years. Will hear from people about actions to address immediate short term- everyone think about what they want to see/have at Asylum going forward, how can they help. Will talk about how community can help and engage. Will have volunteer task force to get needed work done, but also make sure volunteers are getting what they want from AA. Have suggestions for volunteer committees, but will also take suggestions from community- post all at front desk at end of meeting.

This is the last town hall meeting Molly will run as interim ED, will be here for rest of year but someone else may be running the meeting in April- excited about changes and AA getting the deep management experience it needs. Honor to have been here.

7:20-7:30pm – AARON: Changes in Leadership

Glad for good turnout. A little over year ago, AA had potential crisis, Gui left, Molly stepped in as IED, has run things in last year, faced many challenges. This past Dec, Molly reminded board that they should really start looking for permanent ED- are now in baby steps toward that.

Will require deep business skill, can manage finances, manage staff, talk to community, interface w grant donors, and also need to really get what AA does, understand people and passion, and meet needs of membership. Will be pretty unique individual, will probably 6-9 months to find.

Therefore because facing problems now, will hire interim General Manager - person w/ deep management experience who can come in right now, who has experience w/ similar problems, can help deal with them. There are people who specialize in making businesses run smoothly, this is what we are looking for. Job

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description was posted a couple days ago, Mimi has posted far and wide- will be to at least a dozen places. Plan is to deal w/ current outstanding issues.

Not sure yet what the appropriate salary is. Once have upper range, will offer motion to community because will need community vote to approve the new position. Can't do quite yet because don't have numbers.

Step 2- Molly will transition from IED to I Education Director- she will do this as temporary position through end of year, so there will be overlap with new ED after they come in. Also new IG or ED will be able to hire new education/ marketing/ events person.

Step 3- develop job description for new ED. Need feedback from community, etc and IGM- will start w/ general template, get input from IGM with what specific skill needed, and then input from community.

Tangential- still need to readdress bylaws issues from last year. One of committees will be a bylaws one, to have community as well as board involved. Don't think need sweeping changes, but some issues, also IG suggestions. Pass out sheet going around.

Questions- Derek- are we looking for bookkeeper? Will Molly still be legal for ED for contracts? -most ED tasks will go to IGM- board needs to double-check for cases where ED written into contracts legally. Molly will continue to be president, which per bylaws is defined as chief exec. Have job description for bookkeeper job, are evaluating candidates, also still accepting resumes. Molly reiterated that she will only serve as president as long as appropriate, will resign if becomes obvious that not.

Are any people being considered for bookkeeping job members? Aaron not sure- Molly says yes. Aaron says put out request to community for names. Reiterate that want to hear from member and outside, anyone qualified and interested.

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7:30-7:40pm – MIMI Recap/Followup re: Finances

Recap of Thursday meeting- see notes on wiki for basic info- talked about basic behind-ness in collections, fundraising committees,

Questions- why no gallery space? hard to hear but think was thinking we could set up things for sale

-someone pointed out that many of these low-hanging fruit could make more work for desk.

-Rob- asked when more recent financial info available- is there some way for members to see info before 90 days, before becomes public. Mimi hopes by having bookkeeper we will have information available more quickly- need to have books audited for tax reasons as non-profit. Asylum has grown so much that have been delayed at getting everything caught up- still going through from June. Will try to get out as soon as possible- have committed to quarterly, managing nitty-gritty is kind of board's job.

Lenny- asked Rob what he actually wants- he says mostly transparency, mimi has addressed

What were key issues that weren't expected- Molly answered. Mostly build-out, that project was tied into permitting, had trouble will contractor- kept getting delayed, came out to be twice as expensive- original quote was unrealistic. Also problem that he wouldn't do permitting w/out it. Really needed permitting-board agreed to. At time, did not realize how tight cash cushion was. Was within budget, but not within cash flow. Molly feels some amount of responsibility, part of reason she wanted to push new ED as she does not have background to forsee such things, Thanks staff/Rob for working to forsee issues.

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Was there fine for not getting occupancy permit- No, there was not. Rob- there was possibility that could have raised fees, but worked with City, were not charged extra.

Mimi- part of response was freeze on spending, setting up payment schedules with people we owe. Jess will talk payment issues later.

7:40-7:50pm – MIMI & AARON Fundraising Update & Call to Action

- Matching Grant, New Scholarship Fund, Fundraising Committees

Aaron- announcement- very generous offer Derek- has given \$5K to start fund to give to people in the form of Asylum services for doing awesome. Members, potential members, etc, to use AA services. Open fund, can accept new additions. Application, reviewed and chosen. Will be committee to help set up grant, and make decisions. No board or staff on committee- can give up to half of current amount every quarter.

