

# Artisans Asylum Board Book - MEMBERS - November 12, 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
  - New Board Members
    - Review slate and vote to approve new
  - Finances
  - Front Desk Staff
- Executive Session

## Housekeeping

### Minutes

Recorded and submitted by Dan Kulla, Secretary

Minutes for the September Board Meeting were reviewed and approved.

### Corporate Officers

Jack de Valpine and Kit Cangardel have been voted and approved to fill the following board positions:

- Co-Chair - Jack de Valpine
- Vice-Chair - Kit Cangardel

The statutory officers of the corporation are:

- Michael Mittelman - President and Co-Chair
- Geoff Chasin - Treasurer
- Dan Kulla - Secretary

## Departing Directors

The board wishes to extend their sincere gratitude to Lewis Bryant, Joe “Puppy” Wight, and Alice Stein for their efforts and input in working on the board to help advance Artisans Asylum. This work requires significant dedication of energy and time with no compensation or other benefits. We thank them for their service.

## Reports

### Executive Director

Submitted by Carol Ward, Executive Director

### Operations

We hosted our second quarterly All Members Meeting, where we gave the pulse of the organization, heard updates from members and had a robust Q&A from members.

The Fall Open House went extremely well, with over 250 guests attending. Each shop was activated with special activities and there was also a makers market, poster sessions and demonstrations throughout the day. Follow-up is being done to engage participants to take classes and become members.

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 November.

A2 has decided to cancel our contract with OunceIT, our IT consultant company. The IT work will now be done in house by a team led by Sadie, and also some outside consultants who will be working on smaller, discrete projects.

### Staff

We hired two new staff members during this time frame:

Maddie Starr Wicker is A2's new Program Coordinator - she will be working under the direction of Sarah in the Education Department. Maddie will focus on class scheduling, billing, instructor interfacing and also helping with social media and large scale public events.

Cal Groudas is A2's new Experience and Engagement Coordinator - this new role will focus on supporting both Sal and Amber in Operations and Member Services. Cal has already been instrumental in developing and implementing the gift shop and some new front of house procedures, and he will continue exploring ways to increase earned income at A2 as well.

## Committees

Thanks to the DEI committee LUCE came and led a training on best practices when dealing with ICE agents. The DEI committee also sent out to all members the internal policy created about ICE related issues. 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.

As part of the Fall Open House we rolled out three different new levels of membership - Supporting (\$100 per year), Young Professionals (\$75 per year) and Family (\$150 per year).

## Finance Committee

Chair: Geoff Chasin

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

## SUMMARY

We knew that there would be a period when we were paying for all the staff, and the results of their efforts would not yet be bearing fruit. We are there. The board needs to remove any obstacles from Carol and her team's path, so that they can increase the revenue from every revenue stream. There needs to be a sense of urgency to: increase membership, complete and rent out the former SCUL space, comb through our data and make sure that everyone is paying what they should be, increase courses and course enrollment, bring in more individual contributions and grants. If we do not do this, we will first have to start implementing some austerity measures, like no longer paying 10% of education revenue to the shops. There are more draconian measures like increasing membership costs – this needs to be avoided if at all possible.

## Governance Committee

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

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## SUMMARY

Over the past several months, the governance committee has been focused primarily on two tasks: A) member-elections for (1) open member elected board seat and (1) member elected board liaison position, B) board recruitment for new board members to fill up to (3) open seats. These efforts were delayed in August and September. Starting at the beginning of October, the committee moved to a weekly meeting schedule in an effort to get back on track. The member elections are proceeding on a recently updated schedule with election completion and results now set for November 24. Board recruitment efforts are proceeding, however scheduling conflicts and other timing related issues have delayed the development of a full slate for presentation to the Board at its November meeting. Based on a number of discussions, the committee will present an initial slate of (3) for the November board meeting, consisting of (2) current board members to continue and (1) new board member to be added. Recruitment efforts will continue with the intent to present a second slate of (2) candidates at the January board meeting.

## DETAILS

The committee is actively working to develop several opportunities for filling remaining board seats. The process includes multiple points of contact between committee members and prospective candidates for nominated seats. Typically candidates have had an initial contact with a board member and/or the ED. If there is indicated interest in moving forward an introduction is made to the governance committee members. Following this, one or more opportunities are arranged for the committee members to meet and interview the candidate. The committee is looking for candidates with a wide range of experiences, capabilities and backgrounds who are interested in working to help advance A2 based on its mission and vision.

