

Artisans Asylum Board Book - MEMBERS - September 9, 2025

Agenda

- Call meeting to order
- Housekeeping
 - Vote on minutes
- Reports
 - Executive Director
 - Finance Committee
 - Governance Committee
 - Development Committee
 - DEI Committee
 - Strategic Planning Committee
 - ED Evaluation Committee
- Discussion
 - Board Recruitment/Election
 - Communications to Members
 - Public Version of Board Book
 - Member Meeting
 - Structure of Artisans
 - Board Communications to Members
 - Collaboration with MassArt MDes Program
 - Asset Map
- Executive Session

Housekeeping

Minutes

Recorded and submitted by Dan Kulla, Secretary

Minutes for the July Board Meeting were reviewed and approved.

Moving forward McCarter and English will be responsible for minutes.

Reports

Executive Director

Submitted by Carol Ward, Executive Director

Operations

The major update in operations is the successful rollout and completion of the new membership agreement. To date the vast majority of members have signed the agreement, with a small group of day pass holders and 24/7 members still needing to sign. Amber and I are working on getting to 100% completion, there were no major negative reactions to the agreement as a whole.

Sal and I are working on daily, weekly and monthly building checklists and he is taking the lead on ensuring both buildings are clean, members are keeping belongings where they should be and coordinating large scale projects with HRE.

Sal is also working on reconfiguring the prior SCUL space in Antwerp, with the goal to create more studio and storage space for increased earned income opportunities. This project should be completed by the end of September, with the goal to start renting spaces in October.

With the help of Sal and Dan I'm working with OuncelT to complete three large scale projects - additional security cameras throughout Holton, fixing Wi-Fi issues and developing a potential plan for a single "passkey" security system for users at A2.

Staff

Amber Halt is now our F/T on-site Member Services Manager - her main responsibilities will include day-to-day member interactions, studio rentals, new member acquisition, front desk operations and social media marketing.

Sarah Moriarty joined the F/T A2 team on September 8th as our new Education and Outreach Manager - her main responsibilities will be community outreach/programs, developing and implementing educational programming, class structure and management, and educational grant cultivation.

Committees

The Advisory Committee took a hiatus over the summer so I've been focusing my time and energies mainly in the Development Committee.

The Development Committee has been working on the LOI (letter of interest) for the Cummings Foundation. Also, they are helping me plan a Fall Friendraiser for October 18th.

The Strategic Planning Committee is working on both the plan and a new asset map - both of which we can use as supporting materials for funders.

I've also been working closely with the DEI Committee - specifically on policies and procedures related to ICE, and on three initiatives they are focusing on including a scholarship program, maker aid program and access workshops.

Development/Finances

Every Wednesday morning I attend a zoom meeting with Geoff and AI to go over the finances and any financial situations or questions we have as a group.

I'm working closely with Amber and one of our members, Cal, to create a gift shop area in the front lobby and create A2 branded merchandise. We'll likely need to purchase a POS (point of sale) system which could allow someone to sell merchandise, event tickets, memberships and class seats. I'm hoping this initiative will grow into an "earned income" committee soon.

Amber is also brainstorming new membership levels with me including: supporting, days, student and young professional.

Finance Committee

Chair: Geoff Chasin

Members: Dan McGrath, Dan Kulla, Carol Ward, *Damien Dong, AI Donatio*

- July 2026 financials were presented and reviewed. August financials will not be complete until after our board meeting. As soon as they are ready, we will circulate them to the board with annotations. Additionally, our goal is to have the August financials ready in time to present at the members meeting on September 18th. They will paint a clearer picture.
- In July, actuals were short of the budget, largely because of a shortfall in revenue. The shortfall was spread over all revenue categories. Unfortunately, some of the shortfall was due to timing issues and the sample is so small that it is hard to draw any real conclusions. Carol attends our meetings and is aware of the problem and our concerns. We'll know more when we see the August financials.
- Our full year forecast is positive largely because our staffing is starting later than expected.
- In short, we are guardedly optimistic about hitting our budget this year. Of course, whereas expenses always seem to come in as expected, revenue is never as certain. It's incumbent on all – staff, board, members – to help Artisans increase revenue wherever possible – whether it's by increasing membership, teaching or taking classes, or helping raise money through grants, individual donations, etc.

