

Artisan's Asylum
BOARD BOOK
March 11 2026

Agenda

6:00 - Call meeting to order

6:05 - Housekeeping

Vote on minutes

6:10 -6:40 - Questions on committee reports

- [Finance Committee](#)
- [Governance Committee](#)
- [Community Involvement Notes/ Member Suggestions](#)
- [DEIA Committee](#)
- [Development Committee](#)

7:00 - Discussion: [ED Report](#)

7:10 - Discussion: Finances

7:20 - Discussion: Members Temperature Check

7:25 - Discussion: IT Changes

7:30 - Discussion: Reinvigorating Board Support for DEIA

7:45 - Marketing Committee

7:50 - Executive Session

Executive Directors Report

Presented by Carol Ward

Summary:

Since our last Board meeting my main focus has been to focus on the earned income sector of our operations and how that dovetails with staff roles, responsibilities and goals. In addition I've been spending a lot of time with Cal, Jesse and Dariush writing and refining our new strategic plan for the Board's approval in May.

Details:

Earned Income

- A task force was created based on conversations at the last Board meeting and that group met twice to first look at the various buckets from the previous Director's report which included various levers to potentially pull to increase earned income. The choice was made to focus on the following programs/projects:
 - Increase recurring monthly revenue baseline by converting "warm" leads and reactivating lapsed users.
 - Offer a "Plus One" add-on seat for \$100/mo to existing corporate accounts.
 - There is a waitlist for studios (1-3 months for Holton, 6-12 for Antwerp). Do not wait for inbound emails. Aggressively call the waitlist.
 - Schedule "Encore" educational sections of these proven winners.
 - Launch a campaign to "Sponsor a Machine." (e.g., "\$200 buys a new SawStop cartridge").
 - Focus gift shop inventory on high-margin A2 branded swag (T-shirts, mugs) and member created products.

Development

- There is a committee working on a fundraiser event which will be the focus of our Spring Appeal campaign, instead of the three letter appeal we've done for the last two years.
 - SAVE THE DATE - June 4th from 6pm-9pm at Craft Food Halls Allston (thank you Gardy!)
 - Focus is a tiered ticketed scale to entice external people to come to the event
- Geoff and I worked together on appeal letters to a select group of local elected officials. I had a meeting with Senator Brownsberger on February 5th and will be following up on some asks he had to work on programming together.

Finance Committee Report

Presented by Geoff Chasin

Members: Dan McGrath, Dan Kulla, Al Donatio (CFO), Damien Dong (past ED), Jesse Johnson
Gardy Desrouleaux

Summary:

- Please welcome Gardy and Jesse to the Finance Committee. Their financial understanding, business acumen and clear insights have already been extremely helpful!
- Our 2025 Taxes have been filed, all required reporting is complete, and our 2025 Audit has been completed. Big thanks to Al, Jada (our bookkeeper) and our CPA firm
- Our insurance will renew this month – we have comprehensive coverage and are still negotiating with the carrier to try to keep the financial impact to a minimum
- Our FY 2026 Forecast remains substantially the same.
- Carol, Al and I have been meeting weekly, and we've invited the full committee to join these meetings.
- The 2027 Budget will be presented at the May 13th Board meeting

DEIA Committee Report

Presented by Sadie Forbes

Members: Sadie Forbes, Kim Ducharme, Mike Mittelman

Summary:

DEIA has been focused on:

- Open Asylum - creating times / spaces for anyone to come use and learn in our facilities free (or on "what you can afford" basis)
- Evaluating applications and approving funds to Scholarship applicants
- Bringing in a consultancy to begin work at the BOD level
- Belonging / census questionnaire - Cal and Soon Young are both signed on to help this happen

Development Committee Report

Presented by Michael Shia

Members: Jack de Valpine, Geoff Chasin, Michael Mittelman, Abigail Lipson

Summary:

The Development Committee is working in the following areas: Grants, Sponsorships, Individual Giving, and Relationship Building. Will Sondey has taken the lead on coordinating development activities related to grants and sponsorships. Work is also being performed by subcommittees of the Development Committee.