Ecco- what are criteria? Aaron- currently deliberately vague- could be awesome idea, could be member currently in trouble. But only AA services, no money.

Second generous donor- both members, shows level of commitment. Jim Bredt- has made challenge grant to members and public- all cash donations in next few weeks, he'll match up to \$10K. This will make the difference between counting pennies and buying blades for bandsaw- Rob points out that Jim already buys blades – has habit of quietly donating tools, blades, etc. without saying anything. Can make donation by putting check in box, also setting up on-line donation that will get you receipt.

7:50-8:30pm – ROB Facilities Update and Q&A:

- Including status updates on the Multicam, Lasersaur, and new cameras in the shops

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Thank everyone for support after house fire. Derek on own facilitated building laser cutter- letting community help (which is probably slowing down). Have new vinyl cutter. General thanks to everyone.

Multicam- lots of discussion fits business model. Original set up no- Rob has been talking to Drew and other owners. No good documentations of original agreement, Will be per job cost to use machine – part to cover materials and space, rest to escrow account for maintenance and upkeep. Unique and very expensive, noisy aound classes still have to figure out how to time jobs accurately, then will be billed similar to 3D printer and laser cutter.

Lasersaur- Derek currently wiring, will hopefully be done soon. Then will get to work soon on training. People who helped get evaluated, then will retrain people who were trained on old lasercutter- will try to run lots of classes. Will pair classes- one paid for prior members, one class for new trainees. Do need to throttle getting people on so don't overload. Have air supply and ventilation.

Have had significant damage to tools, some safety issues. Some problems of unreported. Ie- unreported kickback- damage compressor room door, concern that was not reported. Will add some cameras, to see if have same person causing problem- less money concern that safety concern, person who gets hurt is often the one behind the person doing stupid thing. Have 400 pieces of equipment, lots of volunteers, - listed a bunch of names.

Commities- facilities and maintance and upkeep committies. People have been doing lost of work- Rob's here 60-70 hours, but open much longer. Have lots of volunteers, but needs people to help with volunteer task management to help get organized, also people to help keep inventories updated, audit and check once a month- ie, if new equipment shows up, that's great, but if not on book, don't know what to do with it- is it owned or leased, what if damaged etc. Can just sign up for shop interested in, 2-3 hours per month. Larger job- purchase and replacement costs for items- complicated for

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older/used equipment. For leaseholder agreements and in case of catastrophe. Also important so can give bank valuation of stuff.

Andrew Bressen- originally all tools leased or owned. Now mostly owned. How much do we own versus leased? Are we trying to own, or lease or what?

In past leased lots of cheaper tools, didn't have out to get out of lease- now we are still paying beyond value of equipment and still don't own. Does not make sense. So now are reducing liability to members- gets messy if have both lease agreement, and membership issues. Leased equipment- benefit, but who is liable- ie, plasma cutter- it was broken, but we had keep paying for lease value while not working, ended up costing twice value of machine. Close to half million in equipment. 110K leased from members, nearly 400K in owned. (currently counting multi-cam at 65K). Counts donated software- about \$200K.

Molly- another reason for avoiding leases is that personal equipment not as likely to be industrial level- trying to replace leased equipment with heavier duty purchased. Molly has been working on auto-desk donation- should be available later this week, setting up classes Feb/March, will announce.

Ecco- are we looking to avoid leases, or change. Rob- when have more money, goal was to avoid leases, w/out greentown expansion, can't do that right away. Trying not to lease anything that is not maintainable industrial machine. Gave example if plasma cutter where part broke w/in 24 hours. Molly- misfit between current leases and current value goes both ways- like for Multi-cam, value of lease, dribbled out so long term that less appealing. Rob pointed out this if breaks, AA could be on the hook for 65K. Discussion of time lag in replacement parts for plasma cutter (ordered parts, but taking months to arrive.)

Cameras are in office. Have way to review footage and keep secure. Would like to not need cameras, but people doing sketchy things, and not telling Rob about them, so need to keep things safe for everyone.

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Very few injuries, because generally safety conscious. "Don't touch with your fingers."

Lenny- reminder of RT system- if you break something or trip breaker, make sure you tell someone.

Rob- repairs 50-60 times a week, no one will get mad, just tell someone- email, sheets in shop. Also call for paying bills- only ~5-6% of budget goes to equipment.