The committee has begun discussions about how to strengthen diversity on the board in a thoughtful and intentional way. We are taking initial steps to outline a framework that supports representation across different backgrounds, experiences, and skillsets. This work is still in its early stages, but we're committed to shaping a board whose collective perspectives enhance our ability to govern effectively, represent stakeholders authentically, and advance A2's mission.

## 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. Will Sonday has taken the lead on managing and coordinating development related activities. Work is being performed on these areas by subcommittees of the Development Committee.

- Grants (Michael Shia, Abby Lipson, Karin Keane, Will Sondey, Carol Ward, Will Sondey)  
- A total of 6 grants have been applied for or are in the process of submission.
- Individual Giving (Jack de Valpine, Michael Mittelman, Geoff Chasin, Karin Keane, and Carol Ward, Will Sondey) - Efforts over the period were focused on planning and implementation for the *Fall Into Making* Friendraiser/Openhouse held on October 25. Focus is now shifting to planning for the calendar year end fundraising campaign.

Relationship Building (Michael Shia and Carol Ward) - Work is ongoing to develop and build relationships with selected foundations and organizations.

## DETAILS

### Grants

We are focusing on grants that fund specific types of programs, since they are the bulk of the grants being funded these days. In the current environment, it has become clear that very few grants are being awarded for operations related activities. The program area we are focusing on is Youth Stem Learning (YSL). We have submitted (4) grant applications in relation to this focus area. In addition, preparation is underway for a capital grant program with a December submission deadline. We continue to explore and investigate on an ongoing basis a variety of potential funders and opportunities.

We recently heard we will receive a grant for \$15,000 from the Hamilton Charitable Foundation.

### Individual Giving

The *Fall Into Making* Friendraiser/Openhouse held on October 25, attracted ~250 visitors to A2. Staff, Shop leads and volunteers played key roles in bringing the event together and making it happen with a lot of effort involved by all. Among the successes were activations in or relating to all the shops, including activities, demos and take-aways. An initial post-event debrief was held with key staff and feedback is being solicited from those involved in the event as well as A2 membership. There is a lot that has been learned already in the effort involved in planning and implementing this type of event. There is good opportunity for lessons learned to be applied to future events, including a *Spring Into Making* event in 2026.

Focus is now shifting to a calendar year end fundraising campaign. This is a key fundraising opportunity for A2.

### Relationship Building

Current focus includes: The Boston Foundation, and the City of Boston Arts and Culture Department. Additional organizations are being identified for future development. Separately, preliminary work is underway for the Boston Area Maker and Art Space Consortium. We are

also cultivating relationships with organizations that can partner or further programs e.g. the Youth Steam Learning program (in development), for example Leslie University and the Boston Public Schools administration.

## DEIA Committee

Chair: Lisa Tacoronte

Co-Chairs: *Erin Shackelford, Sadie Forbes*

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

## SUMMARY

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee is currently focused on: securing funding to support DEIA initiatives; planning the spring Maker Aid Workshop Series; expanding outreach to community partners and local neighbors; organizing our internal response to the possibility of ICE raids in support the safety and well-being of vulnerable members; supporting member-driven affinity groups; and hearing concerns related to DEIA issues including changes to the front desk and questions related to A2's policy and practice of responding to DEIA related complaints

## DETAILS

- Grant Funding: Waiting to hear the result of A2's grant proposal to Cummings foundation for support DEI funding for Maker Aid
- ICE Response / policy and procedure in place, with a new camera / intercom to support keeping facility closed to ICE; Our LUCE training went well (thanks to Erin Shackelford for taking point on organizing). Staff and Leads trained at a workshop by LUCE; protocol written and shared with front desk; Erin addressed basic safety bullet points in case of ICE at membership meeting and in membership email; Sadie installed an intercom system. To do: front desk volunteers need training on intercom and new protocol.
- Maker Aid Update: Workshops on hold pending funding; fall options include artist resources talk and Perkins accessibility workshop; continue to promote Fix-it clinic; shifting to spring garden day with at-risk communities.
- Scholarship program funded (\$6k from members / \$3k A^2 match). Evaluation criteria and an application form are drafted, we are working with Will to finalize, as well as plan follow on programs to be pursued for grant funding.
- A2 Open House was a great success. We would like to propose that the spring Open House have a Mutual Aid approach (inviting diverse neighbors in to share resources and skills) and a garden theme, with the whole A2 community coming together with free workshops or activities that are related to growing your own food in a small space.
- DEIA is working to incorporate recent new member experiences into how we approach educating the organization in being a welcoming and safe space for current and potential members.

- The committee is committed to exploring issues of access to A2 and how to create more and additional opportunities for people to become members in order foster a diverse membership that is inclusive of differing income levels, disabilities, races, genders and identities.