- Relevant documents have been turned over to the auditors who have begun the annual audit for FY25.

Governance Committee

Chair: Puppy

Members: Tom Cole, Greg Mertz, Jack de Valpine, Kit Cangardel

- Member Board Election - Planning is underway for the fall election of one Member-Elected Director and the Member Liaison seat. Governance is finalizing the process and timeline, and we recommend member input as we update the role description for the Member Liaison so it better reflects its intended purpose as a bridge between the board and membership.
- Board-Nominated Election - Two board-nominated seats will be filled this fall, including one newly vacated position. Outreach and recruitment are ongoing, though progress has been slower than anticipated due to uncertainty among current board members about how to encourage potential candidates while remaining sensitive to community dynamics.
- Exit Interview Framework - Greg Mertz has drafted an exit interview process for departing board members. This will capture lessons learned, board culture feedback, and continuity of responsibilities, with the goal of making exit interviews a standard part of offboarding.
- Conflict of Interest Policy & IT Contract - Governance reviewed the Code of Conduct and conflict of interest policy in relation to hiring a board member for short-term IT consulting work. The work was disclosed, the contract limited in scope, and the committee agreed that, as proposed, it does not conflict with his board role. This case highlights the importance of clarity and consistent application of our policies.
- Member Liaison Role Revision - The current description of the Member Liaison position does not fully serve the intent of the role. Governance would like to draft a clearer, more effective role description before the fall election.
- Defining Membership - Questions continue to arise about what it means to be a member of Artisans Asylum, rights, responsibilities, and expectations. While this is a cross-committee and staff topic, it could be useful for Governance to help frame the conversation and ensure alignment with bylaws, elections, and board/member roles.

DEIA Committee

Chair: Lisa Tacoronte

Co-Chairs: *Erin Shackleford, Sadie Forbes*

Members: Puppy, Michael Shia, Carol Ward, Will Sondey, *Bill Zimmer, Seth Mazor, Alex Bernstein*

Summary

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is currently focused on: securing funding to support DEI initiatives; planning the spring Maker Aid Workshop Series and identifying additional DEI-focused opportunities for the fall; expanding outreach to community partners and local neighbors; and organizing our internal response to support the safety and well-being of international members, particularly in the face of ICE-related concerns, including visual and spatial improvements, training and resources.

Details

- Grant Funding: working with Will to support DEI funding for Maker Aid and BIPOC/ Queer member Scholarship program through Cummings grant - submitting LOI Sept 17 ; look into corporate funders who do community reinvestment; short-term able to support month to month on some initiative to document evidence on what works for further support.
- Vision & Mission: Draft for the committee based on what everyone discussed and wrote in our exercise last time (hope is to help us stay aligned and focused)
 - Our Vision as a Committee: To welcome the full diversity of our surrounding community, serving as a trusted neighborhood resource where everyone feels they truly belong.
 - Our Mission as a Committee: We create meaningful pathways for community members to access our resources, skills, and spaces while building authentic relationships that benefit both A2 and our neighbors. We prioritize real action over performative gestures, ensuring that our efforts create tangible improvements in people's lives and projects.
- Maker Aid Update: Workshops on hold pending funding; fall options include artist resources talk and Perkins accessibility workshop; continue to promote Fix-it clinic continues; shifting to spring garden day with at-risk communities.
- Outreach & Partnerships: New org spreadsheet; partnerships emerging with Perkins School; potential to approach Herder Community Garden through Michael Shia for Maker Aid; Sarah (education/outreach manager) starts Sept 8 - work with her for continued outreach.
- ICE Response Proposal: Immediate safety measures underway; training with LUCE planned; public statement requires board approval at emergency meeting before Sept 10.

Next Steps

- Erin right out to LUCE training

- Lisa ICE statement draft meeting
- prep for Sept 10 board meeting (share in board book)
- Erin/Sadie/Lisa - Follow up with Carol and Will on future funding for month to month work

Development Committee

Chair: Michael Shia

Members: Jack de Valpine, Geoff Chasin, Michael Mittelman, Carol Ward, Will Sondey, *Karin Keane, Lyle Moffit, Abby Lipson*

Summary

The Development Committee is working on the following main areas: Grants, Individual Giving and Relationship Building. Work is being performed on these areas by subcommittees of the Development Committee.

- Grants (Michael Shia, Abby Lipson, Karin Keane, Lyle Moffit, Carol Ward) - A total of 10 grants have been applied for or are in the process of submission. Three grants previously applied for were not awarded.
- Individual Giving (Jack de Valpine, Michael Mittelman, Geoff Chasin, Karin Keane, and Carol Ward) - Work is in process for the planning and implementation of a Fall Friendraiser event to be hosted on site at A2. This event will have two parts, the first will focus on the guest list from the spring Cultivation Cocktail event and the second part will operate as a more general openhouse. Separately, work is being done to define and implement a pilot scholarship program based on concept and initial funding provided/sourced by a current A2 member.
- Relationship Building (Michael Shia and Carol Ward) - Work is ongoing to develop and build relationships with selected foundations and organizations. Current focus includes: The Boston Foundation, Design Studio 4 Social Innovation, Artists for Humanity, and the City of Boston Arts and Culture Department. Additional organizations are identified for future development. Separately, preliminary work is underway for Boston Area Maker and Art Space Consortium

Details

- We did not have a summer meeting, instead we had subcommittee meetings. These include: Grants, Individual Giving , Relationship Building
- Individual Giving
 - Fall Friendraiser - This event is in the planning/implementation stages. The plan is to host an onsite event at A2 on a Saturday in late October from 12-6. The framework for the event will be in two parts. The first couple of hours will be for guests who attended or were invited to the spring cultivation cocktail event. A2 facility tours will be provided as well as low demand activities that enable guests to see things being done and/or walk away with something made. In addition, time for mix/mingle will be allowed for. The second part of the afternoon is anticipated to operate more as an openhouse, with a broader distribution list. The

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- committee is working on ideas for how A2 can best feature our shops and community.
 - Scholarship Program - An A2 scholarship program is being considered. Scholarships will be need based and awarded based on an application process that will be developed. Recipients may apply funds to membership, classes and/or materials. Planning is ongoing with the expectation that the program will be announced at an upcoming even
- Foundation and Relationship Building
 - Asset Map (for The Boston Foundation)
 - We have a first iteration of the Asset Map and the associated narrative, describing what's going on in the map.
 - Reminder: What is an "Asset Map"
 - An Asset map for a non-profit organization is a visual representation of the organization's resources and capabilities, as well as the resources and capabilities of the community it serves. It helps identify strengths, potential partnerships, and areas where resources can be leveraged to address community needs. Asset maps are valuable tools for strategic planning , program development, and community engagement.
 - Once complete, hopefully by the upcoming Board meeting, we will schedule a meeting with the Boston Foundation.
 - Design Studio 4 Social Innovation
 - Identifying common goals and potential collaborations
 - Plan a visit to their Design Gym in the fall
 - Artist for Humanity
 - Had a conversation about potential collaborations
 - City of Boston Arts and Culture department
 - A meeting has been scheduled
- Other organizations we plan on contacting
 - The Foundry in Cambridge
 - BAMSfest Boston
 - The Theater Offensive Boston
 - Cultural Equity Incubator
 - Boston Arts Academy
 - Let me know if you have any suggestions of who we might talk to
- Boston Area maker and Art Space Consortium (Michael Shia and Abby Lipson)
 - Grass roots effort between A2 and Medford Public Library to build a consortium of all the maker and art spaces in the greater Boston area.
 - More as it develops

Strategic Planning Committee

Chair: Dariush Nejad

Members: Dan McGrath, Saeed Arida, Kit Cangardel, Michael Shia, Carol Ward

The Strategic Planning Committee has met and reviewed a document I compiled, which consolidates data from the community planning session, previous strategic plans, and input from earlier meetings. We are now finalizing the strategic pillars outlined below and defining tangible objectives for each.

2030 Strategic Plan Pillars

- Inclusive Access & Community Connection - Lower entry barriers, create 'entry point' programs, and grow external partnerships.
- Vibrant & Resilient Creative Community - Improve member experience, staff-to-volunteer ratio, and operational consistency.
- Education, Outreach & Workforce Development - Expand scalable education programs and mobile/satellite offerings for all ages.
- Entrepreneurship & Product Incubation - Support product-focused ventures with education, advisory, and services like 'Have It Made'.
- Visibility, Partnerships & Financial Growth - Launch merch, branded sponsorships, endowment planning, and a maker summit.