What donated tools have got?- Most people who donate are members- Jim Bredt, blades, cutting tools. Other members, most prefer to be anonymous. Currently no tools donated by manufacturers. Rob is meeting with people, trying to solicit (ie, meeting w/ DeWalt next week). Trying to figure out how to manage members who have contacts at companies, trying to sort out. Aaron- if you have contacts, sign up for fundraiser committee.

8:30-8:45pm – AARON IT Update and Q&A:

- Including status updates on the wireless networks, infrastructure projects, and the search for new member account management & billing software

A couple of weeks back, Molly asked Aaron to manage IT. A few things became clear- very few people understood how complicated was, thanked Lenny. Currently tasked with setting up bulk of network so will look like something outside company can manage- get staff and network to be something that can be cheaply outsourced w/ 24/6 coverage- email, invoices, etc. At the moment, have current contractor, will be here short term, long term will be combination of internal and exterans. Looking at external people – not many hours, many give discounts to nonprofits. Also looking for internal group who can deal w/ problems- is helping people get on wifi, minor office issues. Have committee, but will need specific skills- will see about getting people organized. Invisilbe stuff mostly all working. Right

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now, still issues with front desk systems, looking for extra resources from community to help with that, important for deskies.

-something is pending upgrade, waiting for new equipment to upgrade internet access, one router sometimes flaky, will replace as soon as have funds- generally will rework in a few seconds.

Most issues are minor- keeping vpn and ssh tunnels open for long time.

Also looking at brining up stability of front desk systems- kiosk, members systems. Will be primary effort at immediate future. Looking at setting up new payment system. Have been having problems with intuit- this is why have not have auto-payments. Aaron is evaluating 3 different systems, hope to have autopay system up for march invoices.

2- trouble ticket system- currently just send email. Want to supplement with ticket system- will let us track problems and who is working on them and track histories. If goes well, will expand to other issues- customers and maintenance, making sure looking at systems that can be expanded. Also can check if outside building.

Finally, evaluating member management applications. Member app currently- would like to have system that handles everything w/out quickbooks- records, bills, membership levels, etc. Would like members to be able to do more on their own, less work for staff. Will be compatible w/ non-quickbooks. For billing, things need to be integrated with quicklbook, but all looking at can also work with other systems and have open interface- need to work for quickbooks for near future. This is widespread issue.

Member who was treasurer for other non-profit, had similar issues- no software well designed for makerspaces- gym programs closest fits.

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8:45-9:00pm – JESS Member Services Update and Q&A:

- Including status updates on billing, account errors, collections, front desk, and the space rentals waiting list

Thanked deskies- really hard job.- 8 new deskies, almost all shifts covered.

Billing- excited about improvement to systems. Working on being more consistent on getting invoices out and correct w/ payment link- was not that way when started. Also problem w/ people who owe money. Update from Thursday – as of earlier today

67K- outstanding

30K- over 90 days.

10K – from December invoices

20K- January invoices

shes working on the 90+ day debt- see how much is still payable and how much is not collectable.

Why are 20K late from Jan- systems, delinquences. Jess- part is system- people are making payments, aren't hitting quick books. Also suspect that may be holidays, people have tight money and paying bills late. Also AA does not send out reminders, Jess is just starting to do that. No judgement- just come pay her or talk about money.

Molly- could you use more front desk volunteers? Jess- yes, could use two versus one person at more shifts, people come in and have to lock door if give tour.

Ecco- could people be trained to give tours to help front desk? Jess- would like more members to be comfortable with giving tours. Pointed out that document

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exists, Ecco- could have laminated copy at front desk. Derek- if interested, go on some tours, everyone's is different. At end of day, ask what interested in, show them, don't let them touch things. Suggested, could set up schedule. It was suggested, but never implemented.

Waiting list- see Jess if have questions about rentals. Since December, about 25 new space rentals, new spaces, and new people. Active waitlist of 75 people who have reconfirmed interest since Dec 1. Average wait time is currently 4-6 months. Sometimes more quickly- 11 open in January- depend on size available, if respond to email, then if show up to see, and then put down money. Encourage people to also get on discuss, some people can also sublet.

Ecco- policy for kicking people out. Jess- per agreement, if not active user, can be terminated. Molly- enforced to varying degrees. Hard to figure out. Some people don't see because they work odd hours. Some people are active members even if don't use space very much. Jess fine right now with paying for space but don't use. May be issue going forward. Rob- we encourage people to use the space versus asking them to leave.

Jess-with outstanding balances. Working on connecting invoice status to doors. Hope to be able to do that for February- if have not paid, will turn off card. Checking to see how feasible- technically doable, concerns about quality of quickbook records. If have any outstanding issues, please come and see Jess, including if think has resolved something but still getting emails.