Next steps:

- Follow-ups with Will / Development
- Aid / ensure training of front desk on ICE procedures

## Strategic Planning Committee

Chair: Dariush Nejad

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

### SUMMARY

Our draft plan is organized around five core pillars, each representing a key area of focus for the next five years. Below are working summaries and example goals under each pillar. We are currently defining actionable metrics to accompany each goal so that we can track progress and clearly understand what success looks like.

#### 1. Inclusive Access & Community Connection

We will strengthen relationships with surrounding communities, lower barriers to entry, and welcome more diverse participants into the maker ecosystem.

##### Example Goals:

- Develop multiple “*entry point*” programs such as open houses, fix-it events, and public workshops.
- Partner with local schools, libraries, and nonprofits to host community-based maker activities.
- Launch a supporter or alumni membership model to sustain engagement beyond active shop users.

**Metric Example:** *Grow participation in public-facing programs by 25% annually through new partnerships and outreach.*

#### 2. Vibrant & Resilient Creative Community

We will improve member experience, volunteer support, and shop reliability to foster a thriving, well-supported creative environment.

##### Example Goals:

- Increase staff-to-volunteer ratios to improve support and communication.
- Enhance tool uptime and shop maintenance tracking systems.
- Streamline member onboarding and safety testing for a smoother start-to-finish experience.

**Metric Example:** *Maintain 95% tool uptime and reduce average new member onboarding time to under two weeks.*

#### 3. Education, Outreach & Workforce Development

We will expand educational access and partnerships that connect making to lifelong learning and workforce pathways.

**Example Goals:**

Launch a mobile/satellite education model to deliver classes offsite in schools and community centers.

Develop a core curriculum in trades, technology, and creative entrepreneurship.

Partner with workforce agencies and youth programs to reach new learners.

**Metric Example:** *Offer 600 monthly class seats across onsite and offsite programs by 2027.*

#### **4. Entrepreneurship & Product Incubation**

We will empower makers to move from concept to product through education, mentorship, and access to fabrication resources.

**Example Goals:**

- Support at least 25 maker-led startups or product ventures by 2030.
- Offer recurring workshops on business planning, intellectual property, and funding.
- Build an advisory network and shared services model for short-run production and prototyping.

**Metric Example:** *Incubate 10 new ventures each year and track at least 70% survival after two years.*

#### **5. Visibility, Partnerships & Financial Growth**

We will grow public awareness and financial sustainability through storytelling, partnerships, and diversified funding streams.

**Example Goals:**

- Launch a branded merchandise and retail program featuring member-made products.
- Establish an endowment fund to secure long-term stability.
- Host a regional Maker Summit to position Artisans Asylum as a national leader in creative innovation.

**Metric Example:** *Increase unrestricted revenue by 15% annually through partnerships, retail sales, and events.*

## **ED Evaluation Committee**

Members: Michael Mittelman and Anne Wright

### **SUMMARY**

The ED Evaluation committee meets monthly with Carol. The second quarterly survey is out with group 2. The group includes 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

## New Board Members

The Governance Committee submitted its recommendations for a slate to fill 3 open board seats:

- Dariush Nejad - to continue in a second term
- Michael Mittelman - to continue in a second term, moving from member elected to board elected seat
- Abby Lipson - to start a first term

The board voted and approved the slate. The board is now composed of the following directors:

Geoff Chasin, Tom Cole, Saeed Arida, Kit Cangardel, Greg Mertz, Lisa Tacorante, Anne Wright, Dariush Nejad, Dan McGrath, Michael Mittelman, Abigail Lipson and Dan Kulla as the director-elected directors and Mike Shia, and Jack deValpine as the member-elected directors

The Governance Committee is engaged in active search to fill two remaining open board seats. The hope is to have these seats filled no later than our next regular meeting in January if not sooner.

## Finances

The state of current finances was discussed. This includes issues of lumpiness in certain categories of non-program revenues such as fundraising and development. In addition, there is a need for urgency in ramping up program service revenues relating to education, membership and space rentals. There are key charitable contributions that have come in that are important and will serve in the run-up to the calendar year end fundraising campaign.

The board and staff are fully committed to the success of Artisans Asylum. The board fully supports the work of the staff and Executive Director in these efforts. The board recognizes that the membership is also likewise committed to working for the success of the organization.

## Front Desk Staff

The current state of the deskie/front desk change was reviewed and discussed. The board is in firm support of Carol and the staff in undertaking changes to advance Artisans according to its mission and vision.

# Executive Session

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