- Grants (Michael Shia, Abigail Lipson, Will Sondey, Carol Ward)
- Individual Giving (Jack de valpine, Michael Mittleman, Geoff Chasin, Karin Keane, Carol Ward, Will Sondey)
- Relationship Building (Michael Shia, Abigail Lipson, Carol Ward).

Details:

Grants

The current crop of the grant submissions are for the YSL or the A2 artist in residence program. We have grant applications pending with 6+ granting organizations.

Individual Giving

Efforts are currently focused on fundraising for the fiscal year end coming in June. A key component of this is a fundraising event that is being developed and planned for in early June. Board related donations have been pledged for the event and goals are being established for additional/outside fundraising. The event will also provide an opportunity for announcement of a new grant funded stem learning program.

Work is also being undertaken to review existing grant applications with the idea of creating summaries of programs that are well defined with respect to scope and budget that could then be provided to selected prospective individual donors for their consideration in funding.

A2 Board Fundraising Toolkit (Abby Lipson and Michael Shia)

We are putting together a toolkit for board members to help them ask their networks for donations. This should be completed by the board meeting.

Relationship Building

- Please send us any suggestions of foundations or organizations that we should talk to and why.
- Meetings, including follow-ups, are scheduled with several organizations and government entities.
- We were present at the Mass Creative event at the State House
- Boston Area Art and Makerspace Consortium - this is moving very quickly with a planned meeting at A2 of all parties interested in this org to meet on Saturday April 25.

Governance Committee Report

Presented By Jack de Valpine

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

Summary:

Committee work is currently focused on two main areas: recruitment process for prospective board candidates and board diversity.

Details:

Recruitment of prospective board members is critical to the ongoing work of the board and development of A2. The committee recognizes that having a ready pool of prospective board candidates is an important objective. Therefore, committee work is shifting to focus on developing and implementing a board recruitment process that is more regular and continuous as opposed to a focused fall oriented recruitment process. An important goal of this effort is to create opportunities for prospective board members to engage with A2 sooner through ad hoc committee work or other efforts in support of A2 and its mission. This would enable prospective candidates to step into board seats with working knowledge of the organization as well as likely broader connections to other board members, staff and members. As part of this process, the committee is also considering board diversity and strategies that can be applied to evaluate, develop and expand.

A current board member is stepping down for personal reasons. The committee agreed that the seat should be filled in the near future rather than waiting until November. The committee is taking relevant steps to meet a prospective candidate to fill the open seat.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

Presented by Dariush Nejad

Members: Carol Ward, Jesse Johnson, Kit Cangardel, Saeed Arida, Greg Mertz, Cal Groudas, Dariush Nejad

Summary:

The Strategic Planning Committee has worked over the past several months to gather input that will inform the organization's next strategic plan. The committee hosted two engagement sessions since the beginning of the year—one with the Board and one with members—to collect perspectives on key priorities, goals, and ideas for Artisans Asylum's future. Both sessions were highly productive and generated valuable insights about what stakeholders believe is most important for the organization and the broader maker community.

Since these sessions, the committee has met biweekly to review the collected feedback and synthesize it into a draft strategic framework. A preliminary draft of the strategic plan has been developed and will be shared with the Board during this meeting for initial review and discussion. The committee looks forward to incorporating Board feedback as the plan continues to evolve.