Are people on waitlist members waiting for space, or people who don't want to be members till they get space. Jess not sure, but from recognized names, at least 1/3 current members, some clearly have not been here when come in.

Do we talk to them see if they want them. Jess, getting space mostly matter if how quickly get back- if don't respond, space may already go back. But also, talk about what to do- ie. Someone wanted to just repair motorcycle from basement- have not every told someone explicitly no, but some feel like better fit than others.

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Drew- number from Thursday was very different from tonight. Jess – 106K was number from early January, Jess reported 73K.

Any effort to put out more space numbers and signs, or maps. Jess- working on labels of all space from shelves up.

Request for opt-in photos- catalogue of space and members. Drew- opt in on Wiki, just not many people there yet.

Parking- several times been there when lot is almost full. Rob- working with landlord. Allotted 19 spaces, 1 for zip van. Rob wants to have spaces specifically marked out, but problem is how to police. Also issues, parking when snow, overnight parking. Only authorized to use Dane Street. When brewery and farmers market open, cars may be towed from L lot.

Will be installing more bike parking in the spring. Not sure any will be covered. Also want enclosed smoking area not near front door.

Handicapped spaces- didn't get done before winter, will do in the spring, will take more work than planned as ramp not compliant.

Molly- followup to Jess- after meeting, Molly will be front desk to accept pre-payments (six months or more by check, 3% discount), bill payments, donations.

9:00-9:15pm – MOLLY & RAHUL Educational Programs Update and Q&A

Rahul- will be working on long-term education programming strategy.

Thinking both in terms of quality of current programming, so both students and teachers feel like core parts of community, Also how to use space and maximize revenue for the space, new classes and venues.

New to community- please come talk to Rahul

Jessica- need more things during the daytime. Rahul- working on.

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Carolyn- could be project committee- Rahul definitely, Will add to list, sign up.

Art- many early courses very repetitive, need to be better about 101, 102, 103. Ie, took basic took training, lathe and mill, then took advance training, 2/3rds was lathe and mill. Rahul, looking at screening curriculum is part of plan that is being developed.

Andrew Bressen- progress on kids in space? Molly- have quotes pending from 2 new agencies, looking to see other options, hit crunch, had to reup w current insurance in Sept, Want to sort out by summer before reup again.

Question: Could we get special event coverage that could cover kids for specific things? Molly- will look into, has not checked so far.

- Has been talking to people about quickly getting money in- one item on list if kids STEM training, something people will give money too. Molly- we can't really get new insurance till September. We cannot get grant for kids' programming till know someone will actually be willing to insure us.
- Rahul: come talk to him after about ideas.

Multicam- more classes? Trying to get on schedule. Flexibility on when to hold- Molly- times to offer is limited because can't run when have any classes in woodshop and welding shop. Trying to find times when can hold classes that work for specific people trying to take classes.

Art- trying to spread out start times of classes so not all at same time of day month or time of day. Molly- trying to do, but narrow window timewise to have class when people can make- even 7 pm class is early for many computer class. Trying to run between 6-7, need to make sure people don't not take classes because too early.

Might be better to have extra desk staff- this was what Jess mentioned before.

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-More how to use tools classes – ie, router table in woodshop (Carolyn: none of the existing instructors highly experienced on router + router table, they're looking for experienced people to teach a class)

Everyone talk to Rahul for ideas, For now Molly will try to schedule as many classes as possible, will try to balance w/ member use. Also trying for more daytime programming. Also trying to do more outreach to daytime groups- elderly, disable, work search,

Lenny- extra welding space that needs ventilation? have approved po that didn't get out before cash crunch- over 8K, if someone to donate that, great, otherwise, needs to work.

Rahul- mentioned upcoming office hours.

9:15-9:20pm – MOLLY Events Update and Q&A

Cambridge Science festival- and street fair- AA, Greentown Labs, rock gym.

Molly desperately needs events committee- events committee and feel good awesome stuff committee- come up with creative ways to make community feel good about things.

9:20-9:25pm – MOLLY/AARON How to Get Involved: Summary & Wrap-up

Won't be easiest next 3-6 months, but will get through it, Management will try to be as transparent and responsive as possible. We should all be having more fun than we are having, should try to bring that back. Needs everyone's help with that.

Goal for next town hall meeting in April, have twice as many people show up (Rob counted 47 tonight). Will look at lists of committees, set up mailing lists for each one, also easy way for more people to sign on, Staff/board liaison will try to get going, will be looking for member to step up to help lead. Liaison will be to make sure group has what need, tie in with other groups.