ED Evaluation Committee

Members: Michael Mittelman and Anne Wright

The ED Evaluation committee meets monthly with Carol. We have completed the first survey group and discussed the results with Carol. The group included 2 board members, 2 members, one staff member and one shop lead. Board members with feedback or concerns for Carol are encouraged to convey them through the ED Evaluation Committee.

Discussion

Board Recruitment/Election

We have had only three submissions to the governance committee for potential board members. There is concern about why we have low submission and if there are issues relating to A2 that are holding back board members from submitting possible candidates for board seats.

Communications to Members

Tom Lingner resigned as board liaison because he felt we should be publishing the minutes of board minutes. At the last board meeting (July) we debated publishing the minutes vs other forms of regular communication. We should settle on format and regularity.

Whatever we decide at the September board meeting should be conveyed to the members in the board presentation at the September 18 Member meeting.

Proposal: The secretary (currently Dan Kulla) can remove identifying information and financial details from the board book and publish the rest via email, to the wiki, and/or to the web site

Proposal: The secretary (currently Dan Kulla) can write a narrative summary of the board meeting and publish it via email, the wiki and/or the web site.

Discussion focused on what would be required to publish a “public” version of the board book with confidential/sensitive materials removed. A motion was put forward to try this approach out. The motion was approved.

Member Meeting

Michael Mittelman

Mike will be presenting on behalf of the board at the Member Meeting on September 18. This will include:

- A summary of our financials
- A broad description of the structure of a Massachusetts 501(c)3 organization
 - A corporation first
 - Must have President, Treasurer, and Clerk
 - An approved mission that serves the public good
 - Citizens of Massachusetts are “Shareholders”
 - Annual audits
 - Annual 990 forms
 - Enforced by the Massachusetts AG

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- A description of the unique aspects of the A2 structure
 - Member elected board members
 - Member liaison
 - Board role as appeal of terminated members
 - Board ability to terminate memberships
- A description of the board discussion of communication with the membership and our resolution in this matter. The board should come to a consensus that this is appropriate

Collaboration with MassArt MDes Program

Kit Cangardel

What's happening?

Kit & Carol have created a plan for A2 to be the “client” for MassArt’s Master of Design Innovation (MDes) capstone (which Kit teaches). A group of graduate students will spend two semesters working with us to build a solution for a problem we all determine together.

- **Fall (now):** explore A2, talk with members and staff, and figure out what problem is most worth solving.
- **Spring:** come back with more students to prototype and test solutions.

Who's involved?

- Students are mostly mid-career designers (visual, industrial, UX, UI). There are 8 students in the fall (2nd years) then 8 1st years join them in the spring for a total of 16.
- I have been teaching in the program since it started in 2017. I plan to guide them toward producing work that's both ambitious and useful for A2.

What does A2 get out of it?

- Fresh outside eyes on how we work and where we might go next.
- Research and synthesis about our community, members, and ecosystem.
- By December: a clear “problem space” to focus on.
- Next semester: tangible solution concepts (could be strategy, space ideas, prototypes, or communication tools).

Examples from past projects

- Last year: students partnered with a pediatrics office (Boston Community Pediatrics). They created communication materials for patient families about how SNAP benefits could help them. I can share this if people are interested & happy to talk about it.
- Other past work:
 - Service blueprints for healthcare systems.
 - Prototypes for public information campaigns.
 - Toolkits for community engagement.

How can A2 engage?

Workshops with members & other stakeholders: students can run hands-on sessions to hear directly from the community, to get input on the potential focus on projects, and to share the outputs.

Guaranteed touchpoints this semester:

- Kickoff workshop Sept 29
- Midpoint check-in Nov
- Final presentation Dec

Board/staff involvement is totally optional, you can lean in as much or as little as you want.

Why do this?

- Free consulting + fresh design capacity.
- A chance for members and staff to be heard.
- Connection to a pipeline of creative graduate students.
- Deepen connection to MassArt, & MassArt's connection to A2.

Happy to discuss in the board meeting, or feel free to email Kit with any questions.

Asset Map

Michael Shia

A final draft of the Asset Map was shared by Michael Shia. Upon completion, the document will be shared more widely, used in relation to our grants process, and may also serve as useful input to the strategic planning process.

Executive Session

The meeting was adjourned, Carol departed and the board went into executive session.