Community Involvement Notes/ Member Suggestions

Presented by Simone Nemes

We had a robust chat on 3/1/26 about the state of A2. We started by talking about the temperature check about how A2 is doing financially and segwayed into a conversation about better utilizing members through the volunteer program, capturing new members, the website, and cleaning, among other things listed below:

Temperature Check:

- During the previous All-Member's Meeting there was a rosier picture painted of A2's financial outlook, so this new information feels a bit out of left field.
- There is a discrepancy between the money needed to be paid to new staff, and the revenue being secured. Contradicting this is that there has been a rolling back of some services (the desk is not always staffed for example). **This needs to be addressed otherwise members will feel more and more alienated by price increases or calls to volunteer.**
- Although there have been some improvements to systems, the progress is slow and members are feeling a need to "step up" and be of service, but there is an **under-utilization of the resources and skillsets of members that we have at A2.**
 - For example, why ask members to take out the trash when there are more prescient issues and there is a wealth of skills/resources and knowledge amongst members to address them?
- Need to reconcile the differences in vision- there is a push to transform A2 from a maker space into a traditional arts organization - let's not lose sight of why we were started.

Possible Action Points (offered with the understanding that some of these may already have been considered or are underway by the staff):

1. **Each Staff member should have 2 - 3 volunteers who they work in tandem with to help spread out the workload.** This has multiple benefits: 1) it helps Carol with staff training; and 2) it creates a reciprocal environment of sharing knowledge and experience between volunteers and staffers. The older generation wants to help the younger ones do the work - let's let them!
 - a. Again, this needs to be a reciprocal relationship between the volunteers and the staffers. The good news is that we have plenty of retired and self-employed members who want to help. A solution could be to have the volunteers also mentor the staffers and give them extra support in their roles.

- b. Note: This would be similar to Sal's team who helps him with Operational tasks.
- 2. **We need to show appreciation and acknowledgement towards our volunteers.** How can we say thank you?
 - a. Have a slide during the All-Members meeting that shows the volunteers who help out at A2 and describe what they are working on
 - b. Bonuses: a thank you coupon at a local business (coffee, snack, beer). (This is a throwback to complimentary beer to thank volunteers from Aeronaut)
- 3. Have-It-Made@artisansasylum.com- the intention here is great but **a dedicated volunteer in a concierge role** would be able to help make connections between the community and makers. For example, say you need a shelf made or want to figure out how to lathe, who can you be connected to?
 - a. This would help bring new members in and form a more community-centric approach
 - b. The database of who is available for hire/collaborations in making is a bonus to our community. Maybe it's an online catalog, but really the concierge should be helping to connect people and this role should be celebrated.
 - c. The old website had a "meet your makers" section, this should be included on the new website
- 4. **Website:** How is this going? Can members see a version or a wireframe? User-test it? What does it look like?
- 5. **New membership:** who are the easiest new members to capture? Shirah and Karin pointed out that those on the studio waitlist and people coming in for tours are the easiest to capture to boost our revenue. Also people who come to shop nights
 - a. If you can't get a studio, how can we bring you in? Let's contact those waitlisters for palette space, a locker, a shelf or a membership. It's easier to get a studio once you're a member.
 - b. Tour groups: let's ask those tour groups what they are interested in working on at the end of the tour, then capture that information to follow up with them: **email** them afterwards, **thank** them for coming, direct them to an upcoming class or membership option. Give them a flyer to take home of upcoming classes at A2.
 - c. Let's have a flyer printout to give to people who come to shop nights. Is there a way to capture their email address so we can follow up with them after. (Need help from the Shop Leads on this)
 - d. We need to be able to sell better to non-members the WHY of becoming a member: is it for community, the space, wanting to tinker, learning a skill?
- 6. **Cleaning: Reconsider whether volunteers should be asked to do this - with the exception of clean up after yourself, obviously!** Some members feel that the value of a membership is that certain services are provided. UTILIZE the skills, knowledge, and expertise of our membership for the valuable work we need help with, rather than just for cleanup.
 - a. Get a quote from a cleaning service to see what the cost would be of taking out trash, cleaning the bathrooms on a weekly basis.
 - b. If this is too expensive, can we offer pay or a membership to a dedicated volunteer who wants to help out